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The Role of Oral Proverbs in Dagbani

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Abstract

This paper examines Dagbani oral arts and describes the role of oral proverbs as a trigger for traditional development, peaceful cohesion, and conflict resolution. The theoretical contribution is centered on the mnemonic SPEAKING model developed by Hymes as a framework for the analysis of a speech event within its cultural context. This paper suggests that the intricate resources of oral literature, exemplified by Dagbamba textual references are viable ingredients for sociocultural empowerment. The ideas conveyed in the genres of oral literature, representing key cultural realities of Dagbamba people offer insights and ideas for development and social good. Based on the data, it examines different types of proverbs that are used in different context depending on the purpose in the society. It also examines the oral proverbs in folktales. The paper calls for the preservation and effective education of oral competence and performance with emphasis on its unifying properties as a means to achieve societal unity, peaceful cohesion and development.

1. Introduction

This paper examines oral proverbs as a trigger for traditional development, peaceful cohesion, and conflict resolution in Dagbani, a Gur language spoken in the northern part of Ghana. It aims to analyse the different types of proverbs that are used in different context to achieve peace, cohesion and unity depending on the purpose in the society and explores the role of the oral proverbs in folktales in Dagbani. It is important to know that culture and development are tightly interlinked as arts in a broad sense and provides bedrock for education of the human mind, social skills, cohesion and long term economic entrepreneurship; so to bring cultural policies into the center of social policies is a major challenge [9]. Dagbamba are bonded by strong values of oral literature which embodies their tradition and epistemology. The key strength of their oral literature is that it is orally transmitted across generations, and various genres that exist among the people. Apart from the aesthetic functions of the genres, they also serve as a storehouse of knowledge and are unwritten.

Essentially, the traditional set up of Dagbamba view oral literature not to be dependent on print but relies solely on the spoken word for its creation, transmission and preservation. The assertion is that oral literature is a communal product with no individual authorship and no standard forms. Awouma observes that being the product of the masses, oral literature very often does not have an author but life is given to it by the very presence and personality of the narrator, hence the consideration of oral literature as a creative and performing art [7]. The scope of oral literature is broad and includes all the narrative forms such as the fable, legend, allegory, myth as well as riddles, proverbs and idioms [17]. The genres which are the branches of oral literature include poetry, prose and drama; this paper will focus on the role of proverbs in Dagbani oral literature and its contribution to the people's development.

Dagbani oral literature are scattered and buried in inaccessible written materials, and their significant has not been widely appreciated though they make input in the pupils' development. Poetry is the writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen, and arranged to create a specific emotional response through its meaning, sound and rhythm [1]. Just like other languages, poetry in Dagbani can be realized as

political songs, folksongs, proverbs, riddles, panegyric, drum language, war charms, dirges, lullaby etc. As part of national development, Dagbani oral art takes the place of newspapers, among non-literate peoples. Songs can be used to report and comment on current affairs, for political pressure, for propaganda, and to reflect and to mould public opinion. Poetry can also be used to pressurize those in authority or to comment on local politics. Songs insult, challenge, or satirical, and can function not only on a personal level but as politically effective weapons. Most Akan proverbs and riddles in drama on TV and Radio reflect the experiences of the people and it is a way by which oral literature educates the public via the media [4].

Finnegan observes that the literary relevance of proverbs is clear and they are a rich source of imagery and succinct expression on which more elaborate forms can be drawn [12]. Proverbs in Dagbani are characterized with imageries that are expressed in abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology. The figurative quality of proverbs is especially striking and one of their most noticeable characteristics is their allusive wording that is usually in a metaphorical form. Like proverbs, riddles are expressed in the simple form of a phrase or statement referring to some well-known object in more or less veiled language. In this paper, we examine the different types of proverbs that are used in different context depending on the purpose in the society and oral proverbs in folktales.

2. Dagbani Speakers in Ghana

According to oral tradition, the history of Dagbani speakers can be traced to *Tohazie* 'Red Hunter'. He was born in a place called *Gomba* (Zamfara) in the heart of the early Songhai kingdom to the west of Bornu. The tribal marks of the *Zamfara* people who are said to have remained behind and to have been conquered are similar to that of the present Dagbamba, so the Dagbamba recognize these folk as their kin [15, 14]. The people of Dagbaŋ speak the language Dagbanli. The speakers of Dagbani are called Dagbamba-pl or Dagbana-sg. Dagbani and Dagomba are the most used forms of Dagbanli and Dagbamba, however, Dagbani and Dagomba are often used by some native speakers. Inusah mentions that Dagbani dialects include Tomosili, Nayahili and Nanunli; Tomosili is spoken in and around the administrative capital of Northern Region Tamale, Nayahili is spoken in Yendi, the traditional capital of Dagbaŋ, and Nanunli, the variety spoken in Bimbila. Dagbani is one of the Gur languages that have attracted the attention of linguists as early as any other language in the region [15]. Other closely related Gur languages that have received relatively more attention in linguistic research include Dagaare, Gurune, Konni and Safaliba.

3. Proverbs

The word "proverb" originated from two Latin words *pro* 'for' and *verbum* 'word' put together to form the compound word *proverbium* 'for word'. The English word 'proverb' is then coined from the Latin word *proverbium* through the morphological process of clipping. This implies that the proverb is what is used instead of a plain word [20]. Okpewho mentions that a proverb is a piece of folk wisdom expressed with terseness and charm where terseness in this context refers to a certain economy in choice of diction while charm conveys the touch of poetic beauty [19]. Finnegan confirms that proverbs are generally marked by terseness of expression, by a form different from that of ordinary speech, and by a figurative mode of expression abounding in metaphor [12]. Nketia cited in Finnegan describes a proverb as a model of compressed or forceful language which draws its words from human wisdom, and takes interest in verbal techniques in the selection of words use of comparison as a method of statement [18, 12]. Nketia's definition exposes the reason for which proverbs are described as short wise saying with deeper meanings. Diabah and Amfo explain that proverbs are the collective view of a society which is reflective of communal thought and takes precedence over individual preferences and opinions [10]. They further explain that proverbs may be considered as a set of cultural heritage which reflect people's thought referring to a particular context. Their explanation proves the fact that proverbs are owned by a society and its content depends on the societal norms and beliefs, therefore, a person who uses a proverb in unsuitable context may not be held accountable for the choice of words in the society. This implies that proverbs are particularly suitable form of communication in situations and relationships of potential or latent conflict. "Since proverbs can refer to practically any situation, it would be impossible to give any comprehensive account of the content of African proverbs. Something of their variety can be gathered from the headings under which they are classed in many collections (in terms either of explicit content or implied allusion), for these endings include every aspect of human affairs" [12]. The literary use of proverbs in ordinary speech is sometimes taken further and shades into more elaborate forms like the Dagbani drum proverbs; like other poetry forms; Dagbani proverbs are not normally used specifically for entertainment but are more involved in everyday situations.

Riddles which involve analogy, whether of meaning, sound, rhythm or tone are very closely related to proverbs and they are expressed briefly and concisely. Finnegan notes that "riddles also sometimes have close connections with other aspects of literary expression with such forms as enigmas and dilemma tales, with stories and epigrams, and with praise names [12]. In spite of such connections, however, riddles emerge as a distinct type of literary expression in most African cultures and often considered to be the special domain of children and, unlike proverbs, to be for entertainment rather than for serious consideration." She explained that African riddles are usually not in a question form but they are usually in a form of a statement. For every riddle, an answer is expected but very often the listeners are not directly asked to guess but merely faced with an allusive

sentence referring analogously to something else, which they must then try to identify. The point, furthermore, is normally in some play of images, visual, acoustic, or situational, rather than, as in many English riddles, in puns or plays on words. In a simple riddles, some generalization is suggested and the answer involves pointing to the particular object implied. The answer here is the name of the object indicated, often just one word, and the analogy is one of meaning; the respondent must recognize the similarity of situation, character, or behaviour in the statement and its answer.

4. The Speaking Model

Eloquent is thought to be of the greatest significant, both practical and aesthetic, whether it is used in a legal case, political transactions, petitions, or the art of elegant conversation: argument, debate, and negotiation as well as elaborate literary forms [2]. Hymes developed a model as a framework for the analysis of a speech event within its cultural context using the mnemonic SPEAKING [13]. The model consists of sixteen components which are organized into eight divisions to form the acronym SPEAKING. The model aims at describing language use and the knowledge that participant in verbal interaction need to display in order to communicate successfully with one another by developing language competence as to when to speak, what to talk about, with whom, when, where, in what manner [11]. The acronym SPEAKING in language use is explained as follows: S stands for *setting and scene* where the speech event is located in time and space; P stands for participants who take part in speech event and their roles (speaker or receiver); E stands for *ends* which is explained as the purpose of the speech event, and what its outcome is meant to be; A stands for *act sequence* which is what speech acts make up the speech event, and order they are performed; K stands for *key* which shows the tone or manner of performance (serious or joking, sincere or ironic, etc.). I stands for *instrumentalities* which indicates what channel or medium of communication is used (e.g. speaking, signing, writing, drumming, whistling); and what language/variety is selected from the participants' repertoire. N stands for norms *of interaction* which indicates the rules for producing and interpreting speech acts; G stands for *genres* which indicates the 'type' the speech event belong to (e.g. interview, gossip), and what other pre-existing conventional forms of speech are drawn on or 'cited' (e.g. quote from mythology or poetry or scripture).

5. The Data

The discussions in this paper are based on fifty (50) oral proverbs in Dagbani that relate to creation, marriage, patience, strength, wickedness, secrecy, unity, arrogance, wisdom and knowledge. The proverbs are used in different context depending on the purpose to achieve peace, cohesion and unity. The data for this paper were both primary and secondary; the primary data were collected as samples of natural conversations by native speakers through focus key

informant interviews. Oral interview was employed as the main instrument for the data collection. The interview was selected for the data collection because the consultants could not read nor write; so the need for me to use the oral interview. The two consultants who were selected for the interview were contacted personally for their consent before the exercise. The sociolinguistic interviews were conducted on one-on-one with the consultants with structured questions asked in a predetermined order and a prescribed form with a more flexible interview protocols. The basic objective was to elicit more extended stretches of unscripted, conversational speech of the consultants in a relaxed 'natural' usage; each interview section lasted about one to two hours. The interviews were recorded with an audio tape and later transcribed. The data were collected in Tamale and Yendi. The secondary data which comprise 20 proverbs were taken from [20].

6. Oral Proverbs in Dagbani

Proverbs which are short sayings with deeper meanings are one of the aspects of oral literature in Dagbani, they are popularly called *ŋahili*.sg (*ŋaha*.pl). It is observed that proverbs in Dagbani are not said anyhow but they are said according to a situation and a purpose. Dagbani proverbs often do not have specialized occasions for their use, literarily forms of proverbs often contain some allusion or a picturesque form of speech, and certain people at least are marked by some poetic quality such as rhythm. Proverbs are accepted utterance used everywhere and anytime in the palace, home, market, durbar, school, meeting etc. There are different types of proverbs that are used in different context and these proverbs play key roles in speeches to achieve peace, cohesion and unity. The uses of proverbs in Dagbani are not restricted and those who use them frequently and constantly in their speech are considered good orators, for instance, some people resort to the use of a proverb to incur the wrath of others when they are not in talking terms. Dagbamba use a common proverb as illustrated below to describe those who use and understand proverbs.

1. a. ŋaha   ŋaha.ra nyɛla   vubɔ.ra
   proverb.pl person cop   trouble-maker
     'A person who uses proverbs is a troublemaker.'
b. ŋun wum li ka baŋ digbini gba nyɛla vubɔ.ra
   rel hear it and know meaning also cop   trouble-maker
'The one who hears and understands it is also trouble maker.'

As illustrated above, example (1a) and (1b) show the existence of proverbs in Dagbani acknowledging the fact that a person who uses a proverb and a person who also understands the proverb are both trouble makers. This implies that proverbs in the language are said with certain motives depending on the context in which they are used. Dagbani proverbs do not have fixed structure in terms of length; some are short while others are long. The words that are put together to make up a proverb have different semantic realization from that of the proverb. Proverbs in Dagbani are usually characterised by a preamble that precedes the main

proverb in a form of introduction.

2. Dagbaŋ kpamba n-nya   ka yɛlɨ……
   state.sg elder.pl see.perf   and   say.perf
   'Dagbaŋ elders see and say….'

The example in (2) is a preamble that serves as an introductory statement before a proverb is said in Dagbani, and once a speaker makes this utterance, it is well known among the people that a proverb will follow. This phenomenon to the Dagabani speaker serves as an alert signal for proverbs. The rest of the paper discusses the various roles of proverbs in different context depending on the purpose in the society and it shows how the proverbs are used to reinforce unity.

6.1. Proverbs Concerning God

The proverbs that are associated with God are known as *naa-wuni ŋaha*. Dagbamba by nature practiced the traditional religion before the advent of Islam and Christianity and they were very religious traditionalists. Traditionally, Dagbamba engage in activities that draw them closer to God like praying frequently, pouring libation and desisting from acts that would incur the wrath of God. They have the belief that since their entire burden is cast on God, His name should be mentioned in every conversation, and this explains one of the reasons some Dagbani proverbs are related to God. In Dagbani, God is referred to as *naa-wuni* 'Chief God' and so the proverbs that are related to God begin with the name of God *naa-wuni*. The most common proverbs that are related to God in Dagbani are human names as illustrated below:

3. a. wum-pini
      God-gift.perft
      'God's gift'
   b. wun-nam
      God-create.perft
      'God's creation'
   c. wun-zaligu
      God.command.perft
      'God's command'

The examples in (3) are some of the indigenous Dagbani names that are proverbs about God, each proverb has a phrasal structure in which the name of God is attached to a stem verb by deleting the initial morpheme *naa* 'chief'. Dagbani speakers prefer to use these names because they belief that the names bear God's name and show loyalty to God's creation by way of praising Him. So the names are significantly used to praise God and show the peoples' association with God. In other proverbs apart from human names, the lexeme *naa-wuni* is not clipped in the construction of the proverbs that are related to God, the proverbs begin with the lexeme *naa-wuni* 'chief God'. The following proverbs illustrate this:

4. naa-wuni binbirili sanzalɨ   bi kuri   li
   chief-God seed.sg dought.sg neg kill.perf it
   'What God has blessed cannot be destroyed by drought.'

5. naa-wuni zaligu   ku kɔŋ   zaa-shee
   chief-God command not thwart.perf place
   'God's commandment cannot be thwarted'

6. naa-wuni bi mɔŋ   so   ti zamba n zooi
   chief-God neg deprive someone 1pl evil 1sg many
   'God has not deprived anyone but we are our own enemies'

7. naa-wuni chɛlɨ zoli   ka zo-tii tam payɨ wuni
   Chief-God leave mountain and mountain-tree stand praise God
   'God should leave the mountain for the mountain-tree to survive on it and praise God'

8. naa-wuni mɔŋ   nayʋ   biɛɣʋ yili-gʋ
   chief-God deprive.perf cow.sg bad   horn.sg
   'God has deprived the bad cow a horn.'

In these examples, God is considered as the creator of the universe and the source of reference as well as the provider. The data in (4) show that God is the provider of life and that God's protection is the safety of the people and it can never be destroyed by any other forces on earth. It shows that a seed sown by God cannot be destroyed by a severe drought so there is the need for one to depend on God. The example in (5) reveals that when the people who have faith in God get themselves involve in a bad situations, there is no need to revolt but they must accept it in good faith for what God has commanded will surely come to pass. The example in (6) explains that people are their own enemies and they must not blame God for their misfortunes since God listens and provides for eveveryone. Similarly, it is illustrated in (7) that one has the responsibilty to praise God in everything because we depend on God to survive since God has the power to make and unmake as illustrated in (8) which shows that God disarms the wicked men who have evil intentions against their fellow beings. The proverbes above are also used to express God's creation as in (7).

6.2. Proverbs Concerning Unity

The proverbs about unity are known as *nangban-yini ŋaha*. Unity is one of the traditional values that are upheld among the Dagbani speakers; it is a major source of bringing people together and to a large extend promote peaceful development. Proverbs related to unity are used to constantly remind people about the need for them to be united and to be one another's keeper for peaceful coexistence. The lexeme *nuu* 'hand' begins most of the proverbs about unity. Some of such proverbs are presented below:

9. naa-wuni chɛlɨ   bɔbgʋ
   God   leave.perf group
   'God loves those who belong to a group'

10. nu.bil yini ku pii   kuɣili
    hand-small one neg   pick.perf stone.sg
    'One finger cannot pick up a stone.'

11. nuu yi tee   ka di kpee gba tee
    hand conj stretch conj part other also stretch.perf
    'When a hand is stretched out, a neighbour's hand is also stretched out.'

12. nu.bil   bi nyu.ra dam-ʒeɣu ka-lee   mi da-yili
    hand-small neg drink alchol-red conj-part know.perf
    alchol-house
    'A finger does not drink pito, but it knows where pito

is sold.'

13. nu.zaa   kpuɣi   bini dɩn tɩmsa nu-dirigu zuɣu
    hand.left take.perf thing rel heavy hand-right head
'The left hand lifts a heavy thing because of the right hand.'

14. din tuli zuɣu ka   naa-wuni nam   kparima ayi
    Part hot head conj God   create.perf cheek.pl two
'It is because of heat that God created two cheeks'

The above examples present different ways of expressing unity in Dagbani proverbs, for instance, example (9) expresses God's love for people who belong to groups for togetherness. It reminds the individual to support positive group activities that promote department and coexistence among people regardless of one's social affiliation in life. Most of the unity proverbs have *nu-u* 'hand' as its subject matter as presented in (10-13). The example in (10) reminds the people that one cannot do things without the cooperation of the others and that unity makes strength. In (11), it indicates that if one person offers to help, others will also do same, so people must work together and be prepared to take the initiative. Sometimes, people do things for others in the name of unity and for that matter one does not live in isolation as shown in (12) which reveals that a person does not just do things which does not concern him/her, but he/she does it for the sake of togetherness. The example in (13) shows that a difficult task is done with the support of others as one person's strength may not be sufficient to accomplish a task but the cooperation of others is needed. Other unity proverbs can be expressed in different form as seen in (14) which show that God created everything for a purpose and that people in need may also rely on others.

6.3. Proverbs Concerning Wisdom

Some proverbs are used to express wisdom and these types of proverbs are referred to as *ɣɛm- ŋaha* 'wisdom proverbs'. In certain situations such as bargaining, traditional court, proverbs are often used by one or other to win a case by drawing some analogy through the image in the proverb. Traditional counselors and elders or judges also use proverbs to comment obliquely on the conduct of those involved, often with implied advice or rebuke. These means that the everyday use of this proverbs help in shaping the people and resolving conflicts through the power of proverbial language which makes the voiceless voiced by helping one to talk under difficult context. The following are examples proverbs concerning wisdom:

15. naŋban valiŋga-lana m   piiri   dabli
    mouth   quick.person 1sg. pick.perf slave
    'The person who speaks well finds a slave.'

16. niŋ-kurugu yika sahim tiri bia o-lee mali yɛl'kurili tiri o
    Person-old neg food give child he-part have wisdom-old give him
    'If an elderly person has no food for a child; he has wisdom for him.'

17. ŋʊn bari   wahʊ ʒi ni tɩŋ   tula
    rel ride.imperf horse neg rel ground hot
    'A person who rides a horse doesn't know the ground is hot.'

18. ŋʊn ka yɔli bi ʒɛm   yo-ŋmaa
    rel neg penis neg reject.perf penis-short
    'A person who doesn't have a penis, doesn't reject a short one.'

19. ŋʊn sɔɣi   yɛm   n nyɛ jɛrigu
    rel hide.perf wisdom 1sg cop fool
    'A person who hides wisdom is a fool.'

20. ŋʊn wʊm gutulu zinli ŋʊn gari ŋun tum gutulinsi
    rel obey selfish tongue rel better rel work selfishness
    'The person who obeys a selfish person is better than a person who acts sefishly.'

The proverbs concerning wisdom are usual stated in the form of an advice and they are used to alert a listener to be wise depending on the context. Example (15) explains the fact that someone who speaks convincingly easily gets what he/she needs and that one should be quick to ask for your need from others. The role of an elderly persons in a society and the need to respect and listen to them is expressed in (16) which show that if the aged has nothing to offer a child, he has wisdom to offer him. In (17), it shows that if a person has not experienced hardship or difficult times, he doen't know what it takes to be in a particular situation. Such people underrate others and usually do not show concern for those who have experienced such things. In (18), it is illustrated that if a person lacks very useful things, he appreciates every little offer he gets from others. It is important to share with others what we have and must associate their potentials or usefulness with others, this is illustrated in the proverb in (19) which shows that a person who does not share what he has is a fool. The example in (20) indicate that it is better to listen to a selfish person than to be slefish in life. Some of the wisdom proverbs usually use the fool as its subject matter as in the examples below:

21. jɛrigu nyɛrɩ-la   yɛm   yɛn-dan   yili
    fool   learn.perf wisdom wisdom.person house
    'A fool learns wisdom in the house of a wise person.'

22. jɛrigu yi di n-tiɣi o   mɔri-la   naa-wuni
    fool con eat satisfy 3sg. challenge chief-God
    'If a fool is satisfied, he rebels against God.'

6.4. Proverbs Concerning Patience

Dagbani speakers also believe the fact that patience can move mountains, so they have patience related proverbs which are used to urge people to resort to patience in every aspect of life. Such proverbs are known in Dagbani as *suɣlo ŋaha* and the lexeme *suɣlo* 'patience' is mentioned in each proverb as the subject matter. The proverbs include the following:

23. suɣulo   yi beni chin-chini-ni kpe gaɣili ni
    patience con there cloth-will enter gallon loc
    'If there is patience, a piece of cloth will enter into a bottle'

24. suɣulo mali nyɔrɩ suli n-ka shɛlɩ
    patience make profit anger neg something
    'There is profit in patience but anger has no profit.'

25. suɣulo ni ku shɛlɩ   pala jifa
    patience rel kill something neg forbidden

'What patience kills is not forbidden.'

26. suɣulo   mali nyɔrɨ di malibu   nto
Patience make profit it make.imperf difficult
'Patience is profitable but it is difficult to keep.'

27. suɣulo   ni ka dakɔli   nya   paɣa
patience loc conj bachelor.sg get.perf girl.sg
'It is through patience that a bachelor gets a wife.'

28. suɣulo mbɔri   buni
patience strive.perf wealth
'It is patience that strives for wealth.'

29. suɣulo   kɔŋ   bo
patience loss what
'What doesn't patience have?'

The examples above illustrate proverbs that express patience in the form of advice like those about wisdom. The examples show that the success of life depends on patience as illustrated in (23) which illustrates that with patience, everything in life is possible. This implies that with patience, even what seem to be impossible can be made possible and it is important for the individual to exercise patience in everything in life. It is noted that if one exercises patience and does not achieve his or her aim, then the person is not patient enough, the example in (24) expresses this sentiment and notes that through patience, one can be successful but can easily hail through anger. In (25), the proverb shows that righteousness is associated with patience and what ever is destroyed by patience is legitimate. It is observed in (27) that it is through patience that a bachelor gets a wife and a bachelor girl also gets a husband and in (28), the narrative is that one needs to deny oneself other things in order to achieve something emphasisng the fact with patience everything is possible irrespective of the difficulties one encounters. It is a belief of the people that there is nothing in life patience cannot do so the proverb in (29) confirms this notion by expressing the fact that patience has everything in life.

6.5. Proverbs Concerning Strength

It is commonly known among Dagbamba that people who are strong have power and they are always right. Their paramount chief is addressed as 'Yaa-naa' 'strength chief' due to the peoples' belief in strength. In this regards, there are proverbs that address the issues of strength in the language, these proverbs relate to strength expressing its usefulness. Such proverbs are called *yaa ŋaha* and usually have the lexme *yaa* **'**strong' as the subject matter. These are some examples from the data collected:

30. yaa-lana   ŋmani   jɛrigu
strong-person   resemble.perf fool
'A strong person resembles a fool.'

31. yaa   nyaaga nyɛla   chɔɣinsi
strong   back   cop   weak
'The result of strength is weaknesses.'

32. yaa mi   la malibu   ka yuu-ra.
srong know.perf Det make.imperf conj keep-long
'Know how to handle strength in order to have it for ever.'

33. ŋʊn mali   yaa   ŋʊn mali   yɛlimaŋli

rel make.perf strong rel make.perf right
'The one who has power is the one who is right.'

34. yaa-yaa   bi kuri   sulugu
strong-strong neg kill.perf hawk
'Strength does not kill a hawk.'

The examples illustrate how power is expressed in different proverbs with strength as the subject matter. It is observed that people who are strong or have power sometimes behave like fools by the way they act in certain situations. They behave as if nothing on earth can happen to them as long as they have the strength so the proverb in (30) shows that people who have power resemble a fool but in example (31) explain that everything has an end and the result of strength if not handled well is total weakness. Strentgh in this context does not refer to only physical strength but it includes power and money. There are proverbs that remind and warn people who have power that they can only hold on to the power if they know how to handle it, this is presented in (32). People believe that if a person who has power dog bites you, there is nothing you can do than to let it go, this centiment is expressed in the proverb in (33) arguimg that those who are strong and have power are right in everything they do. It is stated earlier that patience is a strong key to sucess in life and for that matter one's strengh is not enough to win success as illustrated in (34).

6.6. Proverbs Concerning Wickedness

There are proverbs that are related to human wickedness and the evil deeds of people, such proverbs are usually expressed in a way that the evil aspect is stated followed by the end result. The proverbs are used to advice the people to avoid evil deeds. These proverbs are called *zamba ŋaha* 'wicked proverbs' and they mostly begin with the lexeme *zamba* 'wicked' as seen in the data below:

35. zamba-lana   toŋ barɨ ka di gbaai   o bi-a.
Wicked-person trap set conj it catch.perf 3sg child
'A trap set by a wicked person catches his own child.'

36. zamba bɔɣili gbirimi   ka di zilima
wicked trench dig.imperf conj it deep
'wicked trenches are dug wide or else one may fall into it.'

37. zamba   biɛni-mi ka ŋʊn zoori   zoora
wicked   exist   conj rel grow.imperf grow.imperf
'Though wickedness exists, those who are blessed are still growing.'

It is commonly attested that evil exists because people do evil to harm others for their selfish interest, and for this reason, there are proverbs in Dagbani that are related to wickedness. The example in (35) show that the wickedness one does against others will certainly be his recompense and interestingly, if one digs a wicked trench or does evil to others, the person must, think over it, otherwise the same evil will fall on the person or crushed when it caves in as seen in (36). Although wickeness and evil exist, those who are blessed continue to grow no matter the circumstance and the evil done against them in life, so it's important for one to always visit the enemy if the need be and move on in life.

6.7. Proverbs Concerning Secrecy

The notion of concealment is very important as long as people continue to co-exist in life. In every society, people discuss their personal issues with relatives, friends and close associates and for that matter the need to keep secretes among them for it is not everything that can be discussed openly. There are proverbs in Dagbani that concerns secrecy popularly known as *ashili ŋaha* 'secret proverbs' as presented in the data below:

38. tɔɣisi   zali   nyɛ   nini   kahɨmbɔ
    discuss.perf stand   cop   eye   blink.imperf
    'A secret already discussed results in blinking of one's eyes.'

39. tɔɣisi   niŋ   ku   ŋmani   tʊm-da
    discuss.perf do.perf neg   resemble.perf   work.N
    'A work done in secret cannot resemble the work itself.'

40. din   ku   baa   bela   baa   puuni
    what kill.perf   dog   inside do   stomach
    'What killed the dog is in the dog's stomach.'

The data above illustrate some proverbs about secrecy in different context; for instance, example in (38) shows that a secret only exist if there has been a discussion and one can only blink the eye to the other if there is a secret between them. Sometimes, people plan to do things which turn out to become a secret between them, for instance, the example in (38) indicates that what is done in secret cannot have the same value as what is done in open. The example in (40) explains the fact that whatever happens in life has a source though it may be a secret; this refers to keeping something secretes among a number of people.

6.8. Proverbs Concerning Fear

It is established that an unpleasant feeling of anxiety or apprehension caused by the presence or anticipation of danger could lead to fear in people. Traditionally, the people of Dagbaŋ are ruled with fear of something happening to them if they go wrong and for that matter there are proverbs that concerns fear. Such proverbs are called *dabiɛm ŋaha* 'fear proverbs' and they usually begin with the lexeme *dabiɛm* 'fear' as illustrated in the data below:

41. dabiɛm kani ka   bɔ   n-zibi   yuŋ
    fear   neg   conj what   dark   night
    'If there is no fear, what makes the night dark'

42. dabiɛm-lana n-chɛ ka be bandi niŋ.sala biɛɣu
    fear-person   let   conj 3pl know human   bad
    'It is the coward who makes people to identify an evil person.'

The example in (42) is said to someone who argues about fear and thinks there is nothing to fear in life. The proverb is used to remind the person that it is fear that results into darkness. The fear of been noticed by the public makes it possible for the coward to be identified and in (42) it shows that if one calls someone a coward, others will also call you a coward for what one has done. So it is more important to search for the truth in a case rather than to believe all the false rumors and evil things people will say.

6.9. Proverbs Concerning Marriage

Procreation is a major belief among Dagbamba traditionally, and for that matter marriage is one of the necessary cultural determinants. There are proverbs that relate to marriage in the language due to the nature and types of marriage they have. Such proverbs are called *paɣakpuɣibo ŋaha* 'marriage proverbs' and they usually begin with the lexeme *nahʊ* 'cow' which is personified for neutrality. The following data explains some of the proverbs:

43. nahʊ daari-la   o-kpee   ka   nyʊrɨ   kom
    cow   push.perf-Det   3sg-other   conj drink.perf   water
    'A bull pushes the other aside and drinks water.'

44. nahʊ ni   gɔrɨ shɛlɨ ni   ka   o-mori   ŋubira   be
    cow   loc roam place   loc conj 3sg-grass eat.imperf loc
    'Where a cow roams is the place where its grasses are found.'

45. nahʊ yi   lo   kpaa   ka   o-mali   suɣulo
    cow   con tie stick conj 3sg.have   patience
    'If a cow is tied to a stick with a rope, it is patient.'

Traditionally, a man can confiscate another man's wife through strength, money, deceit or black magic and when such people are confronted, they use the proverb in (43) to explain themselves. Some men render services such as farming to the parents of a lady with the intention of marrying their daughter and when they are questioned about their services; they use the proverb in (44) to announce their intention. A woman who is married to a man is advised to be patient in everything since a wife who is under a man's control must be patient. The example in (45) is usual used to describe such situations in marriage.

6.10. Proverbs in Dagbani Folksongs

Folktales are popular moonlight tales in Africa that are narrated during the evening by adults and children [5]. Folksongs which are known in Dagbani as *salima-yila* are sung during storytelling to mark boundaries between the episodes and events in the story as well as prompt and criticize the narrator, the audience or the characters. The Folksongs which are sung in dramatic forms using dialogues contain proverbs that show conflicts and resolutions. The following are some proverbs in a Dagbani folksong:

46. zom   yɛla   zom yɛla
    fear   trouble.pl   fear trouble.pl
    'fear trouble' → 'fear trouble'

47. zom   yɛla   gari   bɛ   niŋa   bɔ
    fear   trouble   more   they do.perf   what
    'Fear trouble more than what they can do to you'

48. zom   yɛla   ka   naa-wuni   yihi-a
    fear   trouble   and   chief-God   remove-you
    'Fear trouble and God will protect you'

49. dabiɛm kani   ka   bɔ   zibi   yuŋ
    fear   neg-there   and   hat   dark   night

'If there is no fear, what makes the night dark'

The example above is a four-line first stanza of a folksong about fear. It warns people about the dangers of fear and asks them to stay away from troubles. Each line of the song is a proverb that has trouble as its subject matter. People who are arrogant in a society are usually advised to be good and it is common to hear the proverb in line (47) and sometimes the entire folksong is sung by the speaker. For instance, people go to the shrine to seek for a child and if the person gets the child, the child must be named after the shrine but if the person declines, the line in (48) is used to warn the person or the whole song.

7. Discussion

The analysis presented in the data confirms the fact that the use of proverbs in an individual speech is an acceptable means of communicating difficult and sensitive cultural 'truth' [10]. From the data analysis, proverbs in Dagbani employ various linguistic strategies such as smile, metaphor, personification and paradox. It also employs the use of conditional clauses as verbal strategy to communicate cultural sentiments. All the analysis are premised on the ethnography of speaking model which interest is on patterns and functions of speaking, patterns and functions that organize the use of language in the conduct of social life [8].

Simile is an indirect comparison of two seemingly unlike things, indicated by some connectives usually 'like', 'as', 'than', or a verb such as resemble. It expresses similarity, and for a simile to exist, the things compared have to be dissimilar in kind. Simile is used in a number of proverbs, e.g. (30) and (39). It is noted in the examples that two things had been compared in the proverbs indicating some resemblance. Metaphor compares two things by saying that one is the other. It is stated that one thing is something else which in literal sense is not. In (31) strength is directly compared to weakness. Personification involves giving human attributes or qualities to inanimate or lifeless things or animals. In some of the proverbs (43-45), human attributes are given to the cow with the intension of reinforcing a man or a woman in marriage.

It observed that paradox is the most common recurrent linguistic verbal strategy employed in the proverbs. The proverbs seem absurd or self-contradictory at first sight but still contain an element of truth on a second thought. Consider the following proverb:

50. dabiɛmlana kpirila sahakam pɔi ka kum naan yi ka-o-na.

  fear-person die.perf time-all before conj death will come-him-here

 'A coward dies many times before his death.'

The example in (50) shows the semantic nature of Dagbani proverbs in which the meaning is absurd and not clear. Such proverbs are understood on a second thought about the meaning, this applies to most of the proverbs presented in the data in (4) to (49). The example in (50) is used to analyse the proverbs in Dagbani using Hymes SPEAKING model which consists of six components, separating into two components

the referential and situational.

7.1. S – Setting and Scene

This describes where a speech event is located in time and space. The analysis of speech events has been central to the ethnography of speaking as empirical contexts within which speech activity is situated and acquires meaning [8]. Speech event is any activity that involves communication and this event can be a speech act like, proverbs, greetings, apology, questions, compliments and self-introduction. Some events include conversation, confession to priest, interviews, jokes, festivals, lectures etc. As seen in the data, each proverb is used in a specific linguistic context to indicate the fact that proverbs are used to solve problems and not just for their literary beauty in language. The proverbs in (3-8) are used in the context of praising God and to show man's relation with God. Among the people, there is the need for unity among people who live together; the examples in (9-14) are used in the context of conflict resolution to promote peace and togetherness as also in (23-29) which expresses patience. There is no human society without the elder to advise the youth, so the examples in (15-22) are used to express wisdom and to give advice as also in (30-34) about strength. In an event of talking about evil in human life, for instance, the examples in (35-37) are used to express wickedness as examples in (41-45) for fear. In an ordinary conversation, people share secrets so the examples in (38-40) express secrecy. The example in (50) which will be used for the rest of the discussion is used in an event of conflict resolution.

7.2. P-Participants

In every speech event, there are people or characters who take active part in the speech event. The people are assigned or play roles such as speaker or source; addressee or destination, audience, eavesdropper. As seen in (50), the proverb is said by a speaker to a listener who listens and reacts to the proverb. The listener is always the target of every proverb in Dagbani, so there is no proverb that is said for saying sake.

7.3. E-Ends

This defines the purpose of the speech event and the possible outcome it is meant to be. Every proverb is triggered by a particular purpose, so no proverb is said in a vacuum. The example in (50) expresses the purpose of warning an individual not to be a coward but a wise person. The data in (3-49) reflects different ends in the proverbs and these include: creation, marriage, patience, strength, wickedness, secrecy, unity, arrogance, wisdom and knowledge.

7.4. A-act sequence

Speech Act is a term introduced by [6]. And it is used to refer to a theory that analyses the role of utterances in relation to the behaviour of the Speaker (S) and the Addressee (A) in interpersonal communication [2]. It describes what speech acts make up a speech event, and what

order they are performed. The speech act in this paper is the proverbs presented in the data. Proverbs in Dagbani involves the verbal, plus a gesture or sometimes a facial expression. For instance in (50), it begins with a verbal expression which identifies the subject (coward), followed with another verbal expression accompanied with a gesture as a facial expression. In a speech, the proverbs are used either at the beginning or at the end of the speech event.

7.5. K - Key

This part of the model explains the tone or manner of performance such as serious or joke, sincere or ironic, etc. The tone is the voice behind the words that show the attitude of the speaker. Most of the Dagbani proverbs are associated with seriousness and sincere, for example, the proverb in (50) has the tone of seriousness because of the choice of words by the speaker. Example (2) shows that little is associated with joke since a person who uses a proverb and the one who understands it are both describe as trouble seekers; this implies the proverbs used have the key of seriousness.

7.6. I - Instrumentalities

The proverb as a speech act is transmitted through a channel or medium of communication such as speaking, signing, writing, drumming, whistling, and what language/variety is selected from the participants' repertoire. The proverbs presented in this paper are all from the oral source in Dagbani. There are some proverbs in Dagbani that are also transmitted through the talking drums either in Dagbani or Akan. The data in (50) is transmitted to the medium of speaking while some though they were originally spoken, they were later written down.

7.7. N - Norms of Interaction

The proverbs in Dagbani are used based on the rules for producing and interpreting speech acts in the society. These proverbs are mostly used by the elderly men and women in the society and none of those presented in this paper is gender based. Children are hardly heard using a proverb especially when they are talking to an elderly person. The proverb in (50) reflects an adult speech as proverbs are used mostly in adult speeches.

7.8. G – Genres

This describes the type of speech event (e.g. interview, gossip) employed in the communication process, and determines other pre-existing conventional forms of speech that are drawn on or cited in producing appropriate contributions to talk. These include for example, whether people quote from mythology or poetry or scripture. As seen in (50), the proverbs in Dagabani are not created by a speaker who uses them, but they are quoted from traditional sources making reference to what the elders used to say in the past as in example (2) which also serves as an alert in using proverbs in Dagbani.

8. Conclusion

The paper sought to examine Dagbani oral proverbs as a trigger for traditional development, peaceful cohesion, and conflict resolution. It describes the various proverbs in Dagbani focusing on different themes such as God as in (3-8) in which the proverb begins with the lexeme *naa-wuni* to show man's relationship with God. Others include unity as in (9-14) to show cohesion, wisdom as seen (15-22) for development and conflict resolution as also in (23-29) which expresses patience, the proverbs in (30-34) are about strength, the examples in (35-37) are used to express wickedness, those in (41-45) for fear and in a conversation, the proverbs in (38-40) express secrecy. The paper reveals that speech event is any activity that involves communication and conversation is an example which employs a proverb as speech act as discussed in the analysis using the SPEAKING model. We conclude that the proverbs are mostly used by the adult speakers and based on the data, the use of the proverbs are not gender bias. The paper also shows the role of proverbs in Dagbani folksongs as in (46-49) in which each line of the song is a proverb.

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