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The Polyvalent Nature of Proverbs in Akan Language: A Case of Ahwia Nsensanso in the Kwabere East District of Ashanti Region, Ghana

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The Polyvalent Nature of Proverbs in Akan Language: A Case of Ahwia Nsensanso in the Kwabere East District of Ashanti Region, Ghana

Georgina Brookman-Andoh [α], Confidence Gbolo Sanka [σ] & Martin Gyekye-Ampofo [ρ]

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I. Introduction

A story is told of a young man who sat at the banks of a river and did not know how to cross to the other side of the river. Whilst he sat there contemplating a way out of his situation, an elderly man appeared from one side leading to a bush near the river, pulled up his trousers and stepped into the river and with no difficulty, crossed to the other side. Another elderly man also appeared, pulled up his trousers, stepped into the river, and with no difficulty, crossed the river to the other side. Then, a third man came from the same route, pulled up his trousers and also crossed successfully using the same process. Upon observing the three elderly men, the young man decided to give it a try. So, he walked up to the river, pulled up his trousers and entered the river only to be swept away by the river. The three elderly men looked back and said if only he had asked; we would have shown him where the stones are.

Proverbs are like these sturdy stones that are supposed to lead people to decide which way is suitable for life. It broadens one's mind and enriches one's utterances. The paper seeks to argue that proverbs, among the people of Ahwia Nsensanso Township of the Kwabere East District of Ashanti Region, offer more creative and expressive potential like other geographical locations among the Akan speaking people in Ghana.

The paper further seeks to pinpoint that though the proverb is widespread, it surprisingly differs in meaning and other important features from one cultural or geographical area to another and it uses Ahwia Nsensanso as a case study.

The reason for this work stems from the fact that there has been a lot of writings and publications on proverbs throughout the world. In fact, proverb scholarship has reached such an unusual level of achievement that it becomes so difficult for most writers and scholars to deal with this excess of valuable information. However, there still remains much work to be done in the area of proverb studies. This is because, the diverse use and function of proverbs need strategic investigation in much more detail and attention must also be placed on the different historical periods as well as the different geographical locations of proverb use and function. It is therefore important to consider specifically, the use and function of Asante proverbs in Ahwia Nsensanso, which is found in the Kwabere East District of Ashanti Region. Few definitions of what critics say about proverbs have been considered before tackling proverbs from the study area.

From his book, *Proverbs are the best,* Wolfgang Mieder (2005) contends that, "Proverbs as one of the ubiquitous folklore genres have been collected and studied since the beginning of written records."

According to Ochieng Daniel O's book, titled, *Political Grandstanding and the Use of Proverbs in African Political Discourse*, (2009:123-140)"proverbs are regarded as a nobel genre of African Oral tradition that enjoys a special prestige of being the custodian of a

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people's collective wisdom, philosophy of life, experience, fears and aspirations."

Joseph Brookman-Amissah's *Akan Proverbs About Death*, (1986:75-85), also considers proverbs as "a way of expressing conventional wisdom." He continues that "proverbs are couched in terse, pithy statements that may illustrate a fact, convey an opinion, or express a value judgement." It could be argued therefore that proverbs are not primarily scientific statements about man and the universe but are largely imaginative propositions and reflections on life. It is therefore important to pinpoint the fact that the function and use of proverbs deal specifically with a creative aspect of language rather than memorizing a constant usage within appropriate context.

Though various schools of thought have deliberated on a concise definition for the proverb, Ruth Finnegan's description of the genre will be useful in this study. She asserts: "The proverb is a saying that is done in a more or less fixed form marked by popular acceptance of truth strongly expressed in it." (Finnegan, Ruth. 2012). This kind of acceptance of truth makes it especially apt for exploitation in contemporary Ghana. It is this kind of exploitative process that establishes the didactic nature of the proverb common to the Akan society, in contemporary Ghana.(Yankah, Kwesi 1986).

The didactic nature of the proverb usually leads one to believe that in the Akan society, for instance, any short utterance that expresses a moral truth is a proverb. This situation could be based on Ruth Fenegan's assertion, cited in Yanka's *Proverb Rhetoric and African Judicial Process* that the proverb is regarded as "The wit of one and the wisdom of many," He continues that "the proverb is a terse and witty philosophical saying that conveys a lesson." It couches conversational wisdom in a poetic capsule, making it aesthetically pleasing and memorable.

As stated by Mensah, EyoO., (2004), the cross currents of language and culture can depict the use of oral performances such as proverbs which are forms of deeper communication and means of constructing reality in every speech community Proverbs are said to be polyvalent in nature, the world over and linguistically differ from one geographical area to another.

It is argued in this paper that proverbs among the people of Ahwia Nsensanso Township of the Kwabre East District of Asante Region offer a creative and expressive potential like proverbs in other geographical locations among the Akan speaking people in Ghana. As a conversational genre, proverbs among the people of Ahwia Nsensanso Town ship are dynamic and self-renewing. They are also of varied educational and sociocultural significance that enriches the culture and verbal esthetics of the people. An extensive analysis on the didactic nature, the artistic or the poetic nature, the sharp wit and the profanity with the use of proverbs among the people of Ahwia Nsensanso located at the Kwabre East District of Ashanti Region, is what is considered in this study.

The study is guided by the speech act theory in linguistics and the philosophy of language. The Speech Act theory is an utterance that has per formative function in language and communication. According to Bach, Kent (2008), in his book, *Pragmatics and the Philosophy of language*, "Almost any speech act is really the performance of several acts at once, distinguished by different aspects of the speaker's intention. There is the act of saying something, what one does in saying it, such as requesting or promising, and how one is trying to affect one's audience." The utterance made has an already existing meaning to its listeners; the already meaningful utterance also has an intended significance that is socially valid in communication and its effect on the listener, as in persuading, convincing, instructing, advising, commanding is very sharp.

The contemporary use of the term dates back to Austin, John L. (1962)'s development of performance utterance and his theory of Locutionary, Illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. This is commonly understood to include such acts as promising, ordering, greeting, warning, inviting and congratulating. The three acts of sayings are explained as follows:

1. Locutionary act, the performance of an utterance: the actual utterance and its ostensible meaning, comprising phonetic, and rhetic acts corresponding to the verbal, syntactic and semantic aspects of any meaningful utterance.
2. An illocutionary act: the pragmatic illocutionary force of the utterance, thus its intended significance as a socially valid verbal action and
3. In certain cases, a further perlocutionary act: its actual effect, such as persuading, convincing, scaring, enlightening, inspiring or otherwise getting someone to do or realize something, whether intended or not.

The study sits on Austin's theory. This British Philosopher uses the three acts to describe how to do things with words. Below are the pillars of the term.

The pillars

1. Focuses on an utterance that has per formative function in language and communication.
2. Used to distinguish different aspects of the speaker's intention. These aspects include: The act of saying something (Locutioary),

How one tries to affect one's audience, as in persuading, convincing or instructing.(Perlocutionary), Explains how an utterance made has an already existing meaning and yet the already existing meaningful utterance also has an intended significance that is socially valid in communication. In other words, when we speak, our words do not have meaning in and of themselves. They are very much affected by the

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situation, the speaker and the listener. Thus words alone do not have a simple fixed meaning

1. Talking is not just semantics but acting and meaning making.
2. Considers that the meaning of an utterance is defined more by convention than the initiative of the reader. (When we speak, we are following learned rules.) In other words, Performativity occurs where the utterance of a word also enacts a form of illocutionary act.

This is taken up by Buttler, Judith (2006) in feminism and has been used to indicate how pornography is less a form of speech as a performative act of sexual degradation. Meanwhile, the intended significance of such performative acts forces such utterances to be considered as a socially valid verbal action. This is because it is said to be"related to suture interpellation in the way it forces a situation."

Since proverbs make use of utterances and these utterances provide meanings that are socially valid verbal actions, the study adopts this means of linguistic interpretation to analyze the three main issues under discussion; the didactic nature of proverbs, the aesthetic or poetic nature and the profanity or illuminatingly obscure nature of the proverb related to the people of Ahwia Nsensanso in the Kwabere East District of Asante Region.

II. Methodology

Qualitative approach was employed to assess and describe the related views concerning proverb use. The study also adopted the traditional library research approach through the use of books, articles, journals and publications in as much as they contribute to the worth of the study. Purposive sampling was used for the interview conducted since the researchers wanted expert informants to furnish them with the information in the study.

a) The Didactic Nature ofthe Proverbs among the people of Ahwia Nsensanso in the Kwabere East District of Ashanti Region

The proverb, through metaphorical language, may warn, advise, or reprimand by drawing attention to the moral or ethical consequences of human behaviour. The following considers the proverbs that draw attention to moral or didactic nature of human behavior.

1. "Obaa di obaa adee na obarima di obarima adee." A woman inherits a woman's things, a man inherits a man's things. In our contemporary African society, there are defined roles for men and women as well as the general people that make up the society. It is more important for one to concentrate on what he or she is able to do well. It is also important to complement one another when something is well done. This will do away with jealousy and other deviant behaviors that put society into disorder. This proverb is used when there is the evidence of conflict to arise as a result of a form of misunderstanding between two parties. Morally, society is shaped by conventions. In other words, conventions must be followed in order to bring about order in society. This supports Austin's idea of illocutionary act that considers the intended significance of a socially valid verbal action. The meaning of an utterance is defined more by convention than the initiative of the reader and this goes on to explain that when we speak, we are following learned rules.The situation is emphasized through an internal rhyme,the repetition of: "o", "a", "i", "e", rhythm and a significant repetition and alternation of Assonance and Consonance sound devices that occur within the line,
2. "Adwetakyi anomaa weremfoo a: oko asuo a ode n'ano." The adwetakyi bird goes to fetch water with its beak alone. This proverb is used to explain to people that everyone is responsible for his or her own action. In other words, he who creates a problem must deal with it as it is. The "Adwetakyi" bird is a small bird that usually builds its nest with mud and these nests can be seen at the corners of uncompleted buildings. This clever little bird uses its beak to fetch water in order to quench the thirst of all its new born ones. The fact is that for a little bird to have the strength to make sure that its little ones have drunk water to their satisfaction is amazing. The amazing thing about this is how it uses its little beak to accomplish this huge task. Apart from the first lesson, another moral lesson obtained is said of one who does great things with little effort. Paradoxically, the statement appears absurd but turns out to have an acceptable and coherent meaning which emphasizes one of the pillars of the speech act theory that states that talking is not just semantics but acting and meaning making. The effect of this utterance is toshock and surprise the listener.
3. Edwie wo ne kankuaa. Even a louse has its cupping glass. A sizeable number of this insignificant animal was supposed to be obtained by an offender in a community. This was a serious ritual that shaped a lot of lives because; it was difficult to fetch a sizeable number of these tiny creatures when one was accused of a particular offence that warranted this. The moral value captured here is that, however insignificant one is, one has a gift of talent. If this animal that is not useful in any way to human survival could be so needed at a point in life, then it could be argued that there is something useful in every individual no matter how insignificant the person may be at a particular point in time. In other words, we need not look down on any one. This very proverb supports the idea expressed in the theory

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that talking is not just semantics but acting and meaning making. Asking an offender in a community to obtain these insects is an action. Fetching a sizeable number of this insignificant insect is another act. Therefore, from the illocutionary level, a further perlocutionary stage, when the effect of the action is achieved through the point where people become convinced that we need not look down on anyone.

4. "Adwotwa ho adee ye abusudee." Deception breeds ill-luck. This proverb is said of one who deceptively tries to cover up an atrocious behavior with tears. The elderly frowns on characters like this and considers such acts as evil and therefore withdraw their blessings from such people.It is therefore said, based on this situation that (Things got through dishonesty turn sour on you).
5. "Adwene nkoaa nnore." A fish does not grow fat on its own. The idea behind this proverb is that one needs to allow help to come one's way because no one is an island. In the sea, there are so many animals. And it is not the fish alone that resides there. Though the fish is the popular animal that is believed to live in the sea, other animals such as the crab, the octopus, lobsters and even snakes also reside in the sea. There is a comment of socialization that is implied from the context. The comment also suggests togetherness which is also general and is applied to a wide range of situations. The vocabulary is also general and is given through a concrete imagery. The verb, "nnore" implies abundance which also denotes prosperity and plentiful. This grants us the moral value that everyone needs help in order to prosper.
6. "Wo fa abufuo twa dunsin a esi wo nkwansee a, wo hwere wo soafoo". If out of anger, you cut the tree stump on your farm, you lose your carrier. Until recently, farming was the basic source of livelihood for the people of Asante. A lot of people went to their farms alone, which meant that they had no people who helped them to carry their loads. People therefore kept tree stumps in their farms for those stumps to serve as their carriers. (You put your load on your stump before lifting it onto your head). The line capture features such as rhythm and alliteration and also considers an implied comment of disappointment. Alliteration as used here involves the repetition of the initial consonant sound captured in the words of the proverb. It ties the sounds together, reinforcing through repetition that emphasizes a kind of unity that will avoid disappointment. The moral lesson here is thus; one has to be careful with the issue of anger so as not to be disappointed later on in life.
7. "Adwendwen nua ne me ampa ara na me nie". Much thinking is the brother of "Is this what I have become?" It is said that one who puts himself into a lot of thinking puts himself into a life of jeopardy and this situation makes that particular person regrets the kind of person that he will become later. The diction is simple but the abstract nature of the expression tells of the complex situation that it carries. This kind of complex relationship is obtained from the emphasis placed in the internal rhyme that occurs in the line. This strong element that is crafted is what sends the message across to the hearers and listeners.
8. "Odwan funu nsuro sekan". A dead sheep does not fear the knife. This proverb highlightsthe words of Appiah Peggy that proverbs have different contexts within which they may be used. According to the geographical area of the study, this utterance produces two interpretations and it is the occasion that brings the proverb to mind and a skilled user exploits the subtleties of the proverbto the maximum.One interpretation to the utterance is thatthere is an end to all suffering and the same utterance can also be interpreted literally to mean that one who goes through so many difficulties is not afraid to face other serious atrocities.
9. "Odwanini de ne korona na edi asie, nanye ne mmen." A ram fights with its heart andnot its horns. There is a kind of inner quality that is expressed here, so that this very proverb supports Austin's idea that is used to distinguish different aspects of the speakers' intention.That is, there is the act of making the utterance and how the speaker tries to affect his audience as in convincing, that the "krona" is an organ that is kept inside of animals including human beings but the "mmen" is seen outside of the said animal. Ironically, the sight of the "mmen" produces fear which presupposes that the animal initiating a fight with this kind of physique can be intimidating. However, it takes a particular skill employed that can help defeat it in a fight. Since the "krona" is found within, then it means that intelligence which is found within is what is important. Thus we say that bravery comes from within a man and not from his physique.

b) The Aesthetic or Poetic Nature of proverbs among the people of Ahwia Nsensanso.

Apart from the moral or didactic nature of the proverb, a careful observation of the polyvalent nature of proverbs reveal, that the primary function of proverbs among the people of Ahwia Nsensanso is aesthetic or poetic and not didactic. Naturally, in most conversations or dialogues, every participant is engaged in putting across a point urging, reprimanding firmly, or keeping a fact and these ends could, in a greater number of cases, be achieved without resort to proverbs. Yet a speaker often selects a particular proverb or noticeable metaphor because he wishes to decorate or elevate his message with a poetic dimension, or demonstrate to his

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opponent his superior sophistication, education, eloquence, or sensitivity in the use of his language. The goals need not be moral or didactic.

Personal experience with situations, in which brilliant speakers use proverbs supports the view,that those speakers are energized in the mainby a desire to heighten their message poetically. According to Nana Kwame Panin, the Odikro of Ahwia Nsensanso, in the Kwabere East District of Asante, "One could give a variety of explanations for native attitudes to these proverbs, and that native speakers are sensitive to the poetic value of proverbs whether or not these contain a moral truth." He further said, "that the varied emotional and intellectual reactions shown by native speakers to proverbs are conditioned more evidently by the aesthetic value of these proverbs." It could be concluded, based on this observation, that the quality of the imagery and of the wit is also as essential as the moral content or truth value. It was added that native speakers do not evaluate all proverbs equally but seem to arrange them on a hierarchical scale, with some having more rhetorical or poetic value than others. The structure of the hierarchy needs detailed study, but for the present purpose of this study, two of them will be recognized; highly valued proverbs used in serious discussions and debates, generally by adults; and little valued ones mostly used by non-adults or by adults with children, especially during classroom instruction.

It is common for an adult to use a proverb when talking to a child, but the reverseis unusual. (The more concrete and unusual the image the higher the proverb rates).

Let us now turn to a few of the proverbs that are highly valued and are used just by a desire to heighten a particular message poetically.

1. "Se woamma wo yonko a ntwa nkron a , wontwa du." (If you do not allow your neighbor to cut nine, you will not cut ten)
2. "Dabi ye bio"(Someday [the future] is another). i.e., first fool is not a fool
3. "Aserewa su agyenkuku su a ne to pae."
   (if the aserewa attempts to sing like the agyenkuku, his posterior explodes)
4. Aserewa mo danta kese a etu no hwe
   (If the aserewa puts on a large loincloth, it is thrown off balance)

The explanation for (1) and (2) is that the future will offer another, similar opportunity and a chance to retaliate. These proverbs are used as a threat on occasions when a person discovers he has been cheated and regrets having helped a friend. Adult native speakers would recognize these as Akan proverbs by their sentence structure, rhythm, and context at a certain level of discourse incertain social contexts. However, these proverbs would be considered trite and uninteresting although they both convey a moral truth and may have been appropriately used. Any serious adult public speaker who hoped to drive a point home to his audience and used these proverbs to illustrate his argument would be judged an incompetent speaker. Very likely, he would receive evaluative comments such as"n' ano ntee." 'his lips have not dried up yet'. This argument becomes true because in a serious debate, the imagery is too ordinary, uninteresting, and lacks concreteness (1)and (2) will therefore fall under the low profile proverbs on the scale.

A mature participant in a dialogue or public discussion always strives to use vivid language because his audience is continually making literary analyses of his speech. The importance attached to brilliance and imaginativeness in public speech leads people to enter traditional public life and hope to exert influence, especially in the court and in politics.

Proverb number(3) and (4) could be classified under highly valued proverbs used in serious discussions

The "aserewa" is the smallest bird recognized among the people of Asante and the "agyenkuku" is one of the largest birds that is also recognized in the Asante culture. If the Aserewa wants to sing like the Agyenkuku, the "aserewa" has to over train its vocal muscles and he may explode his lungs or belly thereby. The proverb is used in a situation in which a person attempts to do what is far beyond his natural ability.

The "danta" is a large piece of cloth folded several times and used as a loincloth by men who work in the fields or fight on a battle field. It can also refer to the bandages worn by women to cover their private parts. The weight of the huge "danta" throws the little bird off balance and swings him down. The second proverb expresses basically the same idea and shares an image with the first.

There are features such as rhythm and alliteration as well as unique and concrete images that are captured in both proverbs. Each comments on over ambition which is implied from the context. This implied comment is very general and can apply to a wide range of situations. Meanwhile, the vocabulary is not general or implied. It is given in a poetic dimention through a series of concrete images whose semantic features are interrelated. The nouns "Aserewa" and "Agenkuku" are exotic but are also concrete. The verbs "su" and "pae" both imply an activity. "Pae" denotes physical violence and connotes pain, annihilation and final destruction. "Su" suggests joy, vitality, life, spontaneity and volition. The selection of concrete images and the irony that results from the complex relation between the semantic features of these images characterize highly valued proverbs.

We are given a series of physical images that conjures up a picture of a significant bird dressed in a huge loin cloth made up of bands of cloth. The irony lies

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in the vivid contrast between opposites, the small size of the bird and a huge "danta."

On the issue concerning a speaker who often wishes to embellish or elevate his message with a poetic dimension, or demonstrate to his opponent his superior sophistication, education, eloquence, or sensitivity in the use of his language, there is a kind of hierarchy, (as in low or high) that suggests complexity or lack of complexity of relationships.

Proverbs at the low end of the hierarchy lack complexity of relationships. Compare (3) and (4) on the one hand with (5) which purports to express basically the same idea.

5. "Abofra te fufuo a, ote nea ebeko n'ano".(the child should take a morsel small enough to fit his mouth.)

Although, (5) seems to have the same meaning as (3) and (4) and lends itself to use in the same situation, an Asante adult would avoid (5) in a serious discussion or even in a conversation with other adults. He might use it when talking to children and non-adults. The imagery of (5) appears too ordinary to interest mature adults. The proverb contains concrete nouns, but the semantic features in the nouns are not related to each other in any interesting or significant way.

Proverbs such as the following share similar properties and certainly belong toa level of intensity.

6. "Yebaa mmebuo a, anka yeso nkuma". (If we had come to "fell" proverbs, then we would carry axes.)

To interpret this and consider its intensity, "ebe" (proverbs) and "abe" (oil palm) have the same final syllable, and "bu" is used both for felling (of trees) and for making a proverb (bu ebe). Since nouns beginning with "B" form their plurals in "mm", and verbal nouns from "bu" and "buo", we get "mmebuo", meaning both palm felling and proverbs making.

The discussion for 3,4,5and 6 leads us to the part of the Speech ActTheory that says that talking is not just semantics but acting and meaning making.

7. "Odwannini ahooden ne ne mmen. Wopane a, na woanya no awieno". (The ram's strength is in its horns. If you pull them out, then it is powerless. (If you take away a man's main defense, he is powerless.)
8. "Adwennimmoa se ope su a, na enkyere se okyini kope dee obi awuo". (If a lamb says it likes weeping, it does not mean it should go about asking for a place where someone has died). Just because you like doing something does not mean that you have to overdo it.
9. Yemfa mani dorowa nto pane pa ho. (we don't compare a needle of local manufacture with an imported one). Don't equate inferior things with superior things.

Each of these sayings has at least one linguistic feature associated with Asante proverbs. Example (7) is distinguished by the rhythmic balance and the recurrence of the contrastive relationship among the vowel and consonant sounds, (8) by its conciseness and generality, and (9) possibly by the stylistic use of comparison. But there is nothing strikingly concrete or stark about the imagery. Although they may occur in an adult conversation or a serious debate, a mature speaker would, if he had other alternatives, select those with more striking images.

c) *The profanity or illuminatingly obscure nature of the Proverbs among the people of Ahwia Nsensanso*

In discussing the polyvalent nature of the proverb, one should not forget the social context with which it is closely associated and the fact that the proverb is an important aspect in the training of courtiers, who are required to show brilliance, wit, and sophistication in debates. It should be clear from the preceding paragraphs that there exist in the language multiple proverbs which, while expressing a common central idea or philosophy, differ in the intensity and quality of their language and imagery.

As has been said already, the proverbs associated with the people of Ahwia Nsensanso capture the essence of life, thoughts and human endourvours. They have an impression of eternity of the language and a sense of already experienced situations that the proverb, vividly speaks of, and authors go to great lengths to explain the pun on words and meanings which are sometimes shockingly vulgar though they are precious nuggets of words that according to Peggy Appiah, "they must be preserved and cherished in all their richness, profound or punning, profane or illuminatingly obscure nature." Several familiar proverbs that have basic truths in their perceptive manner as well as robs away the dignity of humanity, especially the female factor could be discussed as follows.

"Obaa ahooden gyina natofo mu". A woman's strength is in her bustle. (women sometimes wear their clothes in a kind of roll at the back – "atofo" a bustle, where they may keep their money and other valuables, and on which it is easy to carry a child.) This bustle stands both for her wealth and for her feminity. The means of giving interpretation to the female here, explains Austin's development of the performance utterance and it also emphasizes the pillar that distinguishes different aspects of the speakers' intention; the act of making the utterance (Locutionary), How the speaker tries to affect his audience, as in convincing. (Perlocutionary). One effect is for the female to be convinced that how she carries herself about, defines her dignity as a woman. In other words, a woman's ability to use her wit as a woman to win whatever she wants from her man is what emphasizes her strength, "ahoden" and her feminity. "atofo". As a socially valid verbal action of the people of Ahwia Nsensanso. If a woman is able to use her feminity well,

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she gains wealth, through child care, self- up- keep and her husband's love. Hence, however weak people may be, they also have their strengths.

Obaa ho bon a na efiri ne twe. If a woman stinks, it is because of her vagina. The symbolic consideration of this proverb supports Austin's argument that an utterance made has an already existing meaning and yet the already existing meaningful utterance also has an intended significance that is socially valid in communication. In other words, when we speak, our words do not have meaning in and of themselves. They are very much affected by the situation, the speaker and the listener. The intended meaning argued by the people of Ahwia Nsensanso is that"Internal cleanliness is as important as external cleanliness." This is usually used in situations where one always concentrates on only the physical appearance of something or somebody. "Twe" may stand for "bon". Whereas metaphor and simile name connections between seemingly dissimilar images, a symbol suggests a range of connections. Because of its position on the body of a woman, the image carved out for "twe" has a universal meaning, "bon" The speaker uses "twe" to suggest a connection with "bon" and this is symbolic.This explains that words alone do not have simple fixed meanings.

Obaa dwamanfoo se: "nye atopa a anka onte mpoma mu". A lecherous woman (literally, a prostitute) says: "If it were not for the way I shake my hips, I would not stay in the window" The repetition of vowel sounds and consonant sounds illustrate the sound devices Assonance and Consonance that indicate action that is connected with meaning. This connection of action and meaning making reflect the pillar that "Talking is not just semantics but acting and meaning making." Consonance can be seen in the repetition of "n, t, p,m" and Assonance can be seen in the repetition of "a" and "o" It is the repetition of these vowel sounds and consonant sounds that emphasize the action and meaning making. This proverb is used when one exhibits that he or she is unnecessarily vocal. The intended meaningful utterance is thus, if you are provocative, you will get a reaction.

"Obaa a oda nkunkyire na opene kotekom". A woman who sleeps with her husband is the one who asks for sex. Paradoxically, this utterance appears absurd, but turns out to have an acceptable and coherent meaning. If not, how can a married woman who sleeps with her husband always complains about being starved with sex? The effect of this is to shock and surprise the reader. The intended significance is that the person who has a right to something will ask for it. According to Nana Kwame Panin, the Odikro of Ahwia Nsensanso Traditional area, this particular utterance is made when "there is the issue of legality." He continues that apart from the issue of legality, a speaker's intended meaning can also consider ones' proximity as well as the person's right to that proximity. In other words, and as Austin puts it, "words alone do not have meanings in and of themselves. They are very much affected by the situation, the speaker and the listener." The context of an utterance plays a very important role in language usage.

"Obaa a n'ani atee no yedi no wo dantuo mu."We have sex with a devious woman in an unfinished room. This utterance presents two interpretations. According to the people of Ahwia Nsensanso, it is used when a woman exhibits a high level of experience in sex. It is said by this traditional area that if a woman is wise, she understands the language of sex and thus, when the need arises for the act of sex, it does not matter where it is done in so far as the place obtained for the act is private. That is, if it occurs inside a car, a bathroom, an unfurnished room, it can be done because the two parties at that particular situation have consented to do so. However, the other interpretation also presents the fact that "If one has a bad character, one will be treated without respect." This utterance, factors its actual effect, such as persuading, convincing, scaring, enlightening, inspiring or otherwise getting someone to do or realize something, based on the context of its use at a particular point in time. (Austin 1962).

"Obaa a oso na ne twe so: wo ware on a wonto mpa." If a woman is fat, her vagina is also fat. If you marry her, you don't buy a bed. The people of Ahwia Nsensanso argue that if you have something good to depend on, you don't use a substitute. In other words, if you love someone, you try to understand that fellow. This utterance is said to be used during times of advice to married couples. (Especially at the time of the marriage ceremony.) The vowels "o", "a" and "e" rhyme in the line to emphasize the literal and connotative meanings associated with the utterance. On the literal level, certain features on a woman determine the size of a woman's vagina. An experienced man notices these features and chooses the right woman to suit his desires. He therefore becomes content with whatever he has.

On the connotative level, elderly people use this particular proverb to persuade, convince, advise people to understand and make good use of what they have during conflicts in marriage or even during the ceremony itself.

"Obaa bonoaa n ode kotokuro yi ne twe so." A tough woman uses a cutlass to shave her pubic hair. This utterance is usually used when people exhibit bravery. It is the level of bravery displayed by a woman that will cause someone to make use of such utterances arround her. A shaving stick is what is used for shaving ones' private parts and not a cutlass. A cutlass is used to clear weeds or cultivate on a piece of land. The hyperbolic use of the utterance explains the level of aggressiveness or the hash nature of a particular

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woman. If Yaa Asantewaa, the former queen mother of Edweso, is revered by the Asante's, it is because of the level of bravery that she displayed during her time. Morally, the proverb defines the fact that one acts according to one's character.

"Obaa dwaman foo na oto mmarima mmonaa" (a prostitute rapes men.)" In the context of the people of Ahwia Nsensanso, it is men who propose to women. If the body language of a woman calls for sex, it could be termed normal but when it goes beyond body language it becomes another thing all together. In order to maintain your dignity and image as a woman you need to consider certain factors endorsed by tradition. As barked by Austin's idea that Considers that the meaning of an utterance is defined more by convention than the initiative of the reader. (When we speak, we are following learned rules.) In other words, there are certain conventions that cannot be ignored if only a woman intends to live peacefully in a particular Akan society.

1. "Obaa kondo kotee a, ose: "Mekunu mmo me akonhoma." If a woman is eager to have sex, she says: "My husband does not give me daily allowance." This utterance is used when there is a kind of conflict resolution between marriage partners. According to Nana Kwame Panin, the Odikro of Ahwia Nsensanso Traditional area, It is said that to get a clear meaning of whatever that stands behind the conflict to be able to solve for peace to prevail, elders in charge of the resolution, "abadwafoo" bring out another form of utterance "obi nnim Twumwaa ne Sempa hyee so" which literally means no one knows the boundary of "Twumwaa" and "Sempa". Connotatively, it also means that there is a deeper cause of the conflict that needs "abadwafoo" to meet outside the meeting with only one of the party of the couple. The revealing fact is usually when the man is not up to task. Elders try this means to get to the root of the matter in order to find a lasting solution. The discussion leads us to part of the speech act theory that distinguishes different aspects of the speaker's intention. These aspects include: The act of saying something"obi nnim Twumwaa ne Sempa hyee so" which stays at the " Locutionary" level

How one tries to affect one's audience, as in persuading, convincing or instructing the couple to make plain, the hidden issue in order to solve the problem. (Perlocutionary),

"Woredwonso na wota, na wotwa wani na obia ne ho a, wonya mfasoo-mprenu." If you are urinating and you fart, and you look around and no one is there, you have gained doubly. According to the people of Ahwia Nsensanso traditional area, the etymology of this utterance is that though undesirable, there are certain acts of humans that are usually done in private to obtain pleasure. In private, whatever done to obtain pleasure, the person does it and goes scot free without impunity. This considers the fact that certain indulgences which are sociably undesirable give much pleasure when practiced privately.

Feminists may find such proverbs as infuriating since such proverbs portray women as objects of men's whims and this view is shared by the lead author, Appiah, a British children's author and socialite who usually writes "male chauvinism" beneath her write ups. It can also be considered from the view point of Judith Buttler, an American Philosophist and a gender activist who holds the view that "pornography is a less form of speech as a per formative act of sexual degradation. It is related to suture and an interpellation in a way that forces a situation." In other words, the action involved in the choice of words forces the situation to be acted upon as well as being considered as a convention that must be adhered to. It is this form of acceptance that infuriates feminists and makes them speak about the complementarity of the sexes in situations such as these.

To conclude, the proverb brings home truths that most people unconsciously admit to the fact that in all their shockingly vulgarity, they are precious nugget of words that are supposed to be preserved.

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