The structure of the Dagbani conditional clause

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Abstract

Studies on the nature of conditional clauses have gained the attention of linguists working on Germanic languages. However, the expression of conditional clauses remains unexplored in most African languages. In this paper, I provide an account of the structure of the conditional clauses of Dagbani, a Mabia language spoken in Northern Ghana. I demonstrate that Dagbani conditional clauses are expressed via the use of an independent syntactic element, *yi*. Regarding the syntax of the conditional clauses, I show that it occurs in the protasis and can either precede or follow the apodosis. I further differentiate between realis and irrealis conditional clauses, demonstrating that the two have distinct syntactic characteristics. The particle *di* together with *naan* is identified as the counterfactual markers in the language, which I analyse as discontinuous morpheme. The data used in this work are from three main sources including (i) textual data

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(drawn from existing Dagbani literary works), (ii) elicited data and (iii) data constructed based on my native speaker's introspection.

Key words: Dagbani, Mabia, conditional markers, subordination, syntax

Résumé

La structure de la proposition conditionnelle en dagbani

Les études sur la nature des propositions conditionnelles ont attiré l'attention des linguistes travaillant sur les langues germaniques. Cependant, l'expression des propositions conditionnelles reste inexplorée dans la plupart des langues africaines. Dans cet article, nous présentons la structure des propositions conditionnelles du dagbani, une langue mabia parlée au nord du Ghana. Nous démontrons que les propositions conditionnelles du dagbani sont exprimées par l'utilisation d'un élément syntaxique indépendant, yi. En ce qui concerne la syntaxe des propositions conditionnelles, nous montrons qu'elle se produit dans la protase et qu'elle peut soit précéder soit suivre l'apodose. Nous faisons la distinction en outre les propositions conditionnelles réelles et les propositions conditionnelles irréalisables, démontrant que les deux ont des caractéristiques syntaxiques distinctes. Les particules di et naan sont identifiées comme des marqueurs contrefactuels dans la langue que nous analysons comme des morphèmes discontinus. Les données utilisées dans cet article proviennent de trois sources principales, à savoir (i) des données textuelles (tirées d'œuvres littéraires existantes en dagbani), (ii) des données élicitées et (iii) des données construites

sur la base de l'introspection du chercheur, un locuteur natif.

Mots clés: Dagbani, Mabia, marqueurs conditionnels, subordination, syntaxe

Introduction

This paper explores the morphosyntactic and semantic characterization of conditional clauses in Dagbani, a Mabia language spoken in the northern part of Ghana. Although the study of conditional clauses in European languages has attracted the attention of linguists, (see for example: Lycan, 2001; Evans & Over, 2004; Girotto & Johnson-Laird, 2004; Dancygier & Sweetser, 2005; von Fintel, 2011 among others): this aspect of African languages has not received systematic linguistic investigation and Dagbani is no exception. By exploring a little researched aspect of Dagbani syntax, this work makes a significant contribution to the literature of conditionals in African languages. This work makes a significant contribution to a little explored aspect of Dagbani syntax. The paper addresses the following research objectives: (i) explore the morphosyntactic structures of Dagbani conditional sentences; (ii) explore the semantic categorization of realis and irrealis conditional clauses in Dagbani; (iii) investigate the syntactic characterization of Dagbani realis and irrealis conditional clauses. The analysis is empirically driven, similar to studies by Ameka and Dakubu (2008) and Atintono (2004).

The present study employs data from various sources including data constructed based on my native speaker introspection. I used two language consultants to cross-check the constructed data for grammaticality and contextual appropriateness. The consultants, one male and one female, were carefully chosen as they are people who have practical career background as Dagbani literacy instructors and were deemed as qualified to offer good judgment on these

constructed data on Dagbani conditional clauses. The data used were drawn from the Tomosili dialect of Dagbani, which is the native dialect of the author. For consistency of the dialect under study, I ensured that the literary works used as data sources were authored by speakers of the Tomosili dialect. To avoid biases in the analysis and to ensure data integrity, the data generated based on native introspection were supplemented with textual data from Dagbani works, including Abu-Bakari (2017) and Pazzak (2016). The author has also used elicited data.[1]

The paper next reviews literature on the notion of conditional clauses and their characteristics across various languages, providing essential background on how conditionals function typologically. The review also looks at literature on some selected genetically related Mabia languages, and one Kwa language (Tuwuli). The next section explores previous cursory work on Dagbani conditional clauses, focusing on the earlier work of Olwasky (1999). The section before the conclusion explicates the morphosyntactic and semantic characteristics of Dagbani conditional clauses.

Review of literature on the notion of conditional clauses

This section has two goals: (i) to explore the notion of conditional clauses and (ii) to provide a literature review on some selected languages in which conditional clauses have been examined. The language specific review covers conditional constructions in Mabia languages like Kusaal, Safaliba, Dagaare and Gurenɛ. These languages were specifically chosen with the

[1] I would like to thank the Editorial Team and the three anonymous reviewers of the *Contemporary Journal of African Studies* (CJAS) for their constructive comments that have been instrumental in shaping this paper and improving its arguments. However, all errors and lapses that may still remain are mine.

goal of comparing the findings and because of their genetic relationship and areal proximity with Dagbani.

According to Stalnaker (1968, p. 98), "a conditional sentence expresses a proposition which is a function of two other propositions, yet not one which is a truth function of those propositions." Ngoungouo (2024, p. 60) asserts that structurally, conditionals generally have 'the format if P, then Q.' Based on earlier works of scholars such as Salone (1979) and Caron (2006), it is further assumed that in the format proposed above, 'P and Q are referred to as the protasis and the apodosis, respectivel' (Ngoungouo, 2024, p. 60). Ngoungouo, observes that four types of conditionals have been identified in the study of the English language; these are argued to be introduced by the subordinate conjunctions *if/when*. He further opines that there is a variation in the forms with respect to the tense feature of the verbs of the clauses including: (i) the zero conditional which expresses facts that are generally true, (ii) the first conditional which expresses possible situation in the future, (iii) the second conditional that expresses hypothetical or unlikely situations, and (iv) the third conditional used for imaginary situations that did not happen (also see: Adams, 1975; Veltman, 1985; Jackson, 1987; Iatridou, 2000; Okoro, 2009; Ragueso, 2013). They are illustrated in (1) with data from English.

(1)a. If you stand in the rain, you get wet (zero conditional).
b. If I have money, I will buy a car (first conditional).
c. If I drove carelessly, I would have an accident (second conditional).
d. If you had studied, you would have passed the exam (third conditional). (Ngoungouo, 2024, p. 60)

One typological property of conditional clauses is that they are complex sentences (bi-clausal structure), and generally composed of an adverbial clause, referred to as the conditional clause, antecedent or protasis, and a main clause,

called consequent or apodosis (Payne, 1997; Dancygier, 1998; Bhatt & Pancheva, 2006; Debala & Meyer, 2006; Kaufmann, 2006; von Fintel, 2009). Thus, Trask (1993) suggests that a prototypical conditional sentence is made up of two clauses, the protasis (also known as the *if*–clause) and the apodosis (the main clause) as illustrated in (2) and (3) with examples from English.

(2)a. If the weather is fine, we shall go for a walk. (Trask, 1993, p. 55).

b. If she comes, we will/may consider it.

(3)a. If she ever came, we would/might consider it.

b. If she had come, we would have/might have considered it. (Givón, 1995, pp. 135–136)

Trask (1993) further proposes that all natural languages have unique linguistic structures that are dedicated to the expression of conditionalities. Regarding the semantic dependency of conditional clauses, he adds that, in a conditional sentence, a typically subordinate clause, known as the protasis states some condition, the truth of which is not asserted, under which another main clause, (the apodosis) holds.

Guérois (2017, p. 194) also makes a traditional division between reality and unreality conditionals, claiming the two differ with respect to the degree of 'hypotheticality' of the situation described in the sentence. 'Hypotheticality' is understood as "the degree of probability of realisation of the situations referred to in the conditional, and more especially in the protasis" (Comrie, 1986, p. 88). In the reality conditionals, the condition stated in the protasis can still be met, in which case the event described in the apodosis will eventuate. In contrast, unreality conditionals present a situation which could have happened if the event described in the protasis had been met. As it was not and does no longer hold at the time of utterance, the realization of the event described in the apodosis is impossible. I shall later show that this semantic distinction of

reality and unreality conditionals is available in Dagbani with different syntactic properties.

Nicolle (2017) also postulates that all natural languages have means of expressing cases where one proposition describes the conditions under which another proposition holds. For instance, unlike languages where a syntactic strategy is employed in the marking of conditional clauses, Bassene (2017, p. 104) posits that in Eegimaa, a language spoken in the Casamence region of Senegal, intonation is a much more reliable indicator of conditionality than any morphological markers, adding that the morphemes *me* and *éni* are nevertheless found in conditional sentences. However, these morphemes are also found in other clausal constructions where they fulfill different functions. Bhatt and Pancheva (2006, p. 641) consider conditionals to be adverbial clause structures that indicate the circumstances in which the main clause's proposition is true (or, in the case of relevance conditionals, the circumstances in which its truth is relevant). This includes conditionals created in the antecedent by employing a conditional connective such as if, as in English 'on condition that' or German *wenn/falls* or similar prepositional phrase in German with the assumption that one part of the sentence is true only if the other holds. Cross-linguistically, conditional connectives are not required, despite being a typical method for creating conditionals.

Zaefferer (1991, p. 216-218) outlines a typological inventory of conditional markers grouping them into four: morphological, lexical, phrasal, and structural. Zaefferer posits that one can speak of morphological mood markers if there is a special set of inflectional forms in the verbal paradigms that encode a conditional mood which mark those clauses as protases that have this form as their main verb form or forms, alone or together with other markers. A well-known example of a language with this kind of marking is Turkish. Other examples are West Greenlandic, Aranda (a Pama-Nyungan language),

Nkore-Kiga (a Bantu language). The example in (4) from West Greenlandic backs this claim.

(4) *pakasa-anna-rukku pissanganar-niru-vuq*
surprise just 2SG -3SG COND be-exciting more 3SG -INDIC
'If you just surprise him, it will be more exciting'
(Zaefferer, 1991, p. 216)

Zaefferer (1991, p. 217) suggests that lexical conditional markers are the words or lexicalized expressions, mostly particles that convert a simple clause into a protasis clause, and suggests that some lexical protasis markers are relative pro-forms, the protasis being a free relative clause. Zaefferer postulates that the German *wenn*-clauses, which abstract out of the protasis clause the sum of conditions that are sufficient for the truth of the antecedent, plugging them into another clause makes the proposition of the latter depend on precisely these conditions. This is exactly parallel to other free relatives, for instance local ones, which abstract out of a proposition its location and make it thus available as the location for another proposition. This can be seen in the data below (5).

(5) a. Wo man singt, da laß dich ruhig nieder.
Where one sings, there let yourself quietly down.
'Locations of singing are locations where you can settle quietly'
b. Wenn eine Zahl durch vier teilbar ist, dann ist sie gerade.
If a number by four divisible is, then is it even.
'Conditions of being divisable by four for a number are conditions of it being even.' (Zaefferer, 1991, p. 217)

Zaefferer (1991, p. 217) also adds that phrasal conditional markers are mostly modifications of some default complementizer. Spanish, to Zaefferer, is a language with a host of different types of constructions, where the default complementizer is *que* 'that' and where among others the

following phrasal protasis markers exist: *suponiendo que,* 'supposing that', *ya sea que,* literally 'be it already that', *siempre que,* literally 'always that', *con tal que,* literally 'with such that' as explicated in (6).

(6) *Te perdono con tal que vayas.*
To-you forgive-Is with such that go-SUBJUNCTIVE-2SG
'I forgive you if you go.' (Zaefferer, 1991, p. 217)

Zaefferer (1991) shows that phrasal conditional markers have the form of prepositional phrases and that the prepositional phrases can also be used for spatial, temporal, causal and concessive specification, adding that there are phrases that have the function of relativizing the validity of a claim by restricting it to some aspects of its subject.

To Zaefferer (1991, p. 218), structural conditional markers mark word order that can indicate that a given clause functions as a protasis, giving German as an example, where verb-first clauses are quite commonly used as protases. It is further suggested that no ambiguity can arise as to which clause is the subordinate one and which one is the main clause. The lack of ambiguity is attributable to the fact that German declaratives are verb-second, and therefore the first clause cannot be the main clause as shown in (7).

(7) *Ist der Ruf erst ruiniert, lebt sich's gänzlich ungeniert.*
Is the reputation but ruined, live-IMPERS entirely free-and-easy.
'Once the reputation is gone life is entirely free and easy.' (Zaefferer, 1991, p. 218)

I have so far provided some background to the notion of conditional clauses focusing on themes such as what they are, and the typological strategies available for their derivation in languages of the world. I have also reviewed some works on the coding of conditional clauses in Germanic languages. Below I

will review some literature on genetically related Mabia languages, focusing on Kusaal, Dagaare, Gurenɛ and Safaliba.

Musah (2018) provides a cursory account of the structure of Kusaal conditional clauses and proposes that the expression of the conditional mood is coded by employing the pre-verbal particle *ya'a* 'if/when'. Thus, *ya'a* appears to be a general conditional marker in Kusaal as proposed by the author.

Musah suggests that the presence of the particle points to an irrealis event. Furthermore, he opines that conditionality could refer to an event posterior to the moment of speaking in which case the form of the verb required is the uninflected verb stem. The expression of conditionality is exemplified in (8).

(8) a. *O ya'a ke-na (yɛlim o ye man ken kpɛla na)*
3SG COND comes-VEN
'If/when he comes (tell him that I came here)'
b. *Fʊ ya'a da' (m na paas-if lɛŋ)*
2SG COND buy
'If you buy (I will give you a bonus)'
c. *Ya ya'a bɔɔd (ya tun'e kul)*
2PL COND want
'If you want (you can go home)' (Musah, 2018, p. 182)

In the sentences presented in (8), the conditional marker occurs in the subordinate clause, whereas the second clause is the independent one. He concludes that the possibility of interpreting the sentence as a conditional is based on the presence of the conditionality marker, *ya'a.* Thus, just as is observed in Dagbani, Kusaal also employs an independent syntactic element in marking conditionality. Musah (2018, p. 183) also maintains that apart from the possibility of a conditional clause expressing future events, the reference time of the conditional clause could also be in the past. The structure of this category of conditional clause is different from those in which the events expressed are in the future in the sentence that conditional clause does not only require the pre-verbal conditional marker, but also an irrealis form of the verb

indicated by *a -Vn* suffix. This category of conditional clauses is illustrated in (9) and (10).[2]

(9) a. *Ba ya'a di-in (ba naan kulin na)*
3PL COND eat-IRR 3PL IRR come homeDM
'If they had won (they would have come home)'
b. *Biig la ya'a nɔk-in fʊʊg la ti naan nyɛ-ɛn)*
child DEF COND take-IRR shirt DEF we IRR see-IRR
'If the child had taken the shirt, we would have seen her/him'

(10) a. *Yi-daan la ya'a mi'-in…*
house-owner DEF COND know-IRR
'If the landlord had known…'
b. *Ba ya'a tis-in*
3PL COND give-IRR (Musah, 2018, p. 183),
'If they had given…'

It is worth mentioning that there is a distinction between realis and irrealis conditional clauses, and that this semantic distinction has corresponding difference in their syntactic manifestations. I propose that the realis conditionals require the regular conditional marker *ya'a* in the dependent clause, whereas the irrealis requires *-in* on the verb in the dependent clause and *naan* in the independent clause as shown in the ungrammatical sentences in (12).[3] Musah (2018, p. 183) further opines that the temporal pre-verbals *sa, da, pa'a* 'PST.HEST, PST.DIST, PST.HOD' could also follow the conditional modal to further locate the reference in the past time as regards whether the event relates to *earlier today*, *yesterday* or *two or more days away*. He backed this claim with the data in (11).

[2] This account of the author is reviewed in subsequent sections showing that the irrealis conditional clauses require more than just the *-in* being inflected on the verb.

[3] Thanks to Samuel Asitanga, a lecturer in the department of Gur-Gonja Education, for our in-depth discussions on the structure of the irrealis conditional clauses of Kusaal.

(11) a. *O ya'a pa'a mɔr-in ligidi, o naan da'an fuug la*[4]
3SG COND PST.HOD have-IRR money 3SG IRR buy shirt DEF
'If he had had (earlier today) money he would have bought the shirt'

b. *Fʊ ya'a sa kuos-in naaf la, ti naan mɔr-in ligidi.*
2SG COND PST.HEST sell-IRR cow DEF 1PL IRR have-IRR money
'If you had sold (yesterday) the cow, (we would have had some money)'. (Musah, 2018, p. 183)

(12) a. ∗*O ya'a pa'a mɔr ligidi o naan da'an fuug la*
3SG COND PST.HOD have money 3SG IRR buy shirt DEF
Intended: 'If he had had (earlier today) money, he would have bought the shirt)'

b. ∗*Fʊ ya'a sa kuos-in naaf la, ti naan mɔr ligidi*
2SG COND PST.HEST sell-IRR cow DEF 1PL IRR have-IRR money
'If you had sold (yesterday) the cow, we would have had some money'.

On the basis of the language internal evidence available, I propose that Kusaal has *ya'a* as a conditional marker and that the language makes a distinction between realis and irrealis conditional clauses. The latter is marked by employing the basic conditional marker *ya'a,* in the dependent clause together with the inflection of the verbs in the dependent and independent clauses with *-in* and then the requirement of the irrealis marker *naan,* occurring in the independent clause.

[4] This *-in* inflected on the verb is sensitive to the vowel qualities of the vowel of the verb and can be realised as -an as well. Once again, I am grateful to Samuel Asitanga for this discussion.

Dakubu (2005, p. 23) also presents an interesting case where *kà* introduces the sentence, relating it to the discourse that it precedes, and another *(kà₂)* joins two clauses co-ordinately, although semantically the first clause might be considered conditional, and therefore in some sense a modifier of the second. The basic conditional marker of Dagaare is identified to be *ka*, which introduces the subordinate/dependent clause as illustrated in (13).[5]

(13) a. *Ka a bii-ri gaa, ba na yeli ko te la*
COND DEF child-PL go 3PL FUT tell give us AFF
'If the children go, they will tell us'

b. *Ka teŋ ba boɔrɔ a yiri, ba da koŋ mɛ ʊ*
COND 1PL NEG want DEF house 3PL TRM FUT.NEG build 3SG
'If we do not want the house, they will not build it.'

Apart from this basic form, the language also makes a distinction between realis and irrealis conditional clauses. The data that follow in (14) exemplify the irrealis conditional clauses in Dagaare.

(14) a. *Ka a bi-dɔ-ba ŋ da di a diibu, ba da na Kpi la.*
COND DEF child-MAS-PL IRR TRM eat DEF food 3PL TRM IRR die AFF
'If the boys had eaten the food, they would have died.'

b. **Ka a bi-dɔ-ba ŋ da di a diibu, ba da kpi la.*
COND DEF child-MAS-PL IRR TRM eat DEF food 3PL TRM die AFF
Intended: 'If the boys had eaten the food, they

[5] I acknowledge with gratitude the support of Moses Luri Dramani and Titus Nuobepuor in the gathering of the Dagaare data.

would have died.'

c. *Ka a dɔɔ ŋ da da a lɔɔre, ba da na nyɔge ʊ la.*
COND DEF man IRR TRM buy DEF lorry 3PL TRM IRR arrest 3SG AFF
'If the man had bought the lorry, they would have arrested him.'

d. **Ka a dɔɔ ŋ da da a lɔɔre, ba da nyɔge ʊ la.*
COND DEF man IRR TRM buy DEF lorry 3PL TRM arrest 3SG AFF
Intended: 'If the man had bought the lorry, they would have arrested him.'

In the realisation of the irrealis conditional clause in Dagaare, there is a requirement for the presence of two syntactic elements: the *ŋ* morpheme, which occurs in the dependent clause and the *na* particle, which also occurs in the independent clause. This explains the illicitness of (14b) and (14d) in which the *na* is missing in the independent sentences. Furthermore, sentences (15a) and (15b) are ungrammatical, and this is attributable to the absence of the irrealis marker in the dependent clauses.

(15) a. **Ka a bi-dɔ-ba da di a diibu, ba da na kpi la*
COND DEF child-MAS-PL TRM eat DEF food 3PL TRM IRR die AFF
'If the boys had eaten the food, they would have died.'

b. **Ka a dɔɔ da da a lɔɔre, ba da na nyɔge ʊ la*
COND DEF man TRM buy DEF lorry 3PL TRM IRR arrest 3SG AFF
'If the man had bought the lorry, they would have arrested him.'

The illicitness of (14c, 14d) and (15b), serves as evidence to my proposal that there are two particles that are

required in Dagaare for the marking of the irrealis conditional clause.

Schaefer (2009, p. 139) also provides a cursory discussion of Safaliba conditional clauses and posits that adverbial conditional clauses can be unambiguously marked by the use of the particle *kà* 'if': that *haŋ* 'previously' or 'had done X'. However, he points out that the categorization of the clause as 'conditional' is due to the presence of *kà,* and *haŋ,* adding that, it is an indicator of some less-specific kind of temporal or contingent relation with the main clause. This has been exemplified in (16).

(16) ...*kà υ haŋ isigi zi-aa, ya na va' naaŋ taa a le'.*
if 3SG had get.up place-this 2PL FUT hit PRED-FOC other and fall
'...if he (the buffalo) should emerge right here, you will run into one another and fall down (trying to escape).'
(Schaefer, 2009, p. 139)

Schaefer (2009, p. 142-143) also adds that there are other constructions which at a first glance appear to convey a conditional relationship between clauses. The particle *haŋ* occurs in a high proportion of these clauses apparently with a basic temporal meaning which can be rendered as "previously." Schaefer, however, notes that in many complex sentences where *haŋ* appears in an initial clause, the overall effect is often that the clause with *haŋ* appears to be subordinate to the main clause.

In Gurenɛ, another genetically related Mabia language, Atintono (2004, p. 98) proposes that conditional clauses are marked via the use of an independent syntactic element *san*, which occurs in the dependent clause as illustrated in (17). In

addition, the language distinguishes between realis and irrealis conditional clauses as shown in examples (18).[6]

(17) a. *Kɔma la san kiŋɛ, ba wan yele tu.*
children DEF COND go 3PL FUT tell 2PL
'If the children go, they will tell us.'

b. *Kɔma la san di dia la, ba wan yele tu.*
children DEF COND eat food DEF 3PL will tell 2PL
'If the children eat the food, they will tell us.'

c. *Tu san ka kaara taaba, tu nɔŋer ɛ la wan ki*
2PL COND NEG visit each other 2PL relationship DEF will die
'If we do not visit each other, our relationship will die out'

Thus, Gurenɛ, just like Dagbani, employs the use of an overt syntactic particle in the marking of conditional clauses. It is also the case that the semantic distinction of realis and irrealis conditionals is also available in Gurenɛ and the latter is marked via the use of the counterfactual particle *ta'am,* which occurs in the independent clause.

(18) a. *Ba san dikɛ ni e feebe Adongo, ba ta'am ku ni e.*
3PL COND take FOC 3SG spank Adongo
2PL IRR kill FOC 3SG
'If they had used it to spank Adongo, they would have killed him.'

[6] I am grateful to Samuel Apaare Adongo, a PhD student of the Department of Gur-Gonja Education for providing me with the Guren ɛ data used in this paper.

b. *Bia la san di ni dia la,*
ba ta'am yele ni tu.
child DEF COND eat FOC food DEF 3PL IRR tell FOC us.
'If the children had eaten the food, they would have told us.'

c. *Budazɔlegɔ la san ka zoi ni,*
ba ta'am ŋmɛ e ku
madman DEF COND NEG run FOC 3PL IRR beat 3SG kill
'If mentally ill man had not run away, they would have beaten him to death'

As I will show for Dagbani later, it is also evident that Gurenɛ conditional clauses exhibit distinct syntactic properties for the realis and irrealis conditional clauses. Thus, there is an additional requirement for the addition of the irrealis conditional marker *ta'am* in the independent clause, which must occur with the regular conditional marker *san*. The illicitness of the sentences (19a) and (19b) is borne out by the absence of the irrealis marker *ta'am* in those sentences.

(19) a. **Bia la san di ni dia la,*
ba yele ni tu.
child DEF COND eat FOC food DEF 3PL tell FOC us.
'If the children had eaten the food, they would have told us.'

b. **Budazɔlegɔ la san ka zoi ni,*
ba ŋmɛ e ku
madman DEF COND NEG run FOC 3PL beat 3SG kill
'If the madman had not run away, they would have beaten him to death'

From the discussion above on Guren ɛ , it is evident that the language marks conditional clauses using the conditional

particle *san* and that Guren ɛ further distinguishes between realis and irrealis conditional clauses with corresponding morphosyntatic differences.

In Tuwuli, a Kwa language spoken in South-Eastern Ghana, Harley (2017, p. 122-123) postulates that conditional clauses can be formally identified by the clause-initial conditional morpheme *ntɛ* and that the protasis (condition) usually comes before the apodosis (consequent). Harley adds that conditionals in Tuwuli can be split into two main types on formal grounds: unmarked and marked. Unmarked conditionals contain no extra morphology than would be expected from the basic clause structure constraints, whereas marked conditionals involve additional coding, either in the form of special independent morphemes or a predicate focus construction. Harley also postulates that a common type of unmarked conditionals is when the protasis contains a perfective (unmarked) verb together with its arguments and adds that whether the condition is expected to be fulfilled or is just a possibility, it is not marked. To Harley, another simple type of unmarked conditional involves the presence of a past temporal adverb such as *kadzɔ-* 'yesterday' in the protasis. This triggers a past interpretation in which the fulfilment of the condition is not known. The other type of unmarked conditional is one in which the semantics of the verb in the protasis requires specific tense-aspect marking. This is the case for imperfective, present progressive and (expected) future conditions as illustrated in (20a), (20b) and (20c) respectively for the generic/habitual, future/predictive and past and (21a) and (21b) for the imperfective and present progressive respectively.

(20) a. [*ntɛ ɔ-mɔ lɔfɔã ni,]P [d-e kanɛ liti*
COND 2SG-see tortoise LINK AGR-it
back behind deĩ tigigli] Q have sections
'If/Whenever you see tortoise, its back is all patched.'

b. [*ntɛ ɔ-na fɔsɔ,]P [ɔ-l-aa-buki o-puli ɔ-kɛna nɔ.*
COND 2SG -get sickness 2SG-NEG-FUT-add 2SG -be:able 2SG -do *tudzuma]Q* your works
'If you become sick, you will not be able to do your work any longer.'

c. [*ntɛ ɛ-ya kadzɔ,]P [y-aa-nyi awã̀*] Q
COND 3SG -come yesterday 3SG- FUT-get:to:know there
'If he came yesterday, he will have got to know the place.'

(21) a. [*ntɛ a-nya lisĩ,]P [lɔkɔa ɔ̀-kai ogu kĩĩ]*Q
COND 2SG.IPFV-eat yam then 2SG. SBJV-remember story DEM
'Whenever you are eating yam, then you should remember this story.'

b. [*ntɛ oni la-mɔ ka-ko finyaĩ]P [yĩ tɛtadiɛ a-vɔ˜]*Q
COND rain be-with NMLZ-pour now my clothes IPFV-get:wet
'If it's raining now, my clothes are getting wet.'
(Harley, 2017, p. 124-126)

Harley (2017, p. 127) states that marked conditionals in the language may contain some kind of additional coding either in the form of some special morphemes such as the irrealis morpheme *kufɛ* or the contrast marker *malo*. These marked conditionals frequently indicate conditions on the counterfactual/hypothetical end of the spectrum. The irrealis morpheme *kufɛ* typically occurs in the clause-initial position, that is, in the apodosis, although it also has the syntactic flexibility of occurring in the clause-final positions, that is in the protasis. This difference in the syntactic occurrence is, however, dependent on which clause is being modified. The basic function of *kufɛ* is to indicate that there is something misleading, unrealized, or unfulfilled about the information given. Harley also adds that, the basic function of the contrast marker

malo is to highlight a 'constituent as presenting some original, surprising or otherwise particularly significant information in contrast to various alternatives.' Furthermore, *malo* has a broader function than simply indicating concession; it also indicates that the condition is particularly significant in that if it is fulfilled, the consequences are highly advantageous. This is illustrated in (22) and (23) for *kufɛ* and *malo* respectively.

(22) a. [*ntɛ ɔ-nya fu-kĩĩ,*]P [*kufɛ o-ku*]Q
COND 2SG-eat REF-DEM IRR 2SG-die
'If you had eaten this, you would have died.'

b. [*ntɛ aa-ya,*]P [*kufɛ fɔ-nɛnɛ*]Q
COND 2SG.FUT-come IRR 3SG.REF-be:good
'If only you were to come, it would have been good.'

(23) a. [*ntɛ ɔ-nyɛ ogbeni malo ni,*]P [*dã kĩ o-deĩ funitsã kɔba*
COND 2SG -be hunter CONT LINK look COMP
2SG -have food farm *o-bũ*]Q 2SG-add
'Even if you are a hunter, see that you also have a farm for food.'

b. [*ntɛ aa-puli malo ni,*]P
COND 2SG.FUT-be:able CONT LINK
[*fɔ˜ bi-do paipu bɛ-kpa nɔ nɛ tɔtɔ kamɛ*]Q allow 3PL-put pipe 3PL -give
2SG.OBJ LOC houses inside
'And if you possibly can, let them lay a pipe into your houses.' (Harley, 2017, p. 127-129)

In this section, I have provided a review on conditional clauses in genetically related languages. The review focused on understating the notion of conditional clauses, and a review on language-specific characterizations of conditional clauses. The languages viewed included European languages (English, German), some selected Mabia langauges (Kusaal, Safaliba, Dagaare and Gurenɛ) and a Kwa language (Tuwuli).

Previous studies on Dagbani conditionals

This section reviews literature on earlier studies of the nature of conditional clauses in Dagbani in order to identify the gaps. To the best of my knowledge, in Dagbani linguistics there is no literature dedicated to the nature and characteristics of Dagbani conditionals as it is one area that has not undergone systematic investigation. However, Olawsky (1999) is an exception; he devotes a section of his discussion on Dagbani grammar to a cursory overview of the structure of conditional clauses in Dagbani. A review of this work is crucial to setting the background for the current study.

Olawsky (1999, p. 56) proposes that there is a distinction between two types of conditionals in Dagbani: realis and irrealis. He opines that whereas the conditional realis is derived via the use of the conditional marker *yi*, which precedes the verb, but follows the subject (24), the irrealis 'would' is derived using the independent syntactic particle, *naan* (25).[7]

(24) a. *A yi saɣi*
2SG COND agree
'If you agree.'

b. *A yi tum tuma pam, a ni nya pini.*
2SG COND do.work work much 2SG FUT see reward
'If you work hard, you will get reward.'

c. *A yi bɔri ni a bɔhim silimiinsili, di*
2SG COND want SUB 2SG learn English 3SG.INAN.SUBJ

[7] All data taken from Olawsky (1999) are modified in two ways: first, some interlinear glosses have been changed for consistency with abbreviations used in this paper. These include using PST instead of TRM for the past tense marker *daa*, COND, rather than IF for the conditional marker and 2SG instead of you for the second personal singular pronoun, IRR for the counterfactual marker *naan*.

tuya ka so kahigi wuhi a di ni niŋ-di
be.necessary that someone explain teach
2SG 3SG.INAN.SUBJ PRT make-IPFV
shɛ m. how
'If you want to learn English, someone must explain to you how it works.'

(25) a. **A yi daa chaŋ Aŋkara, a daa naan nya o.*[8]
2SG COND TRM go Accra 2SG TRM IRR see him
'if you had gone to Accra, you would have seen him.'

b. **A yi daa ku gbuɣinli maa a daa naan ŋubi o nimdi.*
2SG COND TRM kill lion DEF 2SG TRM IRR chew his meat
'If you had killed the lion, you would have eaten its meat.'

According to Olawsky (1999), the main syntactic difference between the realis and the irrealis conditional clause is that, in the former, *naan* occurs between the tense markers and a verb of the main clause, whereas the latter, *yi* precedes the tense markers and the verb in the subordinate clause.

Although Olawsky (1999) analyses the sentences in (25) as grammatical in Dagbani, they are nonetheless ungrammatical. Their ungrammaticality is borne out of the fact that *naan* alone cannot code irrealis (counterfactuals) in Dagbani; it has to be combined with *di*, which occurs in the protasis, whereas *naan* occurs in the apodosis. Thus, the sentences in (25) are ungrammatical and their grammatical counterparts are

[8] Olawsky did not include the asterisks on sentences (25a, 25b) in his work.

presented in (26), with the grammatical version of (25a), being provided in (26a) and that of (25b) is provided in (26b).

(26) a. *A yi di daa chaŋ Aŋkara, a daa naan nya o.*
2SG COND IRR TRM go Accra 2SG TRM would see him
'If you had gone to Accra, you would have seen him.'

b. *A yi di daa ku gbuɣinli maa a daa naan ŋubi o nimdi.*
2SG COND IRR TRM kill lion DEF 2SG TRM IRR chew his meat
'If you had killed the lion, you would have eaten its meat.'

In summary, therefore, it is factually not a promising analysis to assign the particle *naan* alone a counterfactual role in Dagbani conditionals since it is unable to license an irrealis interpretation of a conditional clause as proposed in Olawsky (1999). In addition, Olawsky further suggests that in Dagbani, there is an interaction between the expression of conditionality and the future tense. Olawsky opines that 'a hypothetical situation, which has not happened yet, is expressed by the future tense in both clauses' (p. 57). He illustrates this claim with the sentence in (27a), which is also unacceptable in Dagbani and the grammatical version of it is provided in (27b).

(26) a. **A ni ti ma wɔhu n ni ti a laakum*
2SG FUT give 1SG.OBJ horse 1SG FUT give 2SG camel
Intended 'If you give me a horse, I would give you a camel.'

b. *A yi ti ma wɔhu n ni ti a laakum*
2SG COND give 1SG.OBJ horse 1SG

FUT give 2SG camel
'If you give me a horse, I would give you a camel.'

The claim that the future marker is required in both the antecedent (*if*–clause) and consequent (independent clause) to express a hypothetical condition that has not taken place yet is also a problematic account of conditionality in Dagbani. This is because *yi* and not *ni* is required in the if–clause in Dagbani. Thus, the sentence in (25a) could not be adjudged as grammatically correct in Dagbani.

In this section, I have introduced Olawsky's 1999 study on Dagbani conditional clauses and pointed out some problems in this earlier study. In the next section, I investigate the syntactic and semantic properties of Dagbani conditional clauses, and attempt to fill these analytical gaps identified through the review of Olawsky.

The properties of Dagbani conditional clauses

The goal of this section is to investigate the nature of Dagbani conditional clauses with a focus on their morphosyntactic and semantic properties.

The morphosyntactic properties of Dagbani conditionals

This subsection explores the morphosyntactic properties of Dagbani conditionals. In discussing the morphosyntactic characterization of Dagbani conditional clauses, I distinguish between canonical and noncanonical structures of conditionals as indicated in the literature of conditional clauses. On the basis of the claims in the literature, the former category of conditionals is invariably characterized by the presence of an overt conditional complementizer such as in the case of the English *if,* German *wenn* 'if' or Mandarin *ruguo* 'if', whereas the latter may take different syntactic forms of, for example, conjunction/disjunction (cf. Culicover & Jackendoff, 1997; Klinedinst & Rothschild, 2012; van Rooj & Franke, 2012; Weisser, 2015) in English as in (28a) or I–to–C–movement (Iatridou &

Embick, 1994). It is worth noting that the availability of these strategies in the derivation of conditional clauses is a language-specific issue. For instance, whereas the use of strategies like the ones in (28a) to express conditionals are somewhat uncommon in English, they are very pervasive in Mandarin Chinese through the use of particles such as *jiu* 'then' (cf. Lin, 2007) or *ye* 'also' in Mandarin Chinese as in (28b).

(28) a. You come closer and/or I will kiss you.
b. Xiaozhang zou, wo jiu/ye zou.
Xiaozhang go I then/also go
'If Xiaozhang leaves, I will (also) leave.'

The derivation of conditional clauses in Dagbani employs an overt conditional marker just like what pertains in languages like English and German. This overt marker is identified as *yi*, which occurs in the subordinate clause. In the sentences in (29) below, I present an elicitation context of a discourse between two siblings on the ill-health of their aunt and another sibling, Fauzia who is expected to be visiting the sick aunt after she has been duly informed of her health situation. In sentences (29b, 29c) and (29e), there are conditional clauses, which are marked by the overt marker, *yi*.

(29) a. Brother: *Hajia, Fauzia wum m mapira barigu maa*?
Hajia, Fauzia hear 1SG aunt sickness DEF
'Hajia, has Fauzia heard of my auntie's sickness/ill-health?'
b. Sister: *Iin, o yi di sa daŋ teesa maa chan-di*
Yes. 3SG COND IRR TRM get early station DEF go- NMLZ
gba n ŋɔ o di pun paai na.
even by this 3SG TRM already arrive

DM

'Yes, if she had gone to the station early yesterday, she would have arrived by now.'

c. Sister: *O tuma-nima maa yi di sa daŋ o bahi-bu,*
3SG work-people DEF COND IRR TRM she 3SG release-NMLZ
o sa naan paai tuuli loori din yi-ri bɛ ya
3SG TRM IRR meet first lorry that leave-IPFV 3PL towm *kanna Tamale maa.* come Tamale DEF

'If his employers had released her early yesterday, she would have met the first lorry that moves from their town for Tamale.'

d. Sister: *Asiba la*[9] *zaa m ma bi tooi vali o tima maa.*
Morning DEF all 1SG mother NEG be able swallow 3SG medicine DEF

'Since morning, my mother has not been able to take her medication.'

e. Brother: *Ti yi kpaŋsi ti daaduwa, Naawuni ni ti o alaafee.*
2PL COND intensify 2PL prayer God FUT give 3SG.POSS health

'If we intensify our prayer, God will give her good health (heal her).'

In the above elicitation, the conditional clause in (29b) (29c), and (29e), all contain the overt conditional marker, *yi*. In

[9]The definite markers **la** and **maa** have different functions/uses. Whereas the former is used to code 'unmentioned' definiteness, the latter is used in the marking of 'mentioned' definiteness. For details in this difference in the use of these two definite markers, readers are referred Wilson (1972) and Issah (2013) and references cited therein.

(29c), we have a counterfactual/irrealis conditional clause and the subordinate clause *o tuma-nima maa yi di sa daŋ o bahi-bu,* depends on *o sa naan paai tuuli loori din yi-ri bɛ ya kanna Tamale maa*. In each of the conditional clauses, the conditional morpheme is found in the protasis. In the next section, I will comment on the difference in the syntactic characterization of (29c) on one other and (29a) and (29b) on the other and the implication of the difference on the semantic interpretation of the two as different semantic classification of conditional clauses. In (30), I further illustrate the distribution of this independent syntactic marker of conditionality in Dagbani with data drawn from Pazzak (2016, p. 16).

(30) a. *Bɛ yi bo-ra, ti ni da li*
3PL COND want-IPFV 2PL FUT buy
3SG.INAN.OBJ
'If they want, we will buy it.'

b. *A yi di m bukaata maa, a yuli ni du pam.*
2SG COND eat my medicine DEF 2SG name FUT climb a lot
'If you take my medicine, you will become very popular.'

c. *Laɣiŋgu yi ka kpam-ba, di ku tooi niŋ nyɛvuli*
group COND have.NOT leader-PL
3SG.INAN.SUBJ NEG can do life
'If a group does not have leaders, it cannot survive.'

d. *Tɔha yi wum o damli, di bi viɛla*
hunter COND hear 3SG.POSS matter
3SG.INAN.SUBJ NEG be.good
'If a hunter hears about him/her, the consequences will not be good.'

In the data presented in (30a) through (30d) above, each of the sentences is made up of two clauses: dependent and

independent clauses. The clause that contains the conditional morpheme/marker *yi* glossed as 'if' is invariably the dependent and for that matter constitutes the protasis, whereas the remaining part of the sentence constitutes the apodosis (that is the independent clause of the conditional sentence that describes the consequence of the condition happening). Thus, in a sentence as in (30a), *bɛ yi bora* 'if they want' is the dependent clause, whereas *ti ni da li* 'we will buy it' is the independent clause. I, therefore, conclude that, the basic particle employed for the marking of conditionality in Dagbani is the *yi* particle.

One key syntactic characterization of the Dagbani conditional clause involving the overt conditional marker *yi* is that there is no strict syntactic patterning between the protasis and the apodosis. Thus, in the sentences presented in (30) above, it is seen that the conditional clauses (if–clause/protasis) precede the independent clause (apodosis). Based on the grammaticality of sentences (31) and (32), the generalization is that, regarding the syntax of the Dagbani conditional clauses, the protasis and apodosis do not have strict syntactic patterning. As established in the English language, where the position of the main clause with respect to the conditional (dependent) clause is flexible, in Dagbani there is a similar pattern in the derivation of conditional clauses. Thus, the main clause can either precede, or follow the conditional clause.

(31) a. *Ti ni da li, bɛ yi bo–ra.*
2PL FUT buy 3SG.INAN.OBJ 3PL COND want–IPFV
'We will buy it, if they want.'

b. *A yuli ni du pam, a yi di m bukaata maa.*
2SG name FUT climb a lot 2SG COND eat 1SG medicine DEF
'You will become very popular If you take my medicine.'

(32) a. *A yi di m bukaata maa,*
a yuli ni du
2SG COND eat 1SG.POSS medicine
DEF 2SG name FUT climb
pam. a lot
'You will become very popular If you take my medicine.'

b. *Di ku vicla tɔha yi wum o damli.*
3SG.INAN.SUBJ NEG be.good hunter COND
hear 3SG.POSS matter
'It will not be good if a hunter hears about him/her.'

Even though there is a difference in the ordering of the dependent and independent clauses (regarding the syntactic relationship between the dependent and independent clauses), as shown in (31) on one hand and (32) on the other, the semantics remains the same since the realization of the factuality of the main clause is dependent on the realization of the antecedent of the conditional; and for that matter it is a conditional of the form 'if q, then z.'

In summary, I have so far demonstrated that in Dagbani, the marking of conditional clauses requires the overt conditionality marker, and that conditionality is systematically marked in the protasis, using an overt *yi* morpheme. In the subsection that follows, I will survey the semantic characterization of Dagbani conditional clauses.

The semantics of Dagbani conditional clauses

Dagbani conditional clauses built on the semantic characterization of Thompson et al. (2007), who make a basic distinction between reality and unreality conditionals. They propose that whereas "reality conditionals are those which refer to real present, habitual/generic, or past situation", distinguished in English by the tense and aspect marking in the protasis, "unreality conditionals refer to the conditionals which refer to unreal situations". It is worth noting that these definitions, along with evidence from other languages (e.g., English, Tuwuli, etc.), demonstrate that tense and aspect combinations between the apodosis and the protasis lie at the core of distinguishing between reality and unreality conditionals, or real situations and unreal situations (and between realis and irrealis). However, it will later be shown that in the case of Dagbani, the distinction is based on some syntactic elements which trigger this different semantic interpretation. Thompson et al. (2007, p. 17) posit that there are two types of unreal situations – those in which we imagine what might be or what might have been, and those in which we predict what will be. They characterize these as unreality imaginative and predictive, respectively. They illustrate the two semantic categories of reality and unreality conditional clauses with the data in (33) and (34) respectively.

(33) a. If it's raining out there, my car is getting wet. (present)
b. If you step on the brake, the car slows down. (Present Habitual/generic)
c. If you were at the party, then you know about Sue and Fred (Past)

(34) a. If I saw David, I'd speak Barai with him (what might be hypothetical) (imaginative)

b. If you had been at the concert, you would have seen Ravi Shankar (what might have been(counterfactual) (Thompson et al., 2007, p. 17).

c. If she had come, we would have/might have considered it. (Givón, 1995, p. 135-136)

The Dagbani data in (35) and (36) illustrate cases of reality and unreality conditional clauses respectively.

(35) a. *Ti yi bi kaari taba, ti biɛhigu maa ni*
2PL COND NEG visit each other 2PL relationship DEF FUT
kpi. die
'If we do not visit each other, our relationship will die out.' (Abu-Bakari, 2017, p. 62)

b. *Bi-hi maa yi chaŋ, bɛ ni yɛli ti.*
child-PL DEF COND go 3PL FUT tell 2PL.OBJ
'If the children go, they will tell us.'

(36) a. *A yi di mi di ni be ma shɛm, a*
2SG COND IRR know 3SG will is 2SG.OBJ how 2SG
naan che ma a banima zuɣu
(Abu-Bakari, 2017, p.100)
IRR let 1SG.OBJ 1SG.POSS fathers head
'If you had known how I feel, you would have forgiven me for the sake of your fathers.'

b. ∗*A yi mi di ni be ma shɛm, a*
2SG COND know 3SG will is 2SG.OBJ
how 2SG

naan *che* *ma* *a* *banima* *zuɣu.*

IRR let 1SG.OBJ 2SG.POSS fathers head

Intended: 'If you had known how it is with me, you would have forgiven me for the sake of your fathers.'

(37) a. *Bɛ* *yi* *di* *daa* *zaŋ* *li* *fiɛbi* *Yimahinaa,* *bɛ*

3PL COND IRR TRM use 3SG spank Yimahinaa 3PL

daa *naan* *ku* *o.*

TRM IRR kill 3SG (Pazzak, 2016, p. 166)

'If they had used it to spank Yimahinaa, they would have killed him.'

b. **Bɛ* *yi* *di* *daa* *zaŋ* *li* *fiɛbi* *Yimahinaa,* *bɛ* *daa*

3PL COND IRR TRM use 3SG spank *Yimahinaa* 3PL TRM

ku *o.*

kill 3SG

Intended: 'If they had used it to spank Yimahinaa, they would have killed him.'

Sentences (35) on the one hand and (36) and (37) on the other, do not only differ structurally (syntactically), but also in their semantics. Within the syntax of the Dagbani conditional clause, it is evident that apart from the overt *yi* conditional marker, which is present in the protasis in (35), sentences (36) and (37) have additional particles, *di* (occurring in the protasis) and *naan* (which occurs in the apodosis). Whereas (35) illustrates a case of realis conditional clauses, (36) and (37) exemplify irrealis conditional clauses also, known as counterfactuals. The typical characteristic of Dagbani counterfactuals (irealis) is the presence of the irealis markers,

di and *naan.* Distributionally, whereas the *di* particle occurs in the protasis, the *naan* occurs in the antecedent clause. Thus, I conclude that while the use of the *yi* particle alone is for the marking of reality conditionals, there are also two particles *di*… *naan*, which I analyse as split morphemes used for the coding of unreality conditionality in Dagbani.

One question that arises from the data presented in (36) and (37) is the availability of evidence to indicate that the particle *di* is not the time reference marker that indicates that an action occurred earlier today. In my proposed analysis of the function of this particle, I opine that the ability of *di* to occur with other time reference markers (37) and (38) is a piece of syntactic evidence that this particle is indeed an irrealis marker and not the regular time reference marker.

(38) a. *Bi-hi maa yi di sa bo-ra, bɛ sa naan di.*
child-PL DEF COND IRR TRM want-IPFV 3PL TRM IRR eat
'If the children had wanted, they would have eaten (yesterday)'

b. **Bi-hi maa yi sa bo-ra, bɛ sa naan di.*
child-PL DEF COND TRM want-IPFV 3PL TRM IRR eat
Intended: 'If the children had wanted, they would have eaten (yesterday)'

(39) a. *o yi di daa da bindirigu maa, n naan mi.*
3SG COND IRR TRM buy food DEF 1SG IRR know
'If s/he had bought the food (more than two days ago), I would have known.'

b. **o yi daa da bindirigu maa, n naan mi.*

3SG COND TRM buy food DEF
1SG IRR know
Intended: 'If s/he had bought the food (more than two days ago), I would have known.'

In sentences (37a) and (38a), *di* occurs with the time reference markers *sa* and *daa* respectively. If *di* were really the time reference marker, then, there should have been a co-occurrence restriction between this particle and the other time reference markers. This is, however, not borne out, suggesting that the two particles are performing different roles in the language. The ungrammaticality of sentences (37b) and (38b) is attributable to the absence of *di* in the dependent clauses, suggesting that this particle is required in the irrealis interpretation of conditional clauses.

It is worth mentioning that available evidence in Dagbani seems to suggest that the two semantic types of conditional clauses are not sensitive to the aspectual/tense paradigm in the language and this claim is explicated by the data in (39). Consider the context under which the data in (39) were elicited. A woman has three suitors, and each of them has supernatural powers. One cooks food and invites the other two to join him in eating (it) at the lady's house where they are all there to visit the potential mother in-law. One of the suitors responded as in (39).

(40) a. *Ti yi di naan di, ti naan yeli a.*
*2*PL COND IRR TRM *eat* *2*PL IRR tell 2SG
'If we would have eaten, we would have told (informed) you.'

b. *Ti yi ni di, ti ni yeli a.*
*2*PL COND FUT *eat* *2*PL FUT tell 2SG
'If we will eat, we will tell (inform) you.'

From the data presented in (39) there is no difference in the verbal paradigm of the irrealis conditional clause (38a)

and that of the realis conditional clause (39b). A similar pattern is presented in (40) where the imperfective aspectual form is possible with the two semantic types of conditional clauses.

(41) a. *Ti yi di daa bo-ri o,*
o daa naan ku doli
*2*PL COND IRR TRM *want*-IPFV 3SG
3SG TRM IRR NEG follow *so.* someone
'If we would have wanted him/her, s/he would not have followed someone.'

b. *Ti yi bo-ra, ti ni da li.*
*2*PL COND want-IPFV *2*PL FUT buy 3SG
'If we want (it), we will buy (it).'

c. *o ba yi di daa sagisi-ri o,*
o daa naan
*3*SG father COND IRR TRM advise-IPFV
*3*SG *3*SG TRM IRR
ku tu-ri ninkura
NEG insult-IPFV aged people
'If his/her father had been advising him/her, s/he would not have been insulting the elderly.'

This subsection has examined the semantic categorization of conditional constructions in Dagbani. I have shown that there are systematic morphosyntactic clues that are instrumental in the distinction between the different semantic types of conditionals, that is reality and unreality conditional clauses. I have so far demonstrated that Dagbani conditional clauses can be marked using an overt conditional morpheme, *yi* and that there is a semantic distinction between realis and irrealis conditional clauses. Structurally, Dagbani conditional sentences consist of two clauses: the conditional clause (or if-clause), which outlines the condition upon which the main clause depends, and the main clause, which contains the result. A similar claim on bi-clausality of conditional clauses is proposed by Guérois (2017) who argues that in Cuwabo,

conditional constructions are complex sentences, consisting of a main clause (apodosis) and a subordinated clause (protasis).

Conclusion

In this paper, I have provided an account of the nature of Dagbani conditional clauses focusing on their morphosyntactic and semantic characteristics. It has been shown that in the derivation of conditional clauses in Dagbani, there is the requirement for the overt conditional marker, *yi,* which occurs in the subordinated clause (protasis), and triggers the conditional reading. Thus, like most natural languages, Dagbani signals conditionals via the use of a subordinating morpheme, *yi.* I further offered a differentiation between realis and irrealis clauses in Dagbani, demonstrating that the two semantic categories have distinct syntactic properties. Based on the language internal evidence, I concluded that even though conditional constructions are complex sentences, consisting of a main clause (apodosis) and a subordinated clause (protasis), there is no strict syntactic pattern for the order of the apodosis and the protasis in Dagbani. It is shown further that Dagbani basically employs a dedicated conditional clause marker in the derivation of conditional clauses. Based on semantics, it is apparently shown that Dagbani distinguishes between realis and irrealis conditional clauses with a corresponding difference in their syntactic and sematic characterization. The research is important because it provides a meaningful contribution to Dagbani syntax, specifically in the unexplored area of conditional sentences. Additionally, the inclusion of a comparative analysis with related Mabia languages strengthens the paper's scope and credibility, offering a broader typological and linguistic context. It is recommended that future studies should focus on the structure of conditionals in Mabia languages with the goal of establishing the typological characteristics of conditionals in Mabia languages generally.

Abbreviations

1 =first person pronoun
2 =second person pronoun
3 =third person pronoun
AFF =affirmative
COND =conditional
DEF =definite
FUT =future
IRR =irrealis
IPFV =imperfective
INAN =inanimate
NEG =negation
NMLZ =nominalizer
OBJ =object
PFV =perfective
PL =plural
POSS =possessive
PRT =particle
PST =past tense
SG =singular
TRM =time depth marker

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