

Research Article

This article is published by JFP Publishers in the *African Social Science and Humanities Journal (ASSHJ)*. Volume 2, Issue 3, 2021.

ISSN: 2709-1309 (Print)

2709-1317 (Online)

This article is distributed under a Creative Common Attribution (CC BY-SA 4.0) International License.

Article detail

Received: 22 February 2021

Accepted: 02 April 2021

Published: 16 June, 2021

Conflict of Interest: The author/s declared no conflict of interest.



Contemporary use of proverbs in Akan news broadcast

Nana Anima Wiafe-Akenten*

¹Akan-Nzema Department, University of Education, Winneba-Ghana,
wiafeakenten1@gmail.com

*Corresponding author



Abstract: Proverb is a universal phenomenon which plays very significant roles in language use and communication. The Igbo of Nigeria says: "Proverb is the palm oil with which words are eaten", meaning without the ornament of proverbs, words are hard to swallow. Akan people of Ghana also believe that: If you speak without proverbs, your speech is not complete in sweetness. Proverbs have been used extensively in the media since the establishment of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) in 1954. Therefore, this paper analyses the use of proverbs in radio and television news broadcasts in Akan. Four radio stations and three Television stations were selected for the study. Recordings of 6:00 a.m, 12:00 and 6:00 p.m. News from the four Radio stations and evening News from the three Television stations constituted the data for the study. After listening to the recordings, follow-up interviews were conducted. The study used an integrated approach for data analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis and

Politeness Theory are the theoretical frameworks adopted for this ethnographic discussion. Both theories emphasize that in all speech or communication acts; one must consider the text, cultural context, and the setting in which expressions or certain literary devices are used. Analysis of the data indicates that Newscasters/readers in the selected stations use proverbs in their News items. It was further found out that proverbs used in this context are of four categories – original, modified, embellished, and newly coined proverbs. In each case, the proverbs are either used appropriately or otherwise.

Keywords – Embellished, Indispensability, News broadcast, Proverbs, Text and context

1. INTRODUCTION

The word proverb has seen various definitions by scholars and writers. Mieder (2004: xi) states that proverbs "are everyday experiences and common observations that are put in succinct and formulaic language, making them easy to remember and ready to be used instantly as effective rhetoric in oral or written communication." Finnegan (1970: 390) opines that a proverb is a body of a brief statement, which mirrors the thought and insight of a group of people over some time. Agyekum (2005: 9) defines proverbs as "interpretations of traditional wisdom based on the experiences and socio-political life of our elders." Yankah (1989a: 12) also explains that proverb "is a condensed statement of a collective idea or sentiment relative to a determined category of objects..." From the above classical definitions of proverbs, we can conclude that proverbs are short or condensed statements which reflect the thought and insight of a group of people and guide their social interactions based on their socio-cultural experiences. There

is the general belief that proverbs enhance the attention value of discourse, making it rich, appealing, audible, and memorable. Hence, the indispensability of proverbs in everyday conversation and in the media discourse as well.

Agyekum (2000) and Wiafe-Akenten (2008) observed that Akan proverbs are used in radio and TV programs such as newspaper reviews, news, folktale, advertisement, competition programs, etc. Notable among them is the Akan News Broadcast. It is not uncommon to hear literary devices such as *proverbs*, *hyperbole/exaggeration*, *metaphor*, *simile*, *idiophones* and many others being employed in the news. But there is also a general concern that the use of many literary devices, especially proverbs, often distort the core message. Thus, the newspaper article “*News must be devoid of proverbs; these proverbs distort the news...*” (Daily Graphic, Wednesday, March 14, 2009: 9). Nketiah (2006) has also shown concern that literary devices used in the media most “*often do harm than good*”. It is in the light of the above reasons and others that informed our quest to look at the use of proverbs in the Akan News broadcast.

1.1. Background of Akan

Akan belongs to the Kwa group of languages (Dolphyne, 1988, 2006; Agyekum, 2010). It refers to both the language and the people who speak it. Akans mostly occupy the southern and middle (Western-North, Central, Eastern, Ashanti, Bono, Bono East, Ahafo, and Oti regions) parts of Ghana. The Akan language comprises various dialects: Agona, Akuapem, Akyem, Akwamu, Asante, Assin, Bono, Buem, Denkyira, Fante, Kwawu, Twifo and Wassaw (Agyekum; 2008, 2018). In Ghana, Akans constitute the largest ethnic group. According to the 2010 population and housing census, 47.5% of Ghanaians are Akans (Ghana Statistical Service 2012:5). Agyekum (2006), Wiafe-Akenten (2015) found out in their researches that the Akan language is now extensively used in the media for various purposes. Wiafe-Akenten (2008; 2015) has also pointed out that the majority of the population of Ghana including a significant number of non-native Akan speakers, speak and understand the language. The language is used in several domains of communication (for example, media, advertisement, education, entertainment, market and so on) in the country. It is studied as a subject from primary to the university level in Ghana with some written materials consisting of novels, poetry and drama in it (Agyekum, 2010). This has greatly contributed to the patronage of Akan programmes and for that matter the use of proverbs in the media, which also aided in providing ample data collected for the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Quite a number of works have been done on proverb use in both Western and African communication context, especially those from an African perspective (Amfo & Diabah 2012; Anderson 2012; Meider 1993, 2004; Obeng 1996; Yankah; 1985, 1989a, 1989b). Yankah (1995) looks at the performer, performance, audience, role and function of Akan proverbs. According to Yankah (1997), proverbs are highly ambiguous in the sense that they are used as a form of verbal indirection by the tale singer to protest against authority due to their vindictive and repressive dispositions which preserve his face and that of his social relations. He further noted that proverbs, like other genres such as folktales, are embedded with morals that are mostly accessible to the people. The ambiguous view on proverbs is also shared by Amfo and Diabah (2015: 8) who opine that “...by their opaque and sometimes ambiguous meanings, proverbs often hide their intended meanings thereby making their ideological underpinnings subtle, but quite pervasive.”

Yankah (1986a & b) discuss the characteristics, themes, roles and stylistics of proverbs in Akan rhetorics and intimated that the meaning of a proverb is dependent on the context of usage. Yankah (1986b) specifically looks at the speaking of a proverb as a creative and dynamic process in the language (Akan). This, he describes as a means by which proverbs respond to the changing needs of a group of people which reflects the present situations of that period/time. Ofoe (2003) talks about how proverbs are employed as a form of indirection in some Akan radio/TV Talk shows. Agyekum (2005) looked at the Akan people’s perception of proverbs in Kwabena Konadu’s song and

stated that proverbs used in the song provided the avenue for understanding the Akan culture, philosophy and morality.

Kqoufi, Amate and Tabi-Agyei (2013) discuss how some Akan selected proverbs have symbolic and socio-cultural significance and proposed that the visual symbols have embedded values that are held in high esteem by the Akan people, therefore, there is the need to create more proverbs through this visual medium to save other numerous proverbs which are on the verge of being endangered; because these proverbs are indispensable in African communication and in Akan for that matter. Akan proverbs have also been studied from a gender lens to show how males and females are portrayed in them (Amfo & Diabah, 2015; Diabah & Amfo, 2018).

Amfo and Diabah (2015) examine the representation of women as espoused in some selected Akan proverbs (which are stereotypical in nature) and they argued that by the use of these proverbs; which are gendered and are often derogatory, subservient or negative are used to lure women in accepting and reinforcing these stereotypical roles or tendencies. They conclude that traditional thoughts are reflected in proverbs in the sense that we can identify feminine roles which are traditionally assigned to them. Diabah and Amfo (2018) also discuss the representation of men in some selected Akan proverbs from texts and oral sources and the imports of those representations on modern-day men (Ghanaian). The study discusses the contemporary and the traditional expectations of men in Ghanaian societies and how they are represented in the selected proverbs. The study makes it clear that such men are unable to meet the demands expected from them so they are considered not men enough.

Some proverbs are also known to contain emotion references in the Akan societies of Ghana. Such a function of some Akan proverbs is studied (Dzokoto et al., 2018). Dzokoto et al. (2018) discuss that emotions are being regulated or managed and some Akan proverbs depict some strategies for the regulation of emotion which include a change in situation modification, response modulation, cognition, and situation selection. The study also looked at some proverbs which through social context influences how emotions are being expressed and experienced as well as the nature of emotions. The emotions discussed of which some Akan proverbs refer to were categorized into negative affect and positive affect whereby, quantitatively, it was shown that the negative effect or emotion proverbs were most typical.

2.1. Theoretical framework

The study adopts an integrated theoretical approach in analysing the data. The theories adopted are Fairclough (2002) Critical Discourse Analysis and supported by Brown and Levinson (1987) Politeness theory. Both theories are adopted because; Fairclough (2002) deals with the socio-cultural and situational context of using language while Brown and Levinson (1987) support it to analyze how speakers or proverbs users use proverbs as a tool for face-saving and mitigating strategies in issues that are sensitive and delicate.

2.1.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

This theory is propounded by Fairclough (2002). It points out that, the notions: text, socio-cultural context, institutional context and situational context are considered as basic thresholds in communication. The theory posits that in all speech or communication act, one needs to consider the text, the socio-cultural context, institutional context and the situational context in which communication takes place. The text encompasses spoken or written language produced in a discursive event; including visual, sound and additional semiotic forms i.e. the aspect of the multisemiotic character of texts which also considers the media as an aspect (Abdullah, 2014). This deals with how linguistic and non-linguistic forms can play some social functions. The theory, therefore, aims at describing, interpreting, analyzing and critiquing the social life of a community, an organization or an individual's way of using language in a particular context. This study focusing on the use of proverbs in Akan media discourse focuses

more on oral usage with regards to the situational and social-cultural use of Akan proverbs rather than the written form.

Fairclough (2002) gives a discourse framework based on three stages of meaning: 1) text; referring to both spoken and written language; 2) interaction, thus, the production and interpretation of the text; and 3) context; the wider socio-cultural situations of discourse production and interpretation. In correspondence to these three stages of discourse meanings, three components of analysing discourse are also postulated which are description, interpretation and explanation. The description stage concentrates on the meaning and form of a text. This states that the meaning of the text depends on its structure thus the structure brings out the meaning of the text. The interpretation level mediates text and social practices which deal with the text production and comprehension by the participants. The explanation which is the final stage centres on the analysing the connection between the social context of production and interpretation.

This means that social context is crucial in language use as the context could be depended on to comprehend or interpret a particular text or genre. Therefore, the social context informs the choices of language being used. This makes discourse serve as a link between the text and society. Abdullah (2014) adds that texts, genres and discourse may undergo a change with socio-political and to add cultural change. This is a process of *recontextualisation* where new element being transferred give an understanding of the formation of new meanings and their usage in new contexts. Among the Akan people, choice of words and the context of usage in communication is very crucial since not all expressions (genres) are culturally or situationally apt to be used. Media settings are formal settings hence their act of communication or expressions are deemed very important. Therefore, media participants in order to communicate effectively must take into consideration the appropriate genre of expression to suit the socio-cultural context of usage. Achieving this objective, there is the likelihood that genres such as proverb usage in the Akan media discourse consider carefully the context of usage and appropriately recontextualize by restructuring some of the proverbs depending on the prevailing social conditions. It is due to this that CDA seeks to be adopted to analyze how and why such strategies are employed. This makes the CDA theory a workable one for the study.

2.1.2. Politeness Theory

Politeness is a communicative theory propounded by Brown and Levinson (1987). Brown and Levinson's work entails two parts. The basics of the theory are in the first part; what constitutes 'politeness' and how it functions in interaction. By focusing on these three languages: English, Tzeltal, and Tamil, they provided a list of 'politeness' strategies but works cross-linguistically including Akan which is the focus language in this study can also be seen in the second part. Such strategies may depend on the choice of genres such as proverbs, indirection, circumlocution, euphemistic expressions etc. used in the communicative act to gain a positive social status (Kitamura, 2000 & Abdul-Majeed, 2009). Brown and Levinson (1987) postulate that the interactants in a communicative act redress their affronts to gain positive social values in social interactions or mitigate the Face Threatening Acts. The notion of face is introduced in the framework to illustrate politeness from a broader perspective. Since media communication gains a wider spectrum of audience, the use of language is given much cautiousness. This helps in achieving the desired ends of the communication process as posited by Hymes (2003). The choice of language use may either have a positive or negative repercussion on the user. It may either save the face of the speaker or threatens it or threatening the face of the listener. For the media participants such as newscasters to save their face and the face of their audience, there is the likelihood of strategically selecting appropriate linguistic elements for effective communication. One of these linguistic elements or genres is proverbs. Therefore, the study is guided by Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to analyze how Akan proverbs are contemporarily utilized in achieving the politeness phenomena of positive face-saving to avoid face threats.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In addition to the literature reviewed above on the present subject matter, Konstantinova (2014) also focuses on how proverbs are used in the English mass media discourse. The study discusses that due to the prevalent changes in social conditions, the English mass media employ the use of traditional (original) English proverbs though, but not as frequent as their transformed variations which are the traditional proverbs that are modified. Most importantly, except for Ofoe (2003) which is about proverb as an indirection strategy and Konstantinova (2014) that discusses how proverbs are used in English media discourse, we observed that contemporary modifications of Akan proverbs employed in a news broadcast, in particular, are yet to be studied. This is the motivation for this special study.

Tables 1: *Table 1: List of selected stations the texts were drawn.*

Radio/TV Stations	Town/Region	Program
Peace F.M.	Accra/Greater Accra Region	Akan News
Adom F.M.	Accra/Greater Accra Region	Akan News
Kessben F.M.	Kumasi/Ashanti Region	Akan News
Obuoba F.M.	Nkawkaw/Eastern Region	Akan News
UTV	Accra/Greater Accra Region	Akan News
Adom TV	Accra / Greater Accra Region	Akan News
GTV	Accra/ Greater Accra Region	Akan News

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data for this study was gathered through primary source. Purposive sampling technique was adopted for the study. This technique was chosen to get the relevant information which will suit the purpose of the study (Cresswell 1994, Owu-Ewie 2012).

4.1. Data collection strategies

Recordings of 6:00 a.m, 12:00 and 6:00 p.m News in Akan from Peace FM, Adom FM, Ghana Television (GTV), United Television (UTV), Adom TV News (all in Accra) that of Kessben F.M. (Kumasi) and Obuoba F.M. (Nkawkaw) constitute the data. The text and context data were gathered from the news bulletin of 2005 – 2020. Within this period, twenty-one (21) number of texts were sampled from the four (4) radio stations and three (3) TV stations each. These stations with most of them from Accra were purposively selected because they are highly regulated and also have wider listenership/viewership among the Ghanaian populace as well as their higher number of affiliates nationwide. Peace F.M. and Adom F.M. for instance, have affiliates in all the other regions in Ghana. Follow-up interviews were also made with the newsreaders and other relevant persons of the targeted program when the need arose. The data was analyzed with a critical look at the text and context of usage, the content & themes, and the socio-cultural/pragmatic functions of the proverbs used. It also looked at the neologism/current trend as well as deviations from the original meaning(s) of proverbs used in the News.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned earlier, the study set out to find out how proverbs are used in the Akan News broadcast. The data indicated that the trend of proverbs employed are of four categories – *Originality, Modification, Embellishment* and *Newly Coined Proverbs*.

(A) Original proverbs

These proverbs are used in the news in their original forms; without any additions or subtractions. The texts remain the same in terms of the words and form/structure.

Excerpt 1. Adom F.M. 12 pm News, A.P., September 5, 2016.

Montie o, Imampanin na zreka enye me. Jse, se zyi neesefoɔ 'alawa' (allowance) yi firi hɔ na se wɔka se wɔnto aba mma no koraa a, emfa ne ho..... Wei na ama aneesefoɔ yi bo afuo no. Wɔse wɔnka hwee. Wɔse: 'adidi gya ene muna na enam'. Se Imampanin se, se twa ara na wɔbetwa wɔn alawa no mu a, wɔnkasa. Wɔn nso 2016 abatoɔ yi wɔbekyere no bi.

Listen, these are the words of the President (of the Republic of Ghana) but not mine. He said he does not care if scraping the nurses trainees' allowance will cost him his presidency. Like rain falling on stone, its state does not change. This has got the nurses trainees infuriated. They said they have nothing to say for now. They said *'Denying a person of his share of the food will cause him to frown.'* If the President insists that the allowance will be cancelled, they have nothing to say. They will also show him their power in the 2016 general elections.

Original Proverb: *Adidi gya ene muna na enam*

Meaning: Denying a person of his share of the food will cause him to frown.

Excerpt 2. Peace F.M. 6 pm News, Y.B.G, July 5, 2012.

Me Y. B. G. dee, dee mepɛ se meka kyere S.J. ne ne N.P.Pfoɔ no ara ne se, se zye lɔyani, zntie na zntie no yie pa ara. Mpanimfoɔ na wɔkae, enye me. Wɔse: 'Se wodi kan wɔ kɔto a, na enkyere se woadi bem'. Znyae akasakasa no na atemmuafoɔ no nye wɔn adwuma wae, zmma Ghanafoɔ nwene kakra na asomdwoe na wɔpe...

What I, Y.B.G, want to tell S.J and his N.P.P (New Patriotic Party) party is that, hope he is a lawyer so he should listen attentively. The elders say, *'Being the first to arrive in the courtroom doesn't grant you victory'*. He should end his pre-judicial commentaries and allow the judges to perform their duties, and also allow Ghanaians to enjoy their peace because that is what they desire.

Original Proverb: *Se wodi kan wɔ kɔto a, na enkyere se woadi bem*

Meaning: Being the first to arrive in the courtroom doesn't grant you victory

i. Socio-pragmatic Analysis of the Original Proverbs Used: (i) Indispensability of Proverbs

The knowledge here is that proverb is vital to speech. The speakers here, thus employed the above proverbs to shorten matters (1); *"Yede twa asem tiawa"*, and emphasizes a point (1); *"Yede si asem so dua"*, as observed in excerpts 1 and 2. Besides, our interaction with some of the TV and radio presenters also revealed that they perceive the proverb to be an essential element that portrays the artistic beauty and liveliness of a speech. They hold the same

view as the informants in Yankah 1989 that: “without proverb, speech is ‘tasteless’, “*asem no nwie de ye*” (your speech is not completely sweet) (Yankah, 1989).

However, some communication experts also opine that, in as much as the proverbs cut matters short, it should not be overused in the news; “News is a serious business and must be presented as it is” (see Ansu-Kyereme, 2008). Besides, improper use of proverbs in news can result in misreporting and misinformation. Again, it becomes worse when the proverbs are used inappropriately and/or in the wrong context. News is a highly formal discourse and must be handled as such. Even if it becomes necessary to use a proverb in news, that proverb should rather be short, succinct and summarize issues” as in excerpts (1) and (2) especially.

In excerpt one (1), the proverb, in that context, has been used to support/emphasize the message. The agitated nurses have employed the proverb to support and defend the cause of their protest and also to ‘cut matters short’ (“*Wose, won kasa bebre* – they said, they do not want to talk too much, our message is brief...”). Aside from being used to cut matters short’ as mentioned, the implication of the protest made by the nurse's trainees may be a rebellious (voting against him in the forthcoming election) one towards the addressee who is the president. Therefore, the reporter reporting the words of the aggrieved nurses chose to employ the use of a proverb to mitigate the face-threatening act associated with the expression rather than its plain form. It is observed from the excerpt that, the proverb used was not direct words from the nurses but the addressor chose to strategically select that proverb as an avoidance strategy to save his face as a reporter against threatening the face of the first gentleman of the land. Selecting the proverb ‘*Adidigya ene muna na enam*’ communicates to the intended addressee that, if the president refuses to give them their share of the food which metaphorically refers to their allowance, the repercussion of it will not be a pleasant one which ‘*muna*’ (frown) signifies. This reiterates the aesthetic use of proverb to warn as indicated (Omoera & Inegbeboh, 2013).

Also, in excerpt two (2), the reporter through the use of proverb as an aesthetic tool to emphasize or inform the addressees who are S.J and the members of the New Patriotic Party following a suit filed first to the court of law against the Electoral Commission about their unacceptability of the 2012 election result which saw their candidate losing the poll. The reporter selected the mentioned proverb in the excerpt to emphasize on the communicative act expressed by the original addresser Y.B.G. It could be observed that the reporter employed the said proverb to swerve his/her way out of the strong face-threatening acts that the original report may contain and explicitly reporting it in its originality may be problematic as it is a report made for the public. Considering the difficulty of the speech act in question, using the proverb as an emphatic and euphemistic tool to sway out of the FTA associated with the original speech act is called for. As stated in Yankah (1989), proverbial usage by Akan people are motivated by these factors: (1) for social change, (2) to persuade, and (3) to embellish discourse. It is evident in the excerpt that, the original speaker wants the addressees to show a change in behaviour by stopping their talks to allow the court to perform its function. With that change in behaviour being one of the motives of the speech act performed, appropriate words ought to be selected to mitigate the face-threatening acts of the addressees. Therefore, the reporter uses the proverb in its original form in this context to embellish the discourse as stated by Yankah (ibid.) and to also shield him or herself from any FTAs associated with the message.

It was observed that in certain situation/context where the news item has taboo words or euphemistic expressions, simple and original proverbs have been employed as a politeness strategy to save one’s face. In the same manner, similar proverbs have been utilized as mitigating and avoidance/evasive strategies in issues that are sensitive and inflammatory (ethnic, religious matters and political issues), as well as libelous, defamatory and slanderous matters. In the aforementioned delicate situations, proverbs then become a critical indirectional tool for prevention and conflict management; through the use of correct, appropriate and simple proverbs, one can avoid inflaming passion or fueling conflict. Usage of proverbs in the news in such instances and the above examples are, therefore, considered acceptable. Proverbs used are simple and easy to understand. By all means and standards, proverbs should *rather* enhance the message than distorting it. Hence, these reasons for proverb usage as emphasis

and avoidance strategies can be considered as **rational**. They do not in any way affect the message. Neither have they been manipulated or adopted for personal interest as done in the below (Excerpt 3):

Excerpt 3. Peace F.M. 6 pm News, Hon. A. N., March 1, 2006.

.....*wɔtwa abɔfra yi ti. Yɛkae no woante anaa? Mpanimfoɔ se: 'Yerekeka funu no na yerekeka ma dampan' wonnim? Etire a NPP Chairman yi atwa yi, eyɛ wo se ɔde rekɔye den?*

.....he has beheaded the child; didn't you hear when we said it? The elders say, '*As the corpse is prepared, it is prepared for the graveyard*'. Where do you think the N.P.P chairman is sending the head he has cut off to?

Proverb: *Yerekeka funu no na yerekeka ma adampam*

Meaning: Preparing the corpse means it is prepared for the grave

(ii) Purpose of Usage: Adoption for Personal Agenda

Although the above proverb has been used in its original form to emphasize a point, in this instance, the context of usage is suspicious. The above excerpt was extracted from a statement by the general secretary of the National Democratic Congress (N.D.C) concerning a murder incident which he suspects was committed by the N.P.P for ritual purposes to capture political power. The issue is a delicate one of which must be strategically presented using a proverb as an escape route. The proverb was pragmatically employed in the discourse to indicate that the committed murder has a purpose which is to perform rituals to capture political power. As indicated, the proverb was used to emphasize on his point but it goes beyond just the emphasis depending on the context.

As indicated by Fairclough (2002) the analysis of the relationship between interaction and the social context of production and interpretation occurs at final level of explanation and meaning which shows that social context is crucial in language use as the context could be depended on to comprehend or interpret a particular text or genre. So, the proverb employed carries an agenda of suspicion addressing the N.P.P as the culprits of the murder. The proverb was used by the addresser with a voice of festivity to strategically escape a sense of personal agenda. This can be inferred from how the proverb preface was employed in the context and ended it with a rhetorical question ("*Yekae no woante anaa?*", "*mpanimfoɔ se:*" ... "*wonnim anaa?*" 'Didn't you hear when it was said?', 'the elders say', ... don't you know (a rhetorical question). Wiafe-Akenten (2008 & 2015) call such usage "strategic inclusion and manipulation of proverb preface" for personal agenda.

Yankah (1986; 1989) and Obeng (1996) explain that proverbs can be lifted verbatim or en bloc and placed securely in discourse, to show that the issue is a factual or universal fact. As Yankah rightly observed some speakers strategically manipulate proverbs (and their 'source formula', 'factive formula' or 'deferential formula') this way for mischievous purposes. This is a likely case in the above usage of the proverb: "*Yekae no woante anaa? mpanimfoɔ se: 'yerekeka funu no nayerekeka ma dampam'...wonnim anaa?*". The speaker thus employs the following preface and markers in order to distance himself from the matter, as observed by Amfo (2001:32-35): "*Yese* (pragmatic marker/ distancing marker/ hearsay marker) "*is used to introduce information that is not firsthand or distances the speaker from the truth of the proposition expressed.*" But, despite the effort to hide his motive behind the proverbs, it is obvious in the context that, there is the likelihood of mischief by the speaker. It is seen that strategic inclusion, factive formula, deferential formula or source formula possesses the power of mitigating the FTAs that comes with a proverbial genre when added to the proverb in a pragmatically offensive discourse.

(B) Modified Proverbs

With regard to the instances of modified proverbs, it was found out that several additions and subtractions, in terms of words have been made on the text. The presenters modify the text with their own words and in some cases the arrangement, thereby changing the original form.

Excerpt 4. UTV Kaseebɔ, 12pm, K. A. C., November, 17, 2020.

Enne deɛ Ghanafoɔ yeate asem, ei! Owura Kwasi Peter. Me nuabarima baako bi be bi a ɔtaa bu, ɔse: 'Se asemkeseɛ rebeba a, eye a na thousand yards frankaa nsi so a erehuru babababababa saa wae'. Asem nwanwa abetɔ dwa enne da yi, Owura Martin Alamisi Amidu, Special Prosecutor, tintontann, ɔde n`adwuma ato ho....

We have heard a shocking news today, ei! Mr. Kwasi Peter. There is this proverb mostly used by one of my brothers. He says, '*When a serious matter is coming it wouldn't have a thousand-yard flag flying babababa (idiophone)*'. The shocking news is that, Mr. Martin Alamisi Amidu, the special prosecutor has resigned.

Modified Proverb: *Se asemkeseɛ rebeba a, eye a na thousand yards frankaa nsi so a erehuru babababababa.*

Meaning: when a serious matter is coming it wouldn't have a thousand-yard flag flying babababa (idiophone).

Original Proverb: *Asemkeseɛ reba a, frankaa nsi so.*

Meaning: A big trouble or problem comes unannounced.

Purpose of Modification and Socio-pragmatic Analysis

Konstantinova (2014) opines that in the media, traditional or original proverbs do occur however, the rate of the phenomenon of modification is very huge because it could be measured as a method used which affect the audience universally. This lays credence that reporters modify proverbs to some extent to gain the attention of their audience and as has been mentioned, to show their exquisite speaking skills and creativity as well. As there are constant changes in life and social activities, this arguably reflects on language and contents on literary genres which neologism is evidence of it. These constant changes have made the listeners modern persons with modern language usage and communication so reporters using proverbs infuse the proverbs with neo-linguistic elements such as borrowing, code-mixing, modern terminologies to appeal to the understanding of the audience since the audience have a crucial influence on oral performance as mentioned by Agyekum (2000) and Agyekum (2013). Some literary devices to are infused into the proverbs to achieve the same purpose mentioned in the former.

Aside from expressing their competence in using the language, some reporters also manipulate them for emphasis while others too use it as a form of expatiating the meaning of the proverbs used as others also does the manipulations for strategic indirection or euphemistic purposes. Agyekum discussed the strategic manipulation of literary devices/words as a form of invectives, innuendo and indirectness in the media (Agyekum, 2004). But this has to be carefully done to maintain the core meaning of the proverb as overdoing it may lead to misinformation, misinterpretation, misreporting and many more.

It was also observed that some presenters, hosts and other users add their own words for propaganda and mischief. Yankah (1986b:204) observed that proverb manipulation begins with modification and strategic use. It may be transformed or embellished to match the temperament, speaker's style, and the modalities of the discourse in which he participates. The texts sampled for the study proves that some of the proverbs employed by some

media hosts, social commentators and reporters of some media institutions are modified for some purposes. Excerpt (4) above shows some level of modifications. Studying the structure of the original proverb and how it has been modified, it is evident that the lexical items “*asenkesee* (serious matter/trouble/problem)” and “*frankaa* (flag)” are still maintained in the modified proverb proving that, they are the core elements that holds the key to an understanding of the proverb despite its structural dynamics as pointed out by Yankah (1986). The speaker uses this proverb to reinforce an emphasis on big trouble or issue ahead that is coming unannounced or without any signal. The speaker creatively altered the structure of the original proverb under discussion by inserting the noun phrase ‘thousand yards’ to pre-modify the noun head, “*frankaa* (flag)”. This is what Konstantinova (2014) asserts as constant changes in life and social activities which have an impact on language and contents on literary genres. The speaker (addresser) places this phrase in the discourse to emphasize the intensity of the signal or the announcement that does not inform the coming of the trouble or problem inferred from the proverb.

(C) Embellished proverbs

Just like the modified proverbs, the presenters add their own words but this time they add too many words that loosen that pithy wise saying, thinking they are making the proverbs more beautiful, interesting, humorous and exciting. Yankah (1986b: 206) states that the proverb may be embellished with narrative [but] its basic identity [must] be retained; for each proverb has a datum point such as a key image or lexis that remains relatively stable in the face of structural dynamics. Below are some embellished proverbs sampled from Adom TV and Peace FM.

Excerpt 5. Adom TV Kaseɛbo, 12pm, O. A. K., November 8, 2016.

Mpanimfoɔ na wɔkaa se: ‘*Afiboa akokɔ a onipa tumi nya ne ho mfasoɔ pii no, se ɔsa bu ne pa se den anaa ɔkyeakyea ne ho sa fefefe kyee se den, asoroboa a anka ɔhununu biribiara wɔ ɔsoro hɔ akorɔma se, enye no fe da*’. ɔmampnin se, afe yi nso ɔmanfoɔ nshan nto aba ntia ... esiane se: ‘*Sɛ ɔkwaterekwa, omnibie, hwee nni kotere yam, ka se ɔbema wo ntoma a, tie ne din wae ansa na wode mmirika akɔhyia no se worekɔgye. Wo bebre atu mmirikahunu kwa....*’.

The elders say: ‘*If a domestic fowl that humans even get benefits from dances and twists the waist and body in style, a flying bird which sees everything from above like hawk says that the dance does not appear nicer to it*’. The president says... should be voted against this year too because: ‘*If naked, the poor, nothing in the stomach of a lizard, promises to give you a cloth, listen to its name before rushing to receive whatever being promised. Your run will be in vain.....*’

Embellished Proverb (5a): *Afiboa akokɔ a onipa tumi nya ne ho mfasoɔ pii no, se ɔsa bu ne pa se den anaa ɔkyeakyea ne ho sa fefefe kyee se den, asoroboa a anka ɔhununu biribiara wɔ soro hɔ akorɔma se, enye no fe da.*

Meaning: “If a domestic fowl that humans even get benefits from dances and twists the waist and body in style, a flying bird which sees everything from above like hawk says that the dance does not appear nicer to it.”

Original Proverb(5a): *Akokɔ sa kyee, enye akorɔm afe.*

Literal translation: If a fowl dances *kyee* (an ideophone signifying extremely nicer) it does not appear nice to the hawk.

Meaning: No matter what good you do; your haters will never like it.

Embellished Proverb (5b): “*Se ɔkwaterekwa, onnibie, hwee nni kotere yam, ka se ɔbema wo ntoma a, tie ne din wae ansa na wo de mirika akɔhyia no se worekɔ gye.*”

Meaning: “If the naked one, the poor, nothing in the stomach of a lizard, promises to give you a cloth, listen to its name before rushing to receive whatever being promised”

Original Proverbs:(5b) *Se ɔkwaterekwa se ɔbema wo ntoma a, tie ne din.*

Literal translation: If the naked one says it will give you clothes, listen to its name

Meaning: If someone you know does not possess something and he/she promises to give, look at his situation or condition.

Purpose of Embellishment and Socio-pragmatic Analysis

Proverb texts may exist and is subject to creative deformation during performance even as it retains its identity as a cultural frame of reference (Yankah, 1986b). This implies that proverbs can undergo manipulations to structurally differentiate them from their original form as has been observed in the modification aspect of this study. Here, the deformations and manipulations are done with the aim of making the proverbs more beautiful, interesting, humorous and exciting. Journalists or media broadcasters often use proverbs to embellish whatever information being disseminated to show their creative competence. The “ordinary” journalist has considerable freedom, especially in the African newsroom context, for deciding what is to become news and how it is to be presented as opined by Diedon (2008) so this allows media reporters to creatively embellish proverbs to suit the content of their news presentation while they also embellish the proverb itself.

Most of the presenters we interviewed indicated that even though they are aware that broadcast news is a “serious business” governed by rules, they believe listeners feel relaxed and entertained when they hear the news with the embellished and coined proverbs. As shown in excerpt (5) the reporter made use of two embellished proverbs to emphasize on the content reporting.

In excerpt (5a), the reporter employed the above proverb with the intent of informing the listeners that, no matter how well their actions are, it will never please their haters. With the aim of spicing up the proverb to appeal to the senses of the listeners, the subordinate clause of the proverb which appears at the initial part of it which is “*Akokɔ sa kyee a*” literary meaning ‘If a fowl dances *kyee* (an ideophone signifying extremely nicer)’ is expanded and embellished as “*afiboa akokɔ a onipa tumi nya ne ho mfasoɔ pii no, se ɔsa bu ne pa se den anaa ɔkyeakyee ne ho sa fefeefe kyee se den*” meaning ‘If a domestic fowl that humans even get benefits from dances and twists the waist and body in style’. It is observed that the head noun “*akokɔ*” ‘fowl’ is given a pre-modifier and post-modifying structure which in a way provides insight into the meaning of the structure but also exaggerates the activity performed by the fowl inferred from the proverb. The exaggeration of how the fowl dances as expressed in the embellished proverb like “*ɔsa bu ne pa se den anaa ɔkyeakyee ne ho sa fefeefe*” literary meaning ‘dances and twists the waist and body in style’ creates a comic image which appeals to the auditory sense of the listener if imagined. The main clause also “*enye akorɔma fe*” literary meaning ‘it does not appear nicer to the hawk’ is embellished as “*asoroboa a anka ɔhu biribi ara wo soro ho akorɔma se, enye no fe da*” literary meaning ‘a flying bird which sees everything from above like hawk says that the dance does not appear nicer to it’ displays a creative speech play ‘*asoroboa a anka ɔhu biribiara wo soro*’ which makes it soothing to the ears and also shows the speaker’s artistic creativity and verbal art (see Agyekum, 2009).

In excerpt (5b), the speaker or reporter in reporting a message from the president instructing the public to vote against his opponent, he emphasized it with an embellished proverb whereby the initial subordinate clause, “*Se ɔkwaterekwa se ɔbema wo ntoma a...*” literary meaning ‘If naked says it will give you cloth...’ is embellished as “*se ɔkwaterekwa, onnibie, hwee nni kotere yam, ka se ɔbema wo ntoma a....*” “If naked, the poor, nothing in the stomach of a lizard, promises to give you a cloth....” With this, the reporter in his own way added some expressions believed to carry similar meanings to reinforce the meaning of the noun head in the initial subordinate clause. This lays

credence that, sometimes, embellishment which is an aspect of the modification is also done to emphasize or expatiate on the meanings of some of the expressions in the proverb. This is an instance of *recontextualisation process* mentioned by Abdullah (2014) in explaining Critical Discourse Analysis which states that texts, genres and discourse may undergo a change in relation to socio-political and to add, cultural change to offer insight into the new formation of meanings and their usage. The main clause of the original proverb which is also “*tie ne din*” ‘listen to its name’ is also embellished as “*tie ne din wae ansa na wode mmirika akohyia no se woreko gye. Wobebre atu mmirika hunu kwa...*” ‘listen to its name before rushing to receive whatever is promised. Your running will be in vain...’ whereby the original main clause is also post-modified with a subordinate clause that strategically indicates the pace of movement, urgency and desperation in response to empty promises.

(D) Newly coined/created proverbs

In this case, the presenters have created new proverbs, using their traditional knowledge. In such situations, there is a tendency for the newly coined ones to be influenced by the prevailing socio-economic and other factors. As mentioned by Konstantinova (2014) and repeated here for emphasis, constant life changes leading to the change in ideologies, opinions and morals.

Excerpt 6. Adom F.M. 6 pm News, K. A., February 13, 2017.

Jsoafɔɔ yi faa akwanya no so tuu mmabunu no fo se, wɔmfɔ obuo ne anidie mma wɔn mpanimfoɔ, esiane se, yese: ‘Se WhatsApp, Twitter ne Instagram se wɔn na wɔte so enne a, wɔnhunu se wɔbetoo radio ne TV’. Asem a radio anaa TV de bema nnipa dodoo bum baako no, wɔn deɛ gye se wɔde weawea ansa. Na kyere se “Ɔpanin de Ɔpanin” ampa.

This Minister (of State) used this medium to advice the youth that, they should give respect to their elders because it is said that: *‘If WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram say this is their time, then they should know that they came to meet radio and TV’*. Information that radio and TV will disseminate to a chunk of people at once, for them unless they crawl with it.

Coined Proverbs: (6) *Se WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram se wɔn na wɔte so enne a, wɔnhunu se wɔbetoo radio ne TV.*

Meaning: If WhatsApp, twitter, Instagram say this is their time, then they should know that they came to meet radio and TV.

Similar Proverb: *Ɔpanin nni hwee koraa no, ɔwɔ abatwe/ Ɔpanin de Ɔpanin*

Meaning: If an elderly person does not even have anything, he/she has an elbow/ An elderly person is an elderly person.

Reason/purpose of Coinage

The phenomenon of proverb modification has dramatically triggered the dynamic development which has occurred in the media at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Konstantinova, 2014). New socio-cultural development as has been mentioned triggers the use of modern or contemporary language to suit modern-day people’s understanding and their way of life. Mieder (2004) opines that some old proverbs are not in use any longer because they reflect a culture that no longer exists, or has vanished. Due to this, new proverbs that reflect contemporary society are created instead to suit the contemporary lifestyle of the users of those proverbs. In the same manner, some media reporters also choose to coin or create new proverbs that are similar to some traditional

proverbs in using contemporary linguistic terminologies that the audience are familiar with and could easily understand.

In excerpts 6, a newly coined proverb that is created from an already existing proverb was used to communicate similar ideologies found in the already existing or the original proverb it was created from. It is observed that the coined proverb in excerpt 6 above is similar to the original proverb “*Ɔpanin nni hwee koraa no, ɔwo abatwe. Ɔpanin de ɔpanin*”. ‘If an elderly person does not even have anything he/she has an elbow. An elderly person is an elderly person’, does not include contemporary lexical items that are familiar to the audience. Social media has become one of the most modern media of communication and information dissemination by the majority of people. This has made the name of social media platforms as seen in the newly coined proverb above very popular to all. The original is used to communicate to the younger ones that, no matter how clever they are, the work they do, how rich they are, or the positions they may hold that their elders don’t hold, that should not let them perceive they know much than the elders because they possess life experiences and much knowledge about life that the younger ones do not have. This is equated by the addresser in the coined proverb as he chooses to use media elements. It is obvious that social media platforms like what has been mentioned in the coined proverb are modern and well patronized in contemporary social life but, TV and radio have been in the system for a long time before the inception of those social media platforms or applications. That does not mean the social media platforms are better off than the TV and radio media as the TV and radio media possess some good qualities the social media applications do not have. Such a coined proverb is one of the proverbs to substantiate the assertion that contemporary socio-cultural development is a reason for the new coinage of proverbs.

6. CONCLUSION

The liberalization of the airwaves has led to the establishment of several radio and television stations in the country. A significant number of these radio and television stations use Akan and thus reach out to a large number of audiences. People take comfort in learning from the media and most people believe what they hear from these media. This study points out that the use of proverb in media discourse is very crucial in their dissemination of News and various reportages. It is observed that news reporters and other media presenters choose to maintain the original or traditional form of proverbs, modify some of the original ones, embellish them or coining new ones to achieve some purposes. The study reveals that some presenters employ the use of the original proverbs to shorten issue and emphasize whatever content being delivered. In addition to that, it is also seen that in certain situation/context where the news item has taboo words or delicate expressions which may trigger anger or any unpleasant emotion among the interlocutors, simple and original proverbs are employed as politeness strategies to save one’s face or mitigate the problems that are associated with the speech act performed.

We however suggest that newscasters/reporters/newspapers must present the news without being seen as taking sides. News in all forms must not be embellished too much since this can lead to misinformation and misreporting. Proverbs should rather be employed in the appropriate and the right communication context which will not negatively affect the message and create unnecessary tension. It is therefore important that we discourage the improper and inappropriate use of proverbs in the news.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, F. S. (2014). Mass media discourse: A critical analysis research agenda. *Pertanika J. Soc. Sci. & Hum*, 22, 1-18.
- Abdul-Majeed, I. R. K. (2009). The realization of positive politeness strategies in language. *Journal of the College of Education for Women*, 20, 509-527.
- Agyekum, K. (2013). The pragmatics of ‘mouth’ metaphors in Akan. *Ghana Journal of Linguistics*, 2(1), 1-17.
- Agyekum, K. (2011). Akan Kasadwini (Akan Oral Literature).

- Agyekum, K. (2006). Akan traditional arbitration: Its structure and language. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 27(5), 359-374.
- Agyekum, K. (2005). An Akan oral artist-the use of proverbs in the lyrics of Kwabena Konadu. *Institute of African Studies Research Review*, 21(1), 1-17.
- Agyekum, K. (2000). Aspects of Akan oral literature in the media. *Research Review*, 16(2), 1-18.
- Amfo, N. A. A. (2001). *A relevance-theoretic study of some pragmatic markers in Akan* (Doctoral dissertation, Department of Linguistics. University of Trondheim).
- Diabah, G., & Appiah Amfo, N. A. (2015). Caring supporters or daring usurpers? Representation of women in Akan proverbs. *Discourse & Society*, 26(1), 3-28.
- Brown, P., Levinson, S. C., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* (Vol. 4). Cambridge university press.
- Daily Graphic. 2009. "These proverbs distort news" Wednesday, March 14, 2009. pp.9.
- Diabah, G., & Amfo, N. A. A. (2018). To dance or not to dance masculinities in Akan proverbs and their implications for contemporary societies. *Ghana Journal of Linguistics*, 7(2), 179-198.
- Diedong, A. (2008). Establishing journalistic standards in the Ghanaian press.
- Dzokoto, V. A., Osei-Tutu, A., Kyei, J. J., Twum-Asante, M., Attah, D. A., & Ahorsu, D. K. (2018). Emotion norms, display rules, and regulation in the Akan society of Ghana: an exploration using proverbs. *Frontiers in psychology*, 9, 1916.
- Fairclough, N. (2002). *New labour, new language?*. Routledge.
- Hymes, D. (2003). *Foundations in sociolinguistics: An ethnographic approach*. Psychology Press.
- Kitamura, N. (2000). Adapting Brown and Levinson's 'politeness' theory to the analysis of casual conversation. In *Proceedings of ALS2k, the 2000 Conference of the Australian Linguistic Society* (pp. 1-8).
- Konstantinova, A. (2015). 13 Proverbs in Mass Media. In *Introduction to Paremiology* (pp. 276-293). De Gruyter Open Poland.
- Kquofi, S., Amate, P., & Tabi-Agyei, E. (2013). Symbolic representation and socio-cultural significance of selected Akan proverbs in Ghana.
- Mieder, W. (2004). *Proverbs: A handbook*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Obeng, S. G. (1996). The proverb as a mitigating and politeness strategy in Akan discourse. *Anthropological linguistics*, 521-549.
- Omoera, O. S., & Inegbeboh, B. O. (2013). Context of usage and aesthetics of selected proverbs from Southern Nigeria. *Journal of Language, Technology & Entrepreneurship in Africa*, 4(1), 16-30.
- Yankah, K. (2004). *Language, the mass media, and democracy in Ghana* (Vol. 2004). Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences.
- Yankah, K. (2001). Nana Ampadu, the sung-tale metaphor, and protest discourse in contemporary Ghana.
- Yankah, K. (1995). *Speaking for the chief: Okyeame and the politics of Akan royal oratory*. Indiana University Press.
- Stoeltje, B. (1989). The Proverb in the Context of Akan Rhetoric: A Theory of Proverb Praxis (Book Review). *Journal of Folklore Research*, 26(3), 269.
- Yankah, K. (1989). Proverbs: The aesthetics of traditional communication. *Research in African Literatures*, 20(3), 325-346.
- Yankah, K. (1986). Proverb rhetoric and African judicial processes: The untold story. *Journal of American Folklore*, 280-303.
- Yankah, K. (1986). Proverb speaking as a creative process: The Akan of Ghana. *Proverbium*, 3, 195-230.