



Title Sociolinguistic Analysis of some Akan Proverbs

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Abstract

This study examined the sociolinguistic analysis of some Akan proverbs. With this, the analysis predicated on the social contexts that bring about the use of the proverbs and their sociolinguistic implications. The data sourced from the research participants were analysed alongside Dell Hymes' (1974) "Ethnography of Communication", which also served as the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. In all, twenty one (p.21) proverbs were analysed which saw the various factors of communication, as postulated by Hymes (1974) coming to bear. Discussing the analysis, it was indicated that the home is the place where proverbs are mostly used. The time for the use of proverbs also saw the evening dominating in the data analysis. With the addressers under participants, men were found to be the people who mostly use proverbs in the Akan society. Anybody, be it a man, woman or child in the Akan society, qualifies to be addressed with proverbs, per the analysis in this study. The end of the use of Akan proverbs is to encourage, rebuke, admonish and warn the addressee. Finally, the key, which also manifests as the tone under which a particular proverb is used saw serious tone as the most frequently used tone in the analysis, as most Akan proverbs are used to direct the paths of its members, whenever they go wayward.

Key words: Proverb; Context; Sociolinguistics; Akan

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1. INTRODUCTION

The study of proverbs, which is also known as paremiology, has received much attention based on its stance of transmitting the values, traditional experiences, etc of a society from generation to generation. Its study has moved from just simple compilation, as scholars now study it from both linguistic and literary perspectives. Notably, one crucial or incumbent feature of proverb which cannot be overlooked is its contextual usage. The contextual use of a particular proverb gives dynamisms that apply to the meaning of the proverb, rather than making it give a fixed meaning. In Akan, where the use of proverbs is much cherished, the contextual usage of proverbs is not overlooked. This even goes to confirm the Akan maxim: *Asem mmae a, yemmu be* 'Without discourse or context, there is no proverb.' And when language, especially proverb, is perceived with such notion, sociolinguists come in to study what might have prompted the use of a particular proverb. Therefore, what this study seeks to address is to study some Akan proverbs in relation to the contextual usage of these proverbs. By so doing, the social contexts that bring about the use of these proverbs and the sociolinguistic implications will come to bear in this study.

1.1 The Akan Language

Akan is a language spoken by the people called Akans. It belongs to the Kwa group of the Niger-Congo group of languages. The Akans, who subscribe to this language, form the largest ethnic group in Ghana per the 2010 population and housing census. The Akan language can be found spoken in six of the regions in Ghana, namely; Eastern, Central, Western, Ashanti, Brong Ahafo and Volta regions. Again, it umbrellas various dialects which are mutually intelligible, namely; Asante, Akuapem, Akwamu, Fante, Akyem, Agona, Denkyira, Twifo, Assin, Wassaw, Kwawu, Bron and Buem (Agyekum, 2006). Amongst these dialects, the major ones are Asante, Akuapem and

Fante. They are recognized as the major dialects owing to the fact that they are the dialects used in writing when it comes to the Akan language.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study is to;

identify the social contexts that bring about the use of some Akan proverbs.

identify the sociolinguistic implications of the use of the proverbs in these social contexts.

1.3 Research Questions

The questions this study seeks to answer are;

what are the social contexts that bring about the use of some Akan proverbs?

what are the sociolinguistic implications of the use of the proverbs in these social contexts?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the study reviews relevant literatures that relate to this study. The review revolves around the theoretical framework that underpins this study and works that have been done on Akan proverbs.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is Dell Hymes' (1974) "Ethnography of Communication." Hymes propounded this theory as an objection to Chomsky's (1965) "Linguistic Competence", which only looks at the appropriateness of vocabulary and grammar use by an idealized speakers in a homogenous speech community, thereby not considering the various changes that might occur in the use of these appropriate grammar and vocabulary when they come into contact with certain contextual situations. Hymes objects this notion by Chomsky and supports communication competence, which helps or sees a speaker speak uprightly or in the right order, thereby considering what a particular context demands. To Hymes, just studying language from the perspective of mental grammar of the speaker without relating it to how social contexts shape the speaker's speech or utterances makes it limited or deficit. Hymes notes that "just as an ungrammatical utterance may be socially acceptable, it is the same way a grammatical utterance may be socially unacceptable." This may suggest that what Chomsky may treat as ungrammatical may be seen as socially acceptable utterance.

It was based on this that Hymes came out with the "Ethnography of Communication", which is a framework that analyses speech or communication within a particular social context. With this framework, he is of the view that "speech or communication does not occur in a vacuum, but within a specific context, and when the speech is analysed, we realize that it entails dimensions of participants, etc, which partly govern its meaning"

(Hymes, 1989, p.444) cited in (Johnstone and Marcellino, 2010). These dimensions are what Hymes treat as social factors that affect speech or communication for meaning to be derived. For convenience sake, he represents these factors with the mnemonic: SPEAKING. Each letter in the mnemonic represents a factor, which are explained below based on Chienjer's (2004) analysis:

S- Setting and Scene – The setting refers to the time and place which could be in the morning and at a ceremony respectively. The scene usually describes the environment of the situation.

P – Participants – This refers to the people involved in the communication or speech. They include the addresser or speaker and the addressee or listener or audience.

E – Ends – This factor of communication predicates on the goal or outcome of the speech or communication. This is what the speaker wants to achieve as he or she speaks to the addressee.

A – Act Sequence – This deals with the various events that takes place from the start of the speech to the end of the speech.

K- Key – This deals with the tone that describes the speech. The key or tone of a particular speech can be serious, harsh, friendly, jovial, etc.

I – Instrumentality – This is the form through which the speech is presented. It can therefore be oral or written.

N – Norms of interaction and interpretation – These are the socially acceptable rules that govern the speech event. These social rules are observed significantly for interaction and interpretation to be done on the part of the participants. In simple terms, it is the linguistic social competence shown by the participants in a particular communicative situation.

G – Genre – It deals with the type of speech which is being given. It can be a poem, song, proverb, etc. Maledo (2015) explains that the genre can be determined by the occasion at hand, as a festive mood will have a song as the genre and a meeting of council of elders will have proverb as the genre.

From the above interpretation, it is therefore obvious that this theoretical framework befits the analysis of this study. This is because the use of proverbs in the Akan speech community subscribes to the above factors, which make communication meaningful. With the use of Akan proverbs, there is time and place, which together depicts the "setting" and a "scene", which describes the environment of the situation that demands the use of the proverbs. There is also participants, specifically, the one who presents the proverb and the one who receives or listens to the proverb. There is also an "end", as the Akan proverb is usually used to arrive at an outcome, which may be used to persuade, admonish, warn, etc. Again, there is an "Act Sequence", and this gives birth to the events that takes place from the point of using the proverb to the point when meaning has been derived and

the addressee is convinced enough to behave in a certain way. The key also comes in to denote the general tone or manner under which the proverb is presented, which could be serious, harsh, jovial, etc tones. The instrumentality is obvious, as the use of Akan proverbs is in the spoken form. The norm of interaction and interpretation is also obvious, as the participants are competent Akan language speakers who are able to apply the Akan rules that govern communication for meaning to be derived from the proverbs. Lastly, the genre is also obvious, as it resides in the realms of proverbs.

2.2 Empirical Studies on Akan Proverbs

As indicated earlier, the study of proverbs is cross-linguistic, and it has received much attention from different scholars over the years, of which the Akan language is not an exception. Akan proverbs can be analyzed from the perspectives of just compiling them and subjecting them to linguistic and literary analysis. Therefore, this section of the study reviews literatures on the study of Akan proverbs and states the gap to be filled.

When talking from the perspective of just simple compilation of Akan proverbs, scholarship is attributed to Appiah, et. al. (2007) and Christaller (1879). Their works are significantly accorded, as insights are drawn from them by scholars who quest to study Akan proverbs. In as much as their works are significantly accorded, they are limited in scope, and for that matter, nothing like linguistic or literary analysis can be attributed to their works. This therefore creates a gap and makes this study relevant.

Yankah (2012) also looked at “The Proverb in the Context of Akan Rhetoric.” He is of the view that Akan proverbs should be analyzed based on context, other than studying the proverbs in isolation. He adds that proverbs manifest as dynamic communicative strategy, of which their form, meaning and logic continue to interact. He also differentiates between proverb as concept and proverb in context. With this, he argues that just collecting and assigning fixed meaning to a particular proverb makes it a concept, but looking at dynamisms that apply to the meaning of a proverb can only be achieved based on proverb in context. What is so special about his work is the proverbs been studied or analyzed in context. Again, it was analyzed theoretically. Though these contextual and theoretical analysis make his work special, it was only analysed based on only one typology of proverbs, that is, the rhetoric type of proverbs. Notably, there are other types of proverbs: didactic, epistemological and philosophical (Adedimeji, 2003) in Maledo (2015). Not accounting for these three types of proverbs creates a gap in his work.

Moving on, Agyekum (2012) looked at “Akan Proverbs and Aphorisms about Marriage.” With this, he looked at how proverbs and aphorisms relate to Akan marriage, thereby examining the types of proverbs used for marriage as a whole, pre-marriage, during the marriage

contraction and after the marriage contraction. His work is limited in scope, as marriage is not the only social context that requires the use of proverbs. There are other social contexts that require the use of Akan proverbs. This therefore creates a gap in scholarship.

Obeng (1996) worked on “The Proverb as Mitigating and Politeness Strategy in Akan Discourse.” He accounts that proverb is a very crucial language that saves the face from being threatened. He is of the view that the best way of showing humility and acknowledging the sensibility of a listener is by resorting to proverb, which helps mitigate any utterance that might threaten the face of the speaker. His work is accorded with at least two good qualities. One, the data was analysed or sourced based on context, that is, from the context of a man who advises his son who leaves for abroad. The man resorted to the use of proverbs to mitigate any utterance that might step on the toes of the child. Second, he analysed or backed his study with the framework: “Conversational Analysis” with insight from Hymes’ (1962) “Communication governed by Context.” Though these two qualities make his work a renowned one, it is limited in scope, as mitigating and politeness strategy is not the only function of Akan proverbs. This also creates a gap.

Dzokoto, et. al. (1981) looked at “Romantic Relationship Rules in Akan Proverbs.” With this, they looked at how Akans conceptualize romantic relationship in relation to proverbs. Based on this, they comment that Akan romantic relationship predicates on the “Work-it-out” approach and not the “Soul mate” approach, which is seen in Western romantic relationships. Being a “work-it-out” approach, they identify four major themes that are ruled by Akan proverbs in romantic relationships: material support, relational support, negativity or relationship problems and emotional support. What makes this work a good one is that it is backed by the theories “soul mate theory” and “work-it-out theory” as practised by (Franuit, Cohen and Pomerantz, 2002). With the soul mate theory, the couple do not pay attention to problems that emanate in the relationship, but with the work-it-out theory, the couple stand firm and are ready to combat or confront any problem that emanates. Therefore, what the study lacks is that it is limited in scope, as the proverbs are analysed in the context of marriage or relationship only. Two, the data is sourced from scripted source, that is, “Bu me be (Tell me a proverb): Proverb of the Akan” compiled by Appiah, et. al. (2007). This therefore makes their work to be absent from real life situations.

Quan-Baffour (2011) analysed Akan proverbs from the perspective of its significance as an educational value to the contemporary generation. He is of the view that Akan proverbs do not only warn people against bad deeds, but also provide grounds for better life. With this, he noted that proverbs play important role of encouraging unity, hardwork, support, love, co-operation, communal life, etc, and discouraging laziness, discrimination, hypocrisy, etc.

It is a work significantly accorded, as it umbrellas a lot of themes embedded in Akan proverbs, but what is lacking and creating a gap is that, all the themes were not derived from context.

Other scholars like Kquofi, et. al. (2015) - "Symbolic Representation and Sociocultural Significance of Selected Akan Proverb in Ghana," Agyeman, et. al. (2015) - "The Relevance of Ghanaian Akan Proverbs to Explanations of Contemporary Human Resource Principles and Corporate Values," Brookman-Amisshah (1986) - "Akan Proverbs about Death," Adu-Gyamfi (1999) - "Akan Mm□bus□m mu bi," Opoku (1997) - "Hearing and Keeping: Akan Proverbs among others are scholars who have studied Akan proverbs from various perspectives.

In view of these studies, and to the knowledge of us, no work has been done on the sociolinguistic analysis of Akan proverbs, thereby looking at the various social contexts that bring about the use of the proverbs and the sociolinguistic implications of the use of the proverbs in these social contexts. Therefore, this study adds to the literature on Akan proverbs by studying some Akan proverbs from the sociolinguistic perspective.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section of the study deals with the research methodology. With this, the research design, source of data, method of data collection and method of data analysis are all discussed in this section.

3.1 Research Design

The research design used in the study was qualitative research. The data collection strategies used in qualitative research include observation (complete and participant), interview (structured, semi-structured and unstructured), documents and audio-visual materials (Creswell, 2009) in (Owu-Ewie, 2012).

This design befits the study as the data analysis is mainly descriptive. Again, the ethnography nature of the study subjects it to qualitative research design. Being ethnographic and descriptive, it looks at proverb use in context or under certain situations and explains or gives a clear picture of the situations.

3.2 Source of Data

The data for the study was sourced from native speakers of the Akan language. The situations or contexts of use of the proverbs were noted as the speakers used them. The Akan dialects of Bepong (a town in the Kwahu-South District in the Eastern Region, Ghana) and Nkawkaw (a town in the Kwahu-West District in the Eastern Region, Ghana) were used, owing to the fact that the participants were residents in these places.

3.3 Method of Data Collection

Observation (both complete and participant) was the method employed in the data collection. The complete

observation was employed as the researcher observed the participants use the proverbs without interfering them. The participant observation was also used as the researcher formed part of the social contexts that brought about the use of the proverbs. For the sake of ethical issues, the researcher sought permission from the participants before the proceedings were recorded. The recordings were then transcribed, after which analysis followed.

3.4 Method of Data Analysis

The data is analysed alongside Dell Hymes' (1974) "Ethnography of Communication" to bring out the social contexts or situations that bring about the use of the proverbs and the sociolinguistic implications that result from using the proverbs in these social contexts. This shows that the proverbs are already known to be used under certain situations or contexts, and this takes care of the setting and scene which are the main determinants of a particular use of proverb.

The participants are also taken care of, as there is no tendency of proverb use, if there are no participants (addresser and addressee). End is also taken care of, as any proverb that emanates is presented to meet a certain outcome or purpose. Act sequence also gives the events that take place from the point of the use of the proverbs to the point when the addressee has come to understand the proverb and he or she is ready to comply. Key is also taken care of, as the topic under discussion will dictate the tone under which the proverb is presented. Under instrumentality, the oral form is how the proverbs are being presented, and under norm of interaction and interpretation, the participants are competent Akan speakers who understand the proverb being used under certain social contexts. Lastly, the genre resides in the realms of proverb.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This section presents and analyses the data sourced from the research participants. The sociolinguistic analysis of the proverbs, discussion of analysis and the sociolinguistic implications will come to bear in this section.

4.1 Sociolinguistic Analysis of Akan Proverbs

This section of the study gives the sociolinguistic analysis of the proverbs sourced from the research participants. The data is analysed alongside Dell Hymes' (1974) "Ethnography of Communication", under which the various factors represented by the SPEAKING mnemonic will come to bear. Notably, the ING (Instrumentality, Norm of interaction and interpretation and Genre) which form part of the SPEAKING mnemonic will not come to bear in the analysis since these factors are general to all the data. Therefore, in the analysis, the act sequence, the proverb (both in the Akan language and the translated form in the English language) and the meaning of the

proverb are given, after which other factors including the setting and scene, participants, end and key are given.

DATA 1

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Nyansa nni baakofo^o tirim.

Nyansa nni baakofo^o tiri-m.

wisdom NEG-reside one person head-PREP

ENGLISH: Wisdom does not reside in the head of one person.

MEANING: It means that for a right decision to be taken to affect the lives of people positively, two or more people must come together to take the decision other than allowing one person to take the decision. The decision of just one person may just affect few positively and affect many negatively.

SETTING – TIME: in the evening PLACE: at church

SCENE: The welfare of the Sunday school of a particular church was not the best the previous year. The Sunday school teachers have therefore met to deliberate on how to go about the welfare of the Sunday school children to achieve what is expected of them.

PARTICIPANTS - ADDRESSER: a male Sunday school teacher

ADRESSEE: Co-Sunday school

teachers

END: to suggest that collective decision-making will help uplift the Sunday school of the church

KEY: suggestive tone

DATA 2

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Yeretwa wo to, wose m'ataa so.

Yε-re-twa wo to, wo-se m'-ataa so.

1PL-PROG-cut 2sg buttock 2sg-say 1sg-hip
PREP

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: You don't cry for your hips when your buttock is being cut off.

MEANING: It means that one is not given a particular chance or opportunity, no matter the numerous efforts he or she portrays to convince the other party.

SETTING – TIME: in the afternoon PLACE: at a lorry station

SCENE: A driver has been sacked from a particular parking point at the station. He goes ahead to find another place to park his car, which he thinks it's not questionable. A station master therefore directs the driver to take off his car from the new parking point he is trying to park his car.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: a station master
ADDRESSEE: a driver

END: to admonish the driver that no matter what he says to convince him, there is no way he will be allowed to park his car at that particular parking point.

Key: serious tone

DATA 3

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Mmerε yεnni nka so.

Mmerε yε-n-ni n-ka so.

time 1PL-NEG-eat NEG-remain PREP

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: Time changes/Time does not remain static.

MEANING: It means that the status of one does not remain the same till eternity. There is time for riches and time for penury, there is time for laughter and there is time for sorrows, etc.

SETTING – TIME: in the evening PLACE: at home

SCENE: A man enjoyed life in times of his riches without paying any attention to his family members. Things have now gone wrong, of which he has gone back to the village to start life again. His senior brother has met him to rebuke him of his mistake of not paying attention to them in times of his riches.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSEE: an elder brother
ADDRESSER: his younger brother

END: to rebuke his brother that he should have remembered or traced his roots in times of his riches.

KEY: serious tone

DATA 4

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Deε ɔretwa asa no nnim sε n'akyi akyea.

Deε ɔ-re-twa asa no n-nim s□
n'-akyi a-kyea.

WH 3sg-PROG-cut dance TP NEG-know that
3sg-back PRF-crook

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: The one dancing does not know his back is crooked.

MEANING: It means that there may be a particular action or attitude of someone which he or she may consider to be right but others may see to be wrong.

SETTING – TIME: in the evening PLACE: at home

SCENE: A woman has been taken loans for a very long time, of which the loans she takes continue to incur debts. Her husband and children have therefore met her to talk to her.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: a husband
ADDRESSEE: his wife and children, particularly his wife

KEY: contemplative tone

DATA 5

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Ayɔnkogorɔ bebree nti na aboa kɔɔ
annya ti.

Ayɔnkogorɔ bebree nti na aboa kɔɔ
a-n-nya ti.

friendship excessive EMP FOC animal crab
PRF-NEG-get head

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: Excessive friendship left the crab headless.

MEANING: It means that involving one's self in excessive friendship may put one in a mess which may

make him or her lose a cherishable attitude or lifestyle.

SETTING – TIME: in the evening PLACE: at home

SCENE: A boy has gained admission to the senior high school. His father meets him on a day before his departure to the school to advise him.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: a father ADDRESSEE: his son

END: to admonish the son to be watchful of how he makes friends in school.

KEY: serious tone

DATA 6

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Wokɔto sɛ kuro bi so aduaba abere na kuromafo no ntee bi a, ɛnkyerɛ sɛ wɔnhunuɪɛ.

Wo-kɔto sɛ kuro bi so aduaba a-bere na kuromafo
 2sg-see that town DET PREP fruit
 PRF-ripe FOC town folks

no n-tee bi a, ɛ-n-kyerɛ
 sɛ wɔ-n-hunu-ɪɛ
 DET NEG-pluck DET WH 3sg-NEG-tell
 that 3PL-NEG-see-PST

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: When you meet a riped fruit not plucked in a town, don't be deceived that they have not seen it.

MEANING: It means that what one may see to be cheap or beautiful and would like to use that as a way of satisfying himself or herself may give him or her problems which he or she may find it difficult to overcome. It is normally used to warn new entrants into a town or society.

SETTING – TIME: in the evening PLACE: at home

SCENE: A landlord meets his tenants who are new entrants into the town of his residence to advise them on situations on grounds in the town.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: a landlord ADDRESSEE: his tenants, particularly the men

END: to warn the tenants to be watchful on how they mingle or take advantage of the ladies in the town

KEY: serious tone

DATA 7

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Anobrebrɛ ma abaa tɔ.

Anobrebrɛ ma abaa tɔ
 dialogue makePRES stick lie

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: Dialogue makes the stick lie.

MEANING: It means that any misunderstanding or conflict that might set between two or more people is resolved through dialogue and not fight.

SETTING – TIME: in the evening PLACE: at home

SCENE: Tenants, who also happen to be new entrants into a particular town have been notified by the landlord on how badly the former tenants behaved in the house. This therefore prompts the new tenants to meet and deliberate on how to live peacefully in their new home.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: a male tenant ADDRESSEE: his co-tenants

END: to encourage the co-tenants to resort to dialogue whenever misunderstanding or conflict sets between them.

KEY: friendly tone

DATA 8

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Wuhu sɛ obi abɔdwesɛ rehye a, na woasa nsuo asi wo deɛ ho.

Wo-hu sɛ obi abɔdwesɛ re-hye
 a, na wo-a-sa
 2sg-see that INDF PRO. beard PROG-burn
 WH FOC 2sg-PRF-fetch
 nsuo a-si wo deɛ ho
 water PRF-put 2sg GEN. PREP

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: When you see somebody's beard burning, get water around yours.

MEANING: It means that everybody is fallible, therefore when you see someone being entangled in problem, be cautious so as to prevent the same problem.

SETTING – TIME: in the afternoon PLACE: at school

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: an assistant headmaster (administration)

ADDRESSEE: newly-recruited teachers into the school

END: to admonish the newly-recruited teachers to be watchful so as to prevent being victims to a problem or teacher-student relationship that caused a teacher his job.

KEY: serious tone

DATA 9

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Bɔdamfoɔ, woasa no yareɛ koraa no, kakra wom.

Bɔdamfoɔ, wo-a-sa no yareɛ koraa
 no, kakra wo-m
 lunatic 2sg-PRF-treat 3sg madness EMP.
 TP little left-PREP

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: You could still see a little madness with a mad person even if his or her madness has been treated.

MEANING: It means that no matter how a problem might have been curtailed, associating one's self with such a problem will cause you a lot.

SETTING – TIME: in the afternoon PLACE: at school

SCENE: Students have been threatening teachers with cutlasses as they claim that the teachers get close to their girlfriends. The headmistress has therefore met the

newly-recruited teachers to advise them to be careful with troublesome students who will not allow them to take their girlfriends.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: a headmistress
ADDRESSEE: newly-recruited teachers

END: to warn the teachers to be careful with troublesome students who would not allow them to take their girlfriends.

KEY: serious tone

DATA 10

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Sε yεkɔkyekyere ahoma na woankɔ a, yede kyekyere wo.

Sε yε-kɔ-kyekyere ahoma na wo-a-n-kɔ a, yε-de kyekyere wo.

if 1PL-go-tie rope FOC 2SG-PRF-NEG-go WH 1PL-use tie 2SG

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: If we decide to tie a rope and you don't partake, we will use the tied rope to tie you.

MEANING: It means that anyone who folds his or her hands without taking part in a particular venture of which others have agreed to embark on ends up not enjoying the proceeds or benefits of that venture. The person is most a time ridiculed or criticized with the fact that he or she did not partake in the venture, anytime he or she gets close to the outcome of the venture.

SETTING – TIME: in the afternoon PLACE: at a ceremony

SCENE: A durbar has been programmed by a school to climax their anniversary. The MC has invited a male fundraiser to raise funds for the school.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: a male fundraiser
ADDRESSEE: the audience

END: to convince the people to give something to help raise funds towards the welfare of the school.

KEY: jovial tone

DATA 11

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Asomsεm ne bεtie bi ma me na εnam.

Asomsεm ne bεtie bi ma me na ε-nam.

secret talks CONJ come-listen IND PRO help 1sg FOC 3PL-walk

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: Secret talks put one in a problem which makes him to call for help.

MEANING: It means that if you don't open up things to people but try to confide in few people, when problem results, you look for help from people whom your secret talks did not include.

SETTING – TIME: in the evening PLACE: at home

SCENE: three friends have met to have dinner together, of which one keeps whispering into the ears of the other at the expense of the third party.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: a male friend
ADDRESSEE: male co-friends

END: to admonish the behavior of the two, as any problem that results from their secret talks will affect him.

KEY: jovial tone

DATA 12

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Deε mmoa adi no, wɔnni nkɔ, na yεmmɔ deε aka no ho ban.

Deε mmoa a-di no, wɔ-n-ni n-kɔ, na yε-m-mɔ

WH animals PRF-eat TP 3PL-IMP-eat IMP-go FOC 1PL-IMP-protect

deε a-ka no ho ban

WH PRF-left TP PREP protect

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: Let's forget what the animals have eaten and protect what is left.

MEANING: This proverb is usually used to resolve a dispute or conflict or misunderstanding between two parties. In resolving the dispute or conflict, the proverb is used to tell the two parties that though they might have experienced some pains from whatever might have generated the dispute, they should let it go and live together as one.

SETTING – TIME: in the afternoon PLACE: at the palace

SCENE: The behavior of a husband has changed, as he has made beatings to be food to the wife. The wife reports it to the chief and his elders in the town. They have therefore called the couple to settle the dispute or misunderstanding.

PARTICIPANTS - ADDRESSER: the chief
ADDRESSEE: the audience, particularly the couple

END: to encourage the couple to stop the dispute and allow peace to reign in their home.

KEY: contemplative tone

DATA 13

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Abotere ma awareε sɔ.

Abotere ma awareε sɔ

patience makePRES marriage thrive

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: Patience makes marriage thrive.

MEANING: It means that what makes marriage thrive or successful is based on patience. Therefore, what is left for a married couple to do is for them to exercise patience, no matter the weight of a mistake one might have committed. Being so angry may lead to taking actions that may affect both negatively.

SETTING – TIME: in the afternoon PLACE: at the palace

SCENE: This scene is the same as the scene in DATA

12.

PARTICIPANTS - ADDRESSER: the chief
ADDRESSEE: the couple, particularly the husband

END: to convince the man to exercise patience in every misunderstanding

KEY: cordial tone

DATA 14

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Deɛ ɔte ne gya ho na ɔnim sedee ehyehye no fa.

Deɛ ɔ-te ne gya ho na ɔ-nim sedee ehyehye no

WH 3sg-sit GEN. fire PREP FOC 3sg-knowPRES how 3sg-burn 3sg

fa

how

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: The one who sits beside his or her fire knows how it burns him or her.

MEANING: It means that one might be suffering within but may seem to people that all is well with such a person on the outside.

SETTING – TIME: in the afternoon **PLACE:** at the palace

SCENE: This scene is the same as the scene in DATA 12 and DATA 13.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: the chief's spokesman **ADDRESSEE:** to the audience, an elder in particular

END: to rebuke the elder to stop using statements that backs the husband at the expense of the wife

KEY: serious tone

DATA 15

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Akyea, nanso emmuie.

A-kyea, nanso e-m-mu-ie.

PRF-crook CONJ 3sg-NEG-break-PST

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: All hopes are not lost.

MEANING: It means that no matter how things might have gone wrong, there is still hope that everything will be fine with a new and fresh effort.

SETTING – TIME: in the evening **PLACE:** at home

SCENE: There was a fire outbreak at a certain place of which the mobile money store or kiosk of a lady was part of the burnt kiosks in the area. She has decided not to work again. The mother therefore invites her to their house to advise her.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: a mother **ADDRESSEE:** her daughter

END: to encourage or persuade the daughter to get all things behind her and make another effort.

KEY: sober tone

DATA 16

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Deɛ ɔbre na ɔdie.

Deɛ ɔ-bre na ɔ-die.

WH 3sg-workPRES FOC 1sg-eatPRES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: The one who works hard eats.

MEANING: It means that the benefits or proceeds that result from a particular venture is shared according to the varied efforts put up by the participants. Therefore, the one who puts up much effort is accorded a big share of the proceeds or benefits.

SETTING – TIME: in the evening **PLACE:** at home

SCENE: There is going to be a bye-election, of which the campaign team for a particular electoral area has met to deliberate on how to strategize things in their campaign trip.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: a political party's coordinator **ADDRESSEE:** members of the campaign team

END: to reiterate that the large portion of the benefits that might result from their victory will be given to those who work hard.

KEY: serious tone

DATA 17

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Ye de ɔhɔhɔ na ekyekyere kuro.

Ye-de ɔhɔhɔ na e-kyekyere kuro.

1PL-use stranger FOC to-tie town/society

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: We use strangers to develop a society.

MEANING: It means that a particular town folks should treat strangers with much care as their presence in the town or society may affect the society positively. Therefore, they should be received happily for them to feel at home.

SETTING – TIME: in the evening **PLACE:** at home

SCENE: A man has rented a room from a landlord, of which he has not paid a dime or penny. He therefore goes to the landlord who lives elsewhere to go in terms with him as to how he would be able to pay the money.

PARTICIPANTS: ADDRESSER: a landlord **ADDRESSEE:** his tenant

END: to assure the tenant that he can go ahead to pay the rent in installments.

KEY: sober tone

DATA 18

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: Nsuo retɔ, nanso fam ye den

Nsuo retɔ, nanso fam ye den

water PROG-rain CONJ ground be hard

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: Though it is raining, the ground is hard.

MEANING: It means that all efforts are being applied in ventures which may give benefits, but things have still not worked well to the maximum.

SETTING – TIME: in the afternoon PLACE: at the workplace

SCENE: A girl in the senior high school is going back to school for the first semester of the academic year. In this sense, she needs to buy some provisions. She goes to her father to ask for the money. The father empties his pocket and gives her something.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: a father ADDRESSEE: his daughter

END: to convince the child to take the little that he has given her for the provisions.

KEYS: sober tone

DATA 19

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: N_{sa} a ε-n-ye adwuma no, ennidi.

N_{sa} a ε-n-ye adwuma no, ε-n-nidi.

hand WH 3sg-NEG-doPRES work TP 3sg-NEG-eat

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: The hand which does not work does not eat.

MEANING: It means that one needs to work to put food on his or her table. The opposite of this leaves one in penury and deprives him or her from getting what he or she so desires.

SETTING – TIME: in the evening PLACE: at home

SCENE: An uncle has noticed the sudden change in his nephew’s lifestyle, as he has decided to move aimlessly with his friends without helping him with his farm work. He invites him one evening to advise him.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: an uncle ADDRESSEE: his nephew

END: to admonish his nephew to desist from moving around aimlessly without helping him with his farm work.

KEY: serious tone

DATA 20

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: N_{suo} taa aponkyerenne a, ɔgye wɔɔ.

N_{suo} taa aponkyerenne a, ɔ-gye wɔɔ.

water overridePRES frog WH 3sg-shrills

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: When the frog has had enough water more than it needs, it shrills.

MEANING: It means that the reaction of someone to a certain behavior will have a negative effect. That is, when one has been affected so much with a particular behavior and he or she becomes fed up, his or her reaction will result in a negative effect.

SETTING –TIME: in the morning PLACE: at church

SCENE: A male pastor has been given the platform in

church to preach on how married couples can work things out for a successful marriage to prevail.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: a pastor ADDRESSEE: the congregants, particularly the married women

END: to reiterate the fact that certain behaviors put up by some wives may drive their husbands away from home or make them act in a negative way.

KEY: serious tone

DATA 21

ACT SEQUENCE

AKAN PROVERB: ɔbra ye ɔko.

ɔbra ye ɔko

life be war

ENGLISH LANGUAGE: Life is war.

MEANING: It means that one cannot make it in life on a silver platter. There are hurdles and misfortunes which may come a person’s way to derail his or her spirit. Such a person must not give up, but strive hard to achieve success in life.

SETTING – TIME: in the evening PLACE: at home

SCENE: A son lost his job. This derailed his spirit and made him to take a decision which sees him not working again. The mother therefore invites him to advise him.

PARTICIPANTS – ADDRESSER: a mother ADDRESSEE: her son

END: to encourage or persuade his son that moving on with another job is better than sitting in the house idle

KEY: contemplative tone

4.2 Discussion of the analysis and the sociolinguistic implications

The above data analysis looked at the sociolinguistic analysis of some Akan proverbs, thereby looking at the various contexts that bring about the use of the proverbs. With this, the various components or factors found in the context of the proverb use, which is attributed to Dell Hymes’ (1974) “Ethnography of Communication” came to bear in the analysis. Therefore, below or the following gives a discussion of how the various factors are portrayed in the analysis.

The setting was analysed from the perspective of time and place of the use of the proverbs. With the time, 12proverbs (57.1%) were used in the evening by the participants, 8proverbs (38.1%) were used in the afternoon while 1proverb (4.8%) was used in the morning. It can be referred from the above analysis that the evening received the highest use of the proverbs with the morning been the last. The sociolinguistic implication of this is that the Akans normally use proverbs in the evening. This is the time that people have retired from their various works. It is this time that they meet to deliberate on matters that affect them positively in all their endeavors and the society at large. It is also no wonder that proverbs used in the afternoon took the second position in the analysis.

This is the time that people usually have meetings with each other at their workplaces and other social gatherings. Therefore, it is assumed that the participants in these social gatherings or meetings will one way or the other use proverbs. Moving on, only one proverb was used in the morning in the analysis. The sociolinguistic implication is that the Akans have no time to waste in the morning. It is at this time that they move to their workplaces to help put foods on their tables. Therefore, social meetings which generate proverbs are not seen around this time of the day.

With the place, 11 proverbs (52.3%) were used at home, 3 proverbs (14.3%) were used at the palace, 2 proverbs (9.5%) each were used at church and school respectively, 1 proverb (4.8%) each was used at the workplace, lorry station and in a ceremony respectively. It is therefore obvious that the home took the highest proverbs. The sociolinguistic implication of this is that the home is seen as the permanent place of living in the Akan society. It is the place people resort to live or stay when they have retired from their daily works. It is also the place people attach importance as it is the home that they think they can seek respite, when things are not going the right direction. It is also no wonder that the palace is ranked second on the list in the analysis. This owns to the fact that the palace is where people resort to take their grievances when they have done anything to solve their grievances in the home and it has worked to no avail. The other places for proverb use did not account for large numbers owing to the fact that these are temporal places of living in the Akan society. They are places where one goes to perform a duty and move back home.

With the participants, which include both the addresser and addressee, 18 men (85.7%) used proverbs in the analysis as addressers, 3 women (14.3%) used proverbs in the analysis as addressees and none of the proverbs was used by children. It is therefore obvious that men are seen dominating in the use of the proverbs in the analysis. The sociolinguistic implication of this is that the Akans see men as dominants when it comes to the use of proverbs in social gatherings in the Akan society. They are the people who usually and dominantly use proverbs in the social contexts in the Akan society than the other participants. Again, it is also obvious that the number of proverbs used by women in the analysis is minimal as compared to that of men. The sociolinguistic implication of this is that women are less recognized when it comes to speaking in Akan social contexts or gatherings. They are made to speak when issues call them to do so. It can also be seen that children were not seen using proverbs in the analysis. This goes to confirm that children are not recognized as people who use proverbs in the Akan society. Proverbs are mostly used or attributed to the elderly.

With the addressees, it can be seen from the data analysis that proverbs can be addressed to anybody in the Akan society. When proverbs are addressed to

children, the addresser tries to interpret the proverb for understanding to be derived on the part of the child. To the elderly, it is assumed that they are known for proverb use. Therefore, no interpretation is needed, as comprehension is automatically assumed on their part.

Moving on, the end, as analysed in the data is the outcome that one expects from the proverb. Therefore, the ends or outcomes of the use of Akan proverbs are to encourage, rebuke, admonish and warn the addressee.

The key, which depicts the tone used by the addresser is the tone he or she uses in presenting the proverb. In the analysis, serious, cordial, contemplative, sober, jovial and suggestive tones or keys came to bear. In all, 10 proverbs (47.6%) were used under serious tone, 3 proverbs (14.3%) each were used under sober and contemplative tones, 2 proverbs (9.5%) were used under jovial tone and 1 proverb (4.8%) each was used under suggestive, friendly and cordial tones. It is therefore obvious that serious tone received the highest proverbs. The sociolinguistic implication of this is that most of the Akan proverbs have didactic function, and for that matter the use of these proverbs help instill good morals and admonish bad deeds among the members of the Akan society. Again, it is no wonder that sober and contemplative tones received the next highest proverbs in the analysis. This owns to the fact that most Akan proverbs are seen to have rhetoric function. Therefore, such proverbs are used to encourage and persuade the members of the Akan society to behave in certain ways that will benefit them.

Finally, and as indicated earlier, the other factors, including instrumentality, act sequence, norms of interaction and interpretation and genre were general to all the data.

CONCLUSION

This study has served to analyse the sociolinguistics of some Akan proverbs. With this, it looked at the contexts that bring about the use of some Akan proverbs and their sociolinguistic implications. The data sourced from the participants was analysed alongside Dell Hymes' "Ethnography of Communication" which brought certain factors which together gives the mnemonic SPEAKING to bear. In all, 21 proverbs were analysed with the factors, after which the sociolinguistic implications were given. Therefore, the study has served to indicate the important or significant role Akan proverbs play, and how its status in the Akan society cannot be downplayed.

APPENDIX: LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EMP-	Emphatic particle
CONJ-	Conjunction
DET-	Determiner
FOC-	Focus

GEN-	Genitive
INDF PRO-	Indefinite pronoun
NEG-	Negation
PL-	Plural
PREP-	Preposition
PRES-	Present
PRF-	Perfect
PROG-	Progressive
PST-	Past
SG-	Singular
TP-	Topic marker
WH-	when, what, which

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