

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

THEMATIC AND AESTHETIC ANALYSIS OF DAGAABA WELLERISMS



A Thesis in the Department of Gur-Gonja Education, Faculty of Ghanaian Languages
Education, submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, University of
Education, Winneba, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
Master of Philosophy
Degree in Ghanaian Language Studies (Dagaare).

SEPTEMBER, 2023

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, **Alfred Bakyee**, hereby declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which are identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own work, and that to the best of my knowledge, it has not been accepted either in part or whole, for the award of any other degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised by me in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

DR. JAMES A. N. SAANCHI (SUPERVISOR)

SIGNATURE

DATE.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late father, Bakyee Dassah A.K.A Fineboy, my lovely mother, Assibi Pascalina Bakyee, my Spiritual mother, Pastor Faustina Laadi Dakurah and my entire family and friends who are solidly behind me in everything.



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ABBREVIATIONS

PA Pragmatic Approach

RT Relevance Theory

TZ Tuozaafi



ABSTRACT

Wellerisms as variants of proverbs in African oral literature have gained much attention and have been explored by scholars in many languages of the African society. Wellerism proverbs are said to be a common and interesting phenomenon in African languages, claimed to be the preserve of collective traditional wisdom of the community. That is, they are attributed to the wisdom of the elders of the community. Just like a normal proverb does, the wellerism is said to be a powerful tool of

communication; they are basically infused in discourse by speakers. Proverbs serve as salt, flavouring the speeches of a speech community. In this study therefore, we examined some themes and aesthetic qualities of the Dagaaba wellerisms which have been least studied. We discussed the meaning and concept of proverbs and wellerisms, as well as the roles and authorship of proverb. The characteristics of Dagaaba wellerisms are delineated. We also examined the sentential structure and some thematic classifications of Dagaaba wellerism proverbs. Also, the aesthetic qualities associated with the use of wellerisms among the Dagaaba are unveiled. It is evident in the study that wellerisms form an integral part of the Dagaaba culture. That is, they are used in their day-to-day communication, not merely for pleasure or to entertain, but to reflect and contribute to their way of life, which form a strong basis for community ties.



CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE WORK

1.0. Introduction

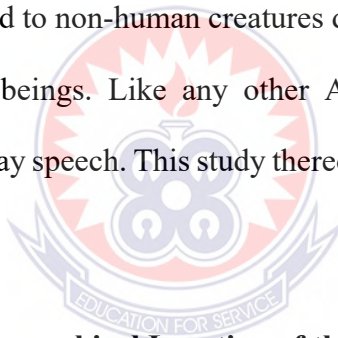
This chapter presents a brief introduction of the study. Thus, it gives a brief background to the study. The Dagaare and its speakers is briefly discussed; it presents the geographical location of the said speakers, both in Ghana and beyond. Furthermore, the varieties of Dagaare and where these varieties are spoken have been pointed out. It highlights the genetic affiliation of the language. Moreover, the chapter presents a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, the objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations and delimitation of the study, as well as the organization of the study.

1.1. Background to the Study

Proverbs as an aspect of oral literature continue to be an interesting phenomenon in languages across the world, and are often infused in everyday human communication. This study seeks to investigate the thematic and aesthetics of Dagaaba wellerisms. Thus, it analyzes the themes, discusses the contextual or situational usage of some collected Dagaaba wellerisms as well as explores the aesthetic values that are embedded in them. It also investigates the characteristics and sentential structure of the Dagaaba wellerisms. “Wellerisms” are a kind of proverbs attributed to non-human creatures; living or non-living. Okumba (1994: 40) as cited in Yakub (2018: 114) defines wellerisms as “proverbs which are presented as quotations from some imaginary or actual characters.” Finnegan (2012: 349) opines that ‘Wellerism’ is a form that involves the use of quoted words attributed to some actual or fictional person, it is another device for giving point and sometimes authority to a proverbial saying.’ Also, According to Williams (2007), wellerisms containing proverbs are variants of proverbs and they

existed separately from proverbs and at some points, some proverbs are transformed into wellerisms while probably continuing in their use as proverbs in their own right. He further affirms that proverbs in wellerisms are mostly often quoted straight forwardly in their standard forms.

“Wellerisms have been considered a type of proverb and have much in common with other types” (Caro 1997: 839) cited in Unseth et al. (2017: 3). Taylor acknowledged the complex status of wellerism proverbs, writing that it was possible to say that a wellerism “belonged to a very special class of proverbs” (A. Taylor 1962: 202) in Unseth et al. (2017: 3). This explains that wellerisms are a category of proverbs which play the same role as the normal proverbs do. It must be noted that wellerisms are a class of proverbs attributed to non-human creatures due to their natural behaviours and often quoted by human beings. Like any other African society, the Dagaaba use wellerisms in their everyday speech. This study therefore examines the use of wellerisms among the Dagaaba.



1.2. The History and Geographical Location of the Dagaaba

Dagaare is the language of the Dagaaba. 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 (Bodomo 1997) cited in Dansieh (2008: 229).

According to Bodomo (2000), 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 asserts that “The Dagaaba have a number of dialect groups. Two of the principal ones are the Lobri and the Dagaare dialect speakers”. He indicates that

the Lobri dialect group lives in the extreme northwestern corner of Ghana and across the Black Volta into Burkina Faso where they refer to both the people and the language as Dagara. According to him the Dagaare dialect speakers live exclusively in Ghana, South-East of the Lobri dialect group. In his view, the speakers of the Dagaare dialect call themselves Dagaaba and their language Dagaare, whereas the Lobri dialect speakers are referred to as Loor, whilst the two groups know that they are one people and they speak the same language. Bodomo (1997) describes Dagaare as a language that comprises a dialect continuum, which includes Dagaare, Waale and Birifor dialects. Bodomo posits that the Dagaare-Waale-Birifor linguistic group presents one of the complex dialect situations in Ghana. From a linguistic viewpoint, the Dagaare, Waale and Birifor groups are variants of the same language yet variations in respect to speech forms occur from one village or town to another.

The Dagaare Language Committee Guide (1982) cited in Bodomo (1997) splits Dagaare into Northern, Central, Mid-Central and Southern dialects; identifying word lists which contains the pronunciation differences of some lexical items. However, Waale and Birifor are not captured in this division as it was based on the geographical landscape of the Dagaaba land from Nandom through Jirapa to Wa. According to Dakubu (2005), the people around Nandom are corresponding to Dagara, Lawra and Babile are corresponding to Birifor, Jirapa, Boo, Ullo, Karni, Sabuli, Daffiama are corresponding to Dagaare and Wa and its environs are corresponding to Waale.

The study is focused on the Central Dialect of Dagaare which comprises the varieties spoken in Jirapa, Karni, Han, Ullo, Daffiama, Nadowli and their immediate environs. Bodomo (2000) observes 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.

The dialect spoken in Jirapa and its environs happens to reflect heavily in the language orthography. Jirapa in question has an interesting historical background. For instance, the name Jirapa formerly (before the arrival of the White Christian Missionaries) was “*Gyerɛbaa*.” ‘*Gyerɛ*’ is the name of some kind of grass in Dagaare whilst ‘*baa*’ means stream in the language. These compounded as *Gyerɛbaa*, meaning ‘*Gyerɛ-stream*.’ According to history, anytime in the olden days women were going to fetch water from that particular stream they would say they are going to Gyerɛstream to be specific since there might have been many streams. This grass called Gyerɛ surrounded the stream, hence its name which later became the name of the community. The White missionaries came and bestowed its name *Jirapa* due to the fact that they could not best pronounce the original name. However, the natives of the community and its surrounding communities still call it by the original name.

Interestingly, McCoy (1988) indicates that it was these Western Christian missionaries who arrived in Jirapa in 1929, and in their quest to spread the gospel they began to develop the Dagaare orthography to help them compose songs, write them down as well as teach people. The land is indeed noted for its rich historical and cultural background. According to McCoy (1988), one of the earliest white missionaries to Jirapa, in his memoir entitled, “*Great Things Happen*” reveals that when the missionary group first arrived in the Dagaaba territory it was in Jirapa they were located until the gospel expansion moved them to other areas like Kaleo, Birfo and others in the same Region of Upper West. According to him, when they arrived it was necessary for them to request for a land where they can build a place of abode as well as build an auditorium

for worship. However, he indicated that the natives were in the midst of confusion as to whether they were some enemies who wanted to cunningly snatch their young men away into slavery, and so they doubted their mission that brought them into the community. Others said they were just mere traders. Consequently, the then chief, Naa Ganaa Angsole I together with his subjects gave an approval for them to be given a neglected land where some of the *gyere* grasses, creeping plants and brambles were found, and altogether evil spirits haunted. McCoy hinted that perhaps the chief had pit them against the evil spirits to get rid of them without chasing them out of the community, and if they won, he would be saved from the evil spirits. However, their stay was fruitful as far as their mission is concerned.

One other great history recoded by McCoy is that, as years went by, a time came when there was heavy drought in the land even after repeated sacrifices were made by the traditional leaders to appease the gods so there may be rain, it all failed them. This created fears and worries in the people since they were basically peasant farmers. Some said if the gods were angry, then it was the cause of those who pray with these Christian missionaries and refused to sacrifice to the gods. This persisted and the entire community and its surrounding villages became hopeless and therefore went to the white missionaries to help seek for rains for the land. He claims that a group of people from a village called Daffiama on one fateful day visited the mission house in Jirapa with gifts and after presenting it to them, their supposed leader said, “what we want is rain.” He got angry at them due to the impolite approach and asked if he was dealing with rain. They apologised and still insisted on their request.

Father McCoy gave them conditions on which they could receive rain: he asked them to stop sacrificing to idols, give freedom to their people who desired to serve God and

also stop forcing their daughters to marry against their will. They hesitated on the conditions yet upon further dialogue they agreed. They then insinuated that if God truly loves them then why is He watching them go through such unabated drought? And he replied to them that they have not asked God for it. This was a way of getting the people turn to God as many were resisting the gospel. Since they did not know how to pray, he led them to pray and ask God for the rain. Immediately they dispersed and the group left for their village Daffiama, they were met with a heavy down pour, and they gladly returned to Jirapa the next morning to thank the missionaries. This news spread beyond the boundaries of Jirapa and delegations from all walks of lives came to Jirapa to seek for rain from the missionaries. This miracle led to the growth of the catholic denomination in Jirapa and beyond, as numerous people joined the faith. Jirapa presently is dominated by the catholic faith aside the traditional religion.

Jirapa people are well cultured; they are hospitable and any stranger can stay with them without any threats. Their main drink is pito, whilst local cakes called “*koosee or sense*” is their major dish sold in the daily market. They are known for their Bawaa dance and annually, they dance it at their festival celebration called Bongo festival. The culture of the people is alive and growing. It is of a truth that the Jirapa dialect (Central dialect) has heavily found its way into the Dagaare orthography more than other dialects of the language due to the influence and great works of the earlier Christian missionaries who settled there. This, by far is the motivation behind the choice of this site for the research. Proverbs are often used by the people in their everyday communication including some occasions such as funerals grounds, traditional marriage contractions and festivals among others.

According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2012: 9) the population of people who speak Dagaare as a native language in Upper West alone is 702,110. However, it is worth noting that Dagaare has spread across all the regions in Ghana and beyond for economic, educational, social and other geographical mobility reasons affecting the native speakers and moved them from their homeland. Dagaare speakers could be found in Accra, Kumasi, Takoradi, Ho, Tamale, among others. This reveals that the total population of the speakers in general could exceed this number indicated by the Ghana Statistical Service.

The singular for Dagaaba is *Dagao*. Apart from ‘*Dagao*’ that is being used to refer to an individual native speaker of the language. It is also used to refer to the entire geographical area occupied by the Dagaaba. Thus, the homeland of the Dagaaba is called *Dagao* and that of the language is *Dagaare*.

1.3. The Dagaare Genetic Affiliation

Dagaare has been genetically classified as a member of the Oti-Volta group of the Gur branch of Niger Congo language family (Swadesh 1996, Bendor-Samuel 1971:144, Naden 1989) cited in Bodomo (1997). The Gur languages in recent times have been classified as the “*Mabia*” language family. According to Bodomo (1997) cited in Bodomo et al. (2020), the term “*Mabia*” is used for the Gur language family due to similarities of some linguistic features like advanced tongue root, vowel harmony, syllabicity, nasality etc. This suggestion by Bodomo is anchored on the genetic characteristics of the central Gur group of languages, where “*ma* and *bia*” are found mostly in the central Gur languages. “*Ma* and *bia*” means mother and child respectively. In Dagaare “*Mabia*” will literally connote ‘*N ma bie*’, which means my mother’s child. It is used to designate a sibling relationship due to the fact that, there

are similarities between words and expressions in the Gur group of languages as earlier indicated.

Dakubu (1989) stresses that the *Sisaala* speaking group shares borders with *Dagaaba*, however, the two languages are not closely related. Though a Gur language, Dagaare traces its roots to the South-Western subgroup of Grusi languages. However, Safaliba and Moosi languages are also related to *Dagaare* genetically. Other languages which are genetically related to *Dagaare* include Gurenɛ (Frafra) and Kusaal in the Upper East Region of Ghana and Moore, Dagbani and Mampruli in the Northern Region.

Though Dagaare has a continuum of geographical/regional dialects, four major dialects are noticeable. These include Northern Dagaare, Central Dagaare, Southern Dagaare and Western Dagaare (Bodomo 1997). According to Naden (1988), speakers of all these variety of dialects understand one another without much difficulty. Dialectal differences therefore, among these dialects are mainly at the phonological level. In Ghana the orthography is based more on the Central dialect which is used in the educational system. In this regard, Central dialect of Dagaare is used in the analysis of this study.

1.4. Statement of the Problem

Dagaaba proverbs over the years have gained some scholarly attention. Some explorations were undertaken by scholars and researchers like Yabang (1980, 1999), Zakpaa (1996), Bangnikon (1999), Kyemaalo (2000), Kyiileyang (2008) and Kogri (2014). However, a gap is yet to be bridged, by giving attention to wellerisms as variants of proverbs.

Other works include, Yabang (1980) who did a general collection of over six hundred (600) Dagaaba proverbs and idioms however, no analysis have been made. Kyemaalo (2000) did a collection of over one thousand (1,000) Dagaare proverbs and idioms, twenty-six (26) wellerisms with no analysis made. Kyiileyang (2008) did an exposition of Dagara proverbs in the northern dialect of Dagaare expounding their moral values. He analyzed two hundred and seven (207) proverbs containing fourteen (14) wellerisms. Kogri (2014) analyzed the thematic and aesthetic pattern of proverbs in Dagaare, with six (6) wellerisms out of eighty-eight (88) proverbs. However, the six wellerisms he analyzed are all proverbs attributed to only animate creatures.

Taking wellerisms into account as variants of proverbs, there has not been any research conducted on their thematic and aesthetic values in the Central dialect of Dagaare. Earlier researchers and writers to the best of my knowledge focused generally on Dagaaba proverbs with little attention on wellerisms. It is in this respect that the researcher proposes to explore the “Thematic and Aesthetic Values of the Dagaaba Wellerisms” so as to examine their themes and the aesthetic qualities embedded in them. The characteristics of Dagaaba wellerisms, and structure, as in the sentential levels will also be discussed.

1.5. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Explore the characteristics of Dagaaba wellerisms.
2. Analyze the sentential structure of Dagaaba wellerisms.
3. Examine the themes and aesthetic features of the selected Dagaaba wellerisms.

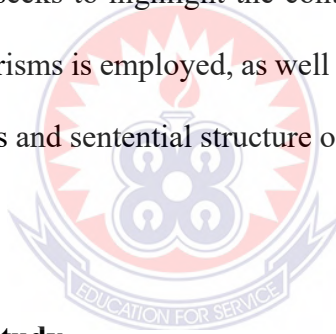
1.6. Research Questions

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the Dagaaba wellerisms?
2. What is the sentential structure of Dagaaba wellerisms?
3. What are the themes and aesthetic features of the selected Dagaaba wellerisms?

1.7. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyse some selected wellerisms among the Dagaaba in various themes. Thus, it seeks to highlight the context(s) or situation(s) under which each of the selected wellerisms is employed, as well as explore some aesthetic qualities in them. The characteristics and sentential structure of the Dagaaba wellerisms will also be examined.



1.8. Significance of the Study

Since every research is aimed at solving a particular problem or bridging a gap, this study significantly adds to the existing literature of Dagaare and other language groups especially on wellerisms. That is, it will serve as reference to other areas of study especially the aspect of Dagaare oral literature, which will contribute to the enhancement of knowledge in the Dagaaba cultural studies.

1.9. Limitations of the Study

The challenging issues that the researcher encountered were the target population and sample size. That is, the researcher targeted only natives of the research area however, due to unavailability of some targeted respondents, the researcher was compelled to

consider interviewing other Dagaare speakers who are non-indigenes of the research area but are currently inhabiting there. On the other hand, the researcher proposed to interview twenty (20) people but ended up with sixteen (16) respondents due to unavailability of the targeted individuals.

1.10 Delimitation of the Study

The researcher would have wished to cover the entire Dagaaba land as far as this study is concerned. However, considering the vast scope of the area, time and resources could not permit him to do so. Therefore, this research is delimited to the Jirapa traditional area, of the Jirapa municipality in the Upper West Region of Ghana. The scope of the study is restricted to the “Thematic and Aesthetic Analysis of Dagaaba Wellerisms.” The study included both young and aged as participants in the study areas.

1.11. Organization of the Study

The research is made up of five chapters. Chapter one (1) introduces the entire study. It talks about the background to the study which includes the geographical location of the speakers of *Dagaare*, the people (*Dagaaba*) and the genetic affiliation of *Dagaare*. It also presents the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, the research questions and the purpose of the study. Moreover, it highlights the significance of the study, the challenges and delimitation of the study as well as the organization of the study.

Chapter two (2) reviews relevant literature related to the study. It looks at concept of aesthetics, previous works on proverbs in a general perspective, the concept or origin of wellerisms as well as related literature on wellerisms. The theoretical framework that underpins this study is also expounded in this chapter. Chapter three (3) concerns the

methodology. The sources of data, population and sampling technique, the research site and data collection techniques are explained briefly. Chapter four (4) covers the analysis and findings of the collected wellerisms and chapter five (5) deals with the summary, conclusion and recommendations on the entire study.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. Introduction

This chapter presents review of some related works done by earlier researchers and scholars on proverbs in general. First and foremost, it begins by introducing some scholars who have done some research work on proverbs in the Dagaare language. It follows with an overview of what ‘aesthetics’ is all about. It looks at the concept/origin and the different definitions given to proverb by earlier researchers. It continues to discuss (review) the works that proverbs do, thus, the role of proverbs in some cultures including Dagaare, explored by other researchers. The views by some scholars in relation to the authorship of proverbs are also presented in this chapter. A brief review of pragmatic analysis of proverbs is done as well. Moreover, the chapter points out some definitions of proverb by some informants of this present study. Additionally, it reviews some related literatures of wellerisms in some cultures, which forms the core of this study. The theory which underpins this study is also briefly presented.

2.1. Some Scholarly Works on Proverbs in Dagaare

Some scholarly works in Dagaare that are related to this present study include, Yabang (1980) who did a collection of over 400 Dagaaba proverbs including some few wellerisms. However, their thematic and aesthetic structure has not been discussed. Yabang (1999) also did an analysis of the literary and artistic qualities of the Dagaaba proverbs. He asserts that in terms of abstract structure the Dagaaba proverbs are philosophical in nature, terse, pithy, quotable, and attributable to elders among several others. In sentential structure, the author stated that some Dagaaba proverbs are simple positive statements, negative propositions, double propositions, negative axioms, reduplication, cross parallelism and others. He also examined the stylistic devices

associated with some Dagaaba proverbs such as, allusion, personification, imagery, symbolism and other literary devices. The sentential structure as well as the stylistic devices of Dagaaba proverbs investigated by Yabang is relevant as far as this present study is concerned.

Zakpaa (1996) collected about 200 Dagaare proverbs with no analysis made. An analysis of Dagara proverbs, in terms of meaning and their moral teaching has been undertaken by Bangnikon (1999) in the northern dialect of Dagaare which is spoken around Lawra and Nandom and its environs such as Yagtoore, Kalsegraa, Tampee, Kupeelle, Mɔyipeelle and Namdomlee. His collected proverbs are about 342. Bangnikon (1999) states that his collection of the Dagara proverbs is intended to leave a legacy for the benefit of Dagara posterity, be a reference of deeper insight into the language, philosophy and literature as well as to be a source of entertainment to those who love to read for pleasure. The author presents each proverb in Dagara dialect followed by its literal translation, explanation and the moral teaching that encompass the proverb.

Kyemaalo (2000) also did a collection of about 1500 Dagaare proverbs and idioms, including 26 wellerisms, yet no analysis has been done. Kyiileyang (2008) as well, did an exposition of 207 Dagara proverbs, also in the northern dialect of Dagaare. In his study, out of the 207 proverbs, 14 of them are wellerisms. His analysis captures the thematic patterns of the proverbs. However, the analysis is not sufficient enough to assume that wellerism proverbs in Dagaare have been exhausted, as far as this study is concerned. According to Kyiileyang (2008), proverbs are part of folklore where folklore is generally considered as the backbone of folk knowledge and wisdom which is accumulated and cherished greatly by the people of the community. He further notes

that folklore covers wide area to include people's verbal and performing arts such as oral literature, material culture, their beliefs, customs and institutions.

One notable thing in the work of Kyiileyang is that the correct explanation of proverbs can be done by following the literal translation of proverbs using analytical references and finally coming out with the moral teaching and relating it to the situation under which it was used. Kogri (2014) equally explored about ninety (90) Dagaaba proverbs and out of the ninety (90) proverbs, five (5) of them are wellerisms. The analysis of his work is on the "thematic and aesthetic" aspect, in the Central dialect of Dagaare.

Even though his work has some relevance to this study such as the thematic and aesthetic aspect, it must be noted that there is a gap to bridge as far as Dagaaba wellerisms have not been effectively tackled in their analysis as variants of proverbs. Some of the themes under which Kogri analysed his collected Dagaaba proverbs include; unity, patience and perseverance, appreciation, laziness, indiscipline, ignorance, hard work and greed. He also discussed the structure that the Dagaaba proverbs have, such as simple positive statements, negative axioms, rhetorical questions, cross parallelism, direct statements, imperative statements among others.

One other aspect that the researcher examined in his study is the aesthetic features of the Dagaaba proverbs and they are the literary devices unravelled in the proverbs analysed. The areas of theme, structure and aesthetic values of Dagaaba proverbs explored by Kogri are relevant to this present study. Kogri says that Proverbs are metaphorical and therefore, it is through proper understanding that their metaphorical nature is unravelled. And that they are "relics of cultural experiences and relate mostly to abstract issues like, laziness, envy, love, power, wealth, poverty, strength, weakness,

mood, intelligence among others that constitute the foundations of the people's mindset" (Kogri 2014: 42-43).

It is indeed commendable that the above scholars worked on Dagaaba proverbs. However, the aspect of wellerisms has been given less or little attention. This study therefore bridges the gap. The study focuses on investigating the thematic and aesthetic features of the Dagaaba wellerisms in the Central dialect of Dagaare. That is, it seeks to draw scholarly attention on their context(s) or situation(s) of usage and also their aesthetic values.

2.2. Aesthetics

The term aesthetics was introduced in 1753 by a German philosopher, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. It was derived from the ancient Greek word '*aisthanomai*' meaning perception by senses. Aesthetics deals with the nature of art, beauty and taste, with the creation and appreciation of beauty. It is more scientifically defined as the study of sensory or sensory-emotional values, sometimes called judgements of sentiment and taste. More broadly, scholars in the field define aesthetics as a critical reflection on art, nature and culture. Aesthetics has come to be used to designate, among other things; a kind of object, judgement, attitude, experience and value. For the most part, aesthetic theories have been divided over questions pertaining to one or another of these descriptions (www.philosophicalsociety.com/aesthetics retrieved on 21/01/2013) cited in Umar (2014: 11). For Sützen (2020), aesthetics is related to sensory value. Sützen attests that the Greek word '*aisthetikos*' means 'to hear' or 'to detect' a good sense of beauty, which refers to the perception of aesthetics.

'Aesthetics' examines the nature of beauty and the arts. In other words, aesthetics concerns the beauty of a subject, such as good, ugly, nice, great or tragic. Sützen

explains beauty as an aesthetic concept, usually of an artistic object, shape, colour, sound, design or rhythm, such as sensory and perceptual experience manifestations of the human mind. However, beauty is exactly that; it is subjective and objective and an absolute value or a relative value. According to Süzen, aesthetics is concerned with sensory information directed towards beauty. This reveals that anything that has an artistic value can stir up human perception about it; it can be perceived with the senses as being good, tragic, ugly or nice. The author further reveals that an aesthetic object is sensual. It is seen, heard or animated in the mind with a sensual shape and provides pleasure to human beings through its sensual qualities. That means aesthetics gives some pleasure to our minds when it is seen, heard or perceived.

According to Santayana (1904) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2176284> retrieved on 03/03/22, the word 'aesthetics' is nothing but a general term lately applied in academic circles to everything that has to do with works of art or with the sense of beauty. The truth is that the group of activities we can call aesthetic is a motley one, created by certain historic and literary accidents. Wherever consciousness becomes at all imaginative and finds a flattering unction in its *phantasmagoria*, or whenever a work, whatever purpose constructed, happens to have notable intrinsic values for perception, we utter the word 'aesthetic'; but these occasions are miscellaneous, and there is no single agency in nature, no specific organ in sense, and no separable task in spirit, to which the aesthetic quality can be attributed. The author postulates that aesthetic experience is so broad and so incidental, it is spread so thin over all life, that like life itself, it opens out for reflection into divergent vistas.

Santayana further throws the question whether aesthetics is a part of psychology or a separate discipline, and says, rather part of psychology deals with aesthetic matters, but

cannot exhaust them; parts of other sciences also deal with the same. Santayana reiterates that if psychology must sometimes consider aesthetic facts, so must moral philosophy sometimes consider aesthetic values. In moral philosophy, then, there is as little room for a special discipline called 'aesthetics' as there is among the natural sciences. If the position of Santayana is that whenever a work, whatever purpose constructed, happens to have notable intrinsic values for perception, we utter the word 'aesthetic', then we say this view covers the work of literature. Literary works have some artistic qualities that appeal to the senses; forming part of aesthetics.

Ranta (2013: 65) posits that analytic aesthetics has been described as a second-order discipline, a "philosophy of criticism" (as conceived by Beardsley), which is rather preoccupied with the language used by art critics or art historians than directly with works of art themselves. According to Huron (2008), aesthetics is commonly defined as the study of beauty, and its opposite, ugliness. He observes that some philosophers conceive of aesthetics as applying solely to the arts or to artistic experience. Huron stresses that, most aesthetic philosophers construe the discipline as applying more broadly to beauty and ugliness in general. His argument is that, in the West, the most influential writer on aesthetics has been the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). According to him, Kant lays out two pillars in Western aesthetics. First, he distinguished aesthetic pleasure from other forms of pleasures. Aesthetic pleasure is not some other type of pleasure in disguise: for example, art is not the sublimation of food, sex, warmth, companionship, or some combination of other existing pleasures. Second, Kant argues that aesthetic emotions are 'disinterested'; when we experience an aesthetic pleasure, there are no utilitarian or ulterior motives underlying this experience. A mother's appreciation of the beauty of her daughter cannot be regarded as a purely aesthetic appreciation, since her experience is apt to be tainted by parental pride.

In the light of these views, we can point out that aesthetics have to do with art and the sense of beauty as well as ugliness. However, from the perspective of Kant cited in Huron (2008), it is explicit that though aesthetics is broad in scope and deals with sense of beauty and art, it despairs from other beauties such as beauty of a mother's daughter, the pleasures of sex, companionship and among others. Young (2005) attests that aesthetics is broadly defined as the philosophical study of the nature of art, beauty and taste. According to him, aesthetics depends on observations about perception and how we know through our senses, and on reflections on the language that we use to talk about both art and our responses to it. Young argues that aesthetics reaches beyond art to nature and perhaps to the nuances a larger picture of sensory awareness. It is broader in scope than the philosophy of art, which comprises one of its branches. Thus, it deals not only with the nature and value of the arts but also with those responses to natural objects that find expression in the language of the beautiful and the ugly.

Young further contends that the terms such as beautiful and ugly seem too vague in their application and too subjective in their meaning to divide the world successfully into those things that do, and those that do not, exemplify them. He ended by stressing that aesthetics is the study of how humans relate and give meaning to a particular type of phenomenon (art) in their environment. This denotes that since aesthetics in nature covers a broader scope, pointing to how humans perceive, relate and assign meanings to certain phenomena, the aesthetic values of how we communicate using human language cannot be undermined. This therefore creates room for the aesthetic quality that proverbs, as a phenomenon contain. Omoera & Imegbeboh (2013) cited in Kogri (2014) affirms that aesthetics deals with those responses to natural objects (including proverbs) and the judgment of them whether they should be regarded as beautiful or ugly, though in a slightly different context, argues that what we see/say/hear has

‘colour’ or ‘art’ attached to it and equally constitutes an aesthetic essence, which is a ‘moment’ of beauty in both tangible and intangible terms. Here lies the aesthetics bite and relevance of proverbs as artistic embodiments that can engage, provoke, evoke or prod human thoughts/ideas tangibly and intangibly depending on the speaker/listener and native intelligence interfaces.

We can at this point suggest that the pivot of aesthetics is sense of taste, beauty, experience and the value that an individual or a society places on natural or artificial objects. As far as proverbs, and for that matter wellerisms are concerned, the focus of aesthetics in this study is on their composition.

2.3. The Concept, Definition and Role of Proverbs

“It is significant to point out that the word proverb is Greek in origin and literally means a wayside saying” (Kyiileyang 2008:60). The term ‘proverb’ is derived from two Latin words ‘pro’ and ‘verbum’. The term ‘pro’ as a preposition actually means ‘for’ or ‘in favour of’. However, as an adverb it means ‘in support of something’. In other words, it refers to the side of an issue that one favours. It originated from Latin in the fourteenth century. On the other hand, the word ‘verb’ is derived from another Latin word ‘verbum’ which means ‘word’ and old French word ‘via’. Both words were in use in the fourteenth century. Basically, a verb is a word used to show that an action is taking place or to indicate the existence of a state or condition. It also refers to that part of speech to which such a word belongs. As a predicate of a sentence, a verb is an indispensable element of a clause or sentence that includes the verb but excludes the subject of the verb (Encarta Dictionaries 2007) cited in Kyiileyang (2008:58).

Olatunji (1984:170) cited in Agbájé (2002) observes that proverbs are considered to be traditional and originated from the observation of natural phenomena and human

relations, old people are regarded as a repository of proverbs. This reveals that proverbs originated from how people especially of the old, observe natural occurrences and that of human relations in the society. Agbájé further notes that according to Bryant (1945: 4), proverbs, since the time of Aristotle, have been depicted as remnants saved from the ‘wrecks and ruins of ancient philosophy by reason of their conciseness. He reiterates that this idea of Bryant is further magnified by Whiting (1932: 273-307) who describes the proverb as: a short saying of a philosophic nature, of great antiquity, the product of the masses rather than of the classes, constantly applicable, and appealing because it bears a semblance of the universal truth. He points out that based on this, anyone who cannot apply proverbs effectively is considered to be unwise. Nsoh et al. (2010) argue based on the African and Ghanaian perspective that, many proverbs originate from historical experiences and such proverbs may refer to historical characters from whose experience the people derive a general perspective of life.

According to Archer Taylor (1995: 902), in *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* edited by Maria Leach, cited in Kyiileyang (2008: 64), a proverb is a “terse statement that is current in tradition or as an epigram says, “the wisdom of many and wit of one.” He stresses that ordinarily, a proverb suggests a course of action. Sometimes too, it also passes judgement on something or somebody. Moreover, Taylor says that a proverb may be merely a statement of fact. He argues that the origin of the term proverb is obscure. Taylor further postulates that perhaps somebody formulated an idea in words sometime ago or drew a lesson from a scene but ultimately it turned out to be an intelligent remark exemplifying a truth until tradition accepted the statement and adapted for suitable application.

An assertion by Kyiileyang (2008: 66) is that, “the definition of proverbs exposes certain recurrent ideas which are stimulation of reasoning and serious reflection,

emphasis on implicit ideas and hidden knowledge, difficult in understanding, wise saying, and teaching of general moral truth and admonitions.” Finnegan (2012: 383) posits that “the exact definition of ‘proverb’ is no easy matter”. She however indicates that there is some general agreement as to what constitutes a proverb. According her, proverb is a saying in more or less fixed form marked by ‘shortness, sense, and salt’ and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it. Nsoh et al. (2010: 40) define a proverb as “a short sentence or phrase that has a special message”. They identify that it contains vivid imagery and makes use of techniques/figures of speech such as rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, metaphor and personification.

According to Nsoh et al. (2010), it is a pithy statement that conveys a general truth and of course is usually stated in maxim or epigram form. In view of all these, we can say proverb is a constructed sentence or phrase which is out of the collective wisdom of the people, intended to give out a special message of truth to some in society. Nsoh et al further hold the view that proverb is a short saying which originates from unknown or ancient source, expressing some useful thought, commonplace truth, or moral lesson. Proverb, therefore, though in its short nature, has the ingredient and capacity of communicating some truth from which moral lessons can be derived. This idea has a correlation with Mensah (2009: 26) cited in Kogri (2014: 14) who attests that a proverb is a short wellknown statement that gives practical advice about human life. Again, this confirms the view of Gabor (1979: 645) cited in Kyiileyang (2008: 63), that a proverb is a popular set of phrase having no authors, known mostly in different languages; expressing in one sentence a principle, advice, a genuine or assumed truth in a general, concise form, its basic idea being of general validity, at least its user considers as such. This concludes that proverbs are known or used in almost every language and are

mostly short sentences or phrases which contain a general truth, and convey messages of advice to the audience. This tells us that proverb is a powerful tool in our day-to-day communication. “.....proverbs often have no specialized occasions for their use. Unlike such forms as riddles and stories they are not normally set apart as suitable for relaxation after, say, the end of the day’s work, but are closely involved with speech and action on every sort of occasion (including general conversation)” (Finnegan 2012: 384).

Kyiileyang (2008: 41) contends that the beauty of any language is greatly valued through the amount of proverbs employed by any speaker particularly an elder cherished and respected by people not for material things he owns but for the quality and quantity of the proverbs he has in his collection of wisdom. He notes that single words in proverbs per se do not give any proper meaning to proverbs. However, the real meaning is concealed in the process of deliberate ambiguity. He therefore emphasizes that it is an intelligent person/speaker who can help to interpret the meaning of proverbs. Again, he explains that many speakers save a lot of energy for proverbs are used to summarise salient ideas within a short time. Kyiileyang buttresses his assertion with the claim of Chinua Achebe who says “Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten” (Achebe, 1958: 5) cited in Kyiileyang (2008: 41). In the Dagaaba society, a person who is well endowed with wisdom cannot end a speech without infusing a proverb. And certainly, he gains societal recognition through his knowledge and use of proverbs.

Agbájé (2002) opines that proverbs often occur informally in day-to-day discourse or conversation and in oratory to garnish, conceal or hint. The cultural affinity between the speaker and the audience makes the proverbial utterance or expression meaningful to the hearer in the society. This means that informally, proverbs can be used in the

course of a conversation. There is no official setting reserve for the use of proverb. This assertion is in line with the Dagaaba culture, in the sense that there is no any required formal setting at which they use proverbs. Wherever there is an ongoing discourse, one can be certain of hearing proverbs being used.

In an attempt to expound the Yoruba perception about proverbs, Agbájé (2002: 238) maintains that “Proverbs are horses on which words ride, when words are lost [i.e. when the truth of a matter is elusive], it is proverbs we use to search for them [i.e. proverbs help us to solve an intractable problem].” He added that when a situation seems intractable, the confusion might be resolved by a manipulation of proverbs. He further indicates that a person who knows the issues as well as appropriate proverbs is the one who settles society’s problems. It is therefore explicit that proverbs play a role of resolving disputes and he who is versatile in the propriety of proverbs can certainly calm an unhealthy situation between people. This also affirms the position of Ayodele (2011) cited in Kogri (2014: 28) who views proverbs to be ‘A vehicle of conversation; when the conversation drops a proverb revives it.’

Agyekum (2012 cited in Owu-Ewie (2019), argues that it is rare to communicate effectively in the African context without using proverbs, especially if the speaker is dealing with issues that border on the values, norms, institutions and on the whole gamut of the people’s experience. He indicates that proverbs are indispensable in African communication. They are tied to the philosophy, experience and cognitive ability of the people. Agyekum further contends that the use of proverbs makes conversation very highly regarded. The author maintains that one’s ability to use proverbs appropriately in speech indicates one’s communicative competence. This means proverbs are a communication tool. They are used in conversations between

people. The Dagaaba use of proverbs does not veer from this claim of Kofi Agyekum. Proverbs among the Dagaaba according to this research appear in conversation between two or more people. They are used to place emphasis and stress on some issues in the conversation.

Momoh (2000: 361) cited in Kogri (2014:30) argues that, proverbs are to the elders, a pedagogical instrument to educate the youth just as modern formal schooling system is an educational form for instructing the youth. He further reiterates that as the scholar would quote recognized authorities in his areas of specialization, preach for beautiful and sometimes bombastic and high fluting expression in language to parade his erudition, in the same way, the traditional African would use proverb to perform similar duties. A Dagaare proverb like; *Nenkpɔn noɔre maŋ nyuuro la, kyɛ o yeɛ ba nyuuro*. “*The mouth of the elderly person smells, but his words do not smell*”. This proverb is basically directed to young ones. It tells the youth that they should not ignore the advice of the elderly.

Owu-Ewie (2019) affirms that proverbs are embedded with accumulated knowledge, wisdom, cultural beliefs and experience. He further opines that proverbs therefore have values and are veritable sources of wisdom that are crucial to counselling people. Owu-Ewie further observes that proverbs are very vital in marital issues as people use proverbs to counsel couple. He reveals how proverbs play important role in marital life by ensuring patience, respect for in-laws, hardwork, respect for each other, truthfulness, good behaviour emulation, childbearing and also to discourage the habit of sexual denial in the marital home among others. In Akan he gives a proverb that: *ɔbaa kɔ awar a, ɔnye ne na kɔ*. “*If a woman enters into marriage, she goes with her mother*”. This communicates that the Akans hold the view that women go to marital homes with

their mother because what their mother taught them is what they will exhibit in their everyday life. This proverb therefore intends to admonish a woman who is getting married to emulate and portray a good behaviour in her husband's home as she might have been taught by her mother. Another proverb: *Ye awar mu kandzea*. "*Truthfulness is the light in marriage*". This proverb also tells both partners going into marriage to be truthful to each other.

It is observed that proverbs among the Dagaaba are tools for educating not just the youth alone as Momoh proclaims, but everybody regardless of age or status because proverbs are the embodiment of life's issues. The claim of Momoh may slightly contrast the contention of Owu-Ewie. This might perhaps be attested by Finnegan's observation:

"Since proverbs can refer to practically any situation, it would be impossible to give any comprehensive account of the content of African proverbs. Something of their variety can be gathered from the headings under which they are classed in many collections (in terms either of explicit content or implied allusion), for these headings include every aspect of human affairs" (Finnegan 2012: 392).

A proverb could be used by an elderly person to a fellow elderly person, intended to inform, warn or educate him on a particular matter. For instance, the Dagaaba have a proverb that: *Naazo-konwoŋ yele la maŋ tu kũũ sigi o bogi*. "*The stubborn fly follows the corpse to the grave*". This proverb does not apply to only the youth but also the adult. It is employed to caution somebody who might be very desperate or persistent in an act that leads to danger.

Agyemang, Asumeng & Amponsah (2015) cited in Owu-Ewie (2019) observe that proverbs in Akan portray themes like team work, training and development, retirement planning, organizational ethics and synergy and collaboration in contemporary human resources. Other themes delegation of function, risk-taking, collective responsibility and accountability, feedback seeking and business planning were other themes

identified by the authors. Similarly, Awedoba (2000) analyzed the significance and thematic aspects of the Kasena proverbs. The author asserts that the Kasena proverbs do not appear to deal with any particular favourite subject to the exclusion of others. He notes that proverbs deal with broad domain of the Kasena experience. That is, proverbs by nature certain truths about life like, authority, friendship, marriage, religion, succession, politics (chieftaincy), personal names as proverbs, economic activities and human behaviour. For instance a proverb in Kasena he states is: *N swo n nakɔ se o ke dwoa n kebeila ne*. “You marry a kin to ensure that she will serve your immediate needs, food wise”.

This proverb he says is a paradox. He emphasized that it is forbidden to marry from a blood relation, thus, both patrilineal and matrilineal lines. That means this proverb intent to achieve a paradox. Awedoba also portrays that the Kasena proverbs have as well structural patterns, hyperbole and exaggeration, metaphorical associations and also unusual syntax.

The Dagaaba proverbs play such roles. There are proverbs that are categorized, and function under similar themes. For instance the Dagaaba have proverbs regarding marriage, farming activities, friendship, attitude, authority, collaboration, responsibility among others. A proverb in Dagaare for example; *Bibil-tonzagera ba dire boɲkãã*. “A child who refuses errands does not eat fatty things”. This means the child who does not take responsibility in performing certain tasks would be denied good things. It teaches children to be responsible and accept tasks given to them by their parents or elders.

Finnegan (2012) explores the significance and concept of proverb, form and style as well as occasions and functions of proverb usage. She opines that in many African

cultures a feeling for language, for imagery, and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology comes out particularly clearly in proverbs. She indicates that the figurative quality of proverbs is especially striking; one of their most noticeable characteristics is their allusive wording, usually in metaphorical form. This also emerges in many of the native words translated as 'proverb' and in the general stress often laid on the significance of speaking in symbolic terms. Indeed, this type of figurative expression is sometimes taken so far as to be almost a whole mode of speech in its own right. Finnegan acknowledged the literary significance of proverbs, she says that the literary significance of proverbs in Africa is also brought out by their close connection with other forms of oral literature. Proverbs among Ghanaians, and for that matter the Dagaaba, are figurative in nature, that is, they are characterized by imagery, symbolism as well as metaphors and therefore are linked up with the oral literature of every Ghanaian society including the Dagaaba. The author also observes that in African societies, proverbs are used in formal speeches before law courts. This is also true about proverb use among the Dagaaba, they are used not only in informal speeches but also in the formal. That leads us to a very relevant and emphatic comment made by Nketia on Ghanaian proverbs.

The value of the proverb to us in modern Ghana does not lie only in what it reveals of the thoughts of the past. For the poet today or indeed for the speaker who is some sort of an artist in the use of words, the proverb is a model of compressed or forceful language. In addition to drawing on it for its words of wisdom, therefore, he takes interest in its verbal techniques— its selection of words, its use of comparison as a method of statement, and so on. Familiarity with its techniques enables him to create, as it were, his own proverbs. This enables him to avoid hackneyed expressions and give a certain amount of freshness to his speech.

This . . . approach to proverbs which is evident in the speech of people who are regarded as accomplished speakers or poets of a sort makes the

proverbs not only a body of short statements built up over the years and which reflect the thought and insight of Ghanaians into problems of life, but also a technique of verbal expression, which is greatly appreciated by the Ghanaian. It is no wonder therefore that the use of proverbs has continued to be a living tradition in Ghana (Nketia 1958: 21) cited in Finnegan (2012: 380).

The Dagaaba proverbs, for that matter are the embodiment of diverse subject matters leading to the expression of different ideas within their environment. Thus, proverbs cover a wide range of matters of the lives of the people, such as traditions, habits, democracy, equality, gender among others. In some societies, proverbs are seen as striking genders apart; showing gender bias. Yuksel (1993: 65) cited in Belfatmi (2013: 15) reveals that because of some characteristics of proverbs (rhythm, rhyme, parallelism, simple language, and short forms); they attract the attention of others and they are easily memorized. So, they are transferred from one generation to another and this fact leads to the creation of certain attitudes towards gender, race, religion etc, which are preserved and transmitted from one person to another.

According to her, Yuksel found in his article that women were perceived like evil and were compared to animals such as dogs, horses, cats etc. Thus, this fact shows that women are not only locally undervalued or discriminated against, but they are universally underestimated. Belfatmi indicates that this fact is also illustrated in this quotation proposed by Yuksel (1993: 66), “Almost every proverb that touches on women contains a severe negation of the value of women in society” (Belfatmi 2013: 16). Regarding the impact of proverb on society, Yuksel (ibid) claims that though proverbs try to convey wisdom, what they actually do are “brainwash” people, using false generalizations and stereotypical conceptions. That is to say, the more new and false generalizations are conveyed in proverbs, the more changes occur in people’s perceptions and conceptions about certain issues. For him, the use of proverbs gives the

speaker prestige. In oral culture, people are impressed by those who have many proverbs at their disposal and know how to rightly use them. The audiences' moral acceptance of the proverbs strengthens the speaker's message. As a matter of fact, proverb usage among the Dagaaba accords some prestige to those who are proficient in them. The embellishment of speech is embedded in proverbs. Similarly, the morals of the people find a reflection in the use of proverbs. However, proverbs as suggested by Yuksel (1993) cited in Belfatmi (2013) should not be perceived or used to create any gender discrimination.

According to Kyiileyang (2008), a prominent linguistics scholar, called Yankah contends that "the use of proverbs is attributed to the elders among the Akan. This view seems to stand for all other elders in most African societies." (Yankah 1989: 71) cited in Kyiileyang (2008: 53). Yankah adds that proverbs are assigned to the elders of the Akan society even though proverbs can also be attributed to certain specific individuals within the community. Elders are greatly respected because they are the main source of great knowledge passed down to young people. One of the main legacies of elders, ancestors, chiefs and kings is proverbs. Yankah believes that proverbs are best understood in context and discourse. Some of the situations which attract the use of proverbs include lineages, clans, history itself, stories, royal court sessions and conferences both formal and informal gatherings where people interact closely. In the course of contributing to discussions, arguments, debates, seminars, sermons and resolving legal problems, many people use proverbs to buttress their ideas. He further notes that the use of proverbs is not premeditated as they often occur extempore. In most cases, users do not prepare themselves beforehand to address people using proverbs that they have already selected. They rather use them when the right situation comes or when the occasion demands it.

He cautions scholars on proverbs and research to be meticulous about asking for proverbs from people. This is because nobody can ever display the appropriate use of proverbs without a specific situation which calls for proverbs. After all, when we do not sleep we cannot dream. Similarly, when there are no activities or situations, proverbs cannot easily occur on mere demand. Yankah cites several situations, which call for the use of proverbs. Some of these include the situation where an “old woman narrates the history of his clan to his son”. The narrator weaves the teaching of history with the imparting of proverb. Elders who fail to lead exemplary lives are also despised through proverbs. In the Dagaaba society, they strongly believe that elders are the “pioneers” of proverbs and mostly use them even though the youngsters can equally deploy proverbs in their speeches. It is interesting to note that even though some scholars believe that proverbs are used by the elders to teach the youth, among the Dagaaba, proverbs are equally used to teach some elders.

A proverb like; *“Nen̄kpon̄-faa la maŋ zeŋ kaara kpee ka saa poɔ”* “It is the bad elderly person who sits and watches the rain beat malt.” Meanings in the sight of irresponsible elder things go wayward. Elders are supposed to be responsible for the wellbeing of their household, however an elderly person who careless may never give attention to some situations in their family. In this case the above proverb can be used to comment on such irresponsible behaviour of the so-called elderly person. This is because the Dagaaba proverbs cover a wide range of matters of life including how people behave or portray themselves in society. Proverbs therefore can be used to correct or mitigate some ill attitudes in people. Another proverb in Dagaare; *“Nen̄kpon̄ zaa e la die dalugiri”* “The elderly person is a fork beam.” Meaning the elderly person serves as a guard or support to his or her people. The “dalugiri” is a Y-shaped fork beam that supports roof beams. This fork beam therefore symbolizes the elderly person, who is

supposed to play a core role of guiding and supporting his or her people. He or she carries all the problems of the people around him or her.

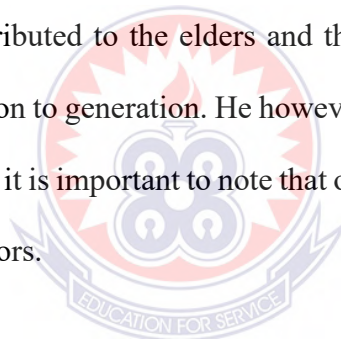
2.4. The Authorship of Proverbs

Many researchers and writers have seen authorship in proverbs as a key component. Authorship can be viewed as the source or origination of something. As regards to that, Nsoh et al. (2010: 42) argue that proverbs are the collective wisdom of the elders of an ethnic group. They portray that the one using the proverb is not the author or his wisdom that he brings forth. They further stated that, that this is why many languages introduce proverbs with a preceding phrase or saying; “*bunkɛgesi yeti (Farefare), mpanyinfoɔ se (Akan), ‘the elders say’ ...*” Most Africans including the Dagaaba acknowledge that proverbs are not owned by one person but are the collective wisdom of their forefathers and so, they usually introduce phrases like; *Dagaaba maŋ yeli ka, ... Nemberɛ maŋ yeli ka, ... “the Dagaaba say that,.....” and “the elders say that, ...”* respectively, before stating a proverb though sometimes one can utter a proverb without bringing in the phrase.

It is important to note that the Dagaaba proverbs are uttered with reference to the elders or their forefathers, as one cannot claim direct ownership of them. This view is shared by Awedoba (2000: 34) who attests that, “it goes without saying a true proverb is always attributed to the ancestors as a collective category.” He observes that the acknowledgement usually comes in the phrase preceding the proverb. He says though the acknowledgement of collective authorship is optional in the statement of proverb, overt acknowledgement in some form serves as one of the important markers of uttering proverbs in Kasem. He therefore reveals that this feature enables the Kasena to distinguish between proverb and other similar genres such as popular sayings. Awedoba

points out that the author of “*sinseira*” (popular saying) is usually a known individual whilst the context might also be known.

Ababila (2006) cited in Nsoh et al. (2010) emphasizes on this assertion by declaring that, “in Africa proverbs are not usually ascribed to any particular individuals, but collectively to the ancestors, the wise men and women of the old” (Ababila 2006) cited in Nsoh et al. (2010: 42-43). According to Nsoh et al, Ababila claims that even though it is difficult sometimes to pinpoint exactly who composed a particular proverb, all proverbs lie in the bosom of the elders. Agyekum (2013: 38) stresses that unlike written literature, where one can easily refer to a person as the author of the work, in oral literature, it is not so. The genre belongs to the entire society. He opines that generally, proverb authorship is attributed to the elders and their oral literary works have been transmitted from generation to generation. He however explains that in spite of this fact about proverb authorship, it is important to note that oral genre like folk songs and some proverbs have direct authors.



Among the Dagaaba, it is revealed that proverbs are authored by the collective wisdom of the elders and people of the old. That notwithstanding, there are instances where some proverbs are known to be created by some known individuals and such proverbs are uttered by citing those individuals. A phrase containing the author’s name is brought either before or after employing the proverb. For instance, they say: *Dakoraa la man lɔɔ o sekpɔgere...* “*Dakoraa is the one who uses his proverb...*” “*Dakoraa*” is the author’s name of the proverb that comes. However, it is revealed in this research that such proverbs are rare among the Dagaaba except that they are mere popular sayings (Emilio Bonna-Eo and Timothy Doonole, personal communication 15/11/21).

2.5. A Review of Pragmatic Analysis of Proverbs

Nwankwo (2015) cited in Yakub (2019) discusses Igbo proverbs in the context of early communicative competence and social stability. Employing the Social Learning as a Reciprocal Determinism Theory, the elicited data focused on discussing the causes of conflicts and rate of moral decadence among the youth and possible ways of instilling sanity in society. The study aimed at examining proverbs as a viable means to ensuring proper upbringing and deterring conflict prone tendencies in the Igbo child. Five (5) major sub-headings in the data were grouped and discussed as indicated by Yakub. They include; (1) proverbs used to encourage hard work and determination, (2) proverbs used for reproof, (3) proverbs portraying unity and hospitality, (4) proverbs that teach the essence of humility and (5) proverbs that encourage justice. Nwankwo thus observes that the Igbo proverbs are sort of precise and incisive, and if appropriately inculcated to the intellectual and moral development of a child, can serve as a tool to reprimand, discourage, instruct and correct or praise the growing child's derailing tendencies more intricately.

The study reveals that the mindset of a growing child can be well prepared by exposing him or her to proverbs that can help curb conflict and criminal tendencies. The outcome of this study by Nwankwo provides very interesting insights into child upbringing. However, the author's research contains interviewees with age range between 45 and 65 only, which I therefore suggest that respondents from the youth class ranging between 18 and 25 could have been contacted to take their views on how possible early exposure to the use of proverbs could be useful in shaping their behaviours and communicative competence.

Ramirez (2015) cited in Yakub (2019) used Pragmatic Approach to proverb use and interpretation. The study relies on the Relevance Theory proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1995) in the exploration of English and Spanish proverbs from a pragmatic point of view. The study aimed at expounding how proverbs allow the speaker to express his or her intentions in an implicit way. The analysis revealed that the functions of proverbs are criticism, advice and warning. It also explains how the ironical and metaphorical nature of proverbs often affects the understanding of proverbs. As earlier indicated, proverbs are the embodiment of issues of life, and so Rameriz's study points out some of the issues that proverbs stand to deal with.

An equally significant study yet from the pragmatic point of view has been undertaken by Owu-Ewie (2019), employing the Relevance Theory by Sperber & Wilson (1986; 1995). The author in his study on "Proverbs in Marriage: Counselling role and implications" did explore how proverbs among the Akans are useful in the institution of marriage. It was a descriptive qualitative study, where he visited some communities in the Shama District of the Western Region of Ghana and had the permission of participants to record some proceedings of traditional marriage contractions. The main aim of the study was to examine the role of proverbs in marriage counselling and how they go a long way to help the couples have a successful marriage life. The analysis of the proverbs indicated that proverbs play vital roles in marriage. During the counselling process, various themes such as patience, co-operation, respect, sex, hardwork, loyalty, faithfulness, humility, love, among others were the concentration.

The study reveals that contemporary professional marriage counsellors should employ proverbs in their premarital counselling sessions because proverbs are valued by the Akans as they portray the embodiment of their soul. In the data analysis, a proverb like,

“atopa na ɔma awar sɔ” (Sex makes marriage blossom), was uttered during optional speeches. This proverb was directed to the people coming together in matrimony not to deny each other sex as it may cause the other to seek for sex outside. Another proverb uttered in one of the marriages ceremonies is *“ɔbaa a ɔdɔ no kun, daa ɔse morohwe woara”* (A woman who loves the husband, will always say I am looking up to you). This proverb falls under the theme of respect. It tells the woman to always look up to her husband in terms of decision making even if she knows more than him.

This study from the pragmatic perspective paves a gateway for this present study. Proverbs and wellerisms in this case among the Dagaaba cover various themes as well. This present study therefore, is underpinned by the Relevance Theory proposed by Sperber & Wilson (1986, 1995).

2.6.1. The Concept of Wellerisms

Wellerism proverbs over the years have gained scholarly attention as variants of proverbs. This section of the study explains the origin of the term “wellerism,” going on to explore the boundaries of the term “wellerism.” This leads to a more detailed, and hopefully more insightful, understanding of what a wellerism proverb is and also what a wellerism proverb is not.

“Scholars have been consciously aware of wellerism proverbs as a class for over 150 years” (Taylor 1962: 201, 202) cited in Unseth et al. (2017: 1). A wellerism “is normally made up of three parts: 1) a statement (which often consists of a proverb or proverbial phrase); 2) a speaker who makes this remark; and [often] 3) a phrase that places the utterance into an unexpected, contrived situation” (Litovkina & Mieder 2006: 20) cited in Unseth et al. (2017: 1).

The wellerism is an ancient proverb form, found as far back as ancient Sumer. The term “wellerism” (sometimes capitalized as “Wellerism”), is derived from the character Samuel Weller in the 1836 novel *The Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens. Samuel Weller was noted for his habit of attributing a quotation to some generic or non-specific speaker. Many of his sayings are very witty, such as “‘Hope our acquaintance may be a long one,’ as the gentleman said to the five-pound note.” As a result of Dickens’ character Weller saying such constructions, they have come to be known as “wellerisms” (Unseth et al., 2017: 2).

Unseth et al. (2017) further note that the label “wellerism” has been adopted and adapted into some other languages. In Wikipedia, examining the English article for “wellerism,” they could see that borrowed forms are used for the cognate Wikipedia articles in other languages, i.e. “wellerismo” in Italian, “Wellerismi” in Finnish, “Веллеризм” in Russian, “Wellerismus” in German, “Wellerisme” in Norwegian (Bokmål), “Wellerismus” in Slovak, and وړلړسم (“wlrasm”) in Persian. The Walon (Walloon) Wikipedia page uses the term “sapinsté,” also offering “welerisse” as an alternate. They however assert that, other languages also have their own original terms for such sayings. The Dutch Wikipedia article uses the title “apologisch sprichwort”; in the Swedish Wikipedia such sayings are called “ordstäv.” In Bamana (Mali), the category “ntale” includes sayings that begin with “the Bamana say ..., the hyena said ..., etc” (Kone 1997: 62) cited in Unseth et al. (2017: 3). They are popularly known among the Dagaaba as ‘*donne yelyelli*’ ‘animal sayings or extensions’ (Kogri 2014:41).

In understanding what a wellerism is and what it is not; the structure or form, Mieder (2004:15) establishes that wellerisms consist of triadic structure, (1) a statement, often a proverb, (2) identification of a speaker (a person or animal) and (3) a phrase that places

the statement into an unexpected situation. The following is an example he noted to illustrate his assertion. (1) "All flesh is grass", as the horse said when he bit a piece out of a man's arm. In this case, we have the proverb in quotation marks; "All flesh is grass", then the speaker; horse and the phrase; when he bit a piece out of a man's arm.

Unseth et al. (2017) argue that a saying can be in a form of wellerism but not a proverb. As their study focuses on wellerisms which constitute variants of proverbs, they used the "unambiguous" term "wellerism proverbs (WPs)", to affirm that they are dealing with proverbs which are in the form of wellerism. They gave a standard English example of a wellerism as: "I see,' said the blind carpenter as he picked up his hammer and saw." They claim that this saying is in the form of a wellerism yet fails to be a proverb; "it is very witty indeed, but it is *not* a proverb" (Peter Unseth et al., 2017: 3). I suggest this position by the authors implies that not all wellerisms are proverbs, as all proverbs are not wellerisms. They further buttress, presenting the differences and similarities between wellerisms and proverbs in a table.

	saying is a proverb	is not a proverb
saying contains a quotation & speaker	“Where there are no eagles, the grasshopper says, ‘I am an eagle.’” Malay (Lim 200:125)	‘I can see’, said the blind carpenter as he picked up his hammer and saw.
saying does not contain a quotation & speaker	Don’t judge a book by its cover.	Penguins live in Southern hemisphere.

Four-way classification of wellerisms and proverbs. (*Adopted from Peter Unseth et al. (2017:3)*)

“The matter of whether wellerisms should be considered to be proverbs does not have unanimous agreement” (Unseth et al. 2017: 3). “Wellerisms have been considered a type of proverb and have much in common with other types” (Caro 1997: 839) cited in Unseth et al. (2017: 3). Taylor acknowledged the complex status of wellerism proverbs, writing that it was possible to say that a wellerism “belonged to a very special class of proverbs” (Taylor 1962: 202) in Unseth et al. (2017: 3). This assertion by Taylor could further be affirmed, as Williams (2007) postulates that wellerisms containing proverbs are variants of proverbs and they existed separately from proverbs and at some points, some proverbs are transformed into wellerisms while probably continuing in their use as proverbs in their own right. Williams further opines that proverbs in wellerisms are mostly often quoted straight forwardly in their standard forms. Prahlad believes “true proverbs must further be distinguished from other types of proverbial speech, e.g. ...Wellerisms” (Prahlad 1996: 33) cited in Unseth et al. (2017: 3).

In this study, the term “wellerism proverbs” is used to refer to wellerisms which are variants of proverbs. This is not to say the researcher’s position is that some wellerisms are not actually proverbs as argued by Unseth et al. (2017) that a saying may be in wellerism form but not a necessarily a proverb. However, it is used here based on the mere fact that if proverb is what comes to mind when people call “wellerism”, then it is not wrong or ambiguous to refer to them as wellerism proverbs.

After comparing a large number of proverbs containing quotations, from a variety of languages, Unseth et al. (2017) discovered some further clarifications for defining wellerisms. They therefore stated them as working hypotheses. According to the

authors, proverbs that include imperatives to say an utterance are not wellerism proverbs, e.g. from Korean, “*Say ‘Uncle, uncle,’ and give only heavy burdens to carry*” (Ha 1970: 160). Similarly, from Biblical Hebrew, with a negative imperative, “Do not say to your neighbour, ‘*Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it*’—when you have it with you” (Proverbs 3:28 RSV). Also, in English we find, “*Never say ‘Never*” (Doyle, Mieder & Shapiro 2012: 178) and “*Cry ‘Havoc!’ and let slip the dogs of war.*” None of these are classified here as wellerisms. Furthermore, 3rd person imperatives (also called “jussives”) may be used in proverbs; but these are not wellerism proverbs, e.g. such as from Spanish, “*Who has a mouth, let him not say to another, ‘Blow*” (Trench 1862: 111). Quoting from Taylor, they contend that a construction that does not seem to be a true wellerism proverb is built with a question about what a speaker said in one clause, followed by the quotation; this is not a wellerism proverb, as in the following Swahili example: “*What said the winnowing tray? ‘Give me, and I will give thee*” (Taylor 1891: 129) all cited in Unseth et al. (2017: 4-5). This assertion by W. Taylor may not be entirely the same case in all languages across the world. This is because, in the Dagaare wellerism proverbs, a speaker can opt to introduce a question together with the proverb in one clause even though the quotation would not come after the question but rather the wellerism proverb. For instance, wellerism proverbs like; *Nyeraa yeli ka boŋ? “Soŋ zele la kpeeð.” Said what the ant or what did the ant say? “Lifting together is strength.”* This is the same as stating that: *Nyeraa yeli ka, “Soŋ zele la kpeeð.” The ant says that, “Lifting together is strength.”* Such construction in the Dagaare wellerism proverbs can be stated whilst they remain in their rightful form. Rattray (1916: 51) as cited in Unseth et al. (2017: 4) attest that if the quotation is identified as something that is not said, then it appears that the proverb is not a wellerism, e.g. in Ashanti Twi “When you are (really) dying, you do not say, ‘Oh, I am

dying! Oh, I am dying!” This implies that some expressions can be quoted yet they lack the quality of being proverbs.

According to Williams (2007), many of the quotations in those typically humorous sayings known in English as ‘wellerisms’ are proverbs, for example, “*A soft answer turneth away wrath,*” as the man said when he hurled a squash at his enemy’s head (Mieder–Kingsbury, 1994) cited in Williams (2007: 176). The author observes that “the structure of wellerisms is usually tripartite, and the three parts are most frequently as shown:” using the example above, we have a quotation, in this case the proverb *A soft answer turneth away wrath*; a speaker, here, ‘the man’; and the situation in which the quotation was used and thereby placing it in the past, here, *said when he hurled a squash at his enemy’s head*. Williams further notes that apart from proverbs and proverbial phrases, many other kinds of set expression can form the quote in wellerisms: for example, greetings, exclamations, curses, blessings and common statements, as in “*I won’t keep you long,*” as Henry the Eighth said to his wives.

One key thing to note is that, Williams (2007), Mieder (2004) and Unseth et al. (2017) ideas about wellerism proverbs is, some proverbs which are owned or known to be constructed by some persons are in the category of wellerisms. For instance, the proverb, “*A soft answer turneth away wrath,*” as the man said when he hurled a squash at his enemy’s head (Mieder–Kingsbury, 1994) cited in Williams (2007: 177-178) is not the saying of any other creature but a person. Also, the proverb, “*Hope our acquaintance may be a long one,*’ as the gentleman said to the five-pound note.” Unseth et al. (2017: 2) referenced a person-gentleman, and they agree that they are wellerisms. Unseth et al. (2017) indicate that, a character named Samuel Weller in a novel titled, “*The Pickwick Papers*” written by Charles Dickens, was noted for his habit of attributing a quotation to some generic or non-specific speaker. This implies that per

the concept of wellerism proverbs, proverbs attributed to some individuals, presented in quotations are also classified as wellerisms and not just only from nonhuman entities. However, other scholars also view wellerism proverbs as belonging to non-human entities. For instance, Amegashie & Asilevi (2010) cited in Yakub (2018) view wellerism as "saying in which some utterances are supposed to be made by the non-human elements" (Amegashie & Asilevi, 2010) cited in Yakub (2018: 114). According to Kogri (2014), the Dagaaba often refer to wellerisms as *donne yelyelli*, "animals' sayings", which does not exclude the inanimate creatures. Thus, the term *donne yelyelli*, "animal sayings" is used to refer to both the animate and inanimate creatures like tree, stones, cattle, goats, land etc. This concept leads us to the definition of wellerism by some earlier researchers.

2.6.2. Definition of Wellerism

Considering the brief description that Litovkina & Mieder presented, saying that a wellerism "is normally made up of three parts: 1) a statement (which often consist of a proverb or proverbial phrase); 2) a speaker who makes this remark; and [often] 3) a phrase that places the utterance into an unexpected, contrived situation" (Litovkina & Mieder, 2006: 20) cited in Unseth et al. (2017: 1), Finnegan (2012:349) maintains that 'wellerism' is a form that involves the use of quoted words attributed to some actual or fictional person, it is another device for giving point and sometimes authority to a proverbial saying. Amegashie & Asilevi (2010) cited in Yakub (2018) define wellerism as "saying in which some utterances are supposed to be made by the nonhuman elements" (Amegashie & Asilevi, 2010) cited in Yakub (2018: 114). Finnegan's definition of wellerism goes in line with that of Okumba (1994) as cited in Yakub (2018) who views Wellerisms as proverbs which are presented as quotations from some imaginary or actual characters.

2.7. A Review of Related Literature on Wellerism Proverbs in Some Cultures

Unseth et al. (2017) mapped the distribution of wellerism proverbs in diverse language backgrounds, such as English, Swahili, Sumerian, Swedish, Spanish, Ewe, Akan among others. The authors observe that Grzybek (1994: 290) explored a list of places, noting that wellerism proverbs are found in “all over Europe,” “frequently found North in Germanic” languages, also in France, Belgium, Italy, Asia Minor, “Nigeria/Africa,” but “rarely documented in Slavic cultures.” He hinted at the broad gap in knowledge, “it is not easy to say if the wellerism is a universal form.” According to them, in the same year, Mieder & Kingsbury (1994: xii) noted that wellerisms had been documented “in the Slavic and Baltic languages and there is an impressive amount of scholarship on African wellerisms,” speculating that they are found “almost everywhere.” Based on such previous knowledge and speculation, the article by Unseth et al. (2017) presents evidence, where their broad research centred on the distribution of wellerism proverbs across over (100) different languages. After noting on a map the regions where wellerism proverbs are found, it became clear that there is an area of eastern Asia in which no languages were found to have wellerism proverbs. This implies that there might be several other languages around the world that lack the existence of wellerism proverbs if further investigations are carried out. They captured some Dagaare wellerism proverbs in the distribution: (a) “*The monkey says that dog has a guardian and that is why I fear dog*” (Kyiiileyang 2017: 174), (b) “*The ant says, ‘Helping to lift is strength.’ This proverb actually means ‘unity is strength’*” (Kogri 2014: 53) all cited in Unseth et al. (2017: 8).

Yakub (2018) tries to draw similarities and differences between proverbs in general and that of wellerism proverbs. According to the author, it seems quite difficult to draw a clear line of distinction between proverbs and wellerisms because. He observes that

Proverbs are didactically used, just as wellerisms, to teach morals. And apart from their moral implications, both seem to be permanent, transmitted to succeeding generations and tend to recur with the same meaning. In both cases, animals and other creatures can be incorporated as elements to portray all aspects of human life, either positive or negative. All the above are common features of proverbs and wellerisms but a significant difference are that, with proverbs, speakers mostly begin by saying our elders say....” whereas wellerisms would begin like, the ant says.....” or the sheep says” Yakub therefore identifies that in wellerisms, these creatures or elements are personified as if they are capable of quoting the statement.

Proverb usage among the Dagaaba take the form presented by Yakub and the same thing applies to the wellerisms. Whilst proverbs are referenced to the elders, wellerism proverbs on the other hand, are attributed to animals and other creatures like, stones, rivers, trees, birds, rocks among others. These creatures are being personified in the use of such proverbs making it appear as though those creatures were the ones that uttered them. For instance, let us consider this wellerism proverb in Dagaare: *Kɔremɔ yeli ka, “Nyɔɔre la gyelɛ.” The partridge says, “Life is egg.” In other words, if there is life, eggs will come. (If I live I can lay more eggs)* (Kyemaalo 2000: 39). This means that if you do not die you will surely prosper. The attitude of the partridge is that, when it lies on its eggs and there is any sound of impending danger, it flies away quickly leaving the eggs behind just to save its own life. This behaviour of the partridge has made the people to attribute this proverbial saying to it and it appears as if it were the words of the partridge. This confirms the assertion of Yakub that, in wellerisms the creatures or elements involved are “personified as if they are capable of quoting the statement” (Yakub 2018: 114).

It is interesting to discover in some earlier scholarly work that some proverbs, in some languages with time get a transformation and turn into wellerism proverbs. Williams (2007: 184) maintains that “some proverbs generate different wellerisms in the same language.” The author gave some examples of such proverbs; *Youth must have its fling*. This, according to Williams has been located in the following common European form in the English of Ireland: “*Youth must have its fling,*” *said the old woman when she jumped over the besom*, [a besom is a broom and the custom of jumping over the besom, or ‘over the straw’ with a partner symbolised long term commitment]. The same proverb has also been found in the English of Ireland with the following ending, *as the woman said when she threw the baby out the window*. Again, the proverbs, ‘*Every eye forms its own beauty*’, and ‘*Everyone to his taste*’, have been collected as wellerisms in Ireland with this ending: *said the farmer when he kissed the cow* (Williams 2002) cited in Williams (2007: 184).

Concerning this claim, even though it is possible to have some proverbs transformed into wellerisms, I contend that if care is not taken, some expressions like idioms will be accepted as proverbs due to their nature. The proverbs above given by Williams to back his position are more likely to be idiomatic expression rather than actual proverbs. We must get a clear distinction between actual proverbs and that of idioms per se because some idioms present themselves as though they were proverbs due to their artistic and stylistic nature. If certain expressions are presented in quotations and have specific or non-specific speaker and altogether artistic may not necessarily qualify them as proverbs and for that matter wellerisms. Some artistic expressions can be traced down to certain individuals as being the ones who constructed them, yet we cannot say they carry the quality of being proverbs either than their standard forms of being mere expressions.

This brings us to a very important thing to note, which is, the argument made by Unseth et al. (2017), that a statement or saying can be in a form of wellerism but not a proverb, with an English example of a wellerism as: *“I see,’ said the blind carpenter as he picked up his hammer and saw”* which they point out to be “very witty indeed but not a proverb.” Like earlier indicated, I suggest their assertion implies that not all wellerisms are proverbs, as all proverbs are not wellerisms, yet some proverbs can be wellerisms. It is actually a bit difficult to come to terms with this claim because, if some utterances are qualified to be wellerisms, then they are supposed to be proverbs. Nevertheless, they equally submit that, “the matter of whether wellerisms should be considered to be proverbs does not have unanimous agreement” (Unseth et al., 2017: 3). This means many people hold varied views concerning what exactly wellerisms are and what they are not. However, per the concept and views of other scholars, it is my observation that indeed all wellerisms are classified as variants proverbs. Baer (1983) reiterates that clearly, wellerisms in Pickwick papers tend to cluster around particular themes; entertainment, marriage, class and politics-subjects of everyday interest, not likely to engage the emotions in any deep or permanent or threatening way.

He however observes that there are also clusters that reveal another side of Weller’s world with its anxieties and fear and anger. This view is reflected in Finnegan (2012: 392) that *“proverbs..... Something of their variety can be gathered from the headings under which they are classed in many collections (in terms either of explicit content or implied allusion), for these headings include every aspect of human affairs.”* That is, proverbs concern life issues of the people, and they are infused in everyday discourse (conversations) that include entertainment, marriage, class, among others. This is confirmed by what Finnegan (2012: 384) says, that *“proverbs..... Unlike such forms as riddles and stories they are not normally set apart as suitable for relaxation after, say,*

the end of the day's work, but are closely involved with speech and action on every sort of occasion (including general conversation)."

Finnegan (2012: 389) observes that among the Bantu, as elsewhere, the use of quoted words attributed to some actual or fictional person is another device for giving point and sometimes authority to a proverbial saying, the form sometimes known as 'wellerism'. She posits that this may be humorous as with the Ganda "‘I’ll die for a big thing”, says the biting ant on the big toe’, but is usually more serious. The attitude of the ant has made the people to attribute this proverb to it as though the saying were the exact words of the ant. Naturally the ant could not have uttered this way, but its behaviour calls for the utterance which is referred to as wellerism. The Dagaaba equally have some proverbial sayings that are attributed to non-human creatures driven from their natural behaviours, and tend to quote these sayings from the supposed entities.

At this point, it is important to draw a line between wellerisms and what some people call “animal proverbs or metaphors.” We established that wellerisms are variants of proverbs which are supposedly uttered by animals and other non-human creatures. They are proverbs associated with such entities due to their natural behaviours exhibited as though the entities in question have spoken out those proverbs. Some proverbs have captured the names of certain animals and other inanimate creatures. However, they are not sayings that can be quoted as coming from the mouths of those creatures. They do not have the basic qualities of wellerism, such as; a speaker, even though a proverb, that captures the name and probably the behaviour of a particular entity which can be related to human life in society. So therefore, we cannot conclude that they are wellerisms. Some researchers refer to them as “*animal proverbs or metaphors.*”

Sameer (2016) reveals that through animal proverbs, it becomes easier to understand and reveal human beings' culture and behaviour. And by using animal metaphors we can satisfy many purposes such as insulting, praising, criticizing and describing societies. As earlier indicated, these proverbs featuring some animals, though they are not wellerisms, they have the potential of speaking truth about human society, the attitude of people for that matter.

Yakub (2019) did a study of animal metaphors and imagery in Nzema proverbs. He highlights that both domestic and nondomestic animals including birds, flies, insects and reptiles are prevalent in Nzema proverbs to advise people against undesirable attitudes like recalcitrance, procrastination, greed, selfishness and all sort of social vices. Yakub stresses that these creatures are also used through the proverbs to direct people towards positive behaviours; such as tolerance, forgiveness, patience, cooperation, obedience, kindness, faithfulness and hard work among others. The aim of his study was to unveil proverbs featuring non-human creatures which have the capacity to function just like the normal actual proverbs, attributing to human behaviour. In his data analysis, it was consistent that no proverb carried the quality of wellerism. Examples of such proverbs in Nzema include the following:

1. *Efa nrezenra nwo eya a ekondɔ wɔ hanɛ.*

‘If you become angry at the housefly, you end up irritating your sore’ (Yakub 2019:11-12).

This calls for the need to control one’s temper. In this proverb, housefly represents a person who causes discomfort to others. When a housefly settles on your sore, it eats it and causes pain, this can cause you to revenge by trying to kill it and in so doing if you are not patient you may end up hurting your sore the more. This scenario created out of

this proverb usually happens in human societies; where people lose their tempers because of little discomfort and later find themselves in serious predicaments.

2. *Nyamenle a kposa akɔlɛ alee a.*

‘It is God who chews food for the chicken’ (Yakub 2019: 9).

This proverb calls for the need to be confident and hopeful in life. According to Yakub, the chicken used in the proverb represents a needy, vulnerable, handicapped or disabled person in our socio-cultural setting. People of this calibre should still be confident and hopeful in life.

In Dagaare such proverbs (animal metaphors) exist. Below are some examples;

- a. *Boŋo poteere koŋ sage ka o buli eele... The thoughts of the donkey will not allow it to grow horns.* This proverb means certain wishes do not come our way due to how our intentions may be. The donkey naturally has no horns but it mostly wants to hurt people by using the legs. It is perceived that if the donkey were having horns it would have been worse because it will use the horns to hurt. It is naturally wicked yet with no horns. The people have therefore related this to the human society because of some people’s bad intentions.
- b. *Ɖmene la maŋ ko gɔmɔ soori ka o vɔle ... It is God who gives the chameleon grasshopper to swallow.* This proverb means that the provision of poor person comes from God. In other words, the one who is weak and incapable of getting what they want should expect or seek it from God, for He (God) is their source of provision.

Proverbs of this sort, though they have been associated with some behaviours of animals, we cannot classify them as being part of wellerism proverbs. This is the line that we need to draw between wellerisms and actual proverbs.

This leads us to some definitions of wellerism proverbs given to the researcher by some respondents of this research, translated from Dagaare to English. They are relevant as far as this study is concerned. They are as follows:

- Wellerisms are variants of proverbs attributed to certain non-human entities, which contain truth about human society.
- Wellerisms are wise sayings associated with animals or other creatures which carry some pieces of information used to advice, encourage, praise, warn and deter people in the society.
- Wellerisms are proverbs which are usually concise but witty in nature and believed to have been uttered by some creatures such as animals, reptiles, trees, seas, birds etc, which are quoted by humans to impact wisdom on people in society. *(Translated from Dagaare to English).*

We can conclude that wellerisms are variants of proverbs associated with non-human creatures, believed to have been uttered by those creatures and are usually quoted by humans to advice, praise, encourage, warn, criticize and deter people in society. They are used in human communication which spice up conversations between people. These proverbs are associated with the non-human entities due to their natural behaviour which have relation with how people also behave or relate in the society. The Dagaaba refer to wellerisms as *donne yelyelli* “animal sayings”, and this includes both the inanimate and animate creatures like goats, sheep, stones, trees, lands, rocks, grass, seas etc. The behaviours of these creatures are personified to reflect that (behaviour) of man.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

Relevance Theory

This study is underpinned by Relevance Theory (RT), a cognitive theory of human communication proposed by Sperber and Wilson, in 1986 and revised in 1995. It really emerged in the late seventies and early eighties as a cognition-centered alternative to Grice's cooperation-ruled explanation of human communication. The theory in question is relevant in pragmatics (a Pragmatic Approach (PA) to the use and interpretation of proverbs. The pragmatic approach deals with how thoughts are communicated from one person to another. The main assumption of the theory is that human beings are endowed with a biologically rooted ability to maximize the relevance of incoming stimuli (including linguistic utterances and other communicative behaviors) (Yus 2006). It is concerned with the fact that by the use of encoding and decoding, listeners receive the message from the speaker and interpret it to arrive at an intended meaning conceived by the speaker.

According to Wilson (2016), Relevance theories, like other broadly Gricean approaches to pragmatics, takes as its starting point three of Grice's assumptions about verbal communication. The first is that a sentence meaning is a vehicle for conveying a speaker's meaning, where a speaker's meaning is an overtly expressed intention that is fulfilled by being recognised. The second is that a speaker's meaning cannot be simply perceived or decoded, but has to be inferred from her behaviour, together with contextual information. The third is that, in inferring a speaker's meaning, the hearer is guided by the expectation that communicative behaviour should meet certain standards: for Grice, a cooperative principle and conversational maxims, and for relevance theorists, a presumption of optimal relevance.

Wilson (2016) notes that Grice was mainly concerned with pragmatic factors affecting the identification of implicatures, whereas relevance theorists (and a growing number of other broadly Gricean approaches) are equally concerned with pragmatic factors affecting the identification of explicit truthconditional content. Moreover, Wilson explains that Relevance Theory treats utterance comprehension as an inferential process which takes as input the production of an utterance by a speaker, together with contextual information, and yields as output an interpretation of the speaker's meaning. Utterance comprehension is seen as essentially an exercise in mindreading, and the challenge for relevance theorists attempting to build a psychologically plausible, empirically testable pragmatic theory is precisely to explain how the closed formal system of language provides effective pieces of evidence which, combined with contextual information, enable successful comprehension to take place. "Intuitively, relevance is a potential property not only of utterances and other observable phenomena, but of thoughts, memories and conclusions of inferences and context. In relevance-theoretic terms, any external stimulus or internal representation which provides an input to cognitive processes may be relevant to an individual at some time" (Wilson & Sperber, 1986: 250).

Relevance theory is based on a definition of relevance and two principles of relevance: a Cognitive Principle (that human cognition is geared to the maximisation of relevance), and a Communicative Principle (that utterances create expectations of optimal relevance). The core of relevance theory is based on the communicative principle which states that as a speaker makes an utterance, he/she is conveying that, what has been said is worth listening to. Nevertheless, the cognitive principle of this theory is equally significant in this study because proverbs in most cases are indirect (implicit) and therefore, when used in communication the listener may have to think

critically in relation to the particular discourse they were employed before he/she can arrive at the intended meaning.

“In RT, implicit messages (i.e. proverbs) are relevant enough to be worth bothering to possess. In such instances, the speaker will be economical as possible but makes the utterance stand out clearly” (Owu-Ewie 2019: 29). Proverbs carry messages which are implicit, and therefore need to be decoded with the help of the context in which the speaker encodes particular information. In other words, the relevance of a proverb is solely dependent on communication and appropriate context.

According to Wilson & Sperber (1986: 252), “other things being equal, the greater the positive cognitive effects achieved by processing an input, the greater the relevance of the input to the individual at that time.

And other things being equal, the greater the processing effort expended, the lower the relevance of the input to the individual at that time”.

This theory, based on the communicative and cognitive principles is employed in this study because in different settings where communication takes place, proverbs which are used stand out clearly from all other structures which makes the addressees or audiences (listeners) use their cognition to process and grasp the meaning of the utterances, which are of relevance or vital to them. Even though some proverbs can easily be understood immediately they are used, others would need critical thinking in order to get their meanings in the communication. For instance, in a situation where an elderly person uses a particular proverb in an attempt to communicate with the youth, who is not abreast of proverbs or that proverb, would have to critically think in order

to get its intended meaning. In this case the appropriate context in which the proverb is employed would help the listener grasp the meaning.

Though the proverbs collected in this study were not all from primary source, where communication went on and proverbs were used in the natural settings, it is important to note that the context(s) of usage of each proverb cannot be underestimated. That is, every individual proverb has specific or particular context(s) in which it is usually employed, and therefore the use of this theory becomes relevant for the study.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3. 0. Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods and procedures used in the data collection. The discussion includes the research approach and design, the respondents or participants and the instruments employed in the collection of the data. The research site, data collection strategies and procedures are subsequently discussed in this chapter.

3. 1. Research Approach

The method or approach to this research is qualitative. Qualitative research involves detailed verbal descriptions of characteristics case, and settings by using interviews, observations and documents as the data collecting procedures. It is non-numerical in nature. It is sometimes referred to as interpretive research. Qualitative research involves deriving information from observation, interviews or verbal interactions and focuses on the meanings and interpretations of the participants (Owu-Ewie (2017: 3). Owu-Ewie (2017) reiterates that a qualitative research is primarily exploratory research used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations of a phenomenon. In this study, we are considering wellerism proverbs as a phenomenon in the Dagaaba setting. An exploration of the Dagaaba wellerism proverbs was made to bring to light, the opinions and motivations behind the use of such proverbs.

3. 1.1. Research Design

The design for this study is ethnography. This is a type of qualitative research design. Creswell (2009) cited in Owu-Ewie (2017: 4) posits that ethnography as a type of qualitative research design is an in-depth description and interpretation of cultural

patterns and meanings within a culture or social group. The study is done in natural settings over a long period of time by collecting, primarily observation and interview data. This present study is geared towards exposing the use of wellerism proverbs among the Dagaaba, which form part of the society's oral literature. It seeks to investigate how the proverbs affect the lives of the people in the Dagaaba society. Proverbs are part of everyday experience; people employ proverbs in their everyday speeches or conversations with others. The researcher therefore engaged participants who have had direct contact with proverbs in speeches in order to gain a better understanding of how they are used and how they affect lives in society. The reality about proverbs is that they do not occur in isolation; instead, they occur in discourse (conversations) between people. People therefore interpret these proverbs based on the meanings and contexts in which they are used.

The researcher considers qualitative research method as more appropriate for the study because the analysis of data is mainly descriptive. Larbi (2008) cited in Kogri (2014: 34) is of the view that qualitative studies are those in which the observations are described and not merely expressed in quantitative terms. He added that the aim of qualitative research is to paint a holistic picture and depth of understanding, but not to render a numerical analysis of data. It is also qualitative and descriptive in the sense that the work is based on the literal and contextual meanings as well as the aesthetic qualities of the wellerism proverbs through an interaction. Again, it is so because the interpretation of the data is subjective; it subjective in the sense that it deals with people's opinions, feelings, intuition, observation or reasoning of what they experience. Owu-Ewie (2017: 4) postulates that one characteristic of qualitative research is that, data interpretation is subjective; data interpretation is based on perceptions of the people in the environment.

Moreover, the researcher chose this approach and design based on the following reasons as identified in Owu-Ewie (2017: 5): It produces more in-depth, comprehensive information for the purpose of which this study is undertaken. It also uses subjective information and participatory observation to describe the context or natural setting of the data under consideration as well as the interaction with the informants on different wellerism proverbs in context. It seeks a wide understanding of the entire data collection. Another motivating factor that calls for the adoption of qualitative method of research in this research design is its flexibility nature. The method is employed based on its suitability for the selection of people especially elders who are very knowledgeable in proverb usage in the area where the research is carried out. It is also used because it best suits the analysis and interpretation of the wellerism proverbs collected.

3. 2. The Research Site

The site for this research is Jirapa traditional area, in the Jirapa Municipality of the Upper West Region of Ghana. The areas covered in the research are Da-Uri, Kongkuo, and Veveri; all within the confines of Jirapa; they form part of the Jirapa traditional area (sections of Jirapa traditional area). The community is chosen as the site for the research as it is considered more appropriate because of its rich historical and cultural background as elaborated in chapter one (fig. 1.2).

3. 3. Source of Data

Data was collected from two main sources for the study which include primary and secondary. According Larbi (2008: 26) cited in Kogri (2014: 36), primary data is the data collected through first- hand information or from primary sources such as original documents, relics, remains, or artifacts mainly through surveys, interviews or

participant observation. Primary data is the direct outcome of events or the record of eye witnesses.

The primary data for this study was collected through interviews, documentation, audio recording, observation and participant observation. The “*tendaana*” (priest of the earth’s shrine) of the Jirapa traditional area as well as other elders who are considered to be very knowledgeable and experienced in Dagaare proverbs were contacted for the elicitation of relevant information. The researcher spent two months in the community to conduct interviews, hold a discussion on a radio station (Gangaa FM) on Thursday 18th November, 2021, on the programme title, “*Baŋe a Fo Sããkonnoŋ*” (Know Your Culture), from 8:00pm to 9:00pm. The said radio discussion was held on just one occasion, and respondents were not included in the selected group of people who were consulted and interviewed purposively.

The researcher used the radio discussion as a “starter” to enlighten people on the need to use wellerisms in speeches, thereby generating some data from the discussion. The researcher also participated and observed wellerism proverbs being used at certain events in the community. The events at which these wellerism proverbs were employed occurred in their natural setting where context was key. That is, the communications that called for the usage of such wellerisms happened in their appropriate contexts. The details of each technique are discussed under data collection technique.

The secondary data for the study is from books, articles, journals and thesis. They include; Yabang (1980), Yabang (1999), Kyemaalo (2000), Kyiileyang (2008) and Kogri (2014). The researcher, as a native speaker of Dagaare also used his intuition on Dagaare proverbs together with intensive and extensive reading of the secondary source

to collect some of the proverbs that are considered relevant for the study. And they were purposively selected as follows: 5 wellerism proverbs were collected from Yabang (1980), 1 from Yabang (1999), 5 from Kyemaalo (2000), 5 from Kyiileyang (2008) and 2 from Kogri (2014). They all amounted to eighteen (18). The researcher did not have enough data from the secondary source because much of the works did not focus on the topic under study hence, the vacuum created which calls for this present study.

The rest of the wellerism proverbs were collected from respondents, recording from the radio station (Gangaa FM) and occasions such as traditional marriage contraction and funerals. Five (5) wellerisms were collected from the radio discussion from five (5) different people who called in when a phone line was opened after a few minutes of the discussion. The respondents for the radio discussion were not selected; it was an open forum however, they were all natives of the research site, thus, they come from the Jirapa traditional area. Each of the callers was asked to introduce him/herself by name and where they come from. Also, twenty-five (25) wellerisms were collected from the occasions that the researcher observed and participated. That is at the traditional marriage contraction, traditional festival and funerals. Lastly, twenty-four (24) wellerisms were collected from individuals who were selected purposively for interview. The total number of wellerisms gathered in the data collection was seventy-two (72) however, sixty-six (66) wellerisms were analyzed in the study.

3. 4. Research Partners/Consultants/Key Informants

The researcher contacted a total number of sixteen (16) people (respondents). He proposed to interview a total of twenty (20) people but due to the challenge of unavailability of some targeted individuals he ended up coming into contact with sixteen (16) people. The key research partners or informants of this research comprise the tendaana (earth priest) of the Jirapa traditional area and some elderly people. The

total number of research partners or key informants is seven (7) including three (3) elderly women. They include the earth priest himself, three (3) elderly men and three (3) women. The researcher also contacted three (3) male Dagaare lecturers who teach in the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) even though they are not natives of the research site. The interview was done on face-to-face basis, and questions were not preplanned; they were not predetermined. In the course of interaction, questions about wellerisms and proverbs in general were asked. This was to help the researcher establish facts on the clear difference between wellerisms and that of the proverbs in general among the Dagaaba.

The earth priest of the Jirapa traditional area and the elders in question are considered more appropriate in the consultation because they possess in-depth knowledge in Dagaaba proverbs as far as their experience in the usage of proverbs in various settings is concerned. The tendaana (earth priest) is a very key personality in the area; he holds a very prestigious traditional leadership position in the land that is responsible for the spiritual welfare of the people. He is the chief priest of the earth's shrine. He leads to pour libation on every occasion that gathers the people for a common purpose as well as ensuring sanity in the land. He works hand in hand with the chief of the area. The other elders selected are also very key persons who are highly recognized in society. They are known for their consistent deployment of proverbs in their daily speeches. The women are considered because they equally have in-depth knowledge and experience in the usage of proverbs. The University lecturers are also people who have requisite knowledge of proverbs; they teach literature which encompasses proverbs as a genre of oral literature.

The other six individuals who form part of the people interviewed (research partners) during the research were also purposively selected based on their in-depth knowledge on proverbs to hear their experience regarding the use of proverbs in the Dagaaba setting. They were three (3) males and (3) females, of which two people, (one male and one female) are non-natives of the research site. Even though these two individuals are Dagaaba and non-natives of the research site (Jirapa traditional area), they have been residing there for a long time. Based on this, they are known for their in-depth knowledge in Dagaare proverbs and that called for their selection. The remaining four (4) of the six respondents are natives of the research area and are versed in Dagaare proverbs hence, their selection. In all, the respondents selected were ten (10) males and six (6) females; eleven (11) natives of the research area and five (5) non-natives.

3. 5. Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

In qualitative research, the data collection strategies very often used are interviews, observation, documents and audio-visual materials Creswell (2008) cited in Owu-Ewie (2017: 40). The researcher in this study employed interviews, documentations, observation, participant observation and audio recordings of discourse (conversations) on occasions such as the radio presentation, traditional marriage contraction, funeral ceremonies as well as one-on-one base on the data collection where proverbs were used in the various communication settings.

The main instruments used to collect the data for this research are interviews observation and participatory observation. This is because the study deals with the themes and aesthetic qualities of the Dagaaba wellerism proverbs in their natural settings. The interviews were one-on-one basis as indicated below.

3. 5.1. Unstructured Interview

In this research, a face-to-face unstructured interview was conducted. A prior notice was given to the people concerned in the community on the day of my visit. The *tendaana* was the first contact followed by the other elderly people and also the randomly selected respondents. The chief of the area was not contacted due to his illhealth and so I depended so much on the *tendaana*. Questions were not preplanned and leading questions depended on the response of the respondent.

According to Patton (2002) as cited in Owu-Ewie (2017: 41), unstructured interview schedule has no predetermined questions before the interview but questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked as the interview evolves. In a discourse with each of the respondents the questions flowed and followed the context and trend of the discourse. This allowed probing for more specific answers. As indicated in the research site, the specific sections of which I visited are Da-Uri, Kongkuo, and Veveri; all within the confines of Jirapa; they are sections of Jirapa traditional area. Each of the key respondents hails from one of these sections. The *tendaana* is from that of Kongkuo so I started with that section and later covered the other two sections. The interview was conducted on the general concept of proverb and further centered on the *wellerism* proverbs which are the core of this study. The rationale behind the use of proverbs; some examples of *wellerism* proverbs, their contextual usage as well as their aesthetic qualities were the major things dealt with. Each participant was asked to give any *wellerism* proverbs they know very well and their context(s) of usage. Documentation and some recording of these *wellerism* proverbs and the contexts in which they are employed was paramount to the research.

Information from the participants was elicited on the concept of proverb in Dagaare, the sources of Dagaaba proverbs, importance of proverbs, who frequently uses proverbs and when and where to use proverbs, just to mention, but a few. The interview technique was actually more useful for the primary data because the face-to-face interaction with the participants gave the researcher a better insight on the wellerism proverbs selected from the primary data. For instance, during the data collection, the respondents really demonstrated that they have got some experience and are knowledgeable in proverbs and the culture of the Dagaaba. They provided relevant information on what constitutes wellerism proverbs and also when and how to use them. It was noted that proverbs are not merely used and that not everyone is knowledgeable and can express themselves using proverbs.

3. 5.2. Spontaneous Data

The second technique used for the data collection was both observation and participatory observation depending on the events. “The role of the participant in qualitative observation can be a complete observation or participant observation” (Owu-Ewie 2017: 44). “In qualitative research, observation consists of detailed documentation of behaviours, events and context surrounding the events and behaviours” (Best & Kahn, 2006) cited in Owu-Ewie (2017: 44). This technique was suitable to elicit information that would not have been revealed in detail by informants.

Participation and observation at events where wellerisms were frequently used was necessary in gathering accurate data. For instance, I was a participant observer of a traditional marriage ceremony at Kongkuo, one of the sub-sections of Jirapa captured in my data collection. On this event, my own community people went to pay the bride price on a woman who got married to a man from community. As custom demanded,

both young and adult men close to thirty (30) in number went to pay the bridal wealth. I seized the opportunity to join. During the payment of the bride price, a lot of communication went on between the two community representatives and some wellerisms were infused in the discourse. The wellerisms used at this event were used in their appropriate contexts since certain subject matters called for them. Also, I observed at a funeral ground in Da-Uri, one of the areas I collected the data. As I stood close to the dirge singers, wellerisms were used in the dirges. This was solely an observation and not participation inclusive. Another occasion brought itself where I observed the dirge singers at a woman's funeral at Veveri, and again wellerisms were used whilst singing the dirges. At a young boy's funeral at Kongkuo, I equally observed that it is not only the dirge singers who used wellerisms but at some points where a group of people were communicating, some wellerisms were employed.

Again, I observed a traditional festival at Veveri. This festival called *Bɔɔre*, is associated with some clans among the Dagaaba and it is not celebrated frequently or annually, but when the need arises. That is, when the gods of that clan or sometimes a particular family reveals its necessity, they will have no option than to celebrate it with rituals mainly performed. I therefore had the opportunity to witness that occasion and during some of the rituals performances the participants used wellerisms. And during a dance session of this festival the singers as well employed wellerisms. Several other groups engaged in conversations, were observed employing some wellerisms in one way or the other. As a native speaker, I equally engaged in conversations with some individuals and I triggered the use of wellerisms in such conversations. All these were the natural settings at which the wellerisms were deployed. Participatory observation is useful in determining what people actually do or how they actually behave in their contexts Kusi (2012: 66) cited in Kogri (2014: 40). The researcher therefore employed

participatory and complete observation because the study is a qualitative research which is non-numerical in nature.

On yet another occasion, I booked an appointment with a radio station called Gangaa FM (94.3 Mhz) situated in the Jirapa Municipality. They have a programme called “*Baŋe a Fo Sããkonnoŋ*” (Know Your Culture), usually hosted on every Thursday evening from 8:00pm to 9:00pm. I used that programme to bring my topic of study on air, where a discussion was held shortly with the host introducing the subject and directly relating it to the Dagaaba culture, since wellerism proverbs are part of their oral literature, and literature for that matter is embedded in the people’s culture. The listeners were made to know that the topic is restricted to wellerism proverbs which most of the Dagaaba specifically refer to as *donne yelyelli* ‘animal sayings’, and the term includes both animate and inanimate creatures. After the brief discussion, phone line was opened for callers to give at least one wellerism proverb and further give the context(s) in which such wellerism(s) is/are used in the Dagaaba setting. Five wellerisms were collected. That is, five callers (respondents) gave one wellerism each and explained its meaning, putting it in the context(s) or situation(s) that could call for the usage of that particular wellerism.

There was audio recording as well as documenting wellerisms at most of the aforementioned events and instances where wellerisms were used, as Duranti (1997) posits that no matter how good we are as writers, if our goal is to have the most accurate record of a given interaction, writing is a very poor technology for describing the richness of the experience of either being in an event or witnessing it as an observer. Therefore, the researcher did audio recording of wellerisms used except on some few occasions like the *Bɔɔre* festival at Veveri where video or audio recording was

prohibited by the people as it is a taboo to their custom. At one of the funerals too at Kongkuo, permission was not granted for audio recording. The recorded audios were later played, transcribed and analyzed under themes. Since my focus was on wellerism proverbs, I concentrated on that aspect even though it was clear that proverbs in general were used together with the wellerisms. I picked out only the wellerism proverbs which form the topic under study to work with.

3. 6. Data Analysis

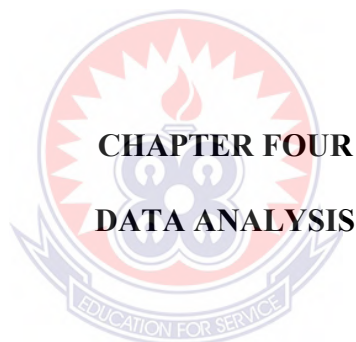
The analysis of the data is descriptive as it is based on qualitative research. The analysis is on the themes that the collected wellerism proverbs fall in. Thus, the thematic roles that proverbs play are discussed. The situational or contextual usages as well as the aesthetic qualities embedded in the wellerisms are delineated. The structure of these wellerism proverbs are equally discussed in the analysis. That is, at the sentential level wellerism proverbs which could be simple, compound or complex sentences are discussed. The functions of these wellerisms under the sentence structure are highlighted. That is, they can function as declarative (statement), imperative (command) or interrogative (question).

The theory that underpins the study is applied in the analysis; it reflects in the thematic discussion of the wellerism proverbs. It talks about the fact that implicit messages like proverbs can make understanding of discourse between speakers and listeners difficult, especially to those who do not have good knowledge on proverbs. Again, it explains that when wellerisms are not employed in their right contexts, they become irrelevant in the speech, and listeners may find it difficult to decode. The relevance of wellerism proverbs in a particular discourse is dependent on their appropriate contexts of usage.

3. 7. Conclusion

The chapter points out the research approach and design. The key informants or research partners, the setting of the research, instruments for data collection are also discussed. Qualitative research approach and ethnography as a design and the rationale behind their adoption has also been highlighted. The sources of data are both primary and secondary. The target population include some selected people who are very knowledgeable in the culture and proverbs. In this chapter, it is indicated that some scholars who are knowledgeable in Dagaaba culture and proverbs were also consulted.

The instruments for data collection are interview and observation, with unstructured face-to-face interview and participatory observation. Interview and observation were appropriate for the data collection. This is because participants provided information which was relevant regarding the use of wellerisms, especially in the natural settings where wellerisms were observed as being used. Through these techniques, the key informants were able to provide the required data for the research. The topic under study was also discussed on a radio station on one occasion where people gave their views and some few wellerism proverbs were collected. The chapter also pointed out that the wellerisms collected were recorded, transcribed and analyze under various themes. A total number of seventy-two (72) wellerisms were collected but sixty-six (66) wellerisms have been analyzed. However, in the analysis, some wellerisms have been repeated based on purpose. For instance, some wellerisms appeared in more than one theme in the thematic analysis. Wellerisms 20, 21, 26 and 38 have been repeated in wellerisms 46, 61, 69 and 66 respectively. This made the numbering of the analyzed wellerisms to be seventy (70).



4.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected on wellerism proverbs among the Dagaaba. The analysis covers the characteristics of Dagaaba wellerism proverbs. It also examines the sentence structure of the Dagaaba wellerisms. Thus, it looks at the sentences according to types and functions. Furthermore, it highlights the themes and contexts of usage of the selected wellerism proverbs as well as explores their aesthetic qualities. The aesthetic qualities have to do with tools like humour, mood and the literary devices that are embedded in the selected wellerisms discussed under the themes. Each wellerism proverb is presented in its literal and idiomatic meanings. The themes under discussion include: hard work, mistrust, gratitude and appreciation,

tolerance, courage and bravery, class, unity and solidarity, support, peace and harmony, patience and endurance.

4.1. The Characteristics of Dagaaba Wellerisms

This section of the study deals with the research question one and research objective one respectively. It seeks to explore the characteristics of the Dagaaba wellerisms. The characteristics have to do with the features that qualify certain proverbs to be wellerisms. According to Finnegan (2012: 389), among the Bantu, the use of quoted words attributed to some actual or fictional person is another device for giving point and sometimes authority to a proverbial saying, the form sometimes known as ‘wellerism.’ And she gave an example as with the Ganda, “*I’ll die for a big thing*”, *says the biting ant on the big toe.*’ As Amegashie & Asilevi (2010) cited in Yakub (2018: 114) point out, wellerism is a saying in which some utterances are supposed to be made by the non-human elements. This means wellerism proverbs are utterances presented in quotations form, attributed to certain non- human creatures, and the utterances are assumed to have been the exact words of those non-human elements involved which are then quoted by the people in society. This portion of the study analyzes the characteristics of the Dagaaba wellerism proverbs.

1. Walaa yeli ka “Peele n nimiri ko ma la so ka maa ane n poge maŋ kyene.”

The antelope says, “Blow my eye for me is the reason why I walk with my wife.”

This wellerism means marriage is for companionship and support between the couple.

2. Zanzakpirime yeli ka, “Demedeme la, neezaa ba nyere tensogo saŋa.”

The bat says, “It is just management, no one sees during the night.”

This wellerism means everyone is facing one problem or the other, and so we all are managing to live.

3. Pɔntere yeli ka, “Nɔdɔɔne ba koorɔ.”

The toad says, “A little shake of the mouth does not kill.”

It means half a loaf is better than none. That is, with the little food you have to eat, it will surely sustain you. In other words, depend on the little food available for you at a time.

4. Gyuuni yeli ka, “N na deɛ N damboluŋ bɔ ne nyɛvotɔɔre, lenso ka N maŋ be tampuuri zu a dire bondifaare.”

The vulture says, “I will use my stupidity to search for long life that is why I am mostly found on rubbish dump eating garbage.”

This wellerism means never be afraid to be called a fool for doing any menial job that earns you a living.

5. Dmaɔŋa yeli ka, “Baa taa la kpateere, le la so ka N zoro baa.”

“The monkey says, “The dog has a guardian and that is why I fear dog.”

This wellerisms means one’s fear of someone or something is based on the fact that there is a backing on that person or thing in question.

6. Zanzakpirime yeli ka, “Dilaŋ maŋ taa la nyoore.”

The bat says, “Staying together in one room produces smoke.”

It means you can never stay or mingle with other people without misunderstandings sometimes. In other words, problems are inevitable as you do things together with others.

Considering these wellerism proverbs above, we can see that they are quoted utterances believed to have been said by some creatures. Secondly, the creatures involved are all non-human entities. This therefore affirms that the Dagaaba wellerism proverbs are characterized by utterances quoted from some non-human characters. Kogri (2014: 52) notes that these forms of proverbs are popular among the Dagaaba as *donne yelyelli*

‘animals’ sayings.’ He asserts these are proverbs that are crafted out of behaviours of animals and their environment. He says the behaviour of these animals are personified to reflect that (behaviour) of man. Again, let us consider the following wellerism proverbs in Dagaare which bear another feature.

7. Badaa yeli ka, “Ka neezaaŋ koŋ puu ma kye maa eŋ na puu la n meŋe.” O naŋ yi tee zu le a naŋ iri vooro.”

The lizard says, “If no one will praise me but I will praise myself.” Because he fell from the tree and got up alive.

This wellerism proverb means be proud of your ability to do or achieve something, even if no one sees or recognizes it. In other words, be your own source of encouragement in doing things.

8. Malaa yeli ka, “N daŋ koŋ la di seremaane, kye la di boŋ?” Ka o soore kye baŋ ka o koŋ baŋ veŋ seremaane diibu.

The “malaa”, a kind of bird, says, “I will never eat pepper but eat what again?” He asked, knowing he can never stop eating pepper.

This wellerism means that it is difficult for one to stop taking what he/she is addicted to. They will always see it as what makes them survive or be better every day.

9. Kyeloo yeli ka “N na wa e la kpoŋ dona.” A wa e kpoŋ ba dona.”

The kyeloo, a kind of snake says, “I will begin to bite when I grow up.” But cannot bite after it is grown.

This means procrastination is the thief of time. In other words, use every good opportunity now before you regret in the future.

10. Waabo yeli ka “Wommu ka a maŋ woŋ ma ka N doŋ.” O da ba eŋ Nensaala dommo yeŋe.

The snake says “it is pain that triggers me to bite.” It has not been his intention to bite man.

This means one reacts or retaliates when he/she gets hurt first. You cannot react or retaliate out of nothing. The snake bites as soon as one steps on it.

Wellerism (7) has its phrase as, “Because he fell from the tree and got up alive.”, wellerism (8) has its phrase, “He asked, knowing he can never stop eating pepper”, welleriam (9) has “But cannot bite after it is grown, and that of wellerism (10) has, “It has not been his intention to bite man.” These phrases came right after the supposed speakers’ witty statements. This characteristic of wellerisms revealed by Mieder (2004) is associated with the Dagaaba wellerism proverbs as seen above.

Mieder (2004:15) establishes that wellerisms are characterized by the following; (1) a statement, often a proverb, (2) identification of a speaker (a person or animal) and (3) a phrase that places the statement into an unexpected situation. The following is an example illustrated by Mieder: (1) "All flesh is grass", as the horse said when he bit a piece out of a man's arm. We have the proverb presented in quotation marks; "All flesh is grass", then the speaker, horse; and the phrase, when he bit a piece out of a man’s arm. The assertion of Mieder is that, a wellerism should be found to have been a proverbial statement or utterance, must have a speaker or the entity that have uttered it and also a phrase which puts the statement in an unexpected context.

One other key characteristic of wellerisms is that the characters involved are personified. Thus, those non-human elements are personified as though they were humans talking or making those witty utterances. Yakub (2018) identifies that in wellerisms, these creatures or elements are personified as if they are capable of quoting the statement. Let us look at wellerism proverbs in Dagaare below:

11. Kɔremɔ yeli ka, “Nyooɔre la gyɛlɛ.”

The partridge says, “Life is eggs.” In other words, if there is life, eggs will come. (If I live, I can lay more eggs).

This means that if you do not die you will surely be productive.

The attitude of the partridge is that, when it sits on its eggs and there is any sound of impending danger, it flies away quickly leaving the eggs behind just to save its own life. The question is that how can a bird like the partridge talk this way as if it is human? This behaviour of the partridge has made the people to attribute this proverbial saying to it and it appears as if it were the words of the partridge.

12. Bodaa yeli ka, “Yaga la ka ba maŋ waa ka ba boɔɔ ba mine purimine.”

The billy goat says, “It is because they are many, they call some of them aunties.”

This wellerism is talking about the fact that the billy goat even chases his own mother goat to satisfy his sexual desires, and so does not care about relations. Human beings are prohibited to have sexual affairs with their blood relations, and so the he-goat is saying that because human beings are many, they refer to some as “aunties”, which figuratively refers to blood relations. The he-goat here is the one personified; it is the one making this proverbial utterance like a human being.

13. Koleyaaraa yeli ka, “Daŋ nyɛ a taaba la so ka N maŋ wa deɛɛ ne n bie kyɛ leɛ n noɔre bare ziyuo.”

The “koleyaaraa”; a type of bird says, “Having seen similar things are the reason when I am playing with my child I turn my mouth to a different direction.”

It means to be forewarned is to be forearmed. In other words, prevention is better than cure. It also means experience is the best teacher.

The “koleyaaraa” is a type of bird that eats flesh, particularly fish in the water. The tendency of this bird being a predator is the reason why she turns the mouth on a different direction anytime she is playing with her young ones. Since she has been preying on other flesh like the fish, this makes her very cautious in order not to ever prey on her young ones.

14. Yɔgegbere yeli ka “N ba taa goɔrɔ, lenso ka N gbɛɛ maɲ tɛɛ yi be soriɲ.”

The pumpkin plant says, “I have no guardian, which is why I stretch my legs even across the road.”

This means waywardness is as a result of having no guardian. In other words, when there is no one to guide you, you can go wayward or walk in the wrong direction.

The nature of the pumpkin plant is that, it creeps to any direction and sometimes even across the road and if no one lifts and redirects it, passers-by will trample on it. The people therefore attribute this witty utterance to the creeping plant due to its behaviour.

15. Kurikuri yeli ka, “Woɔ poɔ vooroɲ ba e fɛɛ.”

The tortoise says “Breath in the skin-bag is never too little.”

It means use any little opportunity that comes your way judiciously. In other words, be content with what you have. Half a loaf is better than none.

The behaviour of the tortoise is that, when it is being caught by human being it quickly pushes its head inside its “skin-bag” to prevent being killed by hitting the head first, even though it knows death is certain once it has been taken hold of.

All the wellerisms presented above are entities personified. Obviously, these non-human creatures cannot speak like humans, but their behaviours called for the proverbs which are quoted in reference to them. The Dagaaba wellerism proverbs, for that matter have this very characteristic as highlighted above because the entities which are non-humans play the roles of humans. Wellerisms (1) to (15) are all personified.

4.2. The Sentence Structure of Dagaaba Wellerisms

This section deals with research question two and research objective two of the study, which is intended to investigate the sentential structure of Dagaaba wellerisms. Wellerisms are composed in varied ways. That is, the structure in relation to wellerisms could be identified in varied forms, such as the arrangement and relation between the parts or elements that form an entire wellerism proverb; the sounds, words, phrases, sentences among others. For instance, Finnegan (2012: 388) observes that the actual wording of proverbs may take the form of a simple positive or negative proposition as in the Swahili '*The goat-eater pays a cow*' (i.e. sow the wind and reap the whirlwind), or of various types of simple rhythmic balanced propositions, double propositions in which the second portion is self-explanatory are also common, negative axioms, contrast propositions as in the Lamba '*The body went, the heart did not go*', reduplication with repeated words or syllables, rhetorical question among other forms or structures.

According to Kogri (2014: 44), scholars in the field of literature like Stewart (1997) and Maidan (2009) classify some proverbs under simple and complex structures. The structures deductively have to do with their syntactic and lexical formations. Yabang (1999:2) claims that Dagaaba proverbs as part of their oral literature have several structures.

This study investigates the sentential structure of the Dagaaba wellerism proverbs. The structure in this context is focused on the types of sentences and their functions. Thus, it looks at wellerisms that can be simple, compound, complex or compound complex sentences by structure, and function as either declarative, imperative or interrogative.

“A sentence is a unit of structure that contains at least one clause” (Dakubu 2005: 22).

Dakubu (2005: 2) indicates that any language in the world has a basic unit of utterance, known as a sentence, in which something is announced, a topic or subject, and something is then said about it: What is said about the subject constitutes the predicate. A sentence with more than one clause can be compound or complex, depending on how the clauses are put together.

According to Dakubu (2005: 22), we get a compound sentence as two principal clauses are joined by a co-ordinating conjunction. The clauses are both principal clauses because they are structurally independent of each other. She further observes that in Dagaare there are several conjunction words employed for this, which are often different from one dialect area to another. Even when the dialects have the same conjunction, they may use the word differently. The conjunctions like *ka*, *kyε*, *ane*, *ε* are used in Dagaare depending on the Dialect. The Central dialect uses the conjunctions like “*ka*” (and) and “*kyε*” (but) whilst the Northern dialect uses “*ε*” (but/and).

According to Owu-Ewie (2014), a simple sentence in Akan has a single idea which implies that it has a single verb. A simple sentence can be composed of a single verb, a noun (subject) and a verb and most often a noun (subject), a verb, and a noun (object). Crystal (2007) cited in Owu-Ewie (2014: 241) postulates that a compound sentence

consists of two or more main clauses. Such clauses are joined by coordinating conjunctions like *and*, *but*, *or*.

Luri (2016) also points out that a sentence in Dagaare is a/are word(s), clause(s) that is/are carefully put together in the structure of the language. He explains that a sentence may function as statement, (declarative), question (interrogative) and command (imperative), and in Dagaare there are classifications of sentences to include; simple, compound and complex sentences. Every independent clause is a sentence. According to Luri, a simple sentence is a sentence that has one independent clause and has one or a single idea. A compound sentence is formed when two or more independent clauses are joined by conjunction and there should not be a dependent clause attached. A complex sentence on the other hand has one independent clause and two or more dependent clauses, and it does not necessarily matter the length of the sentence. He notes that there are two types of complex sentence; compound complex and complex sentences. The complex sentence has one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. Whilst the compound complex sentence has many independent clauses and one of which contains one or more dependent clause(s).

In view of this, let us look at some of the Dagaaba wellerism proverbs sentential structure below according to types and functions.

A. Simple Sentence

16. Pɔntere yeli ka, “N ba laara peeɛ lɔŋ nimiri.”

The toad says, “I am not well to be blowing frog’s eye.”

This means everyone manages his own predicament. In other words, it is difficult to offer help to someone who is carrying the same or similar burden as you.

The sentence structure of the above wellerism proverb is a simple sentence because it presents one independent clause and it has a single idea with a subject and verb. Taking into consideration the idiomatic expression of the wellerism, “*Everyone manages his own predicament*”, it basically has “*everyone*” as the subject and “*manages*” as the verb. A noun object is also identified as “*predicament*.” As indicated by Dakubu (2005: 2), “We refer to a single-clause sentence as a Simple Sentence.” It functions as a declarative statement because it has been expressed in a statement manner.

17. Mɔ̀biri yeli ka “N yeli bebe saa miibu yɛ̀ɛ be?”

The grass seed says, “Do I care if it rains or not?”

It means who cares about others failures?

The one who is self-dependent does not need anyone to survive or get his/her basic needs. The nature of the grass seed is that it can still germinate even without rain. That is self-dependency.

The above wellerism structure is a simple sentence as it conveys a single idea that a “self-sufficient fellow depends on him/herself for survival.” It functions as a question (interrogative) because it is expressed in a form of a question, which is rhetorical anyway. According to Crystal (2003) cited in Owu-Ewie (2014: 239), “interrogative sentences are typically used to express questions.”

18. Nubiri yeli ka, “N maŋ eŋɛɛ kɔ̀ɔ seŋ N meŋɛ.”

The finger says, “I contain pus according to my size.”

It means you cut your coat according to your cloth. In other words, you live according to your means.

The above wellerism proverb is yet another simple sentence. In the English translation, the subject is the “*I or you*” and the verb, “*contain or cut.*” In the Dagaare the subject is “*N*” and the verb is “*eyɛɛ.*” This conveys a single idea in the structure of the language. This wellerism functions as a declarative. Thus, it is expressed in a statement form. “A declarative sentence refers to verb forms or sentence or clause types which are typically used in expressing statement” (Crystal 2003) cited in Owu-Ewie (2014: 239).

B. Compound Sentence

Crystal (2007) cited in Owu-Ewie (2014: 241) postulates that a compound sentence consists of two or more main clauses. Such clauses are joined by coordinating conjunctions like *and, but, or*. The Dagaare uses conjunctions like “*ka*” (and) and “*kyɛ*” (but) to join two or more sentences together. The following are some Dagaaba wellerisms which are compound sentences.

19. Baa yeli ka, “Yeŋ ka noɔ na gaa ne kɔre ka maa naane so o?”

The dog says, “Where will the chicken go with the bone and I will not have it?”

It means be patient because things which are meant for you will not get lost.

It communicates that we should not rush for things which are already ours even if they are in the possession of others or no matter how it may delay. The hen which picks a bone will eventually leave it for the dog because the dog is the rightful owner or beneficiary of the bone. This wellerism by structure is a compound sentence. It is made

up of two main or independent clauses. Thus, the conjunction “*ka*” (and) is putting together the two clauses; “*Yeŋ ka noɔ na gaa ne kɔɔre*” (Where will the chicken go with the bone) and “*Maa naane so o.*” (I will not have it). The two clauses are independent because they make meaning on their own. It functions as question or interrogative.

20. Kpããlee yeli ka “N baŋ ka n ma ba e noɔ kyɛ N tuuro o la.”

The keet (young guinea fowl or guinea fowl chick) says, “I know that the hen is not my mother but I follow it.”

It means do not treat privileges as entitlements. Consider or count it as a privilege when people who not of your class are at your aid.

The keet is a young guinea fowl or guinea fowl chick. More often, it is the hen that hatches the keets. The guinea fowl lays the eggs and the eggs are given to the hen to hatch, and so the young guinea fowls follow the hen together with the chickens to be nurtured. In view of this, the keet is much aware that the hen is not its biological mother yet the hen accommodates it. Even if the keet does not like the hen, it has no choice since it cannot fend for itself. This wellerism is a compound sentence by structure. The conjunction “*kyɛ*” (and) has joined the two independent clauses; “*N baŋ ka n ma ba e noɔ.*” (I know that the hen is not my mother) “*N tuuro o la.*” (I am following it). It functions as a statement (declarative).

21. Gaa tee yeli ka, “N ba boora yeɛ, lenso N maŋ moɔna/berɛ la bondirii saŋa.”

The ebony tree says “I do not want trouble, so I usually ripen during harvest seasons.”

It means let people know that you are without violence. In other words, be an agent of peace.

Ebony is a kind of plant found in the Dagaaba setting, and its fruits are edible. It usually ripens between the months of November and December during which the people have already harvested their farm produce and food is in abundance. The ebony tree is in such a way that children easily fall from it and get dislocations and fractures when they climb to eat the fruits. This wellerism proverb is communicating that during this period there is always an abundance of food yet children want to eat the ebony fruits and when they fall down, they think the tree is wicked. As a result, the tree is making this utterance to mean that man should not accuse it of being wicked because it does not want trouble and that is why it ropes not when food is scarce. The wellerism is a compound sentence because two main clauses are joined by a conjunction. The first clause is, “*N ba boɔra yɛɛ.*” and the second clause is, “*N maɲ moɔna/berɛ bondirii saɲa.*” And the conjunction is “*lenso*” (so/therefore). The sentence also functions as a statement.

C. Complex sentence

Luri (2016) claims that a complex sentence has one independent clause and at least one dependent clauses, and it does not necessarily matter the length of the sentence.

We shall consider the following sentences in Dagaaba wellerism proverbs:

22. Nimiri yeli ka, “Suuri la maɲ iri ka N kyire nentaɲe ka noba nyɛrɛ.” The eye says, “It is anger that rises and I do shed tears and people see.”

This means that certain actions are taken because there are external forces. In other words, some decisions we see others take are triggered by some situations and not by their own will.

In this wellerism, we have **“Suuri la maŋ iri”** (It is anger who rises) as the independent clause. Whilst we have the dependent clauses as **“ka N kyire nentaŋe”** (I shed tears) **“ka noba nyere”** (people see) joined or introduced by **“ka”** as conjunction. In this sentence there is basically one independent clause and two dependent clauses.

The sentence functions as a declarative.

23. Kareŋmee yeli ka, “Ka neeŋ e ma, N na e o la.”

The kareŋmee; a type of bird, says, “If someone provokes me, I will provoke him.” This means tit for tat is a fair game. In other words, you hurt me, I hurt you.

This wellerism presents a structure with one dependent clause as **“Ka neeŋ e ma”** (If someone provokes me) and one independent clause as **“N na e o la.”** (I will provoke him). This sentence functions as a declarative statement.

24. Nimiri yeli ka, “N ba taa die ka saana na baŋ kpɛ be.”

The eye says, “I do not have a room that a stranger can enter there.”

It means any little inconvenience brings discomfort, and so desist accommodating people who can cause you any discomfort because personal peace and comfort matters a lot.

From the above wellerism there is also one independent clause which is, **“N ba taa die”** (I do not have a room) and a dependent clause being; **“ka saana na baŋ kpɛ be.”** (stranger can enter there). This sentence also functions as a declarative because it is in a form of statement.

4.3. Themes and Aesthetic Values of the Dagaaba Wellerism Proverbs

This section of the study discusses research question three and research objective three. That is, it discusses the themes under which the collected Dagaaba wellerism proverbs were categorized as well as the unveiling the aesthetic value(s) under each wellerism. Themes could be seen as the major ideas surrounding a particular thing, either art work or something else that has a communicative significance. “Theme is the major, dominant or central idea of a work of literature” (Agyekum 2013). Owing to this, this study presents wellerisms in which several of them could be found under a particular theme, even though their contexts of usage as individual wellerisms may slightly differ. It is also possible to find some wellerisms featuring in different themes based on their usage.

The context(s) in which a wellerism is used revolves around particular theme(s) or subject matter(s). In every wellerism, a particular subject matter is revealed. Thus, they present some main ideas or opinions of the human society to be precise. The Dagaaba wellerism proverbs are a “bank” in which several ideas are formed. These ideas are what we term as themes. No single wellerism is said to be without a subject matter or an idea.

Theme according to Agyekum (2013) is normally implicit and therefore gives room for many interpretations. He says a theme is not often so obvious and transparent. Theme is the centre, the moving force, the principle of unity. Agyekum further observes that most themes have didactic connotations meant to teach some moral or philosophical truth. Gideon & Kuehner (1999: 441) cited in Agyekum (2013: 113) view theme as an

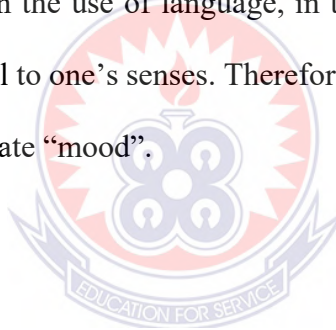
opinion statement suggesting an insight or general comment. This leads us to the thematic analysis of some selected Dagaaba wellerism proverbs.

On the other hand, (www.philosophicalociety.com/aesthetics retrieved on 21/01/2013) cited in Umar (2014: 11) identifies aesthetics as a branch of literature which deals with the nature of art, beauty and taste, with the creation and appreciation of beauty. It is more scientifically defined as the study of sensory or sensory-emotional values, sometimes called judgements of sentiment and taste. More broadly, scholars in the field define aesthetics as critical reflection on art, nature and culture. Aesthetics has come to be used to designate, among other things, a kind of object, judgement, attitude, experience and value. Süzen (2020) also notes that the Greek word 'aisthetikos' means 'to hear' or 'to detect' a good sense of beauty, which refers to the perception of aesthetics. 'Aesthetics' is a branch of literature that examines the nature of beauty and the arts. In other words, aesthetics deals beauty of a subject, such as good, ugly, nice, great or tragic. Süzen explains beauty as an aesthetic concept, usually of an artistic object, shape, colour, sound, design or rhythm, such as sensory and perceptual experience manifestations of the human mind.

In this sense, aesthetics is based on the beauty and taste, used for objects, certain judgements, attitudes, values among others. We can say that aesthetics examines the beauty of those things, especially art works which can be seen, experienced, understood or perceived as either being good, ugly, great, nice or tragic. This "beauty" in question can vastly also revolve around the appearance of those art works to include; the sound or rhythm, shape, colour or even the design. Based on this view, we cannot exclude one of our most "prestigious" elements of experience which is literary work when we are talking about aesthetics. This is because there is so much beauty and taste in literature.

The way literary works appeal to our senses (emotionally or psychologically) can be described as beautiful, ugly, tragic or great. Literature is a broad subject encompassing a vast element of beauty and its impact on man cannot be underemphasized. In this part of the study, the aesthetic features to be unravelled would be some figures of speech (literary devices) such as imagery, sarcasm, metaphor, simile among others found in the collected Dagaaba wellerism proverbs. These devices play an important role as far as beauty is concerned. They appeal to our senses and offer us some kind of pleasure.

Also, humour, as tool for creating jokes and laughter in the use of language is associated with some of these wellerisms based on their contexts of usage. It is therefore regarded as part of aesthetics. To add to that, “mood”, even though not a literary device, it has some aesthetic function in the use of language, in the sense that the use of “tone” in expression can also appeal to one’s senses. Therefore, it is also pointed out, as some of the wellerisms communicate “mood”.



Theme of hard work

Under this theme we look at some collected Dagaaba wellerism proverbs which revolve around hard work. Apparently, the Dagaaba are hardworking people and every home aspires to succeed in whichever work that keeps the family moving. The people are basically peasant farmers and some engage in petty trade. Even those who are presently in the educated working class hail from homes which were or are into farming. Every youngster is taught the way to success which is hard work, and any attempt to harbour laziness will not be tolerated by the family. It is obvious that anyone who works hard will always excel. In view of this, below are some of those wellerisms that talk about hard work.

25. Nɔnyaŋ-peraaa yeli ka, “N na pere la læ te unni n saakoŋkoremɔ kɔbɔ
The hen says, “I will scatter the soil until I unearth my great-grand parents’
bones.”

It means work hard until you achieve your goal. In other words, the achievement of one’s target is found in his/her hard work.

In the Dagaaba society, they discourage laziness and promoting hard work. Lazy people are ridiculed, and aims are achieved through determination and hard work. In this wellerism, the attitude of the hen is perseverance. It will be scattering soil until it finally achieves the goal of finding some food to eat or creating a pothole to relax in the soil. This has made the people to attribute this proverb to the hen because its attitude is a sign of hard work. This wellerism is therefore used in a situation when one wants to admonish others or even himself or herself to work harder in order to get what they desire in life. This wellerism was employed by a caller on the radio station (Gangaa FM) to admonish all youth who are schooling including the researcher himself, to be steady and work hard toward their set goals. The caller indicated that the behaviour of the hen is worth emulating. The “*saakoŋkoremɔ kɔbɔ*” (great-grand parents’ bones) symbolizes the success or achievement one would have to strive persistently for.

The aesthetic value associated with this wellerism is humour. It is indeed humorous to hear the hen say that it will scatter the soil until it unearths its great-grand parents’ bones. Humour is a literary tool that creates laughter. According Agyekum (2013: 199), humour is used as a description of fun often realized in the enjoyments of *anecdotes*, *jokes*, *puns* and *riddles*. He notes that humour in language is culture dependent. The jokes usually presuppose a social bond.

26. Tekoleŋkuoraa yeli ka, “Kpaareŋ maŋ mii ka fo di boŋkãã.”

The woodpecker says, “The occiput gets sore before you eat fatty things.”

It means you suffer before you gain. In other words, “no food for the lazy man.” Enjoyment comes after one’s hard work.

Woodpecker is a type of bird with a sharp beak that usually pecks on dry woods and hits the wood with its beak in order to get worms there to eat. When it is hitting the dry tree or wood, it is presumed that the nape is going through some pains even before it can get the worms to eat. As earlier indicated, among the Dagaaba laziness is greatly snubbed and discouraged. They believe in hard work. They hold the idea that in order to get food on the table, you need to work hard. Therefore, this wellerism used contextually to communicate hard work, meaning before you enjoy, you must be ready to sweat. Like the wellerism (25), this very wellerism was used by another caller on the radio station (Gangaa FM) in line with hard work. The “*boṅkãã*”, which means fatty things, used in the wellerism symbolizes success, enjoyment or comfort.

The aesthetic quality that can be found in this wellerism is symbolism, where *mii* (sore) and *boṅkãã* (fatty things) symbolize hard work/toil and success/enjoyment respectively. Agyekum (2013: 82) claims that symbolism is a device that is prevalent in oral literature as much as written literature. He reveals that a symbol is a concrete or familiar object that is used in reference to, or as an explanation of an abstract idea, or as a less familiar object or event. It is a useful means of conveying certain important truths or lessons about human life and the problems of existence. We can also find metonymy as a device in this wellerism where *kpaare* (occiput) represents the whole body going through some bit of pain in the process of the hard work. The occiput therefore stands for part of a whole (the body).

According to Agyekum (2013: 186) metonymy is a “figure of speech which designates something by the name of something associated with it. It is the name of a thing substituted for another closely associated with it.” Metonymy deals with possession, using part for a whole or vice versa.

27. Naabo yeli ka, “Pennoo be la zageŋ.”

The cow says, “There is rest in the kraal.”

This means that rest comes after work.

When cattle are grazing on the pasture, they do not want go to rest until they go back to their pen in the evening. Even if they will take a break it will be extremely short. They are usually focused on feeding themselves until they return to their pen. “Zage” is the kraal/pen, which symbolizes home.

This wellerism is therefore used in the context of working and not lazing around or trying to relax thinking that there is much time ahead. By the time you realize the sun is setting, time is gone and you may not have worked enough or done the needful. It communicates that there is time for everything; time to work and a time to rest. Evening will soon come and you will rest in sleep. That notwithstanding, this wellerism can also be used in relation to any other work or activity either than farming, in order to remind others or oneself the need to endure.

The aesthetic qualities associated with this wellerism are imagery and symbolism. The image of the kraal which is the house or resting place of the cattle is quickly seen in the mind. The idea of rearing also creates an image in the mind. The Dagaaba were known for their rearing of livestock including cattle, until recently that most people lost their cattle and so it was common to find kraals in almost every environment of the Dagaaba

land. Furthermore, per the context in which the wellerism is applied, there is symbolism in the sense that the “Zage” (kraal/pen) which symbolizes home, and home is a place of rest after work. Also, the context of the wellerism symbolizes time and season which one have to do something.

28. Teɲɛ yeli ka, “Maa eɲ ba ba kyeɛɛ ma dayeni kyɛ saana n tenzɛɛ zu.”

The ground says, “As for me they do not hit me once to get my red layer.”

It means persistency is key in getting one’s desired job done.

Ideally, before you can get into the red layer of the ground you must dig consistently. To see the red layer of the ground means you have dug for some time and even with sweat. The ground is therefore making this proverbial saying that one needs persistence in order to see its red layer. This wellerism therefore communicates hard work or persistence. It is used to tell people of how persistent one must be in life. You keep pushing until you get what you want. It also communicates that if you are lazy you cannot achieve your aim.

This wellerism can be used to create jokes or fun even though it contains some undeniable fact that you cannot hit the ground just once and get the red layer. You will have to persistently do that. Therefore, the aesthetic value in this wellerism is humour. Agyekum (2013: 199) says that in humour “the joker and audience draw freely on stock of common knowledge involving a shared history, a familiar pattern of daily life, topical issue and popular assumptions and attitudes.”

Theme of mistrust

Mistrust is yet another theme under which wellerisms proverbs can revolve around. Mistrust in this sense is the act of having doubt and suspicion about someone or something. In every society, there is an element of mistrust for some people due to one or two reasons. People who cannot trust you would never entrust anything important in you, lest you disappoint them. When one loses confidence in you it means they have some mistrust against you. Below are some Dagaaba wellerisms showing mistrust.

29. Gonda yeli ka “N daŋ koŋ gaŋ nensaala poŋ ka o wa saa n zu.”

The pawpaw fruit says, “I will never stay in human being’s stomach so that he will spoil my head/name.”

It means never put your trust in man; he can let you down.

More often, when you eat pawpaw your faeces comes out having the same colour yellow like the fruit itself that was consumed. It is assumed that since the pawpaw has no trust in man that is why it comes out bearing the exact colour of the fruit instead of changing after digestion. The context in which this wellerism was used is at a funeral when a young man asked his friend to come and perch with him on a chair he sat on, then his friend humorously employed this proverb to tell his friend that he does not trust him because he can announce to people that he has helped him with a seat to sit when he could equally search for one. This proverb was used in the context of the two friends who know each other very well and are play mates. This proverb triggered laughter/joke among people who were around.

The aesthetic qualities of the above wellerism are humour and imagery. To some extent it sounds funny and hilarious for the pawpaw fruit to think and say that staying in man’s

stomach will bring some sort of disgrace or tarnishing of image upon it, and that is the humour created. Imagery can also be drawn from the wellerism as a mental picture is being painted about the colour of the pawpaw fruit and how it is eaten and how its by-product appears. One could perceive everything with a mental picture.

“One way by which oral and written literatures are united is in the way in which they employ words to paint mental pictures that appeal to our feelings and our understanding” (Agyekum 2013: 81).

30. Kugbe yeli ka, “Teere kye koŋ yeli zuɪŋ la ka n poɔ pi daŋ ba taa baaroo.”

The coconut says, “Thinking but will never talk is the reason why my stomach is big forever.”

This means trust no man with your plans, they can expose you.

The shape of the cocoanut is bulky, and it is believed that its own thoughts and plans are piled inside because it has refused to share it with someone. It therefore communicates that due to mistrust in society some people do not want others to hear what plans or thoughts they have. It is used in a context when you want to communicate that man is not trustworthy and so be careful especially with your personal issues.

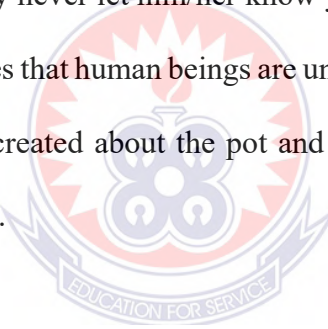
Clearly in this wellerism we can equally deduce imagery as an aesthetic feature. That is, the picture of the shape and size of the coconut is being painted in the mind. One’s mind will quickly go to how the cocoanut looks like and link it with the utterance.

31. Gyelee yeli ka, “Nensaala ba taa bambaabroo zuɪŋ la ka N waa yuori kye ba taa noore”

The egg says, “It is because of the unpredictable nature of man that is why I am a pot but without a mouth.”

This wellerism also means do not put so much trust in man with matters concerning your life.

The egg has almost the same shape like the earthen pot that the Dagaaba used to store water, pito and other things. The egg knows that being of the same shape and having similar watery substance like the pot if it were having mouth, human being would quickly consume the substance it contains and still use it to store other things in the house, so the egg refused to have mouth due to the mistrust it has for man because man can easily destroy it. In context, this wellerism is also used to tell people that if you do not have trust in somebody never let him/her know your secrets else he/she may make you regret. It communicates that human beings are unpredictable. Closely linked to that, there is a mental picture created about the pot and that of the egg, and this calls for imagery as aesthetic value.



In the above wellerism proverb, the aesthetic feature associated with it is metaphor. The metaphorical statement made here is when the egg refers to itself as being *yuori* (pot). Metaphor concerns comparing two different things or objects by direct reference, where one comes to be the other by comparison. For instance, a tree being a house is a metaphor.

32. Baa yeli ka, “Nensaala ba taa bambaaroo lenso ka N maŋ gere niŋe kye gere puori.”

The dog says, “Human being is not predictable that is why I move forth and back.”

Again, this means trust no man because man is unpredictable.

The dog by nature is fond of going forth and back when it is following its owner. The dog therefore makes this witty utterance because whilst following its owner, the owner can decide to chase it back home depending on the journey he is embarking, and so it programmes its mind, having a “plan B.” The back and forth movement here means that it is ready for anything whether going back home or moving forward. On the other hand, the dog is saying this because when man wants to kill a dog, he uses total persuasion so that it does not escape. In this context the dog during the persuasion sometimes goes forth and back due to the mistrust it has for man.

This communicates that man can disappoint, and so always get prepared.

Disappointment is part of the life’s process. This wellerism was employed by one of the dirge singers at the funeral ground when a group was on stage singing dirges. He used it in the context that the deceased family should note that the death of their child was not ordinary or natural, someone close to them might have been responsible, and so they should be watchful and trust no one, knowing that similar thing may occur in their family again. It can also be used in the context when you want to tell someone to always plan ahead in life because disappointment from men is certain.

In the Dagaaba funeral performances proverbs are infused and commonly used in dirges. This affirms the assertion of Kyiileyang (2008: 9) that “Proverbs are common in musical language especially in the singing of dirges. Dirges themselves are proverbial in nature and their use on funeral occasions even doubles the proverbial impact in the context in which they are used.” The aesthetic value in this wellerism is the use of humour, where it sounds very funny to hear the dog hold a view that human beings are not trustworthy or cannot be predicted and that is the more reason why it is

fond of moving forth and back when following man. It presents truth about life, in that no one can fully rely on his fellow man because man is not perfect and can disappoint at times.

33. Soɔŋaa yeli ka, “Ka maan na kaa baa kyũũ, n zu na kpɛ la ðɔ.”
The rabbit says, “If I should keep on looking at the dog, my head will enter the “smoker” (grill).”

This means flee from people you know can harm you. In other words, have nothing to do with people who pretend to be friendly because you may not survive in their hands.

The dog and the rabbit are enemies; the dog runs to kill the rabbit upon seeing it. And so the rabbit naturally runs away without looking back when it senses the presence of the dog at any given time just to save its own life. No matter how friendly the dog may appear, the rabbit cannot trust it. The “ðɔ” (“smoker”) stands for the death of the rabbit. The “ðɔ” is a local grill; it is a clay pot perforated with holes all around that is used in smoking meat, and so the “smoker” is used in the wellerism to mean death. Another dirge singer on the same stage at the funeral of a child used this wellerism to communicate to the bereaved family that they should not entertain those whom they know are already pretending to love them, otherwise the enemy will strike again. The Dagaaba believe that anyone who dies whether young or old, there is a cause and so whilst singing dirges, the singers utter words of caution to the public especially the bereaved family. It can also be employed in a context when you want to caution someone about whom they take for granted can turn to harm them.

Here we can unravel symbolism as the figure of speech is the aesthetic feature associated with the wellerism stated above where ðɔ (“smoker”) symbolizes death for the rabbit. The dirge singer infused this wellerism and the ðɔ (“smoker”) stands for

death. Also, the *ɔɔ* (“smoker”) is used to conceal death which is an unpleasant thing. Therefore, it is a euphemistic expression. Euphemism is “used to conceal the nature of things when an unpleasant fact has to be stated. Say something unpalatable in a nice manner” (Darmani, 2011: 11).

Theme of gratitude/appreciation

To show gratitude means to appreciate someone for doing something positive for you. No one would ever offer another person a helping hand and does not expect the beneficiary to say thank you. It will be ridiculous that after someone has sacrificed for you in one way or another then you walk away without showing gratitude. Among the Dagaaba, when you are given a helping hand or offered any favours it is expected of you to show appreciation. Therefore, wellerism proverbs that concern gratitude or appreciation are discussed below.

34. Naabo yeli ka, “N koŋ baŋ puori baa.”

The cow says, “I cannot thank the stream.”

It means a heart of gratitude. In other words, be appreciative to your source of support or provision.

The cattle after grazing go to drink water at the stream each day. This shows that the cattle depend on the stream for water and so the cow is uttering this proverbial statement to show its deepest gratitude or appreciation to the stream as a source of provision. The “*baa*” is the stream. It is good to always recognize one’s source of support. The cow makes this utterance to mean that it will always depend on the stream for water and no amount of words can best appreciate the stream. It communicates one’s dependency on others and also tells how grateful the beneficiary is. Whilst observing the

communication that went on at the funeral ground, a group of people who were offered pito (a main drink among the Dagaaba) by the deceased family after drinking thanked them for the reception. One of them employed this proverb to show gratitude. Again, this same proverb was employed by a woman at the “*Bɔɔre*” festival in Veveri who was thanking a young man whom she claimed was always at her aid anytime she was sick and cannot go to the hospital by herself. This means that the wellerism used in the context when one gets help or assistance from another person, not necessarily food alone.

The aesthetic value that can be found in this wellerism is antiphrasis. That is, saying ‘thank you’ or appreciating the stream is rather literally framed as “*N koŋ baŋ puori baa*” (I cannot thank the stream). What is actually meant by this statement is the opposite, which connotes a heart of profound appreciation or gratitude. “Antiphrasis is the rhetorical device of saying the opposite of what is actually meant in such a way that it is obvious what the true intention is” (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiphrasis>, retrieved on 06/07/2022).

35. Naabo yeli ka, “*N koŋ baŋ puori seelaa.*”

The cow says, “I cannot thank the salt lick.”

Similarly to wellerism 34, this particular wellerism also means a heart of gratitude or thanksgiving.

The cow saying literally that it cannot thank the salt lick rather means words are not enough to appreciate the salt lick. This shows dependency. Salt lick is a place where salt forms on the surface of the ground and where animals go to lick it up. It is typically grey, and mostly found around the streams’ side where cattle usually go to lick after

drinking water from the stream. This proverb is equally employed to show appreciation and more importantly acknowledge one's source of support or help. It is also used in a context if you want to tell your helper that you will always depend or rely on him/her.

The same antiphrasis is found in this wellerism proverb. The statement, "*N koŋ baŋ puori seɛlaa*" (I cannot thank the salt lick) is the direct opposite from its intended meaning. It is meant to show appreciation or gratitude to one's source of provision.

36. Nɔɔ yeli, "N koŋ baŋ puori tampuori."

The hen says, "I cannot thank the midden."

This wellerism also means be thankful to the one who helps you.

A midden is where rubbish is heaped. Among the Dagaaba, middens or rubbish dumps are usually found a few distance away from the house. The continual dumping of rubbish makes a heap/midden, and hens usually feed on the food particles thrown there. They are also fond of dusting the soil of the midden for fun especially in the mornings and evenings. The hen does this almost every day. This proverb is used in the context when you are conscious of your dependency on someone or that the source of your help is from another person. Whilst you say 'thank you' to the person after a few favours, this wellerism can be used to acknowledge that you will always need the person's help. Even using this proverb alone without saying 'thank you' to the person is an indication of your appreciative heart. Dagaaba people believe that the more appreciative you are, the more favours and supports you get. In this case wellerisms 34, 35 and 36 bear the same connotation and apply in same context and achieve same purpose.

Just like wellerisms 34 and 35 carry antiphrasis as aesthetic attribute, this wellerism equally possesses antiphrasis because all of them are phrased the same way where

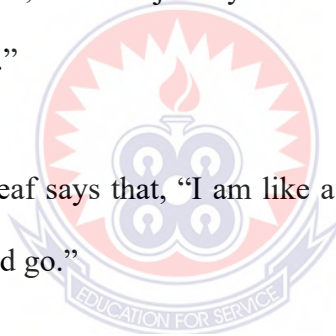
“N koŋ baŋ puori tampuori” (I cannot thank the midden) means thanksgiving in real interpretation.

Theme of tolerance

Tolerance is virtue that communicates endurance; having the ability to bear with someone or something that causes you pain or discomfort. Tolerance plays a very vital role in society, and for that matter among the Dagaaba. The inability to let go of certain offense often triggers retaliation, leading to unhealthy relationships. People who are tolerant are peace makers.

37. Sobiri vaa yeli ka, “N waa ŋa bikyɛnaa kuori ka neɛ maŋ wa uori ka nyɛ wa uori kyɛ te gere.”

The road side leaf says that, “I am like a toddler’s funeral where everyone comes to cry and go.”



This means people can maltreat you yet you accommodate them.

In most areas in the Dagaaba society, the death of a toddler is not mourned like that of an adult. They mostly spend very few hours mourning at such funerals. In this perspective, the toddler’s funeral is not taken so serious; mourners do not spend much time at the ground. People who come to mourn have the habit of going away after spending few minutes. This seems unfair to the toddler. The plant by the road (path) which has leaves is treated unfairly in the sense that when people are passing especially a path leading to a farm, they unconsciously pluck the leaves and begin playing with it or even put it in the mouth just for fun. The leaf is therefore making this witty utterance that it is not treated fairly like other plants’ leaves that are not right by the road, and so

this is likened to or compared with that of the toddler's death. This wellerism is used in a context where one wants to talk about how he/she is being under rated, disregarded or maltreated yet he/she bears it. It is used to show how tolerant one is, irrespective of certain unfair treatment by others in society.

The aesthetic attributes in this wellerism are simile and mood. The leave compares itself with the toddler's funeral using the expression "ηa" (like). It sounds interesting for a leave to liken its treatment to that of the toddler's, and this is simile. Also, we can draw mood in the expression of this wellerism. "A mood is a feeling that can refer to the emotional state of mind of a person/character or the atmosphere of a story. In literature, mood is communicated subtly through the use of imagery, conflict, etc.; and explicitly through omniscient narration or dialogue" ([https:// www. stadiobinder.com](https://www.stadiobinder.com), 08/08/2021). The manner in which the wellerism is being expressed triggers some amount of feelings that sound unfortunate and pathetic for the fact that something is being maltreated.

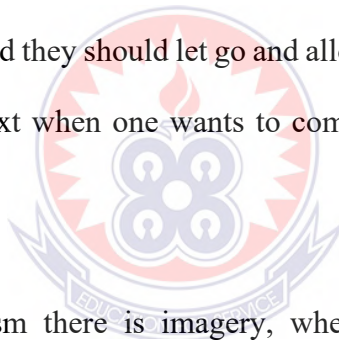
38. Dmanzeε yeli ka, "Samane biiri ba gbeεε taa."

The red dove says, "Neighbours do not stare at each other."

It means be tolerant or bear with people around you. In other words, do not engage in conflicts rather be tolerant.

The "ηmanzeε" is a kind of non-domestic bird (dove) commonly found in the Dagaaba land and they usually fly in pairs, mostly male and female. They can also move in a relatively large group. To *stare* at someone as seen in the wellerism means to look angrily or sternly at someone. This kind of bird therefore says that neighbours should not engage in such acts. That means you need to be tolerant with people around you.

This wellerism was used by a dirge singer when he was trying to tell the bereaved family members that they should not react negatively even if they later discover that someone is responsible for the death of their beloved one, so that it will not lead to further deaths. In his speech he said; “...*kɛɛ wa ny’a kyɛ yɛn tɔɔ derɛ tammo, yɛ e zomm lɛ kyɛ kaara Dmen eebo....yɛ na e la lɛ ka kũũ wolle ko...*” (...if you see it but do not pick up the bow, be quiet and watch God’s action...else you will do that and it will cause mysterious deaths...). Which means the bereaved family should be tolerant and not retaliate which may cause deaths again. The “*tammo*” (bow) used here symbolizes revenge. Among the Dagaaba, if they were going for war in those days it was bow and arrow they would use to face or pursue their enemies. So in this context when the dirge singer admonished them not to pick up the bow he simply means they should not revenge, instead they should let go and allow God himself to take the course. It is also used in a context when one wants to communicate that people should live peacefully with others.



From the above wellerism there is imagery, where the act of “staring” at one’s neighbour is being pictured in the mind. Again, the word “*gbeɛle*” (to stare at...) in context signifies revenge or intolerance as seen in the statement of the dirge singer. So therefore we can also find symbolism in the same wellerism.

The situations in which these wellerisms were used, in the social context, (pragmatic perspective) helped in their interpretation. In the Relevance Theory where pragmatics plays a key role (a Pragmatic Approach (PA) to the use and interpretation of proverbs, these wellerisms used at the funerals and other settings were decoded based on the contexts of usage. The pragmatic approach deals with how thoughts are communicated from one person to another. This affirms the basis of RT (the main assumption of the

theory) that, “human beings are endowed with a biologically rooted ability to maximize the relevance of incoming stimuli (including linguistic utterances and other communicative behaviors)” (Yus (2006:1). It is concerned with the fact that by the use of encoding and decoding, listeners receive the message from the speaker and interpret it to arrive at an intended meaning conceived by the speaker.

That is why in RT, according to Wilson (1994: 44) cited in Yus (2006: 2) the basic claim, summarized in four statements are: (a) the decoded meaning of the sentence is compatible with a number of different interpretations in the same context; (b) these interpretations are graded in terms of accessibility; (c) hearers rely on a powerful criterion when selecting the most appropriate interpretation; and (d) this criterion makes it possible to select one interpretation among the range of possible interpretations, to the extent that when a first interpretation is considered a candidate matching the intended interpretation, the hearer will stop at this point. Every wellerism proverb has its appropriate context(s) in which it is used and any interpretation outside the context(s) will mean that the intended message that the speaker tries to communicate will not be achieved. On the other hand, if the meaning of the wellerism goes in line with the message that the encoder tries to send, communication would be effective. One paramount thing to note about proverbs is that, they occur in communication and not just used in isolation, and every wellerism has its role in communication based on context.

39. Gbeel-kuuri yeli ka “nensaalaba maŋ neɛ ma la, kye ka zie nyaa ka N naŋ waa ba naa.”

The round stone says, “Human beings trample on me and the next day I become their king.”

This wellerism proverb means the people who disrespect or disregard you today will come back to you in the future when they need help, and you cannot say no to them because you are a source of hope.

The “*Gbeel-kuuri*” is a smooth-like round stone commonly used as a idol and worshipped by the traditional believers among the Dagaaba. One can easily find these stones even on farmyards and since they are common, people trample on them. These same stones are carried to the house to be used as idols. The stone makes this utterance that it is a “king” to humans because they rely on it as a medium through which their prayers get to the Supreme Being.

This act of the human beings trampling on the stone is synonymous to disrespect, yet the stone accepts it and meet their needs in hard times. This is therefore a sign of tolerance. This wellerism is used in a context when one wants to communicate that regardless of all the ill treatments from other people, he/she will not hesitate to help them when they ask for. In other words, it communicates that every problem solver will always encounter even the bad side of people.

In this wellerism, the aesthetic value associated with it is humour where it creates some fun or jokes as the smooth stone sees itself as a king to human beings. Closely related to this, the same wellerism can be employed in sarcastic manner where there is some amount of intention to mock or hurt one with such statement. Therefore, we can find sarcasm as one of the aesthetic qualities. Sarcasm is the use of words in a humorous way to mock someone or something. The “*gbeele*” smooth stone is mocking the human being for always turning to depend on it in terms of trouble whilst initially behaves like he can be without the smooth stone.

40. Dɔ-tee yeli ka, “N eɛ ba bondirii, ba daa, kyɛ naŋ kyɛnɛ e ba zoma bone.”

The dawadawa tree says, “I am their food, their wood and yet I am an object of insult.”

It means upon all your kindness and usefulness to some people, they still insult and downgrade you.

Dawadawa is a common tree in the homeland of the Dagaaba which bears fruits. The fruits are eaten by the people. They also cut the dry branches for firewood among others, yet they use its back which is usually very rough as an insult on people. That is, one can insult a fellow human being likening him to that of the back of the dawadawa tree which is rough. The dawadawa therefore says upon all that it provides for mankind, it is being insulted as having a rough body. This is common in human society where people insult others, comparing them with other things or objects around them. Also, no matter how good one is to people, you can be insulted by same people. This wellerism proverb is used in a situation where one wants to claim he/she is being good or a source of survival to people yet they do not regard him.

Sarcasm is the aesthetic attribute that can be drawn from this wellerism as seen in its context of usage. The dawadawa feels that it is a source of survival to man but at times is disrespected. A satirical statement is intended to ridicule or cause pain.

Theme of courage and bravery

To be brave means to remain confident and not being afraid of anybody or anything that appears unfriendly. Bravery makes people lose sight of the dangers or consequences of some unfriendly situations. Bravery can cause one to indulge in evil

acts. On the other hand, it can trigger a positive change in someone's life. Some wellerism proverbs concerning this theme are discussed below.

41. Langberee danmaa yeli ka, "Maa ej waa la n tekpele danmaa, azuiŋ N ba zoro soɔ ka lare."

The "langberee" log says, "I am a strong log, I fear neither the cutlass nor the axe."

This means a strong person has nothing to fear.

"*Langberee*" is a type of plant with very hard wood, and it is quite difficult to cut it using either cutlass or axe though one can still cut it. Therefore, its log is saying that it fears neither the cutlass nor the axe because it has a hard body. This talks about bravery. It is used in a situation where one wants to boast about his physical strength and bravery which may not be entirely so as claimed by the person. It is used in an exaggerated form.

The aesthetic qualities which can be found in this wellerism are hyperbole and humour.

What the "*langberee*" is saying: "*I fear neither the cutlass nor axe*", is not entirely so because even though it has a hard body, they can still cut it down using the cutlass or axe. Therefore, there is an amount of exaggeration in this utterance. Hyperbole is "an exaggerated statement that cannot be taken literally, often used to create humour or emphasize a point" (Darmani, 2011:10). It can also be used to create humour among audiences pertaining to the social relationship that exists between the speaker and his audience. Also, the "soɔ" (cutlass) and "lare" (axe) used in the wellerism symbolize

something unfriendly; a situation or one's reactions. Therefore, symbolism can also be deduced as an aesthetic feature.

42. Piiri yeli ka, "Maa eɲ ɲmenaa ɲmɛ ma la ka N dare, azuiɲ N ba zoro ɲmenaa."

The rock says, "As for me, I am hardened by the scorching of the sun and therefore I do not fear the sun."

It means that one is used to whatever unpleasant situation he/she has endured for long, and so fears it no more.

The rock believes that it has endured the scorching of the sun for long and this has made it so hard and therefore it is not bothered about the sun anymore. The sun is used here as the unpleasant situations that one face in life whilst the "*dare*" (hardened) means that one is no longer bothered about the pains of the situation. It is humorous for the rock to say so because naturally the rock is hard and it is not the sun that causes it to be so. Similarly to wellerism 41, this is also employed in a situation when someone is talking about how he/she has being through some unpleasant situation, got used to it and therefore is not bothered or afraid of such situations any longer. Moreover, there is repetition; the word 'sun' is being repeated in both phrases of the same sentence. According to Agyekum (2013: 67), repetition is one of the most fundamental characteristic features of oral literature. It has both an aesthetic (beauty) and utilitarian (functional) value. He states that pertaining to aesthetic functions, repetition gives a certain emphasis to a point that need to be stressed.

Just like the preceding wellerism, this one also draws humour as an aesthetic attribute. Humour is created as it sounds hilarious for the rock to claim that it fears not the sun because it is hardened by the consistent scorching of the sun. Again, there is symbolism

because the “*ημεναα*” (sun) is interpreted as any consistent unpleasant experience that one have had.

43. Bodaa yeli ka, “N waa la tekpele danmaa, N ba zoro nyoge.”

The he-goat says, “I am a dry log, I fear no pains.”

The meaning of this wellerism is that no amount of hurt can distract one from achieving his/her target. In other words, if you are focused on getting what you desire, you do not consider the hurts/pain you may encounter from people.

When the he-goat is chasing the female ones to have sex with them, they become wild and tend to hit the he-goat very hard. However, this does not make the he-goat stop chasing, it continues until it finally achieves its aim of having sex with the female goats. The he-goat makes this statement to mean that pain does not matter to him because he has an aim to achieve. This communicates bravery. This wellerism was employed at “*Bɔɔre*” festival ground at Veveri in a situation where a man was joking with a certain married woman that he will ‘snatch’ her to his house and marry her. The woman also jokingly threatened him that her husband and his family would come after him with weapons precisely bows and arrows if he tries that. The man then used this wellerism to show that he fears no pain that will come on him because all he needs is a woman. Again, this wellerism proverb can also be used in a context when one is having any quarrel or fight with his/her colleague then he/she receives a threat from the colleague.

The aesthetic features which are related to this wellerism are metaphor and humour. The metaphor is drawn from the direct comparison of the he-goat with that of the log with the omission of the terms; *like, as, than*. On the other hand, the context of usage

of the same wellerism draws humor. People can laugh upon hearing the manner of expression of this wellerism proverb. It creates fun.

44. Naadere yeli ka, “N waa ŋa wɔɔ, ka fɔɔ tuori ma fo pare na sãã la yeŋe.”

The bull says, “I am like an elephant, if you face me your anus will be exposed.”

This wellerism also means a physically strong man or a giant person is a destroyer. In other words, if you face someone who is stronger than you, be sure of being disgraced or humiliated.

The bull is comparing himself with the elephant because the elephant is huge by nature. The bull is equally huge even though not as huge as the elephant. The elephant is a destroyer; even trees in the bush are not spared. The bull is therefore stating that he would not spare anyone who tempers with him just like the elephant does. Obviously, bulls can be wild at humans if tempered with, and that has called for this witty statement. This equally talks of bravery. This wellerism was uttered by the same man as in wellerism 43 to further affirm that he is ready to retaliate if anyone comes to temper with him because of a woman. This wellerism can also be employed in similar situation like in wellerism 43 if one faces his/her colleague with an unpleasant issue.

This wellerism contains simile as its aesthetic feature in the sense that the term, “*ŋa*” (like) is used to compare two different entities; bull and elephant. According to Darmani (2011: 10), simile is “a clearly-stated comparison between two different things. A simile uses words such as *like, as, than* in stating its comparison.

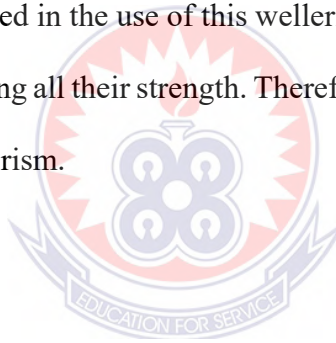
45. Pedaa yeli ka, “N kpeeɔ be la n seenj.”

The ram says, “My strength is in my waist.”

This means there is nothing to be afraid of once you know where your strength lies. In other words, being conscious of your strength or ability makes you courageous.

The rams usually headbutt each other. They move backwards and gather momentum and then hit each other with the heads. The ram therefore courageously utters that his strength is not from his head but rather comes from his waist. This proverbial utterance attributed to the ram communicates bravery. Therefore, it talks about one's source of strength or ability. This wellerism is used in a situation where one wants to refer to himself or another person as being a strong person who can champion issues and so there is no cause for alarm. It can also be used in the context of dependency.

A mental picture is painted in the use of this wellerism. Thus, it paints a picture about how the rams wrestle using all their strength. Therefore imagery is the aesthetic feature found in the above wellerism.



Theme of class

This theme presents wellerisms that talk about class. In human society everyone falls within one class or the other, rich or poor, able or disabled, literate or illiterate, black or white, political or non-political, civilian or non-civilian among other classes. Class shows difference, and everyone in his/her class lives accordingly. Below are some wellerism proverbs concerning the theme of class.

46. Kpããlee yeli ka “N Baŋ ka n ma ba e noɔ kyɛ n na tuuro o”

The keet says, “I know that the hen is not my mother but I follow it

It means do not treat privileges as entitlements. Consider or count it a privilege when people who are not of your class allow you to move or do things with them. This is repeated form of wellerism (20).

More often, it is the hen that hatches the keets. The guinea fowl lays the eggs and the eggs are given to the hen to hatch, and so the keets follow the hen together with the chickens to be nurtured. In view of this, the keet is conscious that the hen is not its biological mother yet the hen accommodates it. Since the keet's real mother is not available, it has no choice than to follow the hen for upbringing. This wellerism talks about difference. It is therefore applied in a context when somebody wants to communicate that the person or people he/she is found to be with are not his class, and it may have been triggered by some circumstance either desirable or undesirable. It can also be used sarcastically on someone who depends solely on another person who is probably not his/her relative.

The aesthetic value in this wellerism which can be identified is mood. There is some amount feeling of pity and distress (being an orphan) in the expression of this wellerism.

According to Darmani (2011), "mood" is when the content of a scene in form of literature is emotional and the description evokes a feeling of any kind that shows the mood of the content. It also describes the tone that is conveyed to the audience. Again, a mental picture is being created because one can see the picture of adoption around the keet which knows that the hen is not the real mother. No matter how long it takes the one who has no parents being adopted by somebody, he/she will definitely discover it and will be conscious of that all the time. Therefore, we can also find imagery in this wellerism.

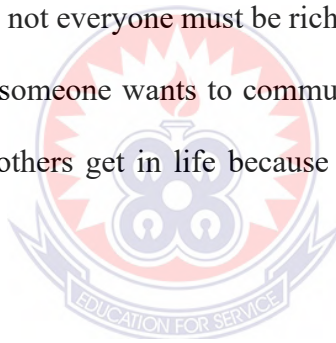
47. Kpãã-kponkpoli yeli ka "Noba zaa naane dire peε zu boma"

The featherless guinea fowl says, "It is not all people that eat food from the roof top."

This means do not compare yourself with others when you are not the same.

In other words, know your strength or ability and live accordingly.

Among the Dagaaba, it is common to find buildings with flat roof tops in almost every local home. They dry farm produce and many other things on the decking and fowls which have feathers can go up there to feed on the things. However, there are still other fowls that cannot afford to fly to the roof because they do not have feathers. This featherless guinea fowl, being conscious of its deformity and inability says that not everyone is qualified to eat food from the roof. This clearly talks about the difference between the weak and the strong, which concerns difference in terms of class. This wellerism proverb was employed by a dirge singer at Veveri. The man who infused this wellerism expressing that the woman died through her quest for material things or to amass wealth. Meanwhile not everyone must be rich or wealthy. This wellerism is also used in a situation when someone wants to communicate that they do not have what others have or get what others get in life because they are incapable due to certain challenges.



Symbolism is an aesthetic quality associated with this wellerism, where “*pee zu boma*” (food on the roof) can mean not only food but any achievement or desired goal. There is also an expression of mood because the physical challenge that the fowl is facing which is lack of feathers is making the expression emotional. The lack of feathers is making the fowl unable to reach to the roof top to also eat food there. Moreover, an image (a mental picture) is created on the fact that there exist some fowls lacking feathers.

48. Salema yeli ka, “Bonzaa naŋ baara e la bonvore.”

Gold says, “Anything that grows is a living thing.”

Be proud that you are part of the living irrespective of your background. In other words, every person belongs to the human society as long as we live.

Gold is something that is found beneath the earth and therefore is proud that it exists regardless of its location. This saying of gold is related to the human society where people need to recognize that every person is important and should be valued regardless of our backgrounds. The gold does not consider where it is found instead, what matters is that it is among the living things. This wellerism proverb is used in a context where people want to communicate that their background or appearance does not matter in anyway but rather, they count themselves as part of the society and more importantly the human class.

In this wellerism an image is being painted in the mind in relation to the ideas; “growth” and “living.” This communicates imagery.

49. Salema yeli ka, “Lanna dire ba wuli ka te e la bonyeni.”

Gold says, “Eating together does not mean that we are the same.”

This means that you must be aware of where you belong. In other words, respect people who are above you whilst you have the privilege to move with them.

It is imperative to state that even though we are all human beings, respect or honour must be accorded to those who are above us either by age or rank. If you have the opportunity to eat or do things with them, that should not guarantee any form of thinking or act that you are equal to them. It is just a privilege given to you. The gold again makes this utterance to the sand that if they are found to be mixed with the gold does not mean they are equal. The gold is pointing to the sand the disparity that exists

between them even though the sand is mixed with the gold. The gold shows that is more important and valuable than the sand whilst they are together. This wellerism was given by a caller on the radio station (Gangaa FM). The caller explained that it is used to achieve sarcasm; where one intends to hurt or insult another who is probably not equal to him but is found to be around him. One could also use it to indicate or acknowledge that he/she is only enjoying certain privileges but the source is above him/her.

The aesthetic feature associated with this wellerism is sarcasm because what the gold has said in some contexts could be meant to mock or cause hurt to the sand. The gold is claiming superiority over the sand. This is directly the same with humans in the society where difference in status can cause one to speak satirically to another. There is also humour because it can be appropriately employed by a speaker to induce fun among listeners. It sounds hilarious for the gold to say, “Eating together does not mean that we are the same.” This means difference in terms of status. Humour can be created among audience due to the social context in which the wellerism is used.

50. Kurikuri yeli ka, “Bataabo la so ka N gana N daga poo.”

The tortoise says, “I live in my coffin because I have nothing.”

It means live your life according to your means and not like others. In other words, if you are not well-to-do then avoid expensive or luxurious lifestyle because you cannot afford.

The tortoise sleeps in its shell even if it has no place to enter or hide itself. This is because it owns no place as a home so at any point in time it adjusts to coil inside its shell. Also, when the tortoise dies, it automatically buries itself in that shell which signifies its coffin. This wellerism is used in a situation where people may want to tell

others that they should live a simple lifestyle; according to their potential. We cannot all live like kings and queens. This wellerism can also be employed to mock or hurt someone in an attempt to tell him/her that they belong to the low class.

The aesthetic value of the above wellerism is based on imagery. The mental picture created in the utterance is seeing poverty, weakness and inability around someone. The tortoise knows it falls within the class of poverty so as soon as this wellerism is being used one can quickly imagine suffering and emptiness. A mental picture is also painted about the nature of the tortoise, that is, how it moves about in its shell or sometimes coils back in it. Darmani (2011) indicates that imagery concerns pictures created in the minds of the audience that appeal to the senses. Images are things or ideas that we hear, see or smell through the choice of words in literary works.

Theme of unity and solidarity

This section of the analysis concerns unity and solidarity. Solidarity is a bond of unity or agreement between individuals towards a common goal. In society the virtue of unison is highly crucial for progress and development. When people come together with a common aim and work towards it, they eventually emerge victorious. There are some wellerism proverbs that revolve around the theme of unity and solidarity, and some are presented below.

51. Nyiraa yeli ka, “Soŋ-zɛle la kpeɛo.”

The ant says, “Helping to lift is strength.”

This means unity is strength. In other words, it means united we stand, and divided we fall.

When one ant is trying to move anything away several other ants come to join in moving it and in the end they succeed with their agenda. This attitude of the ants is the basis of this particular wellerism. At a man's funeral at Da-uri, this wellerism was used in dirge singing when the singer was communicating to the deceased family to endeavour to be united, protect each other and move the family affairs in a positive direction as this will prevent sudden deaths in their family. The singer stressed that with unity no enemy can easily penetrate into their family to destroy. This wellerism is therefore used to tell individuals to come together as one toward the achievement of set goals.

The aesthetic feature in this wellerism is symbolism. The symbol of solidarity is the act of coming together in one accord to do something. So "soŋ-zele" (helping to lift) signifies unity and solidarity.

52. Balee yeli ka, "Nyɛ taa la gɔɔɔ."

The puppy says, "Meeting each other brings sleep."

This means unity leads to success or achievement of goal.

The puppies have the habit of sleeping together when one makes the attempt to go and lie down to sleep. This attitude of the puppies calls for this wellerism. Like indicated concerning the theme of unity and solidarity, people rarely fail when their hearts and mind are one and all work as expected. No group can attain a common goal without this virtue of collectivism and unison. This wellerism was also employed by another dirge at the funeral at Da-uri to admonish the deceased family to be united so as to succeed in every endeavour. It can also be used when two or more people want to call others to join hands to do something that brings success for all.

The aesthetic values associated with the fore mentioned wellerism are symbolism and imagery. The “*gɔ̃ɔ̃*” (sleep), even though it is usually found among humans and animals, the context in which it is used is seen beyond the normal sleeping. It could symbolically mean unity or oneness. The imagery is drawn from manner (how) the puppies gather together to sleep. As soon as one puppy attempts sleeping it attracts the rest to join. So this idea of sleeping together is an image and as one hears this wellerism the attitude of the puppies with come to mind. Di Yanni (2002: 703) cited in Agyekum (2013: 161) claims that “image is a concrete representation of a sense of impression, feeling, or idea.”

53. Baa yeli ka, “Baa le ka baa le la baa deene.”

The dog says, “Dog fall and dog fall is dog’s play.”

It means when people come together in unity it is easier reaching an aim. In other words, teamwork leads to success. It also means reciprocity.

Just as one person may not enjoy playing alone, the dogs which are fond of playing think that when they come together and each one falls to the ground after the other then they can have enough fun. However, if one dog falls to the ground and the other refuses to do same then they can never have fun. This is likened to the human society in that, when people come together with an aim of achieving a particular goal and there is no team spirit then they cannot succeed. The “*baa le ka baa le*” (dog fall and dog fall) signifies the team work and cooperation, whilst “*baa deene*” (dog’s play) is likened to the achievement of the set goal. Also, it communicates reciprocity among people; where people need to reciprocate good gestures and other good moral behaviours. This wellerism proverb is used in a situation when someone is calling others to cooperate and cultivate the spirit of team work so as reach a common goal. Again, it can be

employed in a context where one wants to say that a good gesture offered by someone needs to be reciprocated, which is geared towards building good relationship between people.

Repetition is the aesthetic quality identified in this wellerism proverb. The phrase/words repeated in the same sentence for clarity is/are “*baa le, ka baa le*” (*dog fall and dog fall*). Again, “*baa*” (dog) has been repeated three times in the same sentence.

“Repetition is employed in most cases to enact a feeling of excitement in the sense of utmost delight. It may also be an agitation of deepest anxiety and fear. Repetition of a keyword or phrase is used in a variety of settings to express the fullness of effect”

(Agyekum, 2013: 67-68). Saanchi (1992) cited in Sanortey (2013:125) stresses that “repetition in oral art does not necessarily mean lack of ideas but rather makes the oral art memorable.” Again, the idea of playing is pictured in the mind as soon as one hears or reads this wellerism, and so that is imagery. Furthermore, even though playing is real among dogs, in this wellerism the “*baa deene*” (dog’s play) is a symbol of unity. Therefore, we can also find symbolism in the wellerism above.

54. Kpaare yeli ka, “N yeli kyebe moɔboŋ” kyɛ onan maŋ dan ŋmɛ teŋɛ”

The occiput says, “I do not care about wrestling” but it is always the first to knock the ground.

This wellerism means behaving unconcernedly or uncooperatively can be detrimental to an individual who harbours such attitude even though it can affect others inclusive to some extent.

When one is wrestling with another and one falls, surely the occiput would touch the ground. Meanwhile, the occiput initially says it does not care because it is at the back and will not be hurt but when falling, it becomes the first to hit the ground and it affects it. This same attitude is found in human society where some people think their negative attitude toward a group will not have any detrimental effect on them but in the end they suffer it. This wellerism is therefore used to admonish people who behave carelessly about certain matters especially within a group. It is employed to tell people that when you unite and cooperate with others you get good results. Also, this wellerism can be applied to achieve humour in the sense that when one uses it people get laughing because it is humorous for the occiput to speak and act unconcerned but suffers in the end. Moreover, it is also used in a context when you have a child or relative who is going wayward or in the wrong direction and you decide to ignore instead of correcting him/her. However, when he/she eventually comes back with a problem or trouble you are compelled to address it because at this time you are the parent or guardian and you must act accordingly. In this situation the “*kpaare*” stands for the parent or guardian.

The aesthetic qualities found in this wellerism are humour and symbolism. Humour is created here because people get to laugh humorously upon imagining that the occiput suffers the consequences of being uncooperative in something after saying it does not care about it. Also, there is symbolism because “*kpaare*” (occiput) used in another context symbolizes a parent or guardian who initially becomes negligent at his ward’s waywardness but will have to come in when the ward causes trouble for himself. To add to that, “*moobo*” (wrestling) used in the wellerism is symbolic to any bad act one might engage in.

Theme of support

Support means to assist someone in doing something. Everyone has been supported before irrespective of their status or influence. Anyone who is in need certainly needs support or provision. To provide for someone's needs means to support them. However, it is left to the individual to assess him/herself as to whether they will be willing to support or not. People in society sometimes refuse to offer assistance to others due to diverse reasons. Below are some collected Dagaaba wellerism proverbs which talk about the theme of support.

55. Gaŋgaanaa yeli ka, “N maŋ lanne la tee ka o soŋ ma ka N meŋ nyɛ Naanmene.” The creeper says, “I usually lean on the tree to help me also see God.”

It means before you rise to the top someone definitely has to assist you. In other words your success is linked up to someone.

This wellerism is talking about dependency. The creeper is a type of creeping plant that grows and entangles around other plants, mostly trees and can grow to the top of the tree. It is mostly difficult for this creeper to be erect on its own as it grows. Thus, it leans on the tree in order to grow to the top. This plant (creeper) is saying that it usually leans on (entangles around) the tree so that it can see God. Seeing God as used in the wellerism is symbolic to success.

Before every individual will rise and become successful in life, he/she will definitely need the support of another person in one way or another. Everyone has a destiny helper; no one rises to the top without encountering a helper. Therefore, this wellerism proverb is employed in a situation where one wants to communicate that before you reach to the top someone must assist or help you. It is also used to tell someone that he/she is the reason why you are successful or have achieved some desired goal. This

very wellerism was used in a context when a woman asked her friend to support her with money to cater for some visitors at the Da-uri funeral ground. The woman used this wellerism proverb in communicating the fact everyone will need someone's assistance in life especially when you are very weak and incapable.

There is some emotional feeling (mood) arising from the expression of this wellerism in the sense that the *creeper* is incapable or handicapped and therefore usually draws its support from the tree. Closely linked to that, an image of weakness is created in the mind hence, imagery is found as an aesthetic attribute in the expression.

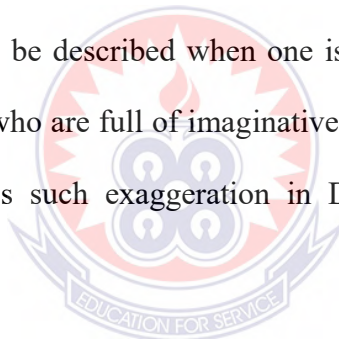
56. Lama yeli ka, “Tenee la maŋ tee yoore ka ba maŋ wa kyene ka o ye laara aŋa banweebaa.”

The testicles say, “It is we who always give support to the penis and when they are walking, it will be swinging like a hawk.”

This wellerism means you are a source of support to someone. In other words, someone has to depend on you to be able to do something.

The testicles are uttering that they are a support to the penis and that is why it dangles around when one is walking. Indirectly the testicles are pointing to the penis that without them the penis cannot swing. In our society there are people who solely depend on others for survival and without them, they may suffer. The testicles are found around the penis and as such they conclude they are there giving support to the penis. This wellerism is used in a context when you want to point out or remind another person that it is you that live to support them and without your existence things may go bad on their side. Again, one can use it to acknowledge that someone is behind his ability to do something.

The aesthetic attributes found in this wellerism expressed are; simile, sarcasm and hyperbole. With the simile, word “*like*” is used in comparing and describing how the testicles support the penis so that it swings like a hawk. The actions of the two are being compared. For the sarcasm, it is perceived from the context of usage; the expression of the wellerism can mock or hurt the one who leans on the speaker or another person for assistance or support. Sarcasm can best be realized considering the manner of expression and also the tone used in the expression of the statement. The hyperbole in this wellerism is drawn from fact the *testicles* have overstated (exaggerated) their function or purpose. It is not entirely a fact that the testicles are the ones that support the penis to behave the way it does. Also, the expression, “swinging like a hawk” is being exaggerated because the manner in which the hawk flies is far different from the behaviour of the penis to be described when one is walking. According to Sanortey (2013: 128) “oral artists who are full of imaginative exaggerations use them to satisfy their emotions.” There is such exaggeration in Dagaaba oral literature including proverbs.



57. *Zedogeele* yeli ka, “Maa la maŋ soŋ koro ka o meŋ maŋ tōo di diibu.”

The cooking pot says, “I am the one who helps the Tz storage pot to also eat food.”

This wellerism also means someone is a source of provision or supply to another person.

When one is your source of provision or supply in certain ways, it means the person supports you. The “*zedogeele*” (cooking pot) which is used to prepare food; among the Dagaaba mostly it is “*Tuozaafi*” (Tz), and when the Tz is prepared some is put in bowls for the household to eat while some is stored in a particular pot which contains sour

water, for the next day or two so that they can eat or serve any stranger that may visit the family. The cooking pot then says that it is the one that normally supplies the Tz storage pot with the Tz to eat. And without the cooking pot it simply means there would not have been any food for that particular pot used purposely for storing the Tz. This wellerism was employed by a dirge singer also at the funeral at Da-uri, in Jirapa. The man was very sarcastic in stating this wellerism because he infused it in his utterance that states, “*A zedogelee naŋ pãã ñmare a koro koŋ la di a saabo ka te nye...*?” (As the cooking pot has broken, won’t the Tz storage pot eat the Tz again then we see?). This means that now that the breadwinner is dead and gone his family will suffer. Even if the deceased was the pillar of the family and his death left them in utter grief, the use of this wellerism by the dirge singer was intended to cause the family to feel the loss of the deceased, so they could mourn more intensely. This wellerism proverb is used to talk about someone’s total dependency on another person.

The aesthetic values found in the above wellerism are sarcasm and imagery. The expression can be meant to mock or hurt someone especially the weak or poor. The imagery if derived from the mental picture about the idea of preparing Tz and storing it in the pot. This idea may be culture specific; the Dagaaba has it in their culture and it may not be the same in other cultures. So any Dagao can quickly grasp the picture of storing Tz in a pot that contains sour water upon hearing this wellerism uttered. The idea of support among the Dagaaba is yet another thing that comes to mind in the expression of this wellerism.

58. Kpegelaa yeli ka, “Maa la maŋ soŋ daŋaa ka noba maŋ tōo dogele boma o zu.”

The supporting stone says, “It is I that always help the hearth for people to cook on it.”

This wellerism means the ability of one to do something lies on another.

Hearth is the fireplace mostly built using stones or clay. Among the Dagaaba hearth of this nature is found in every local home, and that is where food is prepared for the household. More often, “*kusi-kpegele*” (supporting stones) are carefully place on the hearth for adjustments to that the cooking pot can be positioned very well on the hearth. These supporting stones are stating proverbially that they usually give assistance to the hearth so that man can cook food. This implies that the supporting stone is revealing is importance or relevance to the hearth and further to the human being who cooks on the hearth. This wellerism can be used metaphorically to refer to someone who is a source of help or support to other people. A dirge singer deployed this wellerism satirically in his speech that goes, “...*a kpegelaa naŋ pãã moremore wola ka a daŋaa na e tuo dog...?*” (...as the supporting stone has disappeared, how will the hearth carry the pot?). Which means as the deceased will no longer be present to help his family it will not be easy for them to perform their basic responsibilities as before. The “*kpegelaa*” (supporting stone) is used in this context referring to the breadwinner of the family, and the “*daŋaa*” (hearth) refers to the family. And now if the supporting stone is not there again, the hearth if not impossible, may have challenges carrying the cooking pot in a well-positioned manner. This wellerism is employed to tell people the significance of some people in society and the vacuum that they create when they are not there.

In the above wellerism we can identify are imagery and symbolism as the aesthetic attributes. In the Dagaaba culture, the idea of using a supporting stone to place on the hearth before placing any cooking pot on the hearth is very common. Therefore, this creates an image in the mind. On the other hand, there is symbolism in the wellerism per the context in which it was employed by the dirge singer. That is, the “*kpegelaa*”

(supporting stone) symbolizes a person whom others can lean on; a helper, a supporter or breadwinner of a household.

59. Toori yeli ka, “Maa la maŋ woŋ yeli ka suuri doono.”

The ear says, “It is me who hear information for anger to stir up.”

This means someone’s ability to function is dependent on another person.

Whenever the ear hears something undesirable it gives opportunity for temper to rise, even though the heart can sometimes get hurt and anger stirs up without the ear hearing anything. In that sense, the ear brags of its significance in causing the temper to rise upon hearing an unpleasing issue. This wellerism can be used in many contexts: (1) A person can use it to insult or hurt other people if he wants to mean that their ability to function lies on his shoulders, (2) When one wants to state that his/her violence or uncouth behaviour is usually caused by something or someone else and not himself/herself, and (3) When someone wants to acknowledge or recognize by respect, his/her source of strength or power to do certain things.

The aesthetic attribute of this wellerism proverb is imagery. The picture of how someone behaves when angry is being painted in the mind. Nevertheless, the stirring up of anger used in this wellerism does not necessarily mean so however, it symbolizes anything desirable or undesirable that one does with the support of another person. This identifies symbolism as an aesthetic attribute in the wellerism.

Theme of peace and harmony

This theme talks about how people ought to coexist or how some people advocate for peace in society. Peace is the absence of violence, and harmony is the act of relating

well or positively with others. The theme highlights on the fact that peace is a basic necessity for harmonious living or coexistence. It as well talks about the individual's personal peace. In view of this, some collected Dagaaba wellerism proverbs relating to peace and harmony are discussed below.

60. Gɔmateebo yeli ka, “Eɲ taa la veeloŋ.”

Chameleon says, “Respecting one another is beauty.”

This means reciprocating respect is a sign of peace. In other words, having respect for others is the best thing that brings peace.

When the chameleon is moving across a road and sees a human being passing, it expects that it should be given that due respect to pass first before the human being passes. This is because the human being can easily step on it and kill it or hurt it since the chameleon moves slowly. This is likened to human beings; we need to honour one another in all ways to enhance peace. If you do away with respect in society then violence will take over. Having respect for others means tolerating their difference. It is important to state that every person in one way or the other has a shortfall however, respect for one another will always overshadow some of these. Respect will always bring peace between parties who may have divergent opinions. This wellerism was used at the traditional marriage contraction at Kongkuo by the bride's step mother who was advising her to give respect to her husband and his family. She affirmed that outside respect there is nothing which leads to peace and harmony between couples. In this wellerism the word “*veeloŋ*” (beauty) signifies peace in the real context. Peace and beauty are different things but have been used as if they are synonymous. In the right context, it means respect leads to peace. Therefore, the aesthetic quality found in the wellerism is said to be symbolism.

61. Gaa tee yeli ka, “N naŋ ba boorɔ yelɛ la so ka N maŋ moɔna bondirii saŋa.”

The ebony tree says, “Because I do not want trouble that is why I usually ripen during harvest seasons.”

This wellerism is a repeated form of wellerism (21), of the compound structure, in the sentential analysis of Dagaaba wellerism proverbs. Ebony is a kind of plant (tree) found among the Dagaaba setting and its fruits are edible. It usually ripens between the months of November and December when the people have already harvested their farm produce and food is in abundance. The ebony tree is in such a way that children easily fall from it and get dislocations and fractures when they climb to eat the fruits. This wellerism proverb is communicating that during this period there is always an abundance of food yet children want to eat the ebony fruits and when they fall down, they think the tree is wicked towards them. As a result, the tree is making this utterance to mean that man should not accuse it of being wicked because it does not want trouble and that is why it ripens not when food is scarce. This wellerism is employed in a situation when someone wants to say that he or she does not want conflicts or any accusations that is why he/she is always making efforts to avoid it by minding his/her own business. It is used to say that one is an advocator of peace even when people do not see him as such.

In wellerism above, a mental picture about the season in which the ebony ripens in the Dagaaba setting is being painted. Also, the way children usually fall from the ebony tree and sustain bruises and fractures during such season is yet another image created. This means imagery is the aesthetic quality in the wellerism. Again, the act of avoiding problems or accusations is communicated symbolically using the time and season the ebony fruits get ripe. This also means we can find symbolism in the expression using context. Kyiileyang (2008) observes that the Dagaare (Dagara) proverbs are full of

imagery and simple and complex symbolic features and hearers or readers must understand the meanings of these proverbs through effort.

62. Taṇaa tee yeli ka, “N waa la womo soba, a le zuiṇ N zoree sasee.”

The shea tree says, “I am a person of fruits because of that I fear the wind.” It means prevent all kinds of problems, not only because of you but also your children or relatives.

Shea trees are very common in the Dagaaba homeland and they are economic trees because the nuts are used for shea butter which can be processed and used in many ways. The Dagaaba use the shea butter very often to cook and also prepare local soap including several other purposes. The shea tree makes the witty statement that because she has fruits, she fears the wind.

Certainly, when the shea tree has fruits and a heavy wind is blowing even the unripe fruits can fall off from the tree. Therefore, the wind is a threat to the peace of the shea tree and her fruits. Every mother wants to protect her children and for that matter preserve her lineage, and so the parents may be shying away from certain unpleasant issues not because they cannot withstand or face them but for the sake of their young ones who may suffer some mayhem. In this case the mother or parents try not to have any problem with others just to keep their young ones from any external harm. If you are found having issues with others your children may one day suffer the consequences. This wellerism is therefore employed in the context when somebody wants to say that he/she wants peace to reign for the sake his/her lineage or other people. In this context the “womo” (fruits) is symbolic to one’s children whilst the “sasee” (wind) is used in place of the trouble or problem that may come upon the children. Therefore, the aesthetic feature identified is symbolism. Also, the image of how the wind sometimes

blows and causes the shea fruits to fall down haphazardly is created in the mind hence, imagery is another aesthetic quality found.

63. Diebie yeli ka “dēε-kakale ba yaara toori kyeroo.”

The cat says “reckless play can easily wound or cut the ear.”

This wellerism means every seemingly reckless action can easily lead to problems.

The cats naturally do not play like the puppies in the house because the ears of the cat are very soft and can easily get wounded in the process of playing especially if one bites the ear just like the puppies do to each other when playing. Therefore, the cat runs away from such reckless play in order to prevent the ear from destruction because the ear may not be of the same form after been wounded. The “*toori kyeroo*” (ear destruction) symbolizes the problem that comes upon the one who may engage in the recklessness. This is employed in this context to run away from certain things that may seem jovial but have unpleasant ending, so that peace may reign.

The aesthetic value associated with this wellerism is symbolism because the “*toori kyeroo*” (ear destruction) symbolizes the problem that comes upon the one who may engage in the recklessness. Imagery is also found because the cat and its behaviour create a mental picture in the audience.

64. Gɔmateebo yeli ka, “Toloŋ toloŋ kyemmo taa la o yeɛ, ka zomm zomm kyemmo meŋ taa o yeɛ.”

The chameleon says, “Walking fast fast has its own affairs and walking slowly slowly too has its affairs.”

This wellerism proverb means be steady and gentle in all your dealings if you want peace.

The chameleon by nature walks slowly and gently except that there is danger pursuing it and it will have to double up its steps. But the meaning of this statement made by the chameleon is centered on its gentle nature; it moves gently because it does not want to be in haste and possibly encounter any problem. This has a reflection in the lives of some people in society where people want to rush in life and in the end may not even achieve what they were chasing but end up with problems. Again, the attitude of the chameleon being “gentle” is communicating peace. That is, if you are steady and gentle in dealing with your life’s issues and also with others around you there will always be peace. Being gentle toward others is a call for peace, but being harsh will always result in conflicts. This wellerism is used in situations where one wants to advocate that we should bear in mind that our peace lies in how steady and gentle we are in our own dealings and with others.

The aesthetic attribute of the above wellerism is repetition. The words “*Tolon*” (fast) and “*zomm*” (slow) are being repeated at the beginning of each phrase in the sentence expressed. This is done for emphasis.

65. Kɔremɔ yeli ka, “Pare ne kɔre ba kye tɔɔre.”

The partridge says, “*pare* and *kɔre*” are never far apart.”

This means prevention is better than cure.

“*Pare* and *kɔre*” are sounds. That is, these sounds *pare* and *kɔre* are used to describe respectively the way someone will release a stone from the catapult or sling and the way it hits the body of the partridge or any other bird to kill it. The “*pare*” sound is for the sling or catapult when a stone is released, while the “*kɔre*” sound comes from that of the way the stone hits the bird. It takes a split second for a stone to be released and

hit the bird or anything at all that is very close to the hunter. And so the partridge which wants to run away from death will quickly fly away upon hearing any sound of impending danger so as to have its peace of mind than to possibly be killed or hurt.

The flying away of the partridge is of course preventing problems for self-security.

Whilst we are coexisting, everyone's self-security and for that matter, personal peace is very important and must not be taken for granted. This then calls for consciousness in maintaining sanity. In view of that, this wellerism proverb is used to tell oneself or others that prevention is better than cure. For instance, if one encounters someone or something that seems troublesome, he/she can employ this wellerism proverb and move away. That is, running away for one's peace is the best option. It can also be used to forewarn somebody against the future problems of certain actions.

The aesthetic quality in this wellerism proverb is ideophone. The sounds *pare* and *kɔre* are ideophones describing respectively the manner in which the stone is released from a catapult or sling and hits the partridge or any other bird. Agyekum (2013: 77) points out that an ideophone is a vivid representation of an idea in sound. Ideophones are not like normal words to which meanings are readily assigned. They are simply sounds used in conveying vivid impressions. He maintains that ideophones are used to describe physical appearance and the force involved in an event. They are also used to express perception, feeling, emotions, intensity and duration of events.

66. Dmanzɛ yeli ka, "Samane biiri ba gbeɛɛ taa."

The red dove says, "Neighbours do not stare at each other."

It means live at peace with people around you regardless of your differences. In other words, tolerance brings peace.

This wellerism is a repeated form of wellerism 38 under different theme. As indicated, the “*ηmanzee*” is a kind of non-domestic bird (dove) commonly found in the Dagaaba land and they usually fly in pairs, mostly male and female. They can also move in a relatively large group. To *stare* at someone as seen in the wellerism means to look angrily or sternly at someone. This kind of bird therefore says that neighbours should not engage in such acts. Meaning, always be at peace with people around you.

We stated that this wellerism was employed by a dirge singer when he was trying to tell the bereaved family members that they should not react negatively even if they later discover that someone is responsible for the death of their beloved one, so that it will not lead to further deaths. In his speech he said; “...*kεε wa ny’a kye yen tɔɔ dere tammo, ye e zomm le kye kaara Dmen eebo....ye na e la le ka kũũ wolle ko...*” (...if you see it but do not pick up the bow, be quiet and watch God’s action...else you will do that and it will cause mysterious deaths...). Which means the bereaved family should not revenge by trying to deal with the enemy who may have stabbed them. This, he said would bring deaths again. The “*tammo*” (bow) used here symbolizes revenge.

Among the Dagaaba, if they were going for war in those days it was bow and arrow they would use to face or pursue their enemies. So in this context when the dirge singer admonished them not to pick up the bow he simply meant they should not revenge, instead they should let go and allow God to act. This wellerism was used in the context of advocating for peace and harmony.

In the above wellerism the aesthetic feature that is visible is imagery, where the idea of *staring* at someone is being sensed or perceived in the mind. Adding to that, the

“*gbele*” (stare) as used in the expression of the wellerism represents quarrel or fight or revenge in real context. This unveils symbolism as another aesthetic quality.

Theme of patience and endurance

Patience means long suffering; able to endure something. This also means taking time in doing something. This section discusses wellerism proverbs among the Dagaaba that concern patience and long suffering. This could be about the achievements of one’s dreams which involve endurance or persistence. It could also be about how one needs to endure an unfavourable condition or circumstance for a while and get out of it. Below are some wellerism proverbs discussed under this theme.

67. Boḡo yeli ka, “A be a wiri naḡ tara be ka N meḡ tara.”

The Donkey says, “Where the horse is arriving is where I am also arriving. This wellerism means be patient and move according to your strength for you will also get to wherever others are going to. In other words, do not compete with people who can go faster than you, take your time but you will also arrive.

Comparatively, the horse runs faster than the donkey. So if the donkey is on a race with the horse it would be difficult for the donkey to overtake the horse but certainly the donkey too will finish the race according to its strength and pace of movement. It means the donkey first of all knows that the horse can go faster and arrive before it because their strengths vary.

On the other hand, the donkey is certain that it will surely get to the very destination that the horse is getting to even though not at the same time. This finds a direct reflection in our society where people cannot have their dreams achieved at the same time with

others even if they all started at the same time. It is obvious that many people started school together with others but somehow, they are now left behind. Some have completed and even got jobs yet their colleagues are still reading courses which will aid the attainment of their dreams. In this situation, one can employ this very wellerism to mean that it does not matter the delay but what matters is that one day they will also get what they want.

At the Veveri “Boore” festival, while observing a discourse between a group of elderly people who gathered to drink *pito*, a man complained that it was getting late for him to go home yet he had no bike and would be walking home meanwhile others will later use bikes and get home before him. His colleague then used this wellerism to tell him that even if those with the bikes got home before him, he would surely also get home by foot. This means with patience one will surely get to where others are going even if not at the same time because of the difference in abilities.

There is repetition as the aesthetic feature in this wellerism in the sense that the words “*be*” (where) and “*tara*” (arriving) are repeated in the same line of expression. We can also find symbolic features, where “*Boŋo*” (donkey) symbolizes someone who is less advantageous in terms of strength or other possessions, while “*wiri*” (horse) symbolizes someone who is advantageous.

68. Kyee yeli ka, “N yelboɔraa eŋe ka saa maŋ poɔ ma.”

The squirrel says, “For the sake of my heart’s desire, the rain beats me.”

It means if you want to achieve your set goals be ready to pay the price. In other words, one’s dream is never achieved on a silver platter; there are obstacles or challenges on the way.

The squirrel is a kind of animal that destroys crops. During the rainy season the squirrels are common and they mostly go out to feed on the farms. Interestingly, they wait for the very hour that the rain is drizzling and humans are not around then they will smartly sneak out to feed on the produce. This is because they believe that most of the time they will be pursued when people see them, so they patiently wait and go in the rain when people are not around. In this situation the squirrel endures the rain in order to get what it really wants to eat. The rain signifies an obstacle or a challenge that the squirrel must endure. In the human society, before you achieve a goal, more often there is a price to pay, which may present some challenges you have to endure or overcome. This wellerism was used in relation to the ongoing communication that called for the usage of wellerism (67). The man who was to walk home employed this wellerism after his colleague, stating that his wife told him not to leave for the festival since he had no bike and walking was not the best. He therefore infused this wellerism, saying that he would be paying the price for his enjoyment at the feast by walking home and arriving late.

With the context in which this wellerism was used, the aesthetic quality uncovered is humour. It appears hilarious to hear the squirrel trying to sneak through the rain and eat what belongs to man. Using this wellerism in the appropriate context of communication mostly creates fun and laughter among the audience.

69. Tekoleŋkuoraa yeli ka, “Kpaareŋ maŋ mii ka fo di boŋkãã.”

The woodpecker says, “The nape gets sore before you eat fatty things.”

It means you suffer before you gain. In other words, nothing good comes easy or is achieved on a silver platter.

This wellerism is a repeated form of wellerism (26) under different theme. We highlighted that the woodpecker is a type of bird with a sharp beak that usually pecks on dry trees or woods and be hitting the tree or wood with its beak persistently in order to get warms there to eat. It mostly eventually creates a hole in the dry wood. The woodpecker hitting the dry tree or wood means going through some pains even before it can get the warms to eat. This is a form of long suffering because it is never done easily since the tree is dry and hard. Therefore, this wellerism is used contextually to talk about patience and endurance, meaning before you achieve your heart desire, you must be ready to sweat or go through some hard times by either waiting or working it out with persistence.

Symbolism is a dominant aesthetic attribute found in the above wellerism. The “*boŋkãã*”, which means fatty things, used in the wellerism symbolizes success, achievement, enjoyment or comfort and “*mii*” (sore) symbolizes the toil one has to go through before enjoying. Metonymy is another aesthetic quality discovered in this wellerism where *kpaare* (occiput) represents the whole body going through some toil in the process of the hard work. The occiput therefore stands for part of a whole (the body).

70. Bobilkpeebe yeli ka, “Maa ne n poɔ yuomo kɔɔ, kyɛ N meŋ daŋ na dɔgɛ
bie.”

The orphaned little goat says, “With my hundred years’ pregnancy, still I will also give birth someday.”

This wellerism means that no matter how one’s dreams tarry, you will still realize them one day. In other words, achieving one’s visions may take time however, it will surely come to pass.

The “*bobilkpeebe*” used here is a malnourished goat which gets pregnant. Usually this kind of goat goes through a lot of struggle before birth because carrying the pregnancy whilst being malnourished involves a lot of challenges. Upon all, this goat is hopeful that even with the suffering she is going through she will one day also deliver its kind just like any other goat does. This wellerism proverb is employed in a context when someone is struggling to achieve something that when others have had already or can achieve easily. It means going through a lot of ordeal can delay one from attaining something.

The aesthetic value in this wellerism is hyperbole, which is an expression being exaggerated. There is exaggeration because it is impossible for a goat to carry pregnancy for hundred years. However, the malnourished pregnant goat says it is taking her too long to deliver. There is also mood being expressed in this wellerism because the feeling of the suffering that the goat goes through before birth is communicated. Symbolism can also be found, which is the “*bobilkpeebe*” representing a weak person who wants to also achieve his/her dream.

The figures of speech (literary devices), and also other literary tools such as humour, mood etc., found in the wellerism proverbs have aesthetic quality because they offer some kind of pleasure to the audience (readers and listeners), even though the borders of aesthetics cannot be overemphasized. David Huron (2008) claims some philosophers perceive aesthetics as applying solely to the arts or to artistic experience, whilst others “construe” it as applying more broadly to beauty and ugliness in general. Huron however, argues that the most influential writer on aesthetics has been the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), who distinguished aesthetic pleasure from other forms of pleasures. That is, first and foremost, aesthetic pleasure is not some other

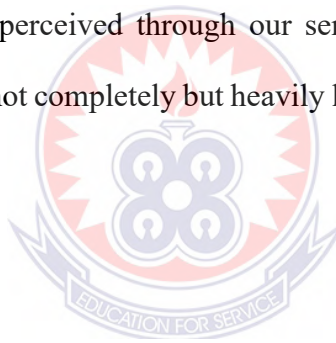
type of pleasure in disguise: for example, art is not the sublimation of food, sex, warmth, companionship, or some combination of other existing pleasures. Second, Kant, according to Huron, argues that aesthetic emotions are ‘disinterested’; when we experience an aesthetic pleasure, there are no utilitarian or ulterior motives underlying this experience. A mother’s appreciation of the beauty of her daughter cannot be regarded as a purely aesthetic appreciation, since her experience is apt to be tainted by parental pride. This means we must not overstate that every beauty or ugliness we see is having aesthetic value, and not all the pleasures we experience have aesthetic value.

That notwithstanding, Dorzie (2013: 114-115) affirms that “among the Dagaaba, one can see proverbs as an intellectually coined language; that carries some aesthetic and utilitarian values in it, used in a matured manner, upon an intelligent reflection, to express a deeper meaning about a general truth on an issue.” Therefore, the Dagaaba proverbs and for that matter wellerism proverbs, which are embedded with some stylistic qualities like literary devices among other literary tools like humour and mood offer pleasure to the audience.

The Dagaaba oral literature, like in any other culture, has beauty which does not exclude the literary devices. The proverbs give us pleasure and beauty. People who mostly and appropriately infuse proverbs in their speeches gain lots of attention and recognition in the society because they are seen as people who know the language very well. It is one thing to use proverbs, yet it is another thing to use them in the right contexts. And when proverbs are found to be falling in their appropriate contexts, they boost the level of attention and recognition from audience to the speaker. Therefore, it takes one who equally knows the language well to determine whether a speaker appropriately employs proverbs in his speeches or not. No proverb is without its context(s) of usage. As the

theory that underpins this study suggests, every speech is understood and relevant based on context. So, the relevance of a particular proverb is dependent on its rightful context of usage. Similarly, as Sanortey (2013:123) indicates, that “literary devices give a kind of beauty to songs.” Proverbs, and for that matter wellerisms equally give some kind of beauty to spoken language.

Young (2005) posits that aesthetics depends on observations about perception and how we know through our senses, and on reflections on the language that we use to talk about both art and our responses to it. Young argues that aesthetics reaches beyond art to nature and perhaps to the nuances a larger picture of sensory awareness. This means that the beauty and taste (pleasure) that we experience from any artistic work such as oral literature, is felt or perceived through our senses. This gives us hope that the aesthetics of proverbs, if not completely but heavily lies in the devices and literary tools they contain.



4.4 Findings

In this section we present the findings of the topic under study.

It was revealed that the main source of the Dagaaba wellerism proverbs is traced to the natural behaviours of animals and other creatures like the plants, streams, birds, reptiles among several others. Also, the study discovered that some human body parts are associated with some proverbial saying which are characteristic of wellerism among the Dagaaba. They are characterized by witty statements attributed to these creatures and quoted by humans. This makes them variants of proverbs. This affirms Williams (2007) assertion that, many of the quotations in those typically humorous sayings known in English as ‘wellerisms’ are proverbs. Finnegan (2012: 349) also affirms that

‘wellerism’ is a form that involves the use of quoted words attributed to some actual or fictional person, it is another device for giving point and sometimes authority to a proverbial saying.

Closely linked to that, the study presents that the Dagaaba wellerisms proverbs are characterized by (1) proverbial statements, (2) attributed to non-human entities (a speaker), and (3) quoted by humans in their communications. This confirms the observation by Litovkina & Mieder (2006: 20) cited in Unseth et al. (2017: 1) that a wellerism “is normally made up of three parts: 1) a statement (which often consists of a proverb or proverbial phrase); 2) a speaker who makes this remark; and [often] 3) a phrase that places the utterance into an unexpected, contrived situation.” With these basic characteristics, it was clear that among the Dagaaba, wellerisms are not proverbs attributed to humans, rather non-human creatures. Unlike this example of wellerism in English “*A soft answer turneth away wrath,*” as the man said when he hurled a squash at his enemy’s head (mieder– kingsbury, 1994) cited in Williams (2007: 176). This proverb stated is directly referenced to ‘man’, and such does not exist among the Dagaaba. Proverbs which can be attributed to certain individuals are said to be part of the general proverbs rather than wellerisms however, they are very rare among the Dagaaba. Wellerisms among most of the Dagaaba are known as *donne yelyelli* (animal sayings), not excluding the inanimate creatures like stones, trees, streams etc. That notwithstanding, maybe for lack of a better terminology, the study revealed that some Dagaare speakers refer to wellerisms as *boŋ-irri mine yelyelli*, which means “sayings of certain creatures.” The term includes both animate and inanimate creatures.

The study has shown that proverbs including wellerisms are prevalent in the Dagaaba funeral dirge. This is because the researcher collected many proverbs at funeral grounds including the dirges.

It is also observed in the study that the Dagaaba wellerisms have several structures including the sentential structure. They have simple, compound and complex sentences with their functions as; interrogatives, declaratives and imperatives. This confirms the claim of Yabang (1999: 2) that proverbs have several structures in the Dagaaba oral literature, to include; simple positive statements, direct statements, negative axioms, rhetorical questions among others. From the study, the Dagaaba wellerism proverbs are largely statements (declaratives) rather than the interrogatives and imperatives.

Also, the study found out that there are several themes under which wellerisms can be classified however, one can find wellerisms under more than one theme. This is because the contexts in which the wellerisms are used play a very vital role; contexts can influence the theme of proverbs. The wellerisms under the themes play similar roles in human society just like the general proverbs. They are used to warn, deter, advice, encourage, praise, appreciate among others. This juxtaposes the claim of Momoh (2000:361) cited in Kogri (2014:30) also maintains that proverbs are to the elders, a pedagogical instrument to educate the youth just as modern formal schooling system is an educational form for instructing the youth. Adding to that, the literary devices and other tools like humour, mood, etc., which are associated with the wellerisms discussed under themes were found to have aesthetic values. Audience draw pleasures from these literary devices and literary tools.

Just as Sanortey (2013:123) indicates that “literary devices give a kind of beauty to songs”, proverbs, and for that matter wellerisms also offer some kind of beauty to spoken and written language. It is important to bring to light that the study has confirmed that symbolism, imagery, metaphor and sarcasm are more prevalent in Dagaaba wellerisms. Humour, which is a tool used in oral literature is as well found to be common in the use of Dagaaba wellerisms. This juxtaposes the assertion of Kyiileyang (2008) that the Dagaare (Dagara) proverbs are full of imagery and simple and complex symbolic features and hearers or readers must understand the meanings of these proverbs through efforts.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0. Introduction

This chapter summarizes the study on the topic: “Thematic and Aesthetic Analysis of Dagaaba wellerisms.” It presents the key issues in the study, beginning from chapter one to chapter four. The final part of this chapter presents a concluding remark on the study and some recommendations to future researchers as far as this topic is concerned.

5.1. Summary

Chapter one (1) starts with the general introduction of this thesis and gives a forelook of each of the five chapters. In the chapter one a brief discussion about the speakers of Dagaare is dealt with. Thus, the geographical location of the Dagaaba is presented. We noted that Dagaare is the language of the Dagaaba. 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 (Bodomo 1997) cited in Dansieh (2008: 229). We also indicated that the speech varieties of Dagaare can be classified into four broad dialects of the language, known as Northern Dagaare, Central Dagaare, Southern Dagaare, and Western Dagaare (Bodomo, 2000). According to Dakubu (2005), the people around Nandom are corresponding to Dagara. The people around Lawra and Babile are corresponding to Birifor whilst those of Jirapa, Boo, Ullo, Karni, Sabuli and Daffiama are corresponding to Dagaare. Wa and its environs are corresponding to Waale. The Central dialect, which is mainly spoken in Jirapa and its environs, is heavily found in the language orthography, and that is what is used in this study. The problem statement, research objectives, questions as well as the purpose and significance of the study were all spelt out in this chapter.

Chapter two (2) deals with literature review; previous scholarly works that have bearing with the topic of this study. Scholars like Finnegan (2012), Awedoba (2000), Nsoh et al. (2010), Yabang (1980, 1999), Kyiileyang (2008), Süzen (2020), Huron (2008), Unseth et al. (2017), Williams (2007), Mieder (2004) and several others were reviewed. It first and foremost looked at what aesthetics is all about according to some scholars. We reviewed works of earlier researchers on general proverbs in Dagaare and other cultures, such as the concept and definition of proverb, the role of proverb as well as the authorship of proverb.

A brief analysis is also done on proverb usage in a pragmatic perspective. Several scholars argued that the source of proverb is traced to the collective wisdom of the community or society and to a greater extent, no single individual can claim ownership of these proverbs. Therefore, the use of proverb in the African society, and for that matter the Ghanaian context is referenced to the elders. Certain phrases are used to introduce proverbs in conversations so as to show decorum, especially when the youth are to use proverb among elders. The youth rarely use proverbs whilst with the elders, and even if they will do so, they show respect by referencing the proverbs to the elders as being the authors eg. “*Ye nemberɛ maŋ yeli ka....*” (You the elders say that...). It is important to note that in this chapter, scholars stressed that proverbs are used during communication and appropriate contexts should be adhered to. They also reiterate that proverbs are relevant to the society because they are used to warn, deter, encourage, praise, counsel and rebuke people. The chapter continued with a reflection of wellerisms; concept/origin of wellerism proverb, definition of wellerism proverb and some basic characteristics of wellerism proverb (what makes up wellerism proverb) which forms the center of this thesis. Several opinions and explorations on wellerisms

in diverse cultural backgrounds undertaken by many researchers have been reviewed in this chapter two.

Again, in this very chapter a line has been drawn between wellerism proverbs and what some scholars refer to as ‘animal proverbs or animal metaphors.’ Animal proverbs/metaphors refer to proverbs associated with some creatures including animals which function like the normal proverbs and not wellerisms per se. These proverbs capture the names of the animals and other creatures yet they are not sayings that can be quoted as coming from the creatures involved.

According to Yakub (2019), both domestic and non-domestic animals including birds, flies, insects and reptiles are prevalent in Nzema proverbs to advise people against undesirable attitudes like recalcitrance, procrastination, greed, selfishness and all sort of social vices. He claims that these creatures are also used through the proverbs to direct people towards positive behaviours; such as tolerance, forgiveness, patience, cooperation, obedience, kindness, faithfulness and hard work among others. Subsequently, in this chapter the theory which underpins this study; Relevance Theory (RT), proposed by Sperber and Wilson in 1986 and 1995 is indicated.

Chapter three (3) concerns the methodology used in conducting this research. The research approach and design that were used are; qualitative and ethnography respectively. The site for this research is Jirapa traditional area, in the Jirapa Municipality of the Upper West Region of Ghana. The areas covered in site are Da-Uri, Kongkuo, and Veveri; all within the confines of Jirapa. This community was selected as the site for the research because of its rich historical and cultural background. The data for the study was gathered through primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected basically through interviews and participatory observation. The

interviews, as data collection technique were one-on-one bases. Thus, they were face-to-face unstructured interviews where questionnaires were unplanned, and leading questions depended on responses of the respondents. The researcher at certain points participated, and also observed occasions where proverbs were used in their natural settings by communicators.

Since proverbs do not occur in isolation but in discourse, it was necessary for the researcher to observe people use them in contexts so as to come out with an enriching data. In this regard, events such as traditional festival, funerals and traditional marriage contraction were the main occasions considered. At the traditional festival celebrated by the Veveri section of Jirapa, the researcher observed people who engaged in conversations use proverbs including wellerisms. At the funeral grounds at Kongkuo, Da-uri and Veveri, the dirge singers as well as some sympathizers employed several proverbs including wellerisms. Being a participant at the marriage contraction at Kongkuo, I observed that people also infused some wellerism proverbs in their communication especially in the attempt to briefly counsel the bride who was ready to go to her husband's house right after her bride price was successfully paid. The researcher also did radio presentation to collect data on the use of wellerism proverbs where callers gave wellerisms and the particular context(s) each wellerism proverb is used.

Apart from the main consultants, teachers who teach the language in the University of Education, Winneba, were as well consulted in the data collection procedure. Being a native speaker of the language, the researcher also applied his native intuition in the data collection. Furthermore, the secondary source of data was gathered from books and theses which contain some wellerism proverbs.

Chapter four (4) dealt with the analysis and discussion of the data gathered on the selected topic: “Thematic and Aesthetic Analysis of Dagaaba Wellerisms.” The chapter examined the characteristics of Dagaaba wellerisms as the first objective of the study, followed by the sentential structure of the Dagaaba wellerisms. That is, it looked at the types and functions of sentences under which the Dagaaba wellerisms can be stated. Moreover, the various themes and contexts of usage under which the selected wellerism were categorized have been discussed as well as delving into their aesthetic qualities as the final objective. The aesthetic qualities that were unravelled in the wellerisms discussed under themes are humour, mood and some literary devices such as metaphor, imagery, simile, sarcasm among others. In all, ten (10) themes were discussed. They include; hard work, mistrust, gratitude and appreciation, tolerance, courage and bravery, class, unity and solidarity, support, peace and harmony, and then theme of patience and endurance.

5.2. Conclusion

The study basically focused on the “Thematic and Aesthetic Analysis of Dagaaba Wellerisms.” It sought to investigate the characteristics, sentential structure, themes and aesthetic qualities of wellerism proverbs in Dagaare. The structure in this regard concerns the types of sentences and their functions. The themes discussed are ten. The aesthetic qualities of the wellerisms analyzed were based on some literary devices they contain, as well as tools like humour, mood etc., used in literature. We realized from the study that wellerisms are variants of proverbs in cultures around the world including the Dagaaba culture. They are proverbs attributed to non-human entities and must be treated distinctly. The study revealed that the use of proverbs is commonly found in discourse because they play major roles in communication. They can be used at any setting where communication is ongoing however, the context in which these proverbs

are used must be appropriate so that listeners do not misunderstand and misinterpret the ongoing discourse. They are used in songs, dirges, folktales, poems and also in ordinary conversations. It must be noted that proverbs use in communication attracts lots of attention and recognition from audience, and anybody who is versatile in the use of proverbs is highly respected by society. Proverbs center on various themes, and play an important role in society by discouraging bad behaviours while promoting the good ones.

5.3. Recommendation

This study revealed that proverbs like wellerisms are highly cherished in the Dagaaba society because they are relevant to discourse. I recommend that further study could be done on the morphosemantics aspect of the Dagaaba wellerism proverbs. This will unearth the morphological and semantic make up of wellerisms in Dagaare. The study has also shown that wellerisms are quite different from animal metaphors because animal metaphors feature the names of some creatures but are not often referenced to them. It is therefore recommendable that future research could be done on comparative study of wellerisms and that of animal metaphors in Dagaare, so as to establish a clear distinction.

Also, since wellerisms play various roles in society, it is recommended that study could be done on the implications of wellerism proverbs in children upbringing. This is because, to be able to preserve some cultural practices like the use of proverbs, the youth should be brought up in a way that they can use them appropriately. Another viable area of research is the sociolinguistic analysis of the Dagaaba wellerism proverbs.

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