

Examining The Structures And Literary Devices And The Aesthetic Qualities Embedded In Dagaaba Proverbs

Eugene Naah Kogri ^{1*} Joseph Kwesi Tangwam ^{1..2}

St. John Bosco's College of Education, P.O. Box 11, Navrongo, Ghana

St. John Bosco's College of Education, P. O. Box 11, Navrongo- Ghana

*Email of corresponding author: eugenekogri@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the structures of some selected Dagaaba proverbs and analyse their literary devices and the aesthetic qualities that are embedded in them with particular reference to the Central Dialect of Dagaare. Purposive sampling technique was adopted for the study and the design of the study was qualitative research because the analyses of the data were mainly descriptive. The sample size of the population of the study was the chief and his elders of the Ulkpong Traditional area and three sections of the language community namely *Konyaasen*, *Gompare* and *Gyepare* in the Upper West Region of Ghana and two lecturers from the University of Education, Winneba. The instruments used in the study for data collection were unstructured interview and participatory observation. The findings confirmed that Dagaaba proverbs have various structures in their compositions and varied literary devices and their aesthetic qualities were clearly displayed in the analyses.

Keywords: simple, complex, statements composition

1. Introduction

This study examines The Structures and the Analysis of Literary Devices of Dagaaba Proverbs. The analysis of the proverbs focuses on the literary devices that are embedded in them. It also looks briefly at Dagaare and its speakers. It also discusses the geographical area where Dagaare is spoken in Ghana and beyond. Another area discussed is the varieties of Dagaare and where these varieties are spoken. It also highlights the geographical location and genetic affiliation of the language. The study also presents the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, the objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitation and delimitation of the study.

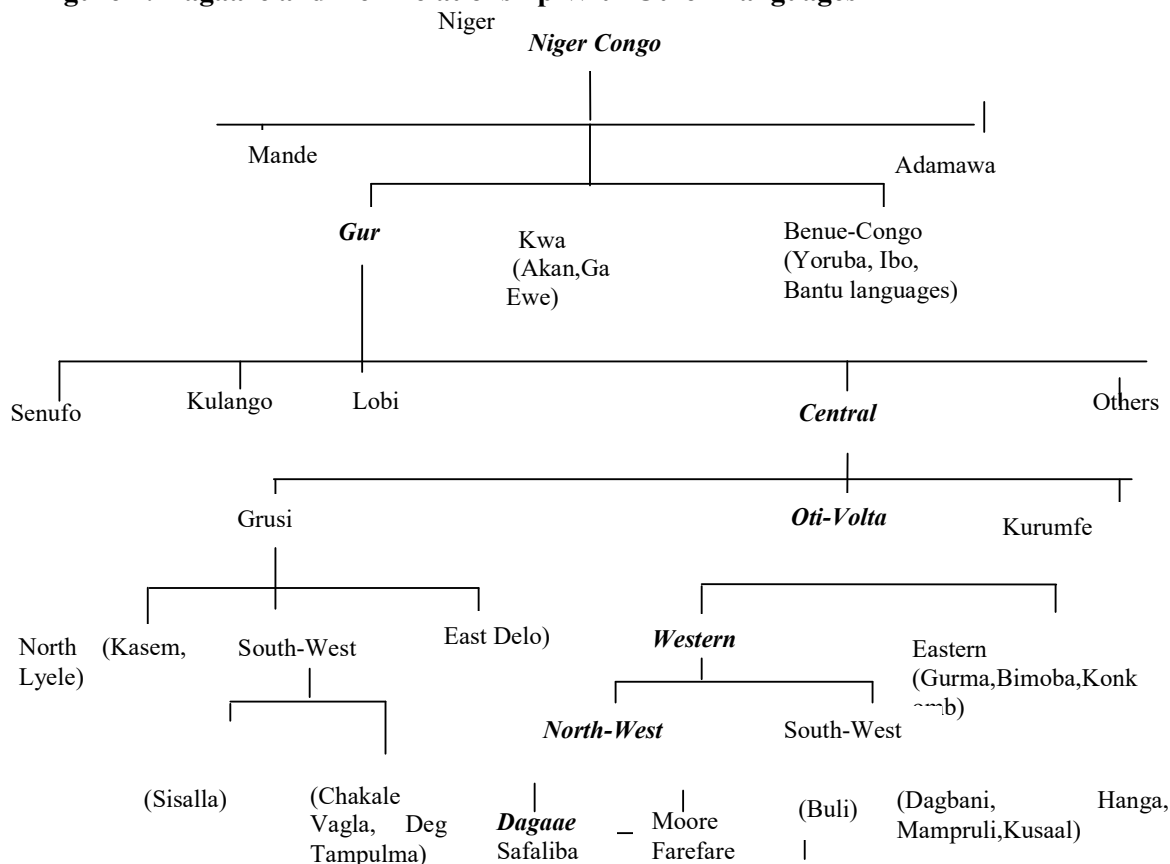
Dagaare is the language of the Dagaaba in the north-western part of Ghana and adjoining Burkina Faso (Bodomo, 1997:1). It is spoken mainly in the north-western part of Ghana and in some communities in the south of Burkina Faso and the north-eastern corner of Cote d'Ivoire respectively (Bodomo 1997) cited in Dansieh (2008:229). Bodomo (2000) posits that the speech varieties can be classified into four broad dialects of the language, known as Northern Dagaare, Central Dagaare, Southern Dagaare, and Western Dagaare. Bekye (1991:94) also postulates that "The Dagaaba have a number of dialect groups. Two of the principal ones are the Lobri and the Dagaare dialect speakers". Bodomo (1997) describes Dagaare as a language that comprises a dialect continuum which includes Dagaare, Waale and Birifor dialects. He attests to the fact that the Dagaare-Waale-Birifor linguistic group presents one of the complex dialect situations in Ghana. From a linguistic perspective, Dagaare, Waale and Birifor should be seen as variants of the same language though variations of speech forms do occur from one village to another. This is because of the fact that there is some amount of mutual intelligibility amongst the various speech forms of the language. The Dagaare Language Committee Guide (1982) cited in Bodomo (1997) divides Dagaare into Northern, Central, Mid-central and Southern dialects and gives word lists showing pronunciation differences of some lexical items. This division, however, does not include Waale and Birifor because it was based on the geographical landscape of the Dagaaba land from Nandom through Jirapa to Wa. Bodomo (1997:4) however explains that their Northern Dagaare is exactly our Northern Dagaare. He further explains that their Central Dagaare and Mid-Central Dagaare is our Central Dagaare and that their Southern Dagaare does not include Waale while ours does. He concludes that they do not have a corresponding division for our Western Dagaare and adds that other information on the dialects, their names and designations can be accessed in most of the works on general Dagaare linguistic analyses.

The focus of this study was on the Central *Dagaare* Dialect which comprises the varieties spoken in and around

Gyerebaa (Jirapa), *Kaani* (Karni) *Heɲ* (Han), *Ulo* (Ullo), *Dafeɛma* (Daffiama), *Nadoli* (Nadowli) and their immediate environs. Bodomo (2000) is of the view that, this group is so-called because it occupies approximately the middle of the Upper West Region of Ghana and enjoys a considerable degree of intelligibility from speakers of other dialects. He adds that it is probably because of this that most of the linguists who worked on Dagaare in Ghana like Wilson (1962), Kennedy (1966) and Hall (1973) have based their analyses on it. The 2010 population and housing census came out with a figure of 667,763 inhabitants in the Upper West Region where the language is largely spoken (Ghana's 2010 Population and Housing Census Statistical Service Website). It is important however, to note that Dagaare has spread all the regions of Ghana and beyond because of the high degree of economic, educational, social and geographical mobility of its native speakers among other reasons. *Dagaare* has been genetically classified as a member of the Oti-Volta group of the Gur branch of Niger Congo language family (Swadesh1996, Bendor-Samuel 1971:144, Naden 1989) cited in Bodomo (1997). Languages which are genetically related to *Dagaare* include *Gurene* (*Frafra*), *Kusaal* and *Mampruli* in the Upper East Region of Ghana and *Moore*, *Dagbani* and *Mampruli* in the Northern Region. Bodomo (1989) also refers to these languages as the *Mabia* languages. Languages that are called the *Mabia* languages are therefore genetically related to *Dagaare*. This is due to the linguistic similarities that exist among them. It is interesting to note that *Sisaala* that closely shares borders with *Dagaare* is not closely related to *Dagaare*. Though a Gur language, it traces its roots to the south-western subgroup of Grusi languages. However, *Safaliba* and Moosi languages are also related to *Dagaare* genetically. Dakubu (2007)

The classification of Dagaare and its relationships to nearby and related languages are shown in the following diagram (bold & italic words indicate direct relationships between levels, while plain words are used to indicate details of intervening levels)

Figure 1: Dagaare and Her Relationship With Other Languages



Source: Adapted from Dakubu (2007)

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Even though some work has been done on *Dagaaba* proverbs by scholars like Yabang (1980, 1999), Zakpää (1996), Bangnikon (1999), Kyemaalo (2000) and Kyiileyang (2008) as far as I know, attention has not been given to the structure and the analyses of the literary devices of *Dagaaba* proverbs with particular reference to Central Dagaare. Though Bangnikon (1999) and Kyiileyang (2008) did some analysis on their proverbs, their analyses are on the moral teaching of *Dagaaba* proverbs and the expository of *Dagaaba* proverbs in the Northern Dagaare respectively. However, it is very important to note that, it is the central dialect or otherwise the standard dialect of Dagaare that is used for academic and examination purposes Yabang (1994). No research has been conducted on the structure and the Analyses of *Dagaaba* Proverbs in the central dialect of Dagaare. It is in this respect that I propose to “Examine the Structures and Literary Devices and the Aesthetic Qualities embedded in *Dagaaba* Proverbs” with particular reference to the Central dialect of Dagaare in *Ul-kpon* in the Jirapa district of the Upper West Region of Ghana, with the intention of coming out with their literary devices and the aesthetic qualities that are embedded in them..

The gap that this study therefore intended to bridge is to expose speakers and readers of Dagaare to the various structures of *Dagaaba* proverbs and the analyses of their literary devices of the proverbs with focus on their literary devices and the aesthetic qualities that are embedded in them for documentation. The objectives of the study were therefore to identify the structures of *Dagaaba* proverbs and explore their literary devices and the aesthetics qualities that are embedded in them.

This research proposes to answer to the following questions:

Research Question 1: What are the structures of *Dagaaba* proverbs?

Research Question 2: Which literary devices and their aesthetic qualities are embedded in the proverbs?

1.1.1. The Significance of the Study

This study is on the structure and the analyses of the literary devices of some selected *Dagaaba* proverbs in the central dialect of *Dagaare*. It will, therefore, serve as a reference point to the study of other aspects of *Dagaare* oral literature. It will also be useful to students who want to study other aspects of the Dagaare. The study will be added to the already existing *Dagaare* oral literature and contribute to the enhancement of the knowledge of *Dagaaba* cultural studies.

1.1.2. The Limitations of the Study

The difficulty that the researcher encountered first and foremost was the identification of the literary devices. The researcher also faced some challenges in the glossing of the proverbs to get their literal and literary meaning before the analyses could be done accurately. The last but not the least challenge was the difficulties in getting the appropriate literary devices and the situational usage of the proverbs.

1.1.3. Delimitation of the Study

The scope of this research was restricted to “The Structures and the Analyses of the literary devices of some selected *Dagaaba* Proverbs” in the Ullo traditional area.

1.1.4. Methodology

This population of this study focuses on the research communities which included the chief and elders of the Ul-kpon traditional area and three sections of the language community such as, *Konyaasen*, *Gompare* and *Gyepare*. The design of this research was qualitative. The researcher considered qualitative research method as more appropriate for the study because the analyses of data were mainly descriptive. Unstructured interview and participatory observation were used as the main instruments for data collection. The list of the chief and his elders, their names, age, sex and occupation are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: List of the chief and his elders under the study

| Name | Age | Sex | Occupation |
|-----------------------|-----|--------|--------------------------------------|
| Naa Dabuormaloo Bayuo | 80 | Male | Chief of Ul-kpon Traditional area |
| Naavee Dɔɔpoo Mathias | 7 | Male | Chief's linguist (farmer) |
| Dery Martin | 65 | Male | Teacher by profession |
| Dangyama Naavee | 85 | Female | House wife (farmer) |
| Pogewee Dataa | 90 | Female | House wife (farmer) |
| Dery Lazarus | 48 | Male | Farmer |

The unstructured interview was conducted to those in the chief Palace as a group and an individual basis in these communities such as, *Konyaasen*, *Gompare* and *Gyepare*.

The second approach for the data collection was a spontaneous data collection under participatory observation. I visited the research community and participated in occasions where proverbs are used. Such occasions included the chief Palace for a village tribunal, payment of bride wealth at *Gyepare*, settlement of disputes among some of the community members at the chief Palace and funeral attendance. For instance, on the 10th of August, 2013, I visited and participated in the funeral of late Mr. Ninnang Boniface at *Gompare*, a section of the study area in *Ul-kpon* where a lot of proverbs were used at the funeral by dirge singers. The proverbs that were used on these occasions were recorded and identified their literary devices

1.1.5. Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the structures of *Dagaaba* proverbs?

This study discussed the structures of *Dagaaba* proverbs. There were other scholars in the field of literature like Stewart (1997) and Maidan (2009), who classified some proverbs under simple and complex ones. The structures deductively have to do with their syntactic and lexical formations. One would therefore realize that the simple structure in proverbs compositions have simple lexical and syntactic statements as shown under simple and complex structures

The term structure can be explained as the arrangement of the various sounds and words that come together to form a complete proverb. Proverbs are generally marked by terseness of expression and different from an ordinary speech and figurative expressions that are abound in metaphor (Finnegan 2012:388). Proverbs are, therefore, composed in a variety of ways. The actual wording may take the form of a simple positive or negative proposition, or of various types of simple rhythmic balanced proposition and double propositions in which the second portion is self-explanatory are also common among, others (Finnegan 2012:389). Yabang (1999:1) argues that proverbs have several structures in the *Dagaaba* oral literature. My classification of *Dagaaba* proverbs is therefore, based on that of Yabang's 1999 classification. According to him, simple positive statements in proverbs are statements of proverbs that are stated in a very simple manner. Finnegan (2012:389) gave an example of Swahili simple positive statement as 'the goat-eater pays a cow' which means; it sows the wind and reaps the whirlwind. She also gives an example of a Zulu proverb as 'He has a chest' which means; he can keep secrets. Examples of such proverbs in *Dagaaba* are in 1 and 2 below.

1. Noore la sɔɔ

"Mouth is a witch craft".

The literary meaning of this proverb is that, the speech mouth is a witch craft. This implies that whatever comes out of the human mouth of an elder is more powerful than witchery, and for that matter if an elder says something is going to happen, it will happen. So you should always listen to the advice of an elder. The positive part of the statement is *la soɔ* ‘is witchcraft’.

Another example of the simple positive statement of a proverb is in example 2 below.

2. N boɔŋ yi n naao

“It is my goat that produces my cow”.

This is said with a particular reference to a lost animal (goat) that returns with its young ones. The positive part of the statement is *yi n naao* ‘produces my cow’.

Proverb 3 is another example of a simple positive statement.

3. Pī la tee lare

“It is an arrow that shot an axe”

The literary meaning of this proverb is that, you are pouring water on rock. The positive part of the statement is *tee lare* “shoot an axe”. This proverb is used on someone who ignored an advice that is given to him. It therefore means that you have not only wasted your time but also wasted your energy in advising that person, since he or she does not pay heed to your advice.

Some of the proverbs were stated directly as indicated in example 4 below.

4. Na wuo a zaa maŋ iri ne la nuzaglaa

“He who wants to collect all, always gets up with an empty hand”.

This proverb means that one must learn how to be content with whatever he or she has. The proverb in 5 is another example of a direct statement

5. Ta ta ma seɛ la bare ma n nu

“Do not get near me is better than leave my hand”

Literary, this proverb means prevention is better than cure. This proverb is telling us that it is better to prevent a problem from happening than to allow it happens and you then begin to look for its solution.

Some proverbs were imperative in nature. Examples of proverbs that fell under this structure are stated in 6, 7 and 8 below;

6. Bare nenfaa ne o bone

“Leave a bad person and his/her property alone”.

This proverb literary means do not envy a bad wealth. This proverb is applied when somebody has something and others think that he or she does not deserve what he or she has as a result of jealousy. It is therefore used to create the awareness of their jealousy, and that even if he or she does not deserve it but he or she has absolute control over it.

7. .Bon naŋ tōɔ o tɔ la vɔb o

“Whatever creature that can overpower the other swallows it”.

This proverb is used when a meal is prepared and some people are complaining by saying that it is either not well cooked or that it is not delicious. It is therefore used to tell the people that those who can eat should and those who cannot should leave. For instance, a toad cannot swallow a cobra, rather, it is a cobra that swallows a toad or it is a python that swallows a toad and not the vice versa an animal is a practical example of this statement.

8. Bon ta wɛ, omeŋɛ la maŋ wɛ

“He who insists that nothing goes to waste, goes to waste him/herself”

This proverb is used when somebody eats food and becomes satisfied but does not want to get up and leave it because it is still there.

Some proverbs were stated in a negative form. Finnegan (2012:389) gave an example of a Zulu proverb as ‘He has no chest’ which means ‘he can’t keep secrets’. Examples of such proverbs in Dagaare are stated in example 9 and 10 below.

9. Ba ba tona dambol buyi

“They don’t give a task to a fool the second time”.

Literary, this proverb means once bitten twice shy. This proverb is used in a situation where a task is given to somebody and he could not do it and you want to give him another task. This implies that you should not delegate a fool the second time when he or she could not perform the first task. The negative part of this statement is *Ba ba* “They do not”. Another example of this structure is indicated in example 10 below.

10. Ɔmbile ba toɔra puli

“A small mouse does not hit an escape hatch”.

This proverb literary means, a child does not take the initiative to do things in midst of elders. It is used in a situation where a child is so vocal that he does not keep anything to himself and always wants to show that he knows everything even in the midst elders. It is therefore used to caution children who are so vocal to desist from it. This means that a child should not take the lead to expose certain things. The negative part of this proverb is *ba toɔra pul* “do not hit an escape hatch”

Some structures of the proverbs were referred to person’s as a negative axiom statement which are without any questioning, explanation or argument. Finnegan (2012:389) gave an example each of the Xhosa and the Zulu as ‘There is no elephant burdened with its own trunk’ which means, a mother does not feel her baby’s weight, and ‘there is no sun that sets without its affairs’ also means, every day has its own troubles. Examples of such proverbs in Dagaare are stated in proverb 11 and 12 below.

11 Neŋkpoŋ noɔre maŋ nyuuro la kyɛ o yelyaga ba nyuuro

“The mouth of an elder smells but his speech does not smell”.

The literary meaning of this proverb is, no matter how ugly an elder may be, his speech is full of wisdom. The negative part of this proverb is *ba nyuuro* “Does not smell” This proverb is telling us not to abuse the advice of an elder. Another example of a proverb under this structure is stated in 12 below.

12. Yoɔre ba ganna gbɛkpoŋ

“A penis cannot be bigger than a thigh”.

The literary meaning of this proverb is that, a child cannot claim superiority over an elder and that what an elder will stand and see, a child can even climb an ego tree but cannot see it. The negative part of this proverb is *ba ganna* ‘cannot be bigger than.’

Some of the proverbs were stated in a question form but did not demand an answer. Finnegan (2012:380) gave an example from the Karanga as ‘The swallower of old cows, is he choked with the bone of a calf?’ which means, a chief who settles big cases, can’t he overcome this small one? Some of these examples in Dagaare are stated in 13 and 14 below.

13. Aŋ beere kɔɔ poɔ gbɛɛ?

“Who traces the footprints in water”?

This proverb literary means, who builds castle in the air? This proverb is used in a situation where someone wants to do the impossible. It is used to caution us not to attempt an impossible or trying to make impossible things to be possible.

14. Aŋ baŋna nɔbil-sɔglaa gyɛɛ?

“Who knows (among a cluster of eggs) the egg that will hatch a black chick?”

This proverb, Bangnikon (1999), citing Shakespeare in Macbeth, gave its meaning as ‘There is no art to find the mind’s construction on the face.’ Among the Dagaaba such proverbs are understood contextually without the listener asking the speaker for an explanation. However, there is an ambiguity in this proverb. The ambiguity is

part of the beauty of the proverb. The ambiguity lies between the ‘egg that hatch a black chicken’ and the ‘egg of a black chicken’

Another structure of the proverbs was identified as a simple rhythmic balance proposition. These are statements of proverbs that have rhymes in the statement. Finnegan (2012:389) gave an example from the Limba as ‘In the house of wrangling, beer becomes bitter’, where there is an exact balance in the two parts as shown in 15.

15. **Goo maŋ sere la doloŋ, ka doloŋ meŋ sere goo**

“The left washes the right and the right also washes the left”.

This proverb literary means, no man is an island. The left hand washes the right hand’ rhymes with ‘the right hand also wash the left hand’. This proverb is telling us that no man is an island and for that matter no one should sit on the fence, but rather we should come together and support one another in our social, economic, and political as well as our linguistic development.

Contrast Proposition Statement was one of the structures of the proverbs identified. This is a style of having a saying in two parts, one in the positive and the other in the negative. Finnegan (2012:389) terms it as double proposition. This structure is further divided into direct parallels between two portions of a proverb and cross parallelism.

A direct parallel between two portions of a proverb was identified as one of the structures of proverbs. These are statements of proverbs that are always in two parts where one part is positive and the other part is negative. Finnegan (2012:389) gave an example of the Limba as ‘A male is a millipede, he is not driven away with one driving (only)’ (a man does not take a single refusal from a girl) and ‘The body went, the heart did not go’. Examples in Dagaare are stated in 16 and 17 below.

16 **Ka foonŋ naŋ nɔpelaɔ seŋ wola zaa kyɛ fo ba maŋ ɔɔ ne a kɔɔloŋ**

“No matter how much you like a white fowl, you don’t eat it with the feathers”.

The point of parallelism in this proverb is *naŋ* and *ba ɔɔ* “like” and “do not eat”

17. **Ka nuulee naŋ e bile wola zaa, kyɛ fo ba maŋ ɔɔ ne o kɔɔloŋ**

“No matter how small the bird is, you don’t eat it with the feathers”.

The parallelism derives here is *e bile* ‘is small’ and *maŋ ba ɔɔ* ‘do not eat’

Cross parallelisms was also identified as one of the structures of proverbs This structure is not different from that of the negative axiom. Finnegan (2012:389) gave an example of the Lamba as ‘One morsel of food does not break a company, what breaks a company is the mouth.

Simple structured proverbs are proverbs that have only one clause and one verb in their composition as seen in example 18 and 19 below.

18. **Suuri soba ba nyeere bini sorin**

“A quick tempered person does not shit toilet on the road”.

Literary, it means that a quick tempered person does not attend to nature’s call on the road. The clause in this proverb is a main clause and the verb is *nyeere* ‘attending nature’s call’. Proverb No 19 is another example of a simple structured one.

19. **Boora ba kono o gbekpɔgre**

“Trouble shooter does not cry of a swelling on his forehead”.

If your recklessness lands you in trouble, you have no one but yourself to blame

There is also a main clause in this proverb and the verb is *kono* “crying”.

The complex structure in proverbs composition on the other hand comes with subordinate clauses in their formation as discussed below. Complex structured proverbs are those that have two or more clauses in their composition as seen in example 20..

20. Ka foon zεgre kɔna nu, o na boɔɔ ka fo kori o

“If you give the leper a hand shake, he will want you to embrace him”.

Literary, this proverb means that if you play with a fool he will disgrace you. There are two clauses here. One is a main clause and the other is a subordinate clause. ‘If you give a leper a hand shakes’ is the subordinate clause and ‘He will want you to embrace him’ is the main clause. This proverb is telling us that we should not take things for granted. For instance, if you are fond of playing with a fool, he or she will disgrace you one day. It is important to note that proverbs are either positive or negative in their composition and are either short or long.

Consider the proverb in example 21 below.

21. Bokūū ba zoro soɔ

“A dead goat is not runing a knife”

Literary, it means that a dead goat does not fear a knife. This proverb is an example of a short proverb which consists of only four words. This is usually used by a person or referred to a person who has already experienced a calamity before and as a result is not afraid of any other calamity. The meaning and application of Dagaaba proverbs are prominent in many situations of human life. An example is stated in proverb 22 below.

22. Pɔge naŋ dɔgɔɔ kyε e ka ba koŋ nyε o laga o bie meŋ koŋ yi

“A woman who is in labour and does want people to see her (womanhood) vagina will not be able to deliver safe. This proverb is an example of a long proverb.

Research Question 2: Which literary devices and their aesthetic qualities are embedded in Dagaaba proverbs?

This study identified and analyzed the literary devices of the selected Dagaaba proverbs and the aesthetic qualities that are embedded in them starting with proverb 23 below.

23. Deeme ne deeme ba bora bie

“In-laws do not play oware together”.

This proverb literary means, in-laws are not supposed to exchange words or quarrel. This proverb is a word of caution to in-laws and that in-laws should not exchange words no matter the circumstance of their misunderstanding, as far as the Dagaaba tradition is concerned. The literary device of the proverb is euphemism where quarrel is mildly used as playing.

24. Golanteebo yeli ka eŋ taa la veɔloŋ

“Chameleon says respect is beautiful”.

The literary meaning of this proverb is that, respect is reciprocal.

The literary device of this proverb is personification where the *golanteebo* ‘chameleon’ has been personified and talks like a human being.. The aesthetic quality of this proverb is the personification of chameleon in the speech.

25. Naabini vūū maŋ gaŋ la kyε logɔɔ

“The fire on the cow dung glows slowly”.

The literary meaning of this proverb is that, a problem left un-solved has long term effect. The literary device of this proverb is personification where the fire on the cow dung has been personified into a human being and behaves like a human being.

26. Dmene la maŋ ko gɔma soori ka o vɔle

“It is God who gives grasshopper to the chameleon to swallow”.

The literary meaning of this proverb is, it is God who helps the needy. This proverb is usually applied when

somebody has a problem and has been discouraged and lost hope of solving it. The literary device in this proverb is personification where God and chameleon have been personified. The aesthetic of this proverb forms part of the literary device. The chameleon is noted to be an animal that cannot move fast and the grasshopper is an insect that can fly. It is therefore surprising for a chameleon to get a grasshopper to swallow. It therefore means that if not for God's mercy, it can never get it to swallow. All these form part of the aesthetics of the Dagaaba proverbs.

27. Kannyiri sobaŋ peere naasaraa bere.

“It is patience who milks a heifer”.

This proverb literary means, patience moves mountains. It is applicable to a situation where someone thinks that all is lost in trying to achieve a task and for that matter can no longer restrain any patience and wants to give up. The belief of the Dagaaba about this proverb is that, no matter how difficult or impossible a problem may be, patience mixed with perseverance can resolve it. This proverb is similar to “patience cooks stones”. This implies that with patience, you can perform any task that is assigned to you no matter the difficulty of the task and without patience too, you cannot carry it out.

The literary device in this proverb is a paradox because the milking of a heifer sounds absurd before an ordinary man. Rationally, a heifer can never produce milk until it gives birth to a calf. However, it makes sense proverbially upon a second thought. The cooking of a stone or the moving of a mountain looks absurd but contains an insight into human life. It is simply talking about the intensity of the patience that one has to restrain. Also, it is not possible to move a mountain from one place to another or to cook a stone and therefore create an imagery of the intensity of the patience one has to exhibit in doing something through perseverance.

The aesthetics quality of this proverb forms part of the literary device that emerges from it. The ability of patience to milk a heifer or to move a mountain is a paradoxical statement. It is not just the milking of a heifer or moving of a mountain per se but rather the perseverance effort one makes in achieving a difficult task. Culturally, a heifer has no milk unless it gives birth to a calf. Milking a heifer therefore is not an easy task which needs a lot of patience before it can be accomplished.

28. Saana kpeere ne la kpẽo kyɛ o ba yire ne kpẽo.

“A visitor forces his way in but does not force his way out”.

The literary meaning of this proverb is that a visitor is in the jurisdiction of his host and cannot force his or her way out. In the situational analysis, this proverb is usually applied to visitors who insist on leaving sooner than the hosts have had time to provide some reception for them. The view of the Dagaaba is that a visitor is in the jurisdiction of his host and cannot decide when to leave. A visitor therefore has to exercise patience and wait until his/her host provides whatever reception he or she has for him or her before he or she leaves.

The literary device in this proverb is a syntactic parallelism alongside a repetition because it involves structural identity between the two sections of the proverb: *Saana kpeere ne la kpẽo* ‘a visitor forces his way in’ and *kyɛ o ba yire ne kpẽo* ‘but he does not force his way out’. The words that are repeated are: *ne* ‘with’ and ‘*kpẽo*’ ‘strength’. The aesthetic quality of this proverb forms part of the literary devices; syntactic parallelism and repetition that form part of the beauty. Each section of the text contains the same classes of phrases and words which bear similar grammatical and thematic relations to the predicator and a sense of emphases respectively.

29. Ba ba kyeere teŋɛ dayeni a pɔgrɔ tɛnzee

“They do not dig the ground once and get red sand”.

Literary, this proverb means, Rome was not built in a day. This proverb is used in a situation where some people think they can use less time than the expected time to achieve a task. The explanation of this proverb is that; do not expect to achieve an important task within a short period of time. For instance “the red sand” is the soil which requires the effort of persistent ‘digging’ and as a result, one’s patience is stretched. History tells us about Ghana’s Independence led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and how long it took him to get to that far. The Independent of Ghana was achieved since 1957. Today we have many dams; factories, Tema Oil Refinery (TOR) just to mention but a few. All these things took several years to come into existence. It was through

patience and perseverance that he was able to succeed in liberating us from Gold Coast and colonization.

The literary device used in this proverb is a metaphor. It means that one has to be digging the red sand persistently until one gets it. The persistent digging of the red sand is directly related or compared to the extent of the patience and perseverance one has to exhibit before achieving a task.

The aesthetic quality in this proverb forms part of the literary device which is metaphorically expressed with a symbolic representation for the persistent digging of the red soil and the extent of the perseverance one has to restrain as a result of patience in order to achieve a difficult task. It is not just the persistent digging of the red soil per se but it is rather the extent of the patience one has to continue to exhibit through perseverance to achieve a tedious task.

30. *Benee wiri naŋ be ka boŋo meŋ gere.*

“Where the horse is going, the donkey will also get there”.

This proverb literary means, there is hope when there is life. In a situational analysis, this proverb is used in a situation where someone is left behind in doing something, hoping that with patience and perseverance, he will also finish. The literary devices used in this proverb are alliteration and repetition where there is a repetition of the consonant ‘b’ in the syllables *benee* ‘where’ and *be* ‘there’ and the word *gere* ‘going’ is repeated.

The aesthetic quality of this proverb forms part of its literary devices which are the enhancement of the effect of the repeated sound /be/ in *benee* ‘where’ and *be* ‘there’ and the emphasis of the word *gere* ‘going’ as a result of its repetition. In the Dagaaba tradition, the horse and the donkey are both means of transport but they know that it is the horse that moves faster than the donkey. However, the donkey has the hope that wherever the horse is going to, it will also get there. The horse therefore represents the more able people in the society whilst the donkey represents the less able people in the society

31. *Nimiri ba kono kanyoore taŋna.*

“The nose does not stop running when tears are flowing from the eyes”.

This proverb literary means, your neighbour’s problem is your problem. This proverb is applicable in a situation where one cannot ignore the problem of his or her neighbour as a result of solidarity. This is the reason why you always see phlegm running through the nose any time tears is flowing from the eyes. This implies that when your neighbour has a problem, it is equally your problem because you cannot sit on the fence at that particular period. The nose and eyes are neighbours as far as the human head is concerned.

The literary device in this proverb is synecdoche where *Nimiri* ‘eye’ and *nyoore* ‘nose’ represent the whole human being. Another literary device that can be deduced from this proverb is personification where the *Nimiri* ‘eye’ and the *nyoore* ‘nose’ are personified and behave like human being. The beauty of this proverb forms part of the literary devices which have a symbolic representation in nature. *Nimiri* ‘eye’ and *nyoore* ‘nose’ represent a human being in term of their behaviour. *Nimiri* ‘eye’ symbolizes the artist of the proverb and *nyoore* ‘nose’ represents the ‘neighbour’ who has the problem.

32. *Nubiri maŋ eŋ la koɔ seŋ omeŋe.*

“A finger contains pus according to its size”.

Literary, this proverb means cut your coat according to your cloth. The literary device in this proverb is personification because the *nubiri* ‘finger’ has been personified and behaves like a human being on its own, talking about the extent to which it can contain pus as far as its size is concerned. We all know that the size of a finger determines the extent to which it can contain pus when it is swollen.

The aesthetic quality of the proverb lies in its literary device which has a symbolic representation. The finger, *nubiri* symbolizes the quantity of the contribution and the containing of the pus by the finger according to its size symbolizes the quality of the contribution. The *nubiri* ‘finger’ represents the individuals in the society and *eŋ koɔ seŋ o meŋe* ‘the containing of the pus by the finger according to its side’ represents the contributions of the individuals. This means that a big finger (*nubikpoŋ*) will contain more pus than a small finger (*nubilee*) where the *nubilee* ‘small finger’ and the *nubikpoŋ* ‘big finger’ represent the poor and the rich respectively in the society. This means that you should not expect the poor and the rich to contribute equally when it comes to

contributions.

However, what do we always see in our communities when it comes to contributions? The poor are expected to contribute as much as the rich. This is what the proverb is against and that, our society is not fair to the poor, and all this is talking about the beauty of the proverb. The poor should also be appreciated no matter how small their contribution may be.

33. **Fo maŋ bokpɛ la noɔ kyɛ bokpɛ tobaa meŋ.**

“You do rule in favour of both the hen and the red hawk without any discrimination”. This proverb literary means, spare the rod and spoil the child. Contextually, the proverb is used in a situation where two children A and B have caused a problem and neither of them wants to take the blame whilst in fact, you know the child that causes the problem. Since you know the child that causes the problem, you have to make your conclusion in your judgment whether to spare the rod and spoil the child. That is to say *noɔ* ‘hen’ is wrong or you judge honestly by saying *tobaa* ‘red hen’ is at fault. *Tobaa* ‘red hawk’ is noted to be chickens snatcher in the Dagaaba tradition because it does not see chickens without tempting to pick them.

The literary device used in this proverb is symbolism where both the hen and the red hawk represent different caliber of people in the society. The red hawk represents wicked people in the society and the hen represents good people in the society. The beauty of the proverb forms part of the literary device which has a symbolic representation of people with different behaviours. The *tobaa* ‘red hawk’ has contravened social norms and such behaviour should be discarded in our society.

34. **Aŋ ba nyɛ badere naŋ zɔɔ wɔɔ?**

“Who has not seen a spider riding an elephant”?

This proverb literary means, give praises where it is due. This proverb is used in a situation where someone tries to do something but fails. It is therefore used to appreciate the effort the person made by trying to do something but does not succeed. The literary device in the proverb is a personification and rhetoric question at the same time in the sense that the *badere* ‘spider’ has been personified with a question mark at the end. The *badere* ‘spider’ has turned into a human being and now riding an elephant. The aesthetic quality of the proverb forms part of the literary device as the beauty and admiration of a spider riding an elephant which does not have any direct relation to its meaning as the appreciation of an effort made but fails to achieve a task. In the Dagaaba culture, an elephant is noted to be a very huge animal and the spider is a very small animal and it is not easy for a spider to ride an elephant. Even if it succeeds in riding an elephant, its feet will not touch the ground and therefore, needs to be praised for the efforts it makes to ride an elephant and only that the feet do not reach the ground.

35. **Bonna Saana naŋ wa pɔge la ka o na di.**

“What a visitor comes to meet is what he or she will eat”.

This proverb literary means, what you have is what you will give to your visitor. Contextually, the proverb is used in a situation where a visitor arrives at the host’s house and they are eating their meal when a prior notice is not given to the host about the impending visit. It is therefore used in appreciation of the fact that they are not aware of his coming and for that matter he could not determine what he or she will get to eat. The literary device of this proverb is allusion which is a reference to a thing that is not in the text but known to be anything that is edible as deduces from the phrase *ka o na di* ‘what he will eat’.

The aesthetic quality is derived from the formation of its literary device as a result of the unpredictability or uncertain nature of what he will eat at the host’s end. This uncertainty comes as a result of the fact that they are not aware of his coming since he does not give them any prior notice of his visit.

1.1.6. Conclusion

The focus of this study was on the “Identification of the Structures of Dagaaba proverbs and the Analyses of their literary devices and the aesthetic qualities that are embedded in them with particular reference to the central dialect of Dagaare. The structures that were identified in the selected proverbs included simple and complex structures, contrast proposition statements, simple rhythmic balance proposition, rhetorical statements, negative axiom statements and simple positive statement as well as short and long proverbs.

In an attempt to examine the literary devices and their aesthetic qualities embedded in Dagaaba proverbs, it was realized that the proverbs are full of symbolic representations of humans, fauna and flora. They have a lot of symbolic representations that bring out the aesthetics of the language. They are usually used in a context that calls for their usage for different meaning in a different context to embellish the aesthetic nature of the language.

Some of the literary devices that were identified in some the proverb included: metaphor, personification, paradox, synecdoche, syntactic parallelism, symbolism, allusion and paradox just to mention but a few. The most frequent used literary device among them was personification. The aesthetic values of the proverbs were clearly realized in the literary devices which have a symbolic representation of human, flora and fauna of the environment and stylishly displayed the beauty of the language in them.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the following personalities through whose effort this paper has become a reality. I will first of all thank the Almighty God for His Grace, guidance and protection from the beginning of my education up till now.

My sincerest thanks go to Professor Avea Ephraim Nsoh, Dr. Samuel Awinkene Atintono, and Mr. Ababila James Azuure all of the University of Languages, Ajumako Campus of the the University of Education, Winneba with the first and last being the Principal and Head of Gur-Gonja Education Department of the University of Languages respectively. May the Good Lord continue to bless each and every one of you in all your endeavours with good health, long life and prosperity.

Reference:

- Bangnikon, L.D.(1999).Wisdom toGuide You. A Book of DagaraProverbs,Wisdom and Humour. Tamale: GILLBT.
- Bekye, P. K. (1991). Divine Revelation and Traditional Religions with Particular Reference tothe Dagaaba of West Africa. Romae: ex Pontificia. Universitate Gregoriana
- Bendor-Samuel, J. T. (1971). “Niger-Congo Gur” in *Current Trends in Linguistics*. Vol 7:141-178.
- Bodomo, A. B. (2000). *Dagáárè*. Languages of the World/Materials 165. LINCOM EUROPA.
- Bodomo, A. B. (1997). *The Structure of Dagaare*. Stanford: CSLI Publication
- Dàgááré LanguageCommittee (1982). *A Guide to Dàgááré Spelling*. Wa: Catholic Press.
- Dakubu, M. E. K. (2007). *Dagaare Clause Structure*. Ms to the Department of Linguistics, University of Ghana. Legon.
- Dansieh, A. S. (2008). “Relevance and Linguistic Markers: Implications for Translation from English into a Gur Language” in *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 17(14); 228-246.
- Finnegan, R. (2012). *Oral Literature in Africa*. Cambridge: Open Books Publishers CIC Ltd.
- Hall, E. (1973). *Dagaare West African Language Data Sheets*. ed by M. E. K. Dakubu presented to the University ofGhana, Legon.
- Kennedy, J. (1966). *Collected Field Reports on the Phonology of Dagaare. Collected Language Notes 6*.Accra: Institute of African Studies.
- Kyemaalo, L. B. (2000). *Dagaaba Sekpaga*. Wa: Catholic Press.
- Kyiiileyang, M. (2008). *Exposition of Dagara Proverbs of Nandom Traditional Area: Context and Tropes*. M.Phil Dissertation presented to the Department of English in the Faculty of Arts, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast.
- Mardan, M. J. (2009). “Proverbs and Idioms” in *Proverb category*.22:20.
- Naden, J. (1989). ‘Gur’. *The Niger-Congo Languages*. Ed. J. Bendor-Samuel Lanthan: MD University Press of America Limited,
- Stewart, J. (1997). *African Proverbs and Wisdom*. London: Carol Publishers.
- Yabang, C. K. (1999). Study Notes on Analysis of the Literary & Artistic Qualities of Proverbs. (Unpublished).
- Yabang, C. K.(1994).*Standard Written Language of Dagaaba (Dagaare) for Educational Programmes*. Wa: The Diocese,
- Yabang, C. K. (1980).*Dagaare Sekpøga (Proverbs)*.(Unpublished)..
- Zakpää, B. B. (1996). *Dagaaba Sekpøga 200*. Accra: BGL