

# Yoruba Dog Names as Warnings: A Contextual Analysis

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*Extant studies on Yoruba names have majorly focused on human names but studies on Yoruba dog names are very scanty. This has prevented a proper understanding of how Yoruba dog names function in society to guide human characters. To this end, this study interrogates Yoruba dog names that are used to signify warnings to people. The study was designed to explain the sociocultural import of Yoruba dog names, discuss the relevance of the names, explore warning strategies naming entails, and explain their implications for society. The study adopts content-based and descriptive analysis to achieve the objective of the study using ethnopragmatic theory. Thirty Yoruba dog names were collected but ten were purposively selected for the analysis because of their relevance to the theme of the study. The data were collected from Yoruba hunters and dog traders. The study identified four categories of Yoruba dog names used for warning; dog names used for warning on how to sustain human relations, warning against wickedness, warning on reward/repercussion, and warning on how to maintain good character. The study concludes that these names cannot be discussed outside their context. It suggests that the use of such names should be encouraged because of their roles in human society.*

**Keywords:** dog, names, Yoruba, warning, context

## 1 Introduction

Yoruba is one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Yoruba people occupy the southwestern states of Nigeria. They can also be found in Kwara and Kogi states of Nigeria and some other countries of the world. Yoruba is known for its rich culture. For example, Yoruba is known for her culture of greetings, dressing, and food. The ethnic group also has the culture of preventing future misfortunes using different strategies such as the use of taboos, warnings, etc. Oyetade (1994) explains that taboos are used for reasons other than propriety but reasons such as fear of the supernatural, to avert ominous consequences, and so on. This reveals that taboo can be used to warn against future occurrences. The culture of warning is also reflected in one of the Yoruba aphorisms, ‘*a wí fúnni kó tó dání, àgbà ijàkadi*’ translated “to be fore-warned is to be fore-armed”. In the same way, taboos are used to warn against future occurrences (good or bad), names also perform a similar cautionary purpose. Both Yoruba human and animal names are very significant and relevant for many reasons among Yoruba people. According to Ayantayo (2015) name is a word or set of words by which a person, animal, place, or thing is known or addressed. He explains further that names are valuable sources of information. They can indicate gender, marital status, birthplace, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and position within a family or even within a society. The present study focuses on the use of Yoruba dog names to warn people.

Naming among Yoruba people, just like any other ethnic group, is unique and interesting. There are personal names, given names, nicknames, etc. for both humans and animals (Ogunwale 2012). Domestic animals among Yoruba people also have given names, though the christening

process for humans is more complex. Cats, dogs, goats, and sheep among others are domestic animals among Yoruba people that are given names. The thrust of this study is on dog names. A dog is a domestic animal that is common to every society; it can be a pet and, at the same time, serve other purposes such as guard, and can be used for hunting especially in the Yoruba setting (Ayantayo 2015). According to Aiyedun and Olugasa (2012), the human-dog bond is a deep connection between two species that exists comparable to no other. This is true because dogs are being trained to carry out some domestic activities such as turning on/off lights, picking up objects, and pulling wheelchairs for those who are physically challenged (Aiyedun and Olugasa, 2012). Dogs among the Yoruba people are good companions and game partners for hunters. Consequently, dog owners give names to their dogs for identification. However, it is observed that there are other functions that dog names perform in Yoruba society. According to Olusola (2005), meaningful names are still relevant in the Yoruba naming system for both human and domestic animals. These names are very significant to the Yoruba people and a reflection of their belief system. One of the Yoruba worldviews is the belief in warning people against future occurrences to avert evil or regret. A warning is given to prevent and save unforeseen but predictable futures. Among the Yoruba people, there are different strategies to consciously and unconsciously warn people ahead of possible happenings. One of the strategies is the use of personal names given to humans or animals. Dog names are used in this regard.

Scholars have interrogated Yoruba personal names, *abiku* (a child presumed to die and come back through his/her mother) names, and animal names from cultural perspectives, contextual meaning, politeness, etc. For example, Ogunwale (2012); Ehineni (2019); Fakuade et al. (2020); Ehineni (2022) have investigated Yoruba personal names from an ethnopragmatic perspective and also examined the politeness in the use of the names. Rafiu and Osho (2021) and Odebode and Onadipe (2011) interrogate the illocutionary act of *abiku* names among the Yoruba people. Yet other scholars like Oluikpe (2004) examine Igbo personal names, Odebode (2012) discuss pet names in polygamous homes while Špago (2022), Leibring (2014), and Loyce et al. (2022) investigate animal names. These studies have also shown the significance of names to the bearer and giver of names. It also shows the importance and value that different societies attach to their names. However, these studies do not examine names given to dogs as an instrument of warning to forestall future occurrences. The studies do not interrogate the significance of dog names in society, especially among the Yoruba people. These have prevented an understanding of the sociocultural values of Yoruba dog names. It has also undermined the roles dog names can play in our immediate society. To this end, this study is guided by the following objectives: to explain the sociocultural import of Yoruba dog names, to discuss the import of Yoruba names as warning strategies, and to explain the implications of the names for society. To achieve the objectives, ethnopragmatics theory is adopted because the theory examines speech practices from a culture-internal perspective. The selected dog names are examined within the cultural context of the Yoruba people. The selected names are grouped according to the category of warning identified and discussed using the adopted theory to reveal the contextual meaning of the names to guide against future occurrences.

## 2 Literature review

This section reviews extant literature that is relevant to the present study to show what has been done and the gaps that necessitate the present study. The section is divided into three; studies on Yoruba personal names, studies on abiku names among the Yoruba, and studies on animal names.

Ehineni (2019) focuses on Yoruba human names. The study uses ethnopragmatic theory to interrogate personal names to reveal how names are formed within their cultural context and show the significant function of the names in Yoruba ethnolinguistics ecology. The study categorizes Yoruba personal names within the context with a focus on family situation, the circumstance of birth, religious orientation, death situation, and profession. The study argues that names are not just arbitrary labels but linguistic categories such as phrases, clauses, or sentences with indexical relationships to sociocultural meanings and functions. This study is very relevant to the present study as it reveals the efficacy of the ethnopragmatics framework in the analysis of names. It also shows the significance of personal names and their formations. However, the present study focuses on the contextual and sociocultural function of Yoruba dog names in preserving future misfortunes.

Fakuade et al. (2020) examine the traditions, patterns, and practices of the Yoruba personal naming system. The study discusses the influence of Western culture and religions on the sociolinguistic features of Yoruba personal names. Indexicality theory is adopted to interpret objects that represent the names based on contextual influence. The study shows that the selected names tell stories of families' socio-economic backgrounds, represent customs and religions, reflect dreams, as well as predict the child's future path. While the study is relevant to this as it discusses Yoruba personal names in context, it however differs from the present study because the present study discusses Yoruba dog names as they are used to warn participants in the discourse. The present study also adopts ethnopragmatics theory to reveal the sociocultural perspective of the Yoruba people about the names. This will help to understand the intention of the naming and the inference of the people.

Ogunwale (2012) describes and analyses Yoruba proverbs that are used as personal names. The study examines the process of converting proverbs into personal names and how proverbs are refashioned into lexes and used as Yoruba personal names. The study also discusses the reason for some proverbs function in such manners and why others cannot. The author argues that the outcome of the work is relevant to understanding the interface between construction types of proverbs and their uses. This study engages the formation of Yoruba names especially from grammatical constructions such as sentences and proverbs. It does not examine Yoruba dog names. It also does not examine names in context and their usage by humans. These are the thrust of the present study; to see how Yoruba dog names are not mere labels, but useful instruments to guide the human future.

Rafiu & Osho (2021) examine the performative role of abiku names within the Yoruba sociocultural context and reveal the way such names explain mysteries within the same context. Names were randomly collected from traditional healers and elderly members of communities who are believed to have access to such names without any embarrassment. Brown and Levinson's model of politeness and Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts were adopted as the theoretical frameworks. The study reveals that politeness is not only used for *face-threatening acts (FTA)* but

also to maintain social relations between participants in discourse. The study submits that there is serious weight in the social factors that influence FTAs in Abiku names for a better understanding of the names. These names also guide the present study to the significant value attached to names among the Yoruba people. The study is, however, concerned with abiku names and not dog names. The study is also anchored on the politeness framework and not the ethnopragmatics framework. This therefore creates a vacuum on the importance of Yoruba dog names and the role of sociocultural context in interpreting names. The present study therefore uses an ethnopragmatics framework to interrogate Yoruba dog names to understand the role of context in interpreting the names to show their relevance in warning people against future happenings.

Odebode & Onadipe (2011) interrogate *abiku* names using the face act theory. The work establishes that certain politeness acts are either violated or obeyed in the Yoruba naming systems of *abiku* children; thereby proving the economy of words in names and that more is communicated than said. Ten *abiku* names were selected and analyzed using the pragmatic principle of the face act. The study shows that abiku names in the traditional African Yoruba context, are more than historical, social, and spiritual labeling and the names can psychologically influence the people. This agrees with Rafiu and Osho (2021) in discussing abiku names using politeness strategies. The duo does not engage dog names among Yoruba people but abiku names. They do not interrogate names within the sociocultural context. These are the focus of the present study to reveal the importance of dog names to human living.

Špago (2022) interrogates how animal names are used for abusive purposes among the people of Bosnia and the level of offensiveness and negative meaning associated with the names. The study collected data from an online survey among two groups of Bosnian university students. The study shows that most female-directed animal names that are frequently used are associated with bad character and less with a lack of manners than those that are male-directed. According to the study, there are different levels of offensiveness of different animal names which is common to female-directed names. This study is also relevant to the present study as it serves as a good guide to the study of animal names. The study also shows the significance of animal names. It is however different from the present study in terms of the theme and scope. While Špago (2022) discusses how animal names are used for abusive purposes in Bosnian, the present study examines the use of dog names as a warning among the Yoruba people. This study is carried out among the Yoruba people and it is restricted to dog names which Špago (2022) did not examine.

Loyce et al. (2022) discuss the usefulness of animal names in learning Chinese by foreigners who are learning the language as a second language specifically advanced Igbo and Yoruba learners of the language. The study adopts the language awareness framework of Hawkins (1984) to reveal the importance of sociolinguistic competence in language learning. The study shows that animal names can be a resourceful material in building vocabulary, for derivation of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. The study argues that animal names can be regarded as one possible means to learn cultures of different people. The results prove that the semantic connotations of animal imagery used to describe human beings and their characteristics are of wide if not universal use. The study is also good for the present study as it shows the significance of animal names to human activities. The study, however, differs from the present study in that it focuses on the conceptualization of animal names for language learning. The present study however focuses on dog names as an instrument of warning. While the present study adopts an ethnopragmatic

framework to interrogate dog names to understand the sociocultural perspective of Yoruba people in using names for warning, Loyce et al. (2022) adopt a language awareness framework. Hence, a need for the present study.

Leibring (2016) interrogates names of companion animals such as dogs and cats from a socio-onomastic perspective to explain if animal owners benefit from animal names or whether they rely solitarily on the popular animal names e.g. anthroponyms or older zoonyms. The study therefore discusses the features of the most popular names given to dogs and their relationship to popular baby names in Sweden. This is a good guide to the present study because it discusses dog names. It also shows the importance of dog names to human beings. However, the study was carried out in Sweden which has different sociocultural background to Yoruba, the context of the present study. The study also compares dog names to cat names, whereas, the present study shows the significance of dog names in guiding human beings against future occurrences.

The above studies are relevant to the present study and serve as a good guide. This is because they show the importance of names (human and animal) to human society. They show that names are not just labels as some may perceive them. They also reveal that names can be interrogated within its context for better understanding. However, the studies do not focus on Yoruba dog names to reveal their significance to human living, prevent future misfortune, and guide human relations. They did not adequately show how names can be understood from the sociocultural perspectives of the bearer and name giver. To this end, the present study uses ethnopragmatic theory to interrogate Yoruba dog names and reveal the sociocultural beliefs of Yoruba people about names, reveal how the names are used to warn people against future occurrences and their relationship to their fellow humans, and discuss the implications of those names for human society.

### **3 Theoretical framework and methodology**

This study adopts Goddard's (2006) ethnopragmatic theory because it helps to interrogate language based on its cultural context. Ethnopragmatic theory interrogates speech practices from the cultural perspective of the language user. In other words, language use is interrogated within the cultural context of the speakers. According to Goddard (2006), ethnopragmatic theory examines speech practices from a culture-internal perspective. The theory seeks to understand language based on the way the native speakers understand it from their cultural perspective. Ethnopragmatics is a combination of ethno and pragmatics. Pragmatics studies language from the point of view of language users. In other words, language is examined based on what the user means as against what the word means. Ethno highlights local communicative practices and native speakers' orientation to language practices. Therefore, language is interrogated based on the linguistic orientations of the speakers. Using ethnopragmatic theory, the sociocultural beliefs and practices of the speakers are considered to unravel meaning. According to Wierzbicka (2003), the basic assumption of ethnopragmatics is that people's thinking and interaction are motivated by their cultural background. This suggests that people of different cultural backgrounds cannot think, reason, or interact in the same way. To this end, culture also plays a significant role in interpreting language. Clyne (1994) opines that 'cultural values constitute 'hidden' meaning underlying discourse structures'. To this end, a community of people may be distinguished from another group

of people in terms of their perspectives and orientation based on their different backgrounds. Their language practices will also be different in terms of structure and interpretation. It is therefore important to interrogate linguistic forms in terms of social and cultural context of use, as it helps to reveal more specific meanings. This is particularly relevant to the interrogation of names (human or animal) as names are products of the cultural beliefs of the people. To this end, this study is anchored on the tenets of ethnopragmatic theory where Yoruba dog names will be interrogated within the Yoruba cultural context to reveal how the names are used to warn people against future occurrences and human relations.

The study adopts content-based and descriptive methods of analysis because they help to discuss language within its context. Personal introspection and interviews were used as methods of data collection. Five men who are local hunters were interviewed in the remote part of each of the selected Yoruba towns and five women who are dog sellers in Ibadan, Osogbo, and Akure were also interviewed for a better understanding of the dog names. Two elderly men from each of the towns were also engaged in a conversation to get more information about the dog names. The native knowledge of the researcher is complemented by interviews. Being a native speaker, the researcher is able to gather some dog names on the street. To complement this for the reason of objectivity and elucidation, the researcher interviewed other adult native speakers some of whom have dogs as pets or hunters whom dogs usually accompany to hunt. Over the years, the researcher has studied dog names on the street. However, he was able to unravel certain 'esoteric' names in Yoruba contexts through oral interviews. This was possible as a result of his good mastery of the Yoruba language which endeared the respondents. In all, thirty (30) dog names were collected from dog owners and traders in Ibadan, Akure, and Osogbo. It is important to state that the names collected from the three Yoruba towns are the same. The overlapping of names is a reflection of the sameness in the culture of the people. However, ten (10) of the names were purposively selected for this study because they reflect the theme of this study which is the use of Yoruba dog names to warn. The data are grouped into four major warning directions which include; dog names used to warn on how to sustain human relations, dog names used to warn against wickedness, dog names used to warn on reward/repercussion, and dog names used to warn on how to maintain good character. The data are discussed within the sociocultural belief of the Yoruba people to reveal the intention and inference of the people.

#### **4 Data presentation and analysis**

As earlier mentioned, this study adopts ethnopragmatic theory to interrogate Yoruba dog names that are used to warn people. A warning is a piece of advice given against future occurrences that may have dire consequences. It is used to forestall future misfortunes in most cases or regret. The Yoruba dog names are Mátànmí, Tẹńbégilójù, Ènìyánsòro, Ìgbẹ̀yìn (áádùn), Kásedáadáa, Èyìnlààrò, Ayéniròmọ̀, Ìwàpẹ̀lẹ̀, Bóoséere, Kásáfáyé. These names are categorized under four subheadings to represent different types of warnings that could be identified. The subheadings are; dog names used to warn on how to sustain human relation (Mátànmí, Kásedáadáa), dog names used to warn against wickedness (Tẹńbégilójù, Ènìyánsòro, Kásáfáyé), dog names used to warn on reward/repercussion/regret (Ìgbẹ̀yìn (áádùn), Èyìnlààrò, Ayéniròmọ̀), and dog names used to

warn on how to maintain good character (Ìwàpèlẹ́, Bóoséere). Table 1 below summarises the categorizations and translations of the dog names.

Table 1: Yoruba dog names used for warning and their translations

S/N	Yoruba dog names	Gloss	Warning on
1	Mátànmí	Do not deceive me	Human relation
2	Kásedáadáa	Let us do good	
3	Ènìyánsòro	Human beings are complex	Wickedness
4	Kásáfáyé	Let us run away from human beings (human character)	
5	Tẹ̀nìbégilójù	He who cuts the tree is to be pitied	
6	Èyìnlàárò	The outcome/aftermath is to be thought of	Reward/repercussion/regret
7	Ayéniròmọ	Deceit ends in the world	
8	Ìgbèyìn (áádùn)	The outcome/aftermath will be better	
9	Ìwàpèlẹ́	Gentleness	Good character
10	Bóoséere	If you do good...	

#### 4.1 Categorization of warnings in the dog names and analysis

##### 4.1.1 Dog names used to warn on how to sustain human relation

From the collected data, two of the names are used for this warning. They are; Mátànmí, Kásedáadáa. These are used to warn people in terms of their relationship with another fellow human being. The first name says **Mátànmí** which roughly translates to mean do not deceive me. It is a compression of a sentence to a single word.

This is used to warn people to be faithful in whatever they do. In the Yoruba sociocultural belief, faithfulness is adored. Yoruba people hate lies and believe it can never stand the test of time. This informs why they usually say ‘bí irọ̀ lọ̀ lógún ọ̀dún, ọ̀jọ̀ kan soso ni otító yóó bá a’. Roughly translated to mean, if a lie travels for twenty years, the truth will catch up with it in a day. This signifies that lies cannot survive for long. When Yoruba people name dog Mátànmí, the intention is to keep reminding listeners that lying is not good, especially in relationships with others. **Mátànmí** implicates that the person does not appreciate being lied to and it can destroy a relationship. The dog owner takes for granted the knowledge of the hearer by presupposing that they know the name by just saying Mátànmí. He assumes that they know that deceit is not acceptable in the society. Listeners will infer that lying is not good in relationships. The dog’s

name is used to warn against lying especially in relationships. The speaker personalized the name with the last morpheme, ‘mí’ meaning ‘me’ which is a personal pronoun in the Yoruba language. This pronoun will help listeners infer that the speaker does not like lies. The second name in this category also talks about human relations.

**Kásedáadáa** is roughly translated to mean ‘let us do well’. This is also a warning about character and human relations. The person naming his/her dog **Kásedáadáa** must have experienced somebody who has done well in the past and got the reward and somebody who has done bad things and also got the reward. This prompted the dog owner to give his dog this warning name for others to learn from it. The sociocultural belief of the Yoruba people holds that whatever a man sows, he shall reap. No wonder the Yoruba aphorism says ‘àti oore àti ikà, ìkan kò ní gbé. È Jé ká máa se dárádára’. This is roughly translated to mean both good and bad that a man does, he shall get the reward. The speaker intends to ensure that everyone is doing well rather than doing badly. This is presumed to be a guide against bad behaviour in Yoruba society.

#### 4.1.2 Dog names used to warn against wickedness

This is another warning that can ensure a society that is free of chaos. This is premised on the fact that when wickedness grows, society will not be good to live. Three dog names are used for this. They are; **Tẹ̀nìbégilójù**, **È̀nìyánsòro**, **Kásáfáyé**. The first name in this category is **Tẹ̀nìbégilójù** which means ‘he who cuts the tree is to be pitied’. Yoruba sociocultural belief shows that when a tree is cut down, it will surely grow again. Cutting down a tree is used as an imagery to mean a bad deed. This shows that when a bad is done to somebody, the person will survive it no matter the situation. The mutual contextual belief of the Yoruba people about life is that everything is situational. That is nothing is permanent. Hence they say ‘ìgbà kò lọ bí òréré, ayé kò tó lọ bí ọpá ìbọ̀n’. This is roughly translated to mean nothing is permanent. This is the reason why Yoruba say **Tẹ̀nìbégilójù** igi á rúwé’. That is whosoever cut the tree must be pitied because the tree will survive. The dog owner intends to keep reminding and warning whosoever listening that being wicked to others is not good because the victim will survive it.

Another dog name in this category is **È̀nìyánsòro**, which means ‘people are wicked’. This name is used to tell people that humans are wicked and cannot be trusted. The sociocultural belief of the Yoruba is that humans cannot be trusted because they are wicked. This is premised on the fact that human beings cannot be understood. The mutual contextual belief of the Yoruba people is that life is a mystery. This is reflected in the saying that ‘ayé le’ which means ‘Life is a mystery’. This is because human beings cannot be understood. To this end, Yoruba will always warn that little trust should be repose in people. The speaker intends to warn others that human beings cannot be trusted considering the difficulty in understanding them. Listeners will also infer from this that the speaker cares about them and their futures. This implies that everyone must be careful. If this is carefully observed, the society will be free of chaos. However, everyone will be suspicious of each other. This may lead to mistrust in the society.

Another related Yoruba dog name is **‘Kásáfáyé’**. Which means ‘to be careful of people’. Anyone who does not understand the sociocultural beliefs of Yoruba people will misinterpret this to mean that people should be running away from each other. However, this name is just a warning to be careful of people around because they cannot be trusted absolutely. This is because human beings and their ways of life are complex. The speaker intends to warn others within the Yoruba



context against the wickedness of others. Listeners will therefore infer that they should be careful about others in whatever they do. This will help them to always pay attention to people around them in their sayings and doings. Participants in this discourse shared the same socio-cultural belief that human beings could be deliberately wicked even without cause, especially those who may be jealous of whatever achievement a man may acquire. These dog names are just like a reminder to everybody who hears them, that this world is full of wickedness. Therefore, we need to be careful of humans around us.

#### 4.1.3 *Dog names used to warn on reward/repercussion*

Yoruba people believe that whatever a man does, there must be a reward for it, be it good or bad. They therefore believe in warning against whatever a man plans to do. Whatever situation you are passing through, they believe there is after effect for it. They therefore encourage one to keep enduring to avoid regret. This is reflected in some of the dog names that are used to warn against quitting in the middle of whatever one is enduring. One of the names says '**Ìgbẹ̀yìn**' means '**áádùn**'. This simply means the outcome will be good. It simply reflects the belief of the Yoruba people about a fruitful future after an enduring situation. This also reflects in one of the Yoruba proverbs which says '**bí egúngún bá n léni, ká máarójú, bí ó ti n rẹ ará ayé bẹ̀ẹ̀ ní ó n rẹ ará òrun**' which means 'if masquerade chases man, the man should keep enduring, as terrestrial men get tired so also celestial men get tired'. Yoruba people believe that after protracted suffering, there will be a reward. This is a form of warning against quitting an enduring situation to would-be sufferers to keep enduring the present hardship to avoid regret in the future as quitting may lead to regret. This is in tandem with the popular saying that, 'quitters never win and winners never quit'. There will always be light after the darkness. The hearer will infer from this that there is no situation especially, a bad situation that is permanent. Not only that the situation is not permanent but also that there is hope for a better future. The hunter may name his dog **Ìgbẹ̀yìn** to encourage him of a better future after the present hardship of toiling the bush for 'bush meat' because if he is discouraged and quits, he will regret it. The name will serve as a warning to anybody who is enduring a situation to continue because the future is rewarding as quitting may have a devastating end (regret).

Another related Yoruba dog name in this category is **Ẹ̀yìnlàárò**. This roughly means the aftermath (of whatever we do) is to be thought of (not the immediate effect). The Yoruba people believe that whatever we do, there is a reward for it, hence, the warning to be conscious of our actions simply because of the aftermath. The **Ẹ̀yìn** which means '*back*' may be misinterpreted to mean back in the usage whereas, contextually, it means future. Yoruba people always think of the aftermath of whatever they want to do to avoid regret. Hence, the constant reminder through the dog's name. The dog owner understands that calling the name will serve as a constant reminder to people to always think before they act.

The third and last Yoruba dog name in this category is **Ayénirómọ** means '*deceit ends in the world*'. This name simply means that lies have a short lifespan. This is a warning to people to stop all forms of deceit as it ends in this world. Yoruba sociocultural belief holds that there is a life after death and in the life beyond, there is no room for lying. Everything we do or have is believed to end in this world. This is effective as people try to desist from lying when they know that it can take them to nowhere because their ancestors (dead forefathers) see and know everything they

have done in life. It affects people psychologically and forces them to desist from lying. The speaker intends to ensure that people stop all forms of deceit. The hearer will infer from this that the lie will only last for a while and thereafter, everything will be exposed. This entails that there is life after this world where lying is not allowed. It is believed that all those things that will be done here that are not good cannot be repeated in heaven especially lies, hence ‘Ayé ni irọ mọ ọ run ò gbèké’ means ‘*lie ends on earth, heaven does not allow deceit*’. Life after now may also be translated to mean the future as lies cannot withstand truth when confronted.

#### 4.1.4 *Dog names used to warn on how to maintain good character*

This is the fourth and last category of the warning identified in the Yoruba dog names. This category has just two names from the collected data. The names are Ìwàpèlẹ́ and Bóoséere. **Ìwàpèlẹ́** means ‘gentleness’. Yoruba people believe that in whatever we do or will do, we should exercise patience. Ìwà may be translated to mean ‘character’ but in this context it means ‘behaviour’. ‘Pèlẹ́’ on the other hand means patience. The name therefore means ‘behaviour’ with ‘patience’ which means ‘gentleness’. In the Yoruba parlance, we say ‘Ìwàpèlẹ́ ló yẹ kí á se, ayé gbajẹ́’. This is simply saying that we should be patient. This name is in tandem with the Yoruba sociocultural belief about patience in life. The context here is the Yoruba setting where there is the belief that patience can solve every riddle in life. The speaker presupposes that every hearer understood the meaning of the name. The speaker intends to inform the hearer about the importance of being patient in life. Moreover, the people have a mutual contextual belief that patience and gentleness are supreme in life. This is a warning to the dog owner as well as the people in the environment who may be hot-tempered/hurried to take things easy. It is a reminder to always take life easy and be patient with people.

Another name in this category is **Bóoséere**. This is another Yoruba dog name which means ‘if you do it well...’. This simply warns people to be of good character because it is good to maintain good relationships. Yoruba people believe in living with one another in harmony. They therefore warn people to be mindful of their character. This will help them to live together peacefully. The mutual contextual belief of the Yoruba people is that whatever you do to others you will get the reward. Therefore, they warn against bad character. The speaker believes that listeners understand the meaning of the name. That is why he did not complete it. The full statement says, if you do it well, you will get the reward. The name carries condition with it. The name gives condition to everything a human does, good or bad. The names presupposes that there are two options; of doing good or bad. The presupposition helps the speaker to perform more functions with fewer words. The intention is to warn people about their character today because the reward will surely come.

## 5 Discussion

Context serves as a conversational undertone for speeches where there is no immediate linguistic feedback. In this work, all the dog names rely largely on the context. It is seen that Yoruba dog names are based on Yoruba ideology about life and these are hardly interpreted when context is lost. In addition, it is the platform in which the data was built, because it helps to recognize the intention of participants in the communicative act. Presuppositions are used to skip what the

speaker already knows or what the hearer believes the speaker knows about the topic of discussion. According to Ayantayo (2021), participants in the communicative event are likely to share some background knowledge. This is true of Yoruba dog names among the Yoruba people. Intention also contributes to the utterance meaning in passing the intended meaning. This is possible with the help of inference. Usually, what the speaker intends is what the hearer tries to infer in the utterance

Dogs in Yoruba families serve as companions, therefore, the name given to it is also as important as a human name. Dog names just like human names are used to serve as warnings. This agrees with Leibring (2016) which states that names of companion animals are useful for society. It reflects the mutual contextual belief of the Yoruba people in warning one another against future occurrences because of the shared love. Because of the oneness of the Yoruba people, they prefer to warn themselves against any future misfortune/regret. This is a reflection of their love for one another. This deviates from Fakuade et al. (2020) which states that Yoruba names tell stories of their creation. The dog names do not tell stories but reflect the sociocultural beliefs of Yoruba people, especially about warning. This study also agrees with Ehinemi which reveals the significance of Yoruba personal names. This also reveals the significance of Yoruba dog names but emphasizes that the names must be subjected to contextual analysis for better understanding. Dog names are used for warning because the calling of the name will remind people of the importance of such a name. As important as dogs are to society in terms of their functions, so also are their names in the teaching of morals and checkmating people in society. This also agrees with Leibring (2016) that companion animals not only perform functional roles but also have useful names.

## **6 Conclusion and recommendations**

This study interrogates Yoruba dog names that are used for warning among the Yoruba people. Ten names were analyzed and discussed in the study. Ethnopragmatics theory was adopted to analyze the selected names. The study concluded that the meaning of Yoruba dog names is best understood in context. This is made known through the ethnopragmatics analysis of the names. It also submitted that names are very significant communicative tools for warning in the Yoruba context. Through the names, we see that it is possible to warn people about human relations, wickedness, rewards/repercussions/regret, and human characters. Consequently, the study suggests that researchers must understand the world knowledge under which the names are used. This will help them to explore the names better. Intending researchers should also look at other levels of linguistic analysis in analyzing the names such as discourse analysis, the role of metaphor, stylistics, and so on. Researchers from other linguistic backgrounds should also look at dog names in their native language. Finally, the study suggests that the use of these names should be encouraged because of their significant roles in managing society and most especially to use them as a storehouse where indigenous languages and culture can be preserved.

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