

## **The ethno-pragmatics of *etile* and *yi* ‘head’ metaphors in Nzema and Dangme**

### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on ethno-pragmatics and conceptualizations of head-related expressions in Nzema and Dangme, two Kwa languages of Ghana. We examine how *etile* and *yi* ‘the human head’ is conceptualized physically and metaphorically in Nzema and Dangme, highlighting the similarities and differences based on socio-cultural experiences and conceptualization patterns of the Nzema and Dangme people. The analysis is based on data obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data comprise examples that were hand-recorded from spontaneous natural speech contexts in both Nzema and Dangme communities, including other examples generated based on the researchers’ native speakers’ intuitions. Supplementary secondary data were extracted from Nzema and Dangme literary texts. The paper shows that both Nzema and Dangme have a rich variety of expressions related to the head; which serves as container for conceptualizations of intelligence and wickedness. Other phenomena such as fortune, prosperity, disgrace and death are construed in terms of cognitive representation of the head. The paper further reveals that virtues like hard-work, unity, trust and transparency are communicated through head-related expressions in Nzema and Dangme. Another interesting finding is that, unlike Dangme, Nzema speakers use ‘colour metaphors’; both white and black in relation to the internal part of the head to describe ‘positive thinking’ and ‘cruelty’ respectively. The paper integrates the theoretical tenets of the Ethno-pragmatics Model (Goddard, 2006) and Cultural Conceptual Metaphor (Sharifian, 2017) to underpin the analysis.

**Keywords:** Nzema, Dangme, communication, head metaphors, ethno-pragmatics