

Themes and structures of Kilba Proverbs

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Abstract: This paper examines the themes and structures of Kilba proverbs. There is no doubt that the selection and application of rhetorical devices to achieve the purpose of communication is determined by speech themes. Structures are the artistic units that can be identified as containing specific information which function together to convey the author's or speaker's thoughts. Proverb is one of the various linguistic devices often used to facilitate communication and to achieve desired effects. As proverb belongs to the syntactic structure and pragmatics, And discursive after and was adopted to examine the themes and structures of the proverbs employed to colour speech and expressions among the Kilba people of Adamawa state of Nigeria. The paper examined and brought to light, the different syntactic structures and themes of the proverbs used in speech and expressions by the Kilba people. The study showed that most of the proverbs embody the people's beliefs, traditions, values and other cultural artefacts. The study also revealed that like proverbs of other Nigerian ethnic groups, Kilba proverbs have diverse themes which include human nature, human vices, values, wisdoms ,social norms, good manner, anxiety etc. They are always employed in interpersonal and group communication as means of dressing the content of speech.

Keywords: Themes, structure, proverbs, genre and poetry

INTRODUCTION

Language is a multipurpose tool that members of speech communities employ to facilitate communication. It manifests itself in different forms as there are various themes and speech events, which determine linguistic features that speakers employ. Proverb is a rhetorical device whose use is always determined by the speech events [1]. Before the advent of western civilization, ethnic groups of Africa used different verbal arts for the transmission of ideas, beliefs, values and other cultural heritages. Among the oral genres of literature, proverb is the one that is used frequently in speeches and are continuously transmitted from one generation to another [2]. However, most of the youths of the Kilba ethnic group [3] nowadays do not have enough knowledge of the people's proverbs. This signals that indigenous proverbs are fast giving way to foreign ones especially English and Hausa proverbs. Just as lexical items of languages grow old, become archaic and die out, so are proverbs of ethnic groups. As languages enrich their vocabularies by borrowing as a result of interaction with members of other ethnic groups, so are proverbs. Proverbs belong to syntactic component of language with anonymous authors. By function, they belong to pragmatics because their uses and interpretations are context bound. As linguistic contexts and cultures are diverse, themes of proverbs are also diverse.

Proverbs in Kilba Community are integral part of everyday discourse/conversation. They are frequently quoted in interpersonal communications, at communal

meetings, village council meetings, marriage arrangements and celebrations, burial ceremonies among others. Proverbs are used to advise, to react to a fellow's comment or decision, or support facts. It is common for elders especially to present ideas, respond to comments or statements in proverbs. As such, proverbs are commonly referred to among the Kilba as "*bwanya njira wawa'a*", meaning the talk or speech of elders. They are not spontaneously created but are created as after math of an incident or long time observation of a natural or social phenomenon. According to Lawal, Ajayi, and Raji [4] in Sanusi [5] proverbs across languages and cultures form part of the codes of behaviours and exemplify their uses for the transmission of tribal wisdom and rules of conduct. It is in this regard that focus is made on the themes and structure of proverbs among the kilba people of Adamawa state.

WHAT IS PROVERB?

Of the various oral genres, proverb is the one which has proved itself to be of great continuing relevance to modern man. It has been and remains a powerful and effective instrument for the transmission of culture, social morality, manners and ideas of the people from one generation to another. Proverbs are means of transmitting lessons derived from the people's experiences. As experiences are diverse, the themes and structures are also diverse. Proverbs are reflections the culture of the people, philosophy, truth and social values [6].

Proverb as an oral literary genre is an aspect of verbal art, normally short; having fixed syntactic structures and is considered as conventional by a speech community. A proverb is an embodiment of wisdom, morals, beliefs, truths and values. The fixed syntactic structures are transmitted from one generation to another. Through the use of proverbs, societal values, ideas or philosophical views are expressed and preserved. Omoloso in Sanusi [5] opines that proverbs have certain stylistic similarities, even though they originate from different cultures. They make use of hyperboles, rhymes, alliterations and colourful pictorial expressions. According to Akmajian, Demer, Fartmer, and Harnish [7] proverbs are traditional sayings or expressions having unknown author, fixed sentential forms alluding to a common truth or general wisdom, with some rudimentary literal values used to guide actions, accept situations, introduce a feeling or attitude. In line with the above definitions, proverbs can be referred to as concise and situational bound expressions. This is because situations or events determine which proverbs to quote. It is uncommon to quote proverbs that depict happiness or excitement by the grave side but common at marriage and naming ceremonies. In this regard, proverbs are inseparable from the peoples culture and is an aspect of language that lives for long and keeps in pace with changing society.

Defining proverbs in terms of forms, Akporobaro [6] refers to proverbs as a graphic statement that expresses a truth of experience. Its beauty and sources of delight is that what it says is readily perceived and accepted as an incontrovertible truth. The truth presented in the proverb is not a logical, a priori, or intuitive truth, it is often an empirical fact based upon and derived from the people's experience of life, human relationship and interaction with the world of nature. Also citing Ruth Finnegan, Akporobaro describes proverbs as sayings in a more or less fixed form, marked by shortness, sense and salt and distinguished by the popular acceptability of the truth expressed. Looking at this definition by Finnegan, proverbs are only useful and meaningful if the target audience understand them. That is why today, most of the children born outside their parents' traditional community are deficient in their people's proverbs but may be proficient in the proverbs of the language of the immediate community or English. This means that there is a need to work towards documentation of this linguistic value for succeeding or forthcoming generations. It is against this background that only proverbs deemed of Kilba origin are selected for analysis.

PROVERBS AND SCIO-GEOGRAPHICAL EXPERIENCES

Proverbs mostly evolve from the people's interaction with the world of nature. Among the Kilba people, many proverbs are authored from the socio-geographical experiences. The imagery in which the

proverbs are embodied, expressed and the common truth conveyed are environment bound. According to Hananiya [8], proverb is one of the oral genres that the Kilba use in expressing phenomenological truth gathered from the society's interaction with nature and the relevance of such truth to the human experience. Sanusi [5] citing Mele points out that proverbs and other figurative expressions are intrinsically related to culture and reflect and reflected and safeguard a societal life. Sanusi in Mele further states that Proverbs are valuable as it incorporates materials, social and ideological features of such technology, forms of social organizations, values, beliefs and morals which are coded are passed down as traditions. Generally, proverbs are employed to inspire logic and common sense among the folk. As there are many identifiable areas or regions forming Kilba community, there are also different cultural artefacts of the Kilba people which are transmitted via proverbs. Many of the proverbs of the Kilba are associated with their occupation which is farming. Examples of these are: 'zwa nda ənna' translated as the digging of yesterday. This proverb refers to little or no impact that has been observed after repeated action. It is likened to a farmer who instead of digging a head, decided to dig the previous spot. Another common example is the proverb "dəl taku ndər Kulinyi" translated as 'a Kulinyi man's purchase of a horse.' It is often quoted to criticize or condemn over anxiety. This proverb evolved from the conversation of a Kulinyi man and his son working on their cotton farm. The son suggested to the father that if they harvest the cotton, they will spin it, weave it and sale the rolls of yarns. They will buy a female horse which will eventually give birth. The son suggested that the father will ride the mother horse, while he will ride the young one. The father out of anxiety hit the child by the head with the hoe in his hand, shouting that the child will kill the little horse. The boy died even before the harvest of the cotton. This proverb is quoted as a caution against over anxiety. There are also some proverbs that evolved from observation of natural phenomenon in relation to human life. The proverb 'ləmbək kəshar ndah tədiya parr kudzam' "translated as 'a tiny cloud that later rained torrentially.' This is often cited to make comment on a person who has been looked down upon but later became great. In addition to proverbs evolving from the people's interaction with the world of nature, there are some evolving from the people's social relations and attitudes to life. The proverb "á nah sal doh fa wa" translated as 'the slandering of a man does not last for a year' This proverb is cited to console somebody that falls into shameful act to take the right decision and not to consider his shameful act. Another example is the "proverb 'kəm səm səm ku dza wu cho bəlla'" translated as 'a sharp axe breaks inside a tree's trunk' It is often cited to warn against the apparent disastrous ends of a hardened criminal. Finally, there are proverbs that evolved from the impact of trade, foreign religion and western education on the people's life. The proverb

“wa nar ngha a biya voa kəlbū ó shili?” Translated as “who told you that potash comes from Borno land?” It is quoted as a response to an idea taken after long contemplation or after experiencing the consequence of rejecting an idea. It evolved from trading partnership with the Kanuri people. Another example is the proverb “Maa gwa Eula a tlah sal cha ha’a upwa” “Translated as should going to Yola become mandatory for man, let him prepared floor.” It is often cited to sympathize with someone facing a difficult and unavoidable task. A convict in those days was sent to Yola prison without any choice of option. Similar example is the proverb, “maa sal a hawu chacha ku sheḍi cha kukulnda.” It is translated as “should a man put his hand inside a bowel, let him shake it off.” It is quoted to give courage to someone who started a tiresome and difficult task to complete it.

THE CORPUS OF THE STUDY

The corpus of this study consists of five sampled proverbs for each of the themes identified. All the sampled proverbs are drawn from my collection of kilba proverbs. The themes and the syntactic structures are briefly discussed in order to make the content explicit. The exemplary proverbs are presented in vernacular, translated and meanings provided.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Based on the fact that proverbs are effective means of transmitting the people’s culture from one generation to another, those deemed borrowed were not presented. Only the proverbs deemed as of Kilba origin which depict the contexts of situations in which proverbs are often used are presented. The proverbs are categorized and discussed based on the identified themes.

Proverbs with Themes of Anxiety

Proverbs in this category relate to a context of situation or event at which someone/ some people showed over anxiety. The following are examples of proverbs used in speech events/expressions depicting the theme of anxiety:

Kwa ndah tsa cha himi, nggə kər à bwah. Translation: He was about to roast the ears, when the head boiled. Meaning: About to use little opportunity when greater one suddenly knocked. This proverb is often quoted on seeing someone eager to use every little opportunity but suddenly got greater one. It is often quoted when somebody anxiously performs an action a head of the time for performing the action.

Kwa ndah gwa pərr cha nggə yidi à tsada. Translation: He was about to slide, when slippery ground slide. Meaning: To have one’s intention facilitated. This proverb is quoted when someone intending to do something is facilitated or given assistant.

Zwa pa’owa ndər kulinyi. Translation: A Kulinyi man’s cultivation of cotton. Meaning: To show over anxiety over something that has not matured or obtained. It is always quoted when an action that is supposed to come after expected outcome or result is displayed

Pənnḍa dzəbəli dəhə ka tii Translation: To pour away the potash waste along with the container. Meaning: In the process of anxiously trying to get rid of the unwanted, the wanted or useful was done away with.

Proverbs with the Themes of perseverance/endurance

Ma sal à hawu cha cha ku shedSi, cha kukul nda. Translation: Should a man puts his hand into a bowel, let him shake it off. Meaning: Endeavour to complete a started task that proves to be difficult. It is quoted to encourage someone that intends to stop a difficult tasked started.

Ma gwa Eula à tla sal, kəl ha’a upwa Translation: Should going to Yola become mandatory for a man, let him prepare flour. Meaning: Be bold to face a difficult and unavoidable task, not to relent. This proverb is always quoted to encourage or advice someone doing a tedious/difficult task to face it squarely.

Kadə miya bwa; kadə dang tha. Translation: Performance of a song is about to be at apex level, while the drumming is about to die out or go down. Meaning: Reference to a tedious job that is about to get to the end but the effort of those carrying out the job seem to die out. It is quoted to encourage a person(s) carryout difficult task.

Ma ka tsiya ləvari tsu’u tsiya patəru da dzau’u wa

Translation: If you kill a lion, killing a cat is no longer difficult. Meaning: To say that the major action or work has finished, so the minor one will be a walkover.

Kutlər – kutlər sal ndah wahə cha Translation: In continuous labour a man prospers. Meaning: It often quoted to acknowledge hard work or advice to work hard

Proverbs with the themes of contentment

Kudekəu, àdeti təfa. Translation: A little swallowed is better than a spit. Meaning: To have little is better than none.

This proverb is quoted to advice that one should accept the little available than putting hope in the abundant not yet available.

Bitir məzham kwa nyabiya dəl. Translation: Water of the thatch fills the river. Meaning: A very little or small thing always serves as a supplement in order to meet up requirement

Bəliya sapa-sapa, tsah kara'a. **Translation:** Better is a tattered dress than being naked. **Meaning:** Accept very small at the time of need than to have none at all. Ma gangər à tuta; nja ngum ti hii. **Translation:** Should the bed be small, let the legs be folded up. **Meaning:** Manage a meagre resource in the absence of the abundant.

A gii tuli wa; a siya cha. **Translation:** Saliva does not go up, it comes down. **Meaning:** Accept little to eat than none at all.

Proverbs with Theme of Human Vices

Proverbs in this category are used to condemn or comment on displayed or observed social vices.

Kəm səmsəma, a ku dza wuah , cho bəlla. **Translation:** A sharp axe breaks inside a tree's trunk. **Meaning:** A renowned criminal ends disastrous

Kətəng kulang ,kəra cha tə zəkətu. **Translation:** The head of a wander-some lamb is on the roof's platform. **Meaning:** A wander-some fellow likely experiences undesirable result. This proverb is often cited to warn a criminal of the imminent dangers of criminal acts.

Həbiya Hona biya te dəl, cha biya sha cha nəng hafa. **Translation:** Taking a Hona man across the river who turns back to shoot you with an arrow. **Meaning:** To pay back a good deed with evil immediately.

Dalatu nggə à dla'a voakə Dzarma. **Translation:** It is Dalatu that raid at the residence of Dzarma. **Meaning:** It is a thief that has stolen his fellow's property. This proverb is cited to mean that there is nothing to worry about if a thief's property is stolen.

Kwakurum nggə à zəndi virr ngal vanyi. **Translation.** It is a tortoise that knows where to bite its fellow. **Meaning:** A criminal knows best how to make or do revenge.

Proverbs with Socio-Cultural themes

Wulsi dləbwal ku tiwi təl. **Translation:** To partake of a drum in the king's funeral. **Meaning:** A poor having colourful occasion because it coincided with the one of a well to do or highly placed person.

Hu pəba kəla nyi na ngguli tə **Translation:** A cemetery of the puba that never fills with the royal sons. **Meaning:** A greedy or insatiable person.

Ula bara dugu **Translation:** Dry on both edges of the axe. **Meaning:** One whose parents are slaves or descendent of slaves.

Fəti nyi zər tə dzah mala mutiya. **Translation:** To place a child on the laps of a witch. **Meaning:** To entrust a property in the hand of a criminal.

Chi mapəlau'u nggər earr à gii tanyi ti. **Translation:** It is the leopard's skin that smoke mounted. **Meaning:** A hero whom old age crippled his performance.

Proverbs with Themes of Social Norms

Zər diz kwa kəkər kwal təl dzah àmà nyi. **Translation:** A baby boy is erecting penis on its mother's laps. **Meaning:** An obvious challenge of a superior or a hero by a subordinate or the weak.

Tra mar ndu do kati ndukur wa. **Translation:** Walking in front of someone cannot hinder you from being human. **Meaning:** Give honour or respect to whom it is due. It is often cited to advice someone on the need to be humble.

Á takku dō səm dzər vanyi sənyi wa. **Translation:** A horse should not feed alone in the presence of another. **Meaning:** It is abnormal to eat alone in the presence of other people.

A dagəla dō thlənda dekwa cha wa. **Translation:** A pig cannot remove its cheeks. **Meaning:** It quite impossible to disown a relation.

Wulea dō ndiya kər. **Translation:** The neck cannot surpass the head. **Meaning:** No matter one's position, one is still answerable to parents, elders or those in authority.

Proverbs with themes of disease/heath

Proverbs under this category are metaphorical expressions that involve disease or health care. Though they literary refer to common diseases or health care/disease management; they refer to different things entirely. Thus, serving as dress of content of the expression.

Tədə nda ndəl tsu'u thə kəla səya. **Translation:** Cleaning the anus before **diarrhoea** pours out. **Meaning:** To complain of trivial issue while a serious one is imminent

Sa mbəla ka **gyang** ndu. **Translation:** Drinking a sour porridge for the sake of someone's fever. **Meaning:** To suffer because of someone's act

"Mi na'a kwa" nwa ndə **kəti** à tsiya ndah? **Translation:** "What is mine in it?" said **an ulcer** that killed somebody. **Meaning:** To say that one does not care having played one's role.

A bibi dədəm-dədəm da kwa shiu'uni wa! **Translation:** An old or age long **leprosy** no longer smells! **Meaning:** To become used to a long term difficulty or suffering.

Kərbang təwul do katə hannyi wa. **Translation:** The headache of a neighbour does not stop one from sleeping. **Meaning:** Minor problem of one close to you may not necessarily stop you from going about your business.

Proverbs with animal characters

The proverbs sampled in this section are metaphors, hyperboles or similes involving animal characters.

Bazhinya mapəlau'u da, bazhinya mabəlang da. **Translation:** There is a friend of a Leopard; there is a friend of a hyena. **Meaning:** Every wicked or bad person has a friend or associate.

Par həya təkəra bərah ulfa. **Translation:** The fighting of dogs upon beaniseed milling stone. **Meaning:** To fight upon something that does not belong to the two parties.

Ufwa kəla pəl do dədə nda təgga wa. **Translation:** A paw less fox cannot pluck off chicken's feathers. **Meaning:** Zealous person that has no or limited resource.

Madərdə kwah a biya na utla. **Translation:** The fart of a goat went out along with a cough. **Meaning:** A mistakenly or unintentional confession.

La'a tla pərtu bəra mal kwah. **Translation:** To see a white cow and assume that it is fatty. **Meaning:** Considering someone as being well to do based on appearance.

Proverbs with Birds' Characters

Tonnggali a ki tatsi hu'u ga shi handzi nyi nə doukou. **Translation:** "Tonngali" went and fetched fire and set the eagle on it. **Meaning:** A worthless fellow whose act implicated an innocent and well respected relation or family member.

A tiwi dər do dziva ku nə hulatu wa. **Translation:** The funeral of a quail cannot come up during the one of hulatu (precious bird) **Meaning:** In reference to the clash of the affair of the poor with the one of a highly placed person.

Ndəm-ndəm təgga kəla dərəpəu. **Translation:** Large flock of chicken without trace. **Meaning:** Many participants who made little or no impact on a given task.

A təgga da kwa pəliya vanyi tə mba wa. **Translation:** A fowl cannot untie another **Meaning:** it is not ideal that one can save someone of one's calibre.

Kwadəgga keker a təkə dā ibi. **Translation:** A black vulture defecated on me. **Meaning:** A serious misfortune or calamity that be fell someone

Kilba Proverbs with insect characters

Təmbur nya gajidi. **Translation:** A moth of the vagina's front. **Meaning:** A coward that hardly moves out of his door stead.

Idaa à diya dā ku kōr vir mbiya da wa. **Translation:** A scorpion stung me in the head, no place to tie. **Meaning:** A situation in which one is supposed to react to a wrong done to him but his relationship with the wrong doer will not warrant it.

Tsara gachi tsa hu'u ? **Translation:** Why should a mantis run from fire? **Meaning:** A criminal dodging the consequence of his action.

Ma təbəl kwa ngal ku gagər təwul a ndə do zindi wa. **Translation:** If a bed bug is biting in a neighbour's bed, nobody will know. **Meaning:** A hidden secret that only the concerned knows of it.

Jigga-jigga kəla gii mələmu. **Translation:** A hopping locust that never ascends the sky. **Meaning:** A weak or coward person that dares not to cross his territory. **Meaning:** In response to one that loves committing crime but seen try to escape

Kilba proverbs with reptile characters

Butukur Gali ku mələm. **Translation:** A lizard's wretchedness in a shrine. **Meaning:** An innocent person suffering for what he does not know the cause.

Dəggə zəwa hirr pwabu. **Translation:** Beating a stick after the snake. **Meaning:** A useless action taken later

Gali dzə kuzəkəu. **Translation:** A lizard of testing a medicine. **Meaning:** A scapegoat

Dəl litsa tə wuah. **Translation:** Buying the monitor lizard up the tree. **Meaning:** To bargain or buy something that is not at hand.

Syntactic Structures

Syntax is a branch of linguistics that studies sentence structure. It looks at how words are combined to form sentences. This branch of linguistics enables us to understand how the different components of sentences are put together in order to communicate. Syntax as a branch of linguistics studies the arrangement of words or different components of a sentence as they are not haphazardly arranged. It encompasses the grammatical rules of a given language and the way the words a given language are organized to form phrases, clauses and sentences. Syntax is a part of grammar that governs the form of strings by which speakers of a language communicate by making statement, asking questions, issuing commands/directives and so on. The study of syntax focuses on the structure of sentences and their functions. This implies that the sentence is the object of study in syntax. Tomori [9] sees as the term syntax as a linguistic component that deals with the study of grammatical structures of sentences; built up of words. Syntax according to this definition examines how the different constituents of a sentence function together to communicate meaning.

Yule [10] in his definition traces the origin of syntax. He defines it as the study of the structure and ordering of elements within a sentence. The word syntax according to Yule came originally from Greek which literally means a setting out together or arrangement. The setting out or ordering arrangement of the elements forming a sentence was looked at from different dimensions by the early linguists. In the early approaches to description of syntax, there was an attempt to produce an accurate analysis of sequence or ordering arrangement of the elements of sentences in linear order. This is still the major concern of syntactic analysis in modern linguistics, though from different angles.

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Declarative sentences:

Kəm səmsəm ku dzah wu cho bəlla

Translation: A sharp axe breaks inside a tree's trunk.

Interpretation: A hardened or sophisticated criminal ends disastrously. This proverb is quoted as a warning/caution to desist from doing criminal activities. It is a criminal that is metaphorically described as a sharp axe. The proverb is in simple declarative sentence. It has as the subject; the noun phrases "a sharp axe" and the predicate "breaks inside a tree's trunk." The predicate consists of a prepositional phrase "inside a tree's trunk. The phrase "a tree's trunk" functions as the complement of the preposition "inside".

Təgga kwa tsaku halea vanyi

Translation: A fowl is feeding on the intestine of another. **Interpretation:** It is a teasing statement made when a person who is about to wed is seen at a marriage ceremony. The proverb is in a simple declarative sentence. It has as the subject" the noun phrase "a fowl"

and the predicate is feeding on the intestine of another. The predicate consists of an auxiliary verb "is" and the main verb "feeding". Serving as component of the verb phrase also is a prepositional phrase "one the intestine of another which has the preposition 'on' as the head and the noun phrase" the intestine of another" as its complement.

Daggəla doh tlənda dekwa cha wa

Translation: A pig cannot plug off its cheeks. **Interpretation:** You cannot disown your close relation no matter what he is done to. This is quoted as an advice to Condon or over look whatever someone close to you has done and show love to him. The proverb is also in simple declarative sentence. It has as the subject the noun phrase "A pig, and the verb phrase" cannot plug off its cheeks". The verb phrase has auxiliary verb "cannot," and the main verb plug serving as its head. The head is followed by a prepositional phrase "off its cheeks". The preposition off acts as the head and "its" cheeks as complement of it.

Mapəlau'u kwa wutə tsaḅəu

Translation: A leopard is feeding on mud. **Interpretation:** A highly placed person who has lost his position and feeds like the poor. It is quoted to make soft comment on the life of a highly placed person that has become wretched and lives like the poor. The proverb is in simple declarative sentence with the syntactic structure as the first three sentences.

Cha tenggərma tanda tə dza

Translation: The hands of a millipede have reduced.

Interpretation: A Soft commend on the death or arrest of a criminal. This proverb depicts that in Kilba community, people feel happy about the arrest or death of a criminal. Though criminals are as many as the hands of a millipede, people feel relieved on hearing about the arrest or death of one. The proverb is in a declarative sentence. The subject is however complex. It consists of a noun phrase "the hands" and a prepositional phrase "of a millipede". The phrase of a millipede acts a post modifier of the noun phrase "the hands". The verb phrase is served at the end with a modal auxiliary verb "has" preceding the head "reduced.

Proverbs in form of rhetorical questions

Zər təgga tsa la'a nda parr kwa tla ya?

Translation: Is the fowl a child that it cannot see the impending rain? **Interpretation:** It is a comment on the failure of an adult to take precaution against an obvious danger ahead. This is the same as saying in plain language the person is old enough and need not to be advised.

Mi tə bəra nadə nda həya?

Translation: What on a mill stone has a dog licked?

Interpretation: Is a comment on the readiness of someone in need to accept very little offered to him.

This is the same as saying in a plain language ‘am not satisfied but let me have the little.’

Tsara gachi tsa hu’u?

Translation: Why should a mantis doge fire?

Interpretation: Quoted as a comment on seeing one that loves committing crime trying escape. The criminal in question is likened to a species of mantis that does not run away from fire. It is the same as saying plain language, why are you running from your hand work?

Abar hu’u ò gwa tə mihya?

Translation: Through which way should a fire enter a burnt ground? **Interpretation:** Quoted on hearing a criminal complaining of criminal act done to him. It is common to hear such a comment if a witch or wizard is complaining of having bewitched?

Wa dugwa? Wa tsərra?

Translation: Who are beans’ leaves? Who are beans?

Interpretation: The question as it is in multiple forms is questioning the reliability of two people not trust worthy. This is the same as saying in a plain language that the two are parties in question are the same.

Proverbs in complex sentence.

These proverbs have features of complex sentences but are straight forward to comprehend. Examples are:

Dzigga Idəma hirr mabəlang. **Translation:** Closing the pen after the hyena has bolted out.

Interpretation: Quoted to make reference to the right action taken after the escape of a culprit. The sentence has an implied subject. The main clause” closing the pen” is followed by the subordinate clause “ after the hyena has bolted out.”

Kwa ndah tsa cha himi, nggə kər a bwah. **Translation:** He was about to roast the ears, when the head boiled.

Meaning: Someone about to use little opportunity but suddenly got greater one.

Hubənda pəlla tsu’u kə kəla həyà dəl.

Translation: Breaking the guard while you are yet reach the river. **Interpretation.** Quoted in a situation where someone exhausted the meagre resource at hand in anticipation of the abundant which later was not obtained.

Kwa ndah tsa cha himi, nggə kər a bwah.

Translation: He was about to roast the ears when the head boiled. **Meaning:** Someone about to use little opportunity but suddenly got greater one.

Mavəlla gakəu nyi tə na shika.

Translation: The anus of a jackal has filled up with African black berry fruits. **Interpretation:** Comment one something that somebody showed dislike for it after taken it to satisfaction. It is common for a woman for instance to quote this proverb on seeing her playing with food after eating to satisfaction. The subordinate clause is served to the end shown by italicization.

Mapa’ a na Voa la’ a dzangum cho dēlnda ka gənna wa.

Translation: Unless a white man looks at the giant, he does not sell him off for wealth. **Interpretation:** A Whiteman during the slave trade period will never sell off a giant slave unless the slave proved stubborn. So this proverb is quoted whenever a master or employer decides to part with a subordinate or employee that he likes suffers the master seriously.

Proverbs in Phrasal forms:

There are many proverbs used by the kilba people that are not in complete sentences. Most of them however have implied subject. Examples are as follows:

Zwa nda ənna

Translation: The digging of yesterday.

Interpretation: This proverb is quoted on observing repeated but fruitless action displayed. It is a noun phrase having “the digging” as head, post modified by a prepositional phrase “of yesterday” which is an adverbial of time.

Bazhi Katu

Translation: A covenant friend. **Translation:** This proverb is often quoted to make reference to intimate and trust worthy Friends. Such friends hardly part and lives like twins. The friends in question in the old Kilba community have made their friendship formalised by making traditional covenant called saa Katu. The phrase consists of an article and two nouns.

Patakəu nya laku

Translation: A wild rope of the road side. **Translation:** To challenge or treat an innocent person badly while the person supposed challenged or faced has been left. The proverb is quoted on observing the right person to be challenged has been left, facing instead an innocent and humble person. The phrase is headed by a noun “rope” preceded by an article and an adjective “a wild” with a prepositional phrase “of the road side as post modifier

Kəlakuzhi wi madəda ndə thəta

Translation: Without shame like the fart of a dead body. **Interpretation.** Comment on displayed action by someone who has been observed not regretting his shameful acts. The proverb is in a complex prepositional phrase. It has as the head, the preposition without, followed by the noun shame and a comparative preposition depicting simile as a figure of speech, which is followed by the noun phrase the fart of a dead body.

Chi hau’u tə fafah

Translation: Planting herbs on a rock. **Interpretation:** Attempting an absolutely impossible task. This proverb is made up of a verb phrase headed by the verb “planting and a noun phrase “herbs on a rock” “which also consists of a prepositional phrase” on a rock. It has

as its head the preposition “on” and a noun phrase “a rock.” This proverb is often quoted on observing someone attempting to do something will never bring solution to a problem.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study has revealed that Understanding the meanings of proverbs depends to a large extent on the understanding of the culture of the people and the context in which it is used as well as the structuring. Since proverbs are not spontaneously constructed, the effectiveness of usage depends on the user’s ability to quote the appropriate ones in appropriate context. Unless we understand pragmatics (how language is used in communication) proverbs may be misused or misinterpreted. Meaning of proverbs in this case may differ from one context to the other but the syntactic structure could remain the same [11]

Proverb is one the rhetorical devices used to dress the content of speech. As a rhetorical device, it functions to facilitate communication and effective interaction among human beings. Being expressions with unidentified authors, proverbs precede the context or event of application. Each proverb has an acceptable and definable syntactic structure since it belongs to syntax. The study has revealed many syntactic structures as exemplified in the date presentation and analysis section.

Generally, proverbs have various themes which relate to the diverse experiences of the people. This is because the imageries in which the meanings are embodied are from the people’s social, political, economic, Religious and cultural environments of the people. That is why; we identify proverbs with particular people such as Hausa proverbs, Igbo proverbs, Yoruba proverbs, Fulfulde proverbs among others.

In addition to functioning as agent of transmitting society’s culture from one generation to another, authors use proverbs to dress the content of their works. For instance, any one that has read one of the novels of Chinua Achebe must have been exposed to Igbo proverbs. Through the use of proverbs, writers present their ideas, advices or make comments in a less obvious and practical manner.

Proverbs are used in conversation as lubricant or glue. Hagher points out that there are proverbs which are used when two people are engaged in a verbal proverbial exchange [12]. It is common to hear two people exchanging ideas or expressing opinions in proverbs. Proverbs tightens relationships and creates a sense of belonging. At village meeting or forum of elders, speakers use proverbs to advice, advance or argue out ideas, make suggestions, or disagree softly. Through the use of proverbs, members of a community express their philosophy of life

pertaining to moral truth, norms, religious, cultural and social values.

Proverbs serve as means of transmitting societal moral codes. The Kilba ethnic group has many moral codes guiding the peoples’ behaviour. Three proverbs depicting this function are selected as examples.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the texts in the corpus has revealed that proverbs of the Kilba people have similar syntactic structures with other Nigerian Proverbs. The study has revealed that the sentences are memorable because they are mostly in declarative forms. This agrees with most of the definitions of proverb as short and concise sayings having fixed syntactic structures and are transmitted from one generation to another. It was observed that although the subject of the sentences and phrases are complex because of pre-modification and post modification of the noun heads, the information contained are concise. There are also some proverbs that are in complex sentences. They are also short and concise as they contain only one subordinate clause served at the beginning or end. Some the proverbs are in rhetorical questions which the context of usage always provides answers. Finally, it has been observed that most of the proverbs are metaphors. Most of the imageries embedding the proverbs are closely linked to the people’ experiences with the world of nature and cultural heritage. The use of proverbs as tool communication and transmission of the people’s culture therefore cannot be over emphasized.

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