



## **THE EFFICACY OF SALIVA AMONG THE EWE AND THE BIRIFOR PEOPLE OF GHANA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Studies on fluids secreted from human body are receiving increasing attention, especially in the medical field as compared to the cultural and linguistic fields but are christened as body waste, by-products, and others. Body fluid secretions are always associated with infections and homes for contagious pathogens. Nevertheless, a vast array of benefits are derived from all body excreted across cultures. This study delves into the efficacy of saliva, one of such secreted body fluids. It explores its sociocultural functions, expressions and beliefs surrounding it amongst the Ewe and the Birifor of Ghana. The study establishes that saliva is the commonest and most easily accessible body fluid and much of it is swallowed when secreted. Data was purposively collected from 85 respondents (34 Birifor and 51 Ewe speakers were counted worthy to use. The findings are interpreted in a logical narrative form, revealing four types of saliva with each performing different functions beyond the basic roles of facilitating swallowing and moistening or softening food items in fauna. The study claims that the usage of saliva has varied psychological and physiological implications backing their cultural functions. Ewe and Birifor people use saliva for sovereignty, curing, cursing, insulting, blessing among others in varied contexts. In addition, spitting and secretion of saliva is also a form of communication. Saliva usage occurs in proverbs, idioms and other linguistic constructions of the users. Saliva swallowing (ingestion) portrays good intentions and spitting it portrays bad intentions. The study concludes that the life of a people revolves around saliva usages for cultural and linguistic purposes.*

**Keywords:** Cultural, Believes, Saliva, Ewe, Ghana

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Saliva is the commonest and the most easily accessible body fluid; generally conceived to aid swallowing and moistening. Functions of saliva go beyond these roles and life really depends on activities involving saliva. Of late, studies on body fluids secretions are much considered especially in the medical field as compared to the cultural and linguistic field. In the medical studies, saliva is christened with names associated with infections: body waste, by-product among others, and is only considered as home of pathogens/infections (Abu-Rabia, 2015; Wojcicki, 2007; Wojcicki, 2003 and Ram, 2016). Nevertheless, body fluids such as saliva plays vital roles in the life of a people on religious, social, linguistics, medical grounds among the lot.



The fact is that studies involving fluids in the body are generally seem to be considering them negatively as infectious and this assumption must be avoided. Much study has not being carried out to trade the benefits of fluids and fluid-like products from the body such as saliva, phlegm or mucus, sweat, blood and others across cultures and linguistic domains. This sociocultural study of saliva among the Ewes (Ewe/ [Èbè]) and the Birifor [Birifɔr] attempts to present the significance of saliva in the total way of life of the people in their culture and literature. It tries to respond to why we ingest or egest saliva and have saliva. The people (Birifor and Ewe) and their language is the same. Osei-Tutu (2002) posits that the literature of a people is defined by their identity which is enshrined in their traditions as portrayed in their language and other cultural practices. This study unearths an in-depth knowledge about the people through explorations on their practices especially the common ones that dominate their lives. Among the Birifor and the Ewes Saliva (B- nataar, E- ta) defines the lives of the people under every day and special occasions.

## **2.0 RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW**

In recent times, there is much attention given to the study of fluids from the oral and other parts of the body. Issues in relation to saliva and its usage in scientific and traditional practices for testing substances or as an alternative to blood or urine test abounds in works of many schools of thought. Saxena and Kumar (2015) noted that saliva in its whole form is actually a combination of many secreted products from varied parts of the human body.

Spitting as a conscious act of forcibly ejecting saliva and or other substances from the buccal cavity (mouth) is a natural occurrence in man (Dogbey, 2012). Traditionally, drawing saliva out is considered rude and a social taboo across cultures. However, some practices involving saliva. As the belief holds in scientific fields that saliva is a medium for transmitting infectious diseases, the same way in cultural and traditional settings, saliva is efficacious in healing, blessing and others. Spitting upon another person, such onto the face, into the palm and others is a global sign of, hatred, anger, contempt and gross disrespect. Despite all these assumption, the benefits of saliva and other body fluids have not been delineated.

Literature has it that customary practices among many African and Indian ethnic groups comprise of mothers and elders spitting slightly at children (not directly on them) as a sign of protecting them from evil spirits and evil people (Abbott, 1984; Osei-Tutu, 2002). Among many Africans, it is a common practice to see traders sometimes spit and make spitting gesture on their first cash sales, which is believed to ward-off bad spirits and bad business for the day.

Spitting rituals are at times calculated for three or seven times accompanied by a compliment or after making a complement to a person, a thing or articles. A study by Wojcicki, (2003) identify categories of three behavioral practices involving saliva usage among Africans during some customary or ritual practices such as using saliva in (1) initiation or ritual practices (2) healing and medical practices, and (3) feeding practices.

Also, Wojcicki, (2003) citing (Cerulli, (1964:9; Puccioni, 1936:167 and Helander, 1988:111) says some ethnic groups in Africa such as in Somalia, Tanzania Ghana and Nigeria among others use saliva alone or saliva combined with other substances such as local herbs, ashes, sand and



others to treat different ailments. The herbs are chewed and the mixture of saliva and herbs is used for the treatment. Among the Somali, sores that do not heal and have pus are treated with saliva. He also, says saliva is mixed with butter in the treatment for snakebites or scorpion stings and open wounds. Additionally, the Azande of Sudan use saliva as a first-aid application to wounds and abrasions as he identified in Anderson, 1911, 250a).

Dogbey (2012) also identifies that the presence and usage of saliva abounds in many traditional cultures. He claims that among some clans Benin and Ewes of Ghana, in treating snake bitten victims, the victim is spitted upon and some snake parts or live snakes are bitten to aid the treatment of the bite. A study by Saxena and Kumar (2015) on saliva ontology identifies that saliva is the best fluid to be used if any profile study on DNA is to be carried out for individualization studies apart from cases involving identical twins or siblings. This relates to what Nutsuakor (1993) says; that saliva rituals in Ewe and some African cultures are used for detecting lost relatives, to identify and treat bad omens in a family and to identify and test people who one wants to marry, in order to see if they are relations or are compatible in a way.

Saxena and Kumar (2015) further explain that saliva usage and its detection on envelop, smoked siga, stamps, DNA etc. has been done through such enzyme and chemical actions. They also stated some scientific approaches to saliva usage and its detection has by using lasers, fluorescent spectroscopy among all other kinds of lightening treatments such as the use of ultraviolet, argon and quartz arch tube lights. The use of soaked cotton swab as seen in the case of the classical method, then the dry cotton swab approach, known as the double swab technique was stayed by as positive in providing a better yield of saliva recovered from the skin surface.

### **3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This naturalistic study is qualitative in nature with data elicitation from primary sources, focusing on ethnocentric contexts. Data was purposively collected from 85 respondents (34 Birifor and 51 Ewe speakers) from traditional authorities and selected citizens from Ewe Communities (Akatsi, Dzita, Hohoe, Anloga, Alakple, Abutia, Dakpa, and Ho) and some Birifor communities (Kao, Gadi, Kyemuonteeng, Jenbob, Bayelteeng, and Maaduteeng). Other data sources include social media platforms (Whatsapp and Facebook) such as The Birifor Youth Network, The Birifor Palace, Avenor Youth and Ewe culture. The WhatsApp and Facebook groups of both languages provide much timely and varied data because of the nature of the composition of their members; most of them are vested with the culture of both languages. The WhatsApp and Facebook groups equally provide a snowballing frame for accessing other respondents outside the platforms. Consultants such as some traditional priests are used because traditional healings across cultures is mostly associated to them.

Also native speakers of the two languages in the University of Education, Winneba and Ajumako were part of our consultants for data collection. Face to face and electronic media conversations were considered for data collection because expressions in relation to saliva can be found in conversations. An example is our face-to-face consultation with Kandool, T. Sulemaane (aged about 80) on 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2016 who remarked; *N yãõ a bɔvr nɔmɔ na, ti a nataar baar ma naa* literally, my grandson the conversation is sweet but my saliva is finished. This literary means the conversation is interesting but I am tired. Specifically, we ask about saliva issues in relation to



practices associated with rituals and non-ritual performances, their implications and interpretations. Collected data is coded and grouped under varied socio-cultural, thematic and linguistic elements and functions.

#### 4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Here we focus on the literary meaning of statements involving saliva usage among the Ewe and the Birifor. ‘E’ and ‘B’ stand for Ewe and Birifor respectively.

*Gloss: B-Birifor, E-Ewe, SG –singular pronoun, PL-plural pronoun, RED-reduplication, PROG-progressive SUBJ –Subject, PV- PART –post verbal particle, DET- Determiner, Adj- Adjective, PP-preposition, PP-post position, NEG-negative, POT-potential, P.C-Personal Communication,*

- 1.E: ta klẽ lĩ e  
 [ta klẽ lĩ -e]  
 saliva open glottis 3SG (obj)  
 ‘saliva choked him/her’
2. B: nataar tur wu naa  
 [nataar tur wu naa]  
 saliva choked 3SG (obj) PV-PART  
 ‘saliva has choked him/her’

These expressions can be used in varied contexts. At the law courts or police stations they can be used to sound as caution statement that ‘your own saliva will choke you’ –meaning, whatever you say will be used against you. Generally, (1, 2) is made when one is choked with saliva as a result of talking. It could also mean a shock to someone who least expects a revered person to be accused of a crime that is later proven to be true.

3. E: Efe nu fe ta  
 [E- øe nu fe ta]  
 3SG- POSS mouth open saliva  
 His/her mouth opens saliva  
 ‘S/he talks, complains or insults.’

‘Ne wò nu fe ta, matu nu kpli wò’ (if your mouth opens saliva I will deal with you).

Though, Datsa (2012) says ‘---Esi wòdzui la efe nu koe fe ta’ means s/he became silent when s/he was insulted, we disagree with it because the morpheme ‘ta’ in the sentence is not referring to saliva (noun), it is an adverb referring to how she became instantly silent out of the shame of the insult.

- 4.B: waa ma nataare  
 [waa chir ma nataar -ε ]  
 NEG. spit 1SG (obj) saliva DET.  
 S/he did not spit me saliva  
 ‘S/he did not utter a word to me.’
5. E: Nyɔnu la nye fo nu mami ta.  
 [ɲɔnu la nye øo nu m- a- mi ta]  
 Woman DET AUX beat mouth NEG- POT- swallow saliva  
 Woman the is beat mouth not able swallow saliva  
 The woman can talk without swallowing saliva.  
 ‘The woman is a talkative.’

Data (5) is metaphorical; referring to a talkative or a gossip. (This a metaphor).



- 6.E: ta vɔ le ve me ne  
 [ta vɔ le ve me ne ]  
 Saliva finish PP throat PP 3SG  
 Saliva finish at throat in him/her  
 Saliva is finished in his/her throat.  
 ‘S/he is tired.’
- 7.B: nataar ko naa a nɛɛ pɔ  
 [nataar ko naa a nɛɛ pɔ]  
 Saliva dry PV-PART DET. mouth PP  
 ‘Saliva is dried in the mouth.’
- 8.E: ta yi le dodom le enu  
 [ta yi le dodo -m le e- nu]  
 Saliva white AUX come-RED.-PROG PP 3SG mouth  
 S/he is foaming  
 S/he is gasping for breath or is fainting.

Data 6, 7, 8 could mean one is tired out of excessive talking. However, it also mean one is fainting. The same concept is attributed to (9) and (10). The nature of the saliva (sticky, foamy) shows fatigue or sickness.

- 9.E: ade gbɔ enu  
 [ade gbɔ e- nu]  
 saliva (sticky) pass 3SG mouth  
 was tired/suffocating/gasping
- 10.B: wɔ furo na nata puur  
 [wɔ furo na nata puur]  
 3SG foam-PROG PV.PART saliva Adj.  
 ‘S/he is foaming.’
- 11.E: ta yi le dodom le enu  
 [ta yi le dodom le e- nu]  
 saliva white CORP come-PROG pp 3SG mouth  
 saliva white is coming from his/her mouth  
 ‘S/he is foaming.’

Saliva can also be used to express beauty our ugly concepts. When something is pretty or ugly, people metaphorically say you could swallow or spit. Data (11, 12) present a good example.

12. B: ĩ vɔl mu ĩ churɛ?  
 [ĩ vɔl mu ĩ chur -ɛ?]  
 I swallow or I spit PART  
 Should I swallow or I should spit?  
 ‘Is s/he beautiful/handsome or ugly?’
13. E: Efe tugbedzedze naa, ŋutsuwo mia ta  
 [E- øe tugbedzedze na -a, ŋutsu -wo mi -a ta]  
 3SG- POSS beauty EMPH. Hab man -PL swallow -HAB saliva  
 Her beauty made men to swallow saliva  
 ‘She is very beautiful/pretty.’
14. B: Ba vɔlɔ bɪ ba chur ɛ?  
 [Ba vɔl -ɔ bɪ ba chur -ɛ?]



3PL (Subj.) swallow PROG CONJ 3PL spit -PROG  
 They swallowing or they spitting  
 ‘Should they be swallowing or spitting?’

*Swallowing* and *spitting* are used here symbolically to represent beauty or handsomeness and ugly respectively. Saliva usage for cursing is found in (15). It is identified that, sometimes the action never takes place but so far as it is said, it is believed to be accomplished in the psychological or any spiritual level. Such statements usually attract heavy fines and penalties before elders. It is not treated as an insult but as a spell according to the belief of the people.

15.B: Ĩ pʊʊr natapɪla y'ʒʒ fʊ nupɛl pɔ  
 [Ĩ pʊʊr nata pɪla y'ʒʒ fʊ nupɛl pɔ]  
 I spit saliva white put 2SG-poss palm PP.  
 (I will spit white saliva in your palm)  
 ‘I will curse you.’

Data (15) is usually on children who defy the order of their parent or elders. (Kandool, T. Sulemani, 9/4/16, p.c.). Expressions involving saliva also inform one on hunger or depict complains. – see data 16-22.

16. B: Ĩ sɔɔ ma bibieu natatuo  
 [Ĩ sɔɔ ma bibieu nata tuo]  
 I rinse 1SG-POSS morning saliva bitter  
 Let me rinse my morning saliva

(Let me take my breakfast). Literary, one wants to take his first food of the day.

17.E: Ta dzi ɖe nu me nɛ  
 [Ta dzi ɖe nu me nɛ]  
 Saliva swell pp mouth PP 3SG (Obj)  
 Saliva is swelling in his mouth.

Data (17) could be interpreted as feeling hungry, or sick.

18.B: Wʊ vɔɔ na nata gbulo  
 [Wʊ vɔɔ na nata gbulo]  
 S/he swallow PROG PV-PART saliva Adj.  
 ‘s/he is swallowing solid saliva’

Literary, the person is salivating for something. (Kyemuon Toorliitey, 21/4/16, p.c).

19.B: Wʊ vɔɔ na nata kɔɔ  
 [Wʊ vɔɔ na nata kɔɔ]  
 S/he Swallow -PROG. PV-PART saliva Adj.

‘s/he is swallowing dry saliva); could be interpreted to mean the person is tired or thirsty’  
 The ‘dryness’ of saliva really suggests little saliva in the mouth’

20. B: Nata bul bundiir  
 [Nata bul bundiir]  
 Saliva ADJ food

‘The food is insufficient / The food is not appetizing’. (Toorliitey & Turma, p.c., 21/4/16).

21. E: Etu ta ɖe nu me nɛ  
 [E- tu ta ɖe nu me nɛ]  
 s/he loose saliva pp mouth inside 3SG  
 ‘s/he spits in his/her mouth.’



Pregnancy is also assumed in the nature of saliva spittle. Saliva usage in expression (21) is metaphorical meaning; one is a true replica of somebody s/he is associated with.

22. E: Ede fu ta  
 [E- de fu ta]  
 3SG- remove/spit pregnancy saliva  
 S/he spit pregnancy woman  
 S/he spits like a pregnant woman. (This is also idiomatic)

23.B: a pɔɔ chɛ na natapiɛl  
 [a pɔɔ chɛ -ɛ na nata piɛl]  
 DET woman spit-PROG PV.PART saliva ADJ  
 ‘The woman is spitting white saliva.’

24.B: a pɔɔ piil chɛ natapiɛl  
 [a pɔɔ piil chɛ -ɛ nata piɛl]  
 DET woman start spit -PROG saliva ADJ  
 The woman is spitting saliva whites  
 ‘The woman is spitting white saliva.’

In some contexts, the statement could mean the woman is pregnant or suffering from fibroid The use of saliva to show displeasure is also captured in (25) (K. Dogbey, p.c, 18/4/2016; Akatsi).

25. E: Womeɖea ta de anyigba gatsɔ aɖe fɔne o  
 [wo- me- de -a ta de anyi ga- tsɔ -a aɖe fɔ ne o  
 3PL- NEG-remove-HAB saliva PP ground REP- take -HAB tongue pick-3SG not  
 You can’t spit saliva on the ground and pick it up with your tongue.  
 ‘You can’t spit saliva and pick it up with your tongue.’

26.B: N ba tara nataar ɔɔri kpone  
 [N ba tara nataar ɔɔri kpone]  
 1SG NEG have saliva chew(ing.) yam(type)  
 I have no saliva to be chewing kpono  
 (I am not interested in what you are saying).  
 ‘I have nothing to tell you.’

The use of saliva in expression of anger and considering revenge is expressed in (27-30)

27.E: ade ge de mi dzi  
 [ade ge de mi dzi]  
 Saliva fall pp faeces top  
 Saliva (sticky saliva) fall on faeces top  
 ‘Saliva fell on faeces.’

I give up on retaliating because of possible friendship / issue. (Had it not that I know your father etc, I would have dealt with you). This is idiomatic.

28.E: vu le dome ta le edzi  
 [βu le dome ta le edzi]  
 blood COP stomach saliva pp 3SG(sub) PP (top)  
 Blood is in our stomach but saliva is on it

I will revenge on your offences despite the pleasantries we share. I have never forgiven you, I will revenge. (the hidden agenda/motif/anger of evil in a person but is acting nice toward you) .

29.E: Ede ta dzɛ tsɔ fia/de anyi ne  
 [E- de ta dzɛ tsɔ fia -e/ de anyi ne



3SG-remove/spit saliva adj. take show 3SG/ PP ground 3SG (obj)

S/he spit red saliva and showed it to him/her.

S/he spit a red saliva on the ground for him/her

To exhibit hatred for someone publicly.

30.E: ta dzē le ame sia ame fe nume wòḁḁ gake mine

[ta dzē le ame sia ame fe nu me wò-a- ḁḁ gake mi -nɛ

Saliva adj. CORP everyone POSS mouth LOC 2SG-POT.remove CONJ. Swallow-3SG

Everyone has the red saliva in the mouth to spit but swallows it

Everyone can spit the red saliva but swallows it. (This is metonymy, that everyone is capable of doing anything but have some reservations)

31. E: Ta ḁeka mezōna o

Ta ḁeka me- zō -na o

saliva one NEG-walk-HAB not

one saliva doesn't walk

Saliva flows in stream form unity is important

32.E: wo me-ḁḁ -a naneke ademafo-e o'

3PL NEG- taste -POT/FUT nothing saliva NEG-POT/ FUT beat 1SG (obj) not

(They do not taste anything without leaving saliva on it). The tongue does not taste anything without saliva

33.E. Menye dōwuame ta adaye lōa ta le tsi ḅḁo o (ke boḅ ḁḁ gbedasi nyui tso duta tae.)

It was not because of hunger that the mud fish collects saliva from the surfaces of water ( but because of sharing good news from foreign lands.

35. E: Ta menōa nume na ame womia tsi toa exa o.

Saliva cannot be in your mouth and you will swallow water to pass by it.

This expression is a figurative language (proverb) and can be used to warn, give advice, entertain, etc. It can be established that proverbs, idioms and other figurative expressions involving saliva abounds in Ewe: *Fli be ta menōa nume na ame woḁea ade o*. Eye Euedodo ḁḁ hã gblō be, ta dzōna wu ade (Saliva goes straight than phlegm).

Further analysis on the data reveals that culturally, four types of saliva is described among the Ewes (*ta*- normal white, *zãta* – first saliva in the morning, *ade*- sticky, *futukpɔ*-foaming saliva) and four types among the Birifor (*natakũḁ*-watery, *natapila*-white, *natapuur*-foaming and *natauo*-bitter,) depending on their nature and importance. The study shows, saliva (**E**=ta, **B**=nataar) is ingested to show pleasure and egested to show displeasure. Further, the largest volume of saliva produced in humans is always swallowed. Though spitting is frowned upon across cultures, and heavy fines and punishments at times imposed on spatters in some cultures, it is never strictly a forbidden act; it is permissible under certain circumstances.

Among the Ewes and Birifor, saliva secretion or *Spitting is NOT permissible*: -on or at a person, any part of the body of a person, any kind of food item, on or into any kind of drink items, corpse, when someone is eating or drinking, on gods, at any good or pleasurable act or event, on or at animals, on or at tools or instruments used for working. But Spitting is permissible : among traditional priests, healers and elders on herbs and articles during the performance of certain rituals, for pregnant women, when one is sick, when something incidentally enters one's mouth,





when performing certain rituals, when dis-stooling or dis-skinning a chief, registering displeasure at something and when people are quarrelling.

Specified sociocultural contexts under which saliva functions amongst the Ewe and Birifor per the findings further reveal that saliva secretion, is common under given sociocultural conditions among the people. There is a strong belief of the people surrounding cultural and other customary practices and rituals involving saliva. Some of these major roles revealed by the study include:

- 4.1.1 Lubricant: to test if a hen is ready to lay an egg, saliva is spat on the index finger and inserted into the cloaca to see if eggs can be felt. Saliva is also used to lubricate the gonads during sexual intercourse. It is used to moisten the lips, wet and remove dry mucus from children's nostrils. It is a pre-breastfeeding lubricant as mothers usually licked their nipples before allowing their children to breast feed as it is believed that the palates and tongues of babies are too soft and nipples must be soft for their sucking as well as moisten and washed before babies are allowed to such (Dzatugbui 10/2/16 p.c).
- 4.1.2 To increase friction: When counting paper currency, we lick fingers. The sayings B :*fõõ wa tonɔ tomɔ fɔ mã tõõ pɔvr nataar faar a nũũ bii a tõtom bon kɔ tõõ nyɔɔ* - if you are working you spit saliva and rub your palm on the tool's handle to enable firm grasping. E: *Dɔwɔlae dea ta de asifome* – "It's only a worker that spits in his palm". Amea *medea ta o*- "The person doesn't spit saliva" meaning the person is lazy or cannot give birth.
- 4.1.3 To find missing and distant relations: Among some Ewe people, rituals are performed on couples and at marriage ceremonies to determine the fate and entire future of the couples. Such saliva acts are performed on the heads and in palms. It also reveal if couples are related in anyway by blood maternally or paternally.
- 4.1.4 To avenge for death among Ewe people, saliva rituals are performed on corpses to let them avenge for their deaths if they are assumed to have been killed by someone. This confirms what Nutsuskor (1993) says about saliva rituals.
- 4.1.5 To cure some ailments: Spiting or smearing saliva at mid night or early morning /dawn on boils, ringworm, skin diseases and on one's navel when one felt constipated heals one from such ailments. The sticky saliva (ade) is used among Ewes for such purposes. Saliva is pat on some items and during the process of performing some rituals to cure patients.
- 4.1.6 To stop bleeding and for fast healing of wounds: Saliva is spat on the wound to wash it clean. The finding revealed that a wound upon which saliva is spat heals faster than those which did not. A common belief is that saliva contained in the mouth has natural effects hence people "lick their wounds". (Araa: 15/12/15; Dzatugbui 10/2/16 p.c).
- 4.1.7 Cooling agent: When one touches a hot object, the finger is instantly put into the mouth. Also saliva is the quickest liquid spat on the spot to facilitate cooling.
- 4.1.8 To remove clotted blood from swollen body parts: Saliva is always applied on swollen body parts to aid sucking of blood, pathogens, etc. For instance among the Ewes, to cure one from the disease called *kùkù* (a disease like hernia which bulges around the abdomen), saliva is spat and applied on the spot before the part is marked cut with sharp objects and treated. Neequaye (1991) 'scarification', a form of healing, by applying saliva dry powders or other substances to the skin after tattooing is a practice across cultures. Children and infants can get tattoos for a variety of ailments and dried herbs, mixed with saliva is placed on these cuts



- 4.1.9 To wash a spot : Aid removal of foreign materials that pierce one's body and before injecting a person as well as putting medicine into the bodies of people as in *tidodo* (putting black powder or charm into a person's body after cutting it with a sharp object), saliva is first put on the spot to wash it. (Dogbey: 18/12/15; Dzatugbui 10/2/16 p.c).
- 4.1.10 To expel evil spirits: evil spirits are considered the source of diseases and bad luck hence saliva is used to drive them away. They spit in the face of children who are having convulsions. This is believed to ward off the disease. Also during the performance of certain rituals, they spit on people with the belief that their bodies will be made unpleasant homes for the diseases. Among the Birifo, *natapila* is spat on numbness to get one healed (Duuma, D. p.c). These findings among Ewe and Birifor agrees with certain saliva applications in literatures such as Jesus use saliva to cure blindness (John 9:6-7) and Prophet Muhammed, used to expel evil (Aref, 2015). During prayers, spitting is always done on herbs, items etc to pronounce their efficacy. Among Ewes when saliva is drooling from the mouth of children, a ritual is performed where the paternal aunt of the child uses a small currency denomination to touch the saliva of the child and pronounce some words of blessing and goodwill on it. This is called *adetsotso* 'cutting saliva' and is believed to cure the child from epilepsies and prevent the child from being a gossip.
- 4.1.11 To register displeasure: The use of saliva to show displeasure is much common under varied contexts among the Ewe and the Birifor. It was found that when people are quarrelling, they spit at each other, into palms and show it to the air/sun, spit on the ground among other. To disstool /remove a chief or a person from authority people spit on the person, his images etc. These spitting acts show their displeasure and abhorrence of the person and his or her acts. Further, when we smell or sight anything unpleasant (faeces, rotten things, etc, we spit).
- 4.1.12 To curse a person, parents or elders spit in the palm or head, foot print of a person in order to curse the person. Also it is identified as a curse when mad people or suffering from epilepsies or any kind of diseases spat on you or their saliva touches you. Rituals are performed to make one pure and free from those curses.
- 4.1.13 As a form of defense: The finding also shows that criminals and some sick people such as mad people and certain patients of contagious diseases spit indiscriminately to protest arrest as their saliva is not allowed to touch people and if so rituals must be performed.
- 4.1.14 To moisten food: To moisten food for easy swallowing or as a moisturizer, saliva is always used (see data 26). Foods among the Ewe and the Birifor that demand much saliva usually include *kpono*, *yakayake*, bread, etc. The Birifor saying, Nymɛ N pɔɔ nataar ɔɔri kpono? "Where do I get saliva to be chewing *kpono*" (type of yam) – (26).
- 4.1.15 As time marker and as a warning: When elders send children on errands we hear: E: *Bu le mo nam hafɛ mami ta* – 'vanish from my face before I swallow saliva', *Hafɛ matu ta la, kpɔ be yegbɔ tso dɔa gbee* 'by the time I spit, you are back from the errand'. B.: *Nataar rɛ N pɔɔr bin teenɛ, wa ka a ta sir re* - 'I spit on the ground, come before it dries up.'
- 4.1.16 Role in taste: The taste of food is detected through saliva. Saliva detects the taste of items in our buccal cavity apart from keeping oral hygiene. Persons with little saliva often complain of dysgeusia (disordered taste).
- 4.1.17 A sign of sickness, Fatigue: It is found that spitting, foaming or saliva drooling from the mouth is a sign of fatigue or sickness among Ewe and Birifor.



- 4.1.18 As a sign of pregnancy (white saliva): The sayings; the woman is spitting or not spitting, you spit pregnancy saliva, have you spit before, can you spit (inform on child bearing status of a woman). This finding of Ram, (2016). Also confirm this.
- 4.1.19 As an entertainment: Saliva is also traditionally connected to fire-licking, common sporting activity practiced among some Ewes and Birifor.
- 4.1.20 A peace making/marking device. In a personal conversation with Dogbey, he says, saliva is spat into a cup for two people who want to be very close friends and will never quarrel in life with each other to drink. He said at times they spit directly into each other mouth and get it swallowed. A ritual showing they are one and will never fight against each other. He also mentioned saliva usage in treating boils where herbs are chewed and placed on the boil or on swollen body parts.
- 4.1.21 To cure insect bite saliva is spat and smeared on the spot.
- 4.1.22 Patient's body is sucked vigorously and bathed with saliva to ward off evil and to remove worms and impurities from their bodies. When some dirt enters one's eyes, the eye is washed with saliva then with plenty water.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

The functions of saliva is beyond the concept of swallowing and moistening among the Ewes and the Birifor. Culturally, spitting is permissible and impermissible under given considerations. Spitting signify 'bad concept' as to swallowing 'for good concept'. Linguistically, the use of saliva among the Ewes and the Birifor in their everyday speech conveys different meanings depending on context. One is therefore not surprised to observe Ewes or Birifor using the same saliva to express pleasure or displeasure in a conversation. Saliva is common in metaphorical and ordinary speeches as well as used in ritual and everyday practices. There is a strong belief surrounding saliva usage and practices and there are serious taboos regarding some practices involving it. For instance, those related to birth, death, widowhood and others. The role of saliva also determines the faith of the people in their ancestors, gods, evil spirits and evil people as the sources of bad omens among others.

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