

Domestication of English in Africa via proverbial expressions: A lexico-semantic study of transliteration in the English of Akɔɔse native speakers in Cameroon

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Abstract: In most countries where English functions as a second language, it is enriched by a variety of cultural and linguistic colouration. This is the case of Cameroon wherein remnants of the languages surrounding the acquisition of the English language are recurrent in the English that is spoken and written. This paper, therefore, explores the English of native speakers of *Akɔɔse* (an indigenous language spoken by a people known as Bakossi)¹ for proverbial expressions that denote their cultural and sociolinguistic world view. Findings reveal that this group of people provide local values, ethics, ideas, and traditions into the English language, in the process of imparting a moral lesson, expressing some truth ascertained by experience and observation, and giving a piece of advice or a warning on issues of life. Consequently this paper argues that *Akɔɔse* native speakers transpose the *Akɔɔse* proverbs into the English language in order to make the language a chest with treasure which expresses their sociolinguistic world view.

Keywords: Akɔɔse native speaker, Cameroon English, proverbial expression, SLA.

1. Introduction

Every language spreads in order to form a network and, once that language begins to enjoy the largest network of users, the latter will keep multiplying until it becomes a global language. To this end, Bok (2001: 129) presents the inevitability of the spread of a language using 'Metcalf's Law' which states that "the value of a certain network is proportionate to the square of its users". Thus, the English language is one of the languages that enjoy a domineering network as a result of its spread.

Though the value of the English language network is appropriate to the value of its users, the global spread of English has had widespread linguistic, social, and cultural implications, affecting the lives of millions of people around the world. According to Schneider (2011: 2), nearly every speaker of English today has been exposed to different varieties of global English. People use strange words which may take a while to recognize because they are pronounced somehow differently; and sometimes people build their sentences in ways that will seem odd in the beginning and use novel vocabulary items. This reveals that "English is no longer just 'one language'; it comes in many different shapes and sizes. It is quite different in the many countries and localities where it has been adopted" (Schneider 2011: 2). In these countries and localities, there is the tendency to unconsciously transfer some of the linguistic behaviours of the first language to the English language performance. Consequently, they use the English language in such a way that they incorporate the first language resources while ensuring that the target English language is not very much distorted. Second language users of the English language carry and transfer some of the cultural nuances of the indigenous culture into the English language. In the course, the structure of native-speaker English has to be adjusted to suit the first language surroundings.

In view of the above-mentioned relations, this paper explores proverbial expressions in the English of Akɔɔse native speakers in Cameroon. This is aimed to show how they embellish the English language with their sociolinguistic world view in order to influence behaviour, to justify

¹ *Akɔɔsə* is a coastal Bantu language (with the code 652) of the Mbo Cluster Group (Guthrie 1967) spoken by a people known as Bakossi. This people are located in the Kupe-Muanenguba Division of the South West Region of the Republic of Cameroon..

behaviour, and to lend support to arguments. It equally aims to actually document these proverbs. The work is divided into four sections: background to the study (2), proverbial expression (3), data and methodology (4), and analysis and discussion of findings (5).

2. Background to the study

The European model of linguistic nationalism – 'one nation, one language' – for creating an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983) was adopted in many multilingual third world countries as a homogenizing strategy for nation building. This was done to increase domestic communication with one or two western 'colonial' languages as official languages (Wright 2004). The consequence of this action has made the English language become localized and indigenized in a great many different countries; most especially, in the ex-British colonies in the British Empire. To this end, Schneider (2011) argues that the English language is not only viewed as a useful 'international' language, but also it fulfills important local functions. This is because it comes in contact with other languages in the course of its spread and it is modified thereby. As a consequence, the English language has developed local forms and characteristics, so that not infrequently people enjoy using it in 'their own' way with new and innovative forms and structures emerging at the level of vocabulary, syntax and pronunciation. In a nutshell, the non-native users of the English language appropriate and change the language to reflect their own experiences. The linguistic changes can be subsumed under the notion of structural nativisation; that is, "the emergence of locally characteristic linguistic patterns" (Schneider 2007:5-6). In many places, therefore, local ways of speaking English have become new dialects which are used to express regional pride. This regional pride can be defined as a sense of belonging to a place which finds expression through local culture, including language forms.

African speakers of the English language are daring in the subversion and appropriation of this European language. They freely deploy different linguistic strategies to indigenize and domesticate the borrowed medium they employ. Like Achebe (1964: 348) who claims, "I have been given the language (English) and I intend to stretch it to accommodate my African thoughts", Adesanmi (2002), apparently in response to Ngugi's (1981) idealist posture, also boasts that Africans will not only continue to use the English language, they will also subvert, appropriate and decolonize it to express their African experiences and worldview. Consequently, Africans who use the English language as a medium of communication are extending the frontiers of their inherited colonial language, thereby Africanizing it in meaning and structure (Osundare 1995). It is healthy to point out here that a similar process is found in other territories where English has been introduced via colonization. For instance, Ooi (2000) has pointed out that Singaporean and Malaysian Englishes are rich in collocations that reflect Asian realities. In the Cameroonian context, examples of Africanized expressions can be drawn from the novel entitled *Son of the Native Soil* (Ambanasom 2007) and *The Crown of Thorns* (Asong 1995). In the *Son of the Native Soil*, expressions such as "The **Chinda**² climbed onto the chief's mighty calling drum, **ndek** and delivered the message" (p.16) and "Ekindi entered the hut, sat on a stool and clapped his hands three times, each followed by **Mbe, Mbe, Mbe**³" (p.24) Africanizing the English language can be found. Also, in the *The Crown of Thorns*, Africanized expressions such as "[...] I do not know, and I can swear by **Ku-ngang**⁴ that I am innocent" (p.32) and "A virgin had been chosen to wash the genitals of the

2 *Chinda* (errand boy) and *ndek* (name of a locally made drum) are lexes from the author's home language. This home language known as *Ngie* is one of the indigenous languages spoken in the North West Region of Cameroon.

3 Word of respect uttered by people before addressing traditional rulers in the *Ngie* community. The author of the novel "Son of the Native soil" is a native speaker of *Ngie*.

4 to swear by *Ku-ngang* is the equivalent of the *Nweh* (an indigenous language in the South West Region of Cameroon) expression "lɔzo (to swear) ku'ngàŋ" (name of a juju in the *Nweh* community)

chief⁵ on the first night of his coronation" (p.64) can be found. This is in line with Achebe's (1965) view that the real African must alter the English language to suit African surroundings.

Cameroon is a multilingual country wherein 286 indigenous languages co-exist side-by-side with two official languages (French and English) and a number of lingua francas (Pidgin English, Arab Choa, Fulfulde, Mongo Ewodo etc). Thus, it is evident that linguistic borrowing, interference, code-mixing, loan translation and other manifestations of language contact phenomena are abundant in the English spoken in Cameroon. In fact, the languages mutually exert some influence on one another. Such influence may be from the official languages to the indigenous languages (Bitja'a Kody 1998), from the indigenous languages to official languages (Echu 1999), from the indigenous languages to Cameroon Pidgin English (Mbassi Manga 1973), from Cameroon Pidgin English to the official languages (Kouega 1998), and from one official language to the other (Mbangwana 1999; Kouega 2005).

The blend of these language contact phenomena, in the English spoken in Cameroon, gives it its peculiarity as one of the World Englishes. The peculiarity and efforts made so far to describe Cameroon English (Echu 2003; Anchimbe 2006; Nkemleke 2006; Sala 2006; Simo Bobda 1994, 2009, 2010; Epoge 2012a, 2012b, 2014) reveal that Cameroonians tend to speak English in slightly different ways and with varying degrees of fluency and accuracy, depending on what part of the country they come from and on the level and type of formal education they have received. Besides, the Akòose native speakers stretch the English language, through the use of proverbs, to accommodate Bakossi thoughts, worldview and cosmic vision.

3. Proverbial expression

A proverb is broadly construed as a concise statement, in general use, expressing a shrewd perception about everyday life or a universally recognized truth (e.g. *A person does not die of yaws when he has nails on his fingers*. [Meaning "you do not die in need when you have the means to provide the need"]). It can also be viewed as a phrase, saying, truth, morals, experience, lessons, and a piece of advice concerning life and which has been handed down from generation to generation. Thus, a proverb is a witty saying that captures the logic, culture and observations of a people. It often evolves from traditional lore, history, and religion, and is usually attributed to elders as it is believed to contain the wisdom of the elders or ancestors in the society (Olatunji 1984). Besides, proverbs have a didactic function in that they express cultural principles and concepts on how people should behave in society and in all situations in life. This may be in the form of prescriptive rule or warning, statements ascertained by experience or observation, as well as suggestions on a course of action. Furthermore, they carry emotionally-charged subject matter and express many abstract concepts to extend thought and to demonstrate that things in life are related and systematic in ways we can comprehend.

Though the above-stated, several scholars have attempted to define proverb from the dimension and view point that is more appealing and encompassing to them. Consequently, it has been defined variously as follows: (i) "a lexical element...which is learned as and reused as a single unit with frozen internal structure" (Cram 1994:75); (ii) a succinct and pungent expression, used to add grandeur to an otherwise ordinary speech; (iii) a "phraseme"; that is, a unit that is coherent and cohesive, able to stand independently and be meaningful without recourse to another text (Lamidi 2008); (iv) "a short pithy saying in general use, stating a general truth or a piece of advice" (New Oxford Dictionary of English 2001); (v) "a short sentence, usually known by many people, stating something commonly experienced or giving advice"; and (vi) "a short pithy saying in common and recognised use; a concise sentence, often metaphorical or alliterative in form, which is held to

5 The meaning is "to have sex with the chief". The *Nweh* equivalent of the expression is *la soh* (to wash) *acena* (sex) *fua* (chief). The author of the novel *The Crown of Thorns* is a native-speaker of *Nweh*.

express some truth ascertained by experience or observation and familiar to all" (Oxford English Dictionary 1989). It is healthy to point out here that defining a proverb is an old problem. Mieder (1999) states that not only did such great minds as Aristotle and Plato occupy themselves with the question of what constitutes a proverb, but early Greek scholars in particular wrestled with this seemingly insurmountable task as well.

In fact, there are varied definitions of what a proverb is. However, one thing which comes out clearly from all these definitions is that proverbs are devices which reflect cultural wisdom and express cultural principles on how people should behave in society and in all situations in life. People epitomise their way of thinking, their feelings, and their ideas through proverbs in order to influence behaviour, to justify behaviour, to lend support to arguments, and to reflect the values and philosophy of those who use them. In this way, proverbs are likened to "the wisdom of the streets" and "the children of experience". Thus, with regard to this study, proverbs are broadly construed as witty sayings used to add grandeur to an otherwise ordinary speech, express a general truth ascertain by experience, give a piece of advice, or pass on a moral lesson.

It is worthy of note that proverbs, as pointed out by Arora (1984), are appealing because they are succinct and are characterized by typical stylistic features such as:

- rhyme (e.g. "A friend in need is a friend indeed", "When the cat is away, the mice will play")
- irony (e.g. "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke iv. 23)⁶)
- alliteration (e.g. "Forgive and forget"), metaphor (e.g. "Still water runs deep")
- parallelism⁷ (e.g. "Nothing ventured, nothing gained")
- comparison or contrast (e.g. "Feed a cold and starve a fever")
- ellipsis (e.g. "Once bitten, twice shy")
- hyperbole (e.g. "All is fair in love and war")
- paradox (e.g. "For there to be peace there must first be war")
- personification (e.g. Hunger is the best cook)

Proverbs exist in all human languages, but they may vary in their importance in each culture. In African societies, they are considered important devices that reflect cultural wisdom. For instance, to the Akɔɔse native speaker's mindset, a language without the use of proverbs is like a chest without a treasure. Nkwellengome (2008: 5) succinctly illustrates this with the analogy of the ingredients that constitute a typical Akɔɔse traditional meal, when he states that

a typical Bakossi traditional meal is pounded cocoyam (*ésúbāg*), a salt-less sauce prepared out of cocoyam leaves (*nzab e ngên*) and specially prepared plantain paste (*mpûb*), for which either meat, fish or cocoyam leaves is added. The last of these ingredients, *mpûb*, is what makes the meal particularly enjoyable. This is the part played by proverbs in a conversation for effective communication in *Akɔɔse*.

This citation reveals that proverbs provide a window into local values, ethics, ideas and traditions that direct questioning will not. Consequently, in the context of speaking, a proverb is used to

6 Jesus Christ used this proverb on the occasion of his first open appearance in the synagogue of Nazareth, He refers to the proverb, Physician, heal thyself (Luke iv. 23), as one which his hearers will perhaps bring forward against Himself; and again presently to another, A prophet is not without honour but in his own country, as attested in his own history; and at the well of Sychar He declares, 'Herein is that saying,' or that proverb, 'true, One soweth and another reapeth' (John iv. 37).

7 A 'parallel' proverb has two halves that share the same syntactic structure. Typically, there is some repetition of words and/or affixes.

capture the totality of an experience such as warning, advice, rebuke, etc. which suits the occasion of discourse. For instance, Mr Mbullepie, Mr Mbontehwah, and Mr Peter Jackson were having a conversation on how Mr Nkwellebong, the Manager of the company in which they are shareholders, was managing the company. In the course of the conversation, Mr Mbullepie realized that Mr Mbontehwah and Mr Peter Jackson are very critical of the attitude of Mr Nkwellebong in handling the affairs of the company. Mr Mbullepie therefore makes the comment "Chase away the fox first then later rebuke the chick". Because this expression is an Akɔɔse proverb, Mr Mbontehwah, a native speaker of Akɔɔse, understood its meaning⁸ and origin;⁹ whereas, Mr Peter Jackson, a non-native speaker of Akɔɔse, did not. In this conversation, Mr Peter Jackson, a non-native speaker of Akɔɔse, might wonder why there would be a fox and a chick in a conversation dealing with the management of a company. In fact, the image Mr Peter Jackson may conjure, based upon the literal words of this proverb, would be nonsensical since he does not understand the meaning and origin of the proverbial expression.

This portrays that, native speakers of Akɔɔse usually express their understanding of the beliefs, values and surroundings in ordinary daily conversations through proverbs. In this way, proverbs fill in an important role in the transmission of beliefs, knowledge, and social values. They express principles and concepts on how people should behave towards friends, neighbours, parents, and in all daily situations of life.¹⁰

4. Data and methodology

The data for this study, which are both written and spoken, are obtained through recordings and field investigations over the past six years. The spoken data were obtained through a dictaphone and a tape-recorder. The recordings involved mainly the formal and informal conversations at different social events, debates, conferences and seminars in which Akɔɔse native speakers were involved as well as Akɔɔse native speakers' group meetings. The informal recordings reflect different settings, ages, and educational backgrounds. Some of the data are also drawn from radio and television discussions in the English language in which Akɔɔse native speakers were involved. The spoken data make up two-third of the data. The written material, which make up one-third of the data, comes from the literary productions of Akɔɔse native speakers in English: *The Tradition of a People Bakossi* (Ejedepang-Koge 1986); *The Lady with a Beard* (Alobwed'Epie 2008); *The Lady with a Sting* (Alobwed'Epie 2010) as well as local Newspapers' articles written by Akɔɔse native speakers in English. With the assistance of some English language experts in the country and twenty-five postgraduate students, the present researcher identified an impressive number of proverbial expressions in the written and extemporaneous speech of the subjects.

The next stage in the exercise consisted in checking the meanings of the expressions. The technique adopted was that of giving the meaning of each of the proverbial expression identified. As I am a native speaker of Akɔɔse, I carried out this exercise in order to prove and authenticate the meaning of the proverbial expressions I have got already in the different contexts in which they were used. Besides, since a proverb is a concise sentence, often metaphorical in form, it requires proper decoding. In order to do this, interpretation need to be sought from two or three sources so that the researcher can make an authentic statement. Thus, subjects were asked to give the meaning of the proverb(s) they have used. Some elderly persons, who have a thorough grasp of Akɔɔse, were

8 The meaning is "defend your relative in public; then, later come home and resolve your differences".

9 The fox is an enemy to the chicken; consequently, to the man who owns the chicken. Most often, the owner of the chicken will build a small hut for them and would expect them to remain in it so that they are protected from hawks and foxes. However, the chicken will sometimes stray and go out against the owner's wish. In the event of attack on a chick, there is a tendency for the owner to be angry with the chick and leave it to bear the consequences of its foolish act. However, it is considered wiser to first save the chick's life by chasing the hawk or fox.

10 This is the didactic function of proverbs that the custodians of the Bakossi tradition pass on to every generation

also met to provide meanings to the proverbs identified. Mastery and fluency in Akɔɔse were the most significant variables for this stage. Consequently, all subjects were chosen with these two variables in mind. To be more specific, each potential subject was to meet the following two requirements: (a) be an Akɔɔse native speaker and (b) have mastery and fluency in Akɔɔse. The proverbs cited as illustrations in this work are recognized and accepted by all the informants: they actually provided the same meanings as the ones I got in the different contexts in which they were used.

After ascertaining the meaning, the proverbial expressions were categorised into sub-classes. The sub-classes identified include proverbs: imparting a moral lesson, expressing some truth ascertained by experience or observation, giving pieces of advice concerning issues of life, and giving a warning.

5. Analysis and discussion of findings

A proverb is often woven round a particular theme, concept or idea which has resemblance with the events in which the proverb is used. From the data collected, it is noticed that Akɔɔse native speakers make use of literary aesthetics in the English they speak, through the use of proverbs, to impart a moral lesson (5.1), express some truth ascertained by experience or observation (5.2), give a piece of advice (5.3), or give a warning (5.4).

5.1. Proverbs imparting a moral lesson

A moral lesson relates to the standards of good behaviour which the society believes in. The native speaker of Akɔɔse believes that moral lessons could guide one's life minute by minute towards noble goals, rather than one's life being controlled by self-serving motives, impulses or emotions. To them, proverbs imparting a moral lesson inspire and motivate the addressee by giving him the energy and zest for living and for doing something meaningful. Some of the proverbs identified in the English of Akɔɔse native speakers which are uttered to impart a moral lesson include:

- (1) A person does not die of yaws when he has nails on his fingers. (Meaning "you do not die in need when you have the means to provide the need")
- (2) Praying for rain to fall is calling for weeds to grow. (Meaning "every good thing that comes one's way, comes with its responsibilities")
- (3) It is not the size of the legs that pound palm nuts. (Meaning "size is not ability")
- (4) One does not detach the fingernail from the finger. (Meaning "one's relative will always remain the person's relative whatever the circumstances")
- (5) When a deer grows old, it breast-feeds from the child. (Meaning "when a parent grows old, he/she depends on his/her children for livelihood")
- (6) The leg of a mother-hen does not kill its chick. (Meaning "a disciplinary measure inflicted by a parent on a child is not meant to harm the child")
- (7) The teeth of an old man are not counted. (Meaning "do not expose an error or a mistake of an old man")
- (8) An elder's flatulence does not smell. (Meaning "the error or mistake of an elder is not

exposed")

- (9) When calming down those who set the traps, also calm down those who go checking the traps for game. (Meaning "peacemakers must play a neutral role")
- (10) Let the flies themselves eat the ears of the puppy. (Meaning "let the problems that befall someone take care of him")
- (11) An empty hand doesn't go to the mouth. (Meaning "a person has to work in order to eat". This could be likened to the English proverb "No food for a lazy person")
- (12) When the flow of palm wine reduces, it leaves the tapper with debts. (Meaning "when the means that enables one to meet his needs fail to do so, he faces a difficult situation")
- (13) He who likes the dog must like its wet nose as well. (Meaning "When you accept someone as a friend, spouse etc, you must bear both his/her good and bad behaviour")
- (14) Blood in the mouth is not poured out in its entirety. (Meaning "Not all the evil done to you by your close relative is exposed or said in public")
- (15) Plums beside the home are not harvested with a hook. (Meaning "family issues are not discussed outside the home or with a third party")
- (16) When a woman is good at bed, you shouldn't break her leg. (Meaning "someone's kindness should not be taken as a sign of weakness")
- (17) A man has to hold his manhood so that urine will have direction. (Meaning "a man should have a focus in whatever he is doing")
- (18) A stream meanders because there was no one to direct it. (Meaning "someone makes a mistake or an error because there was no one to guide or to give him a piece of advice")
- (19) Fingernails of an elder are not rid of dirt. (Meaning "an elder will always have the means to solve a problem or provide the necessary need")
- (20) What concern does a bird have with a toothbrush? It hasn't got teeth. (Meaning "Why do you involve yourself in an issue that does not need your attention?" or "why are you interested in something that is of no value to you?")
- (21) A child's machete is sharpest in the morning. (Meaning "a young person's reaction or action comes up very fast")
- (22) It's when the house sends something outside that the outsiders receive. (Meaning "it is when a close aide or relative exposes the weaknesses or wrongdoings of someone that the others hang on to slander or punish the person")

These proverbs are said as part of a person's speech in a context wherein a moral lesson is imparted. This context can be defined as the situation or event that provoked the invocation of a proverb.

Consequently, each proverb must conform to the norms of interpretation and interaction in imparting the lesson. The next group of proverbs includes those that express some truth ascertained by experience or observation.

5.2. *Proverbs expressing some truth ascertained by experience or observation*

Truth denotes real facts about a situation, event or person. This entails enough emotional development to feel guilty when we say something wrong and enough social development to accept our responsibility for respecting propriety and decorum in what we say. In a nutshell, truth entails a cognitive development to be able to place ourselves in another person's shoes. Some of the proverbs, identified in the English of native speakers of Akɔɔse, that express truth ascertained by experience or observation are as follows:

- (23) The head cannot be hit and you expect the teeth to laugh on. (Meaning "a misfortune that befalls a person affects his/her relatives")
- (24) The eye does not take a fish out of a river. (Meaning "seeing something doesn't give you access to it". It can be likened to the English proverb "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride")
- (25) A debt lasts but never rots. (Meaning "any evil committed has to be paid for some time" or "no matter how long it takes, justice must take its course". It can be likened to the English proverb "What goes up must come down")
- (26) The horns are never heavy for a cow. (Meaning "problems that come a man's way are never beyond his ability to bear them")
- (27) The talkative weaver bird does not build a nest. (Meaning "a person who talks so much does not always complement his words with action")
- (28) The head owner does not shave his hair. (Meaning "a person caught or entrapped in a particular situation or problem is not the best person to get himself out of it")
- (29) If you do not know how to shape a wedge, look at the ears of a dog. (Meaning "if you do not know how to do something, be prepared to learn from those who know how to do it")
- (30) Blood follows the vein. (Meaning "a child takes after the parents")
- (31) Knocks do not buy a calabash. (Meaning "no matter how much you desire something, you can't get it if you do not have the means to purchase it". It can be likened to the English proverb "If wishes were horses then beggars would ride")
- (32) It is one piece of a snake that is used in measuring the other piece. (Meaning "if a rule or a law is applicable or was applied to one person, the same rule or law should be applied to the others". This can be likened to the English proverb "what is good for the goose is also good for the gander")
- (33) A person doesn't kill an owl and dread its eyes. (Meaning "if you stir up a situation you should not dread its consequences")

- (34) The palm wine has flown out of the jug but has not damaged it. (Meaning "the foetus has successfully come out of the woman's womb without destroying it or taking away the mother's life")
- (35) When old palm trees die, the young palm trees grow in their place. (Meaning "when old people retire, the young people take over the baton". Or "The old order changes to give place to the new")
- (36) On day does not cause meat to rot on the trap. (Meaning "certain things can be postponed in case of extreme necessity without much trouble or lose")
- (37) When a drum is displaced it also changes its sound. (Meaning "situations and opportunities may never remain the same"; "The further the time elapse for an event, the more difficult it becomes to handle the situation"; or "When a piece of information passes from one person to another, it changes its contents")
- (38) Crying will eventually come out of a very sick person's room. (Meaning "something evil that is kept hidden will surface someday").
- (39) A person who crosses a river, always has water on his legs. (Meaning, "the character of a person always reflects in the person's behaviour")
- (40) A person who harvests palm cones is never tired of carrying water. (Meaning "a person who is used to doing a difficult task easily copes with less difficult ones")
- (41) When a stream rumbles, then there are stones in it. (Meaning "a person is renowned or successful in life when he has people supporting him" or "if a place is renowned then there are people keeping it alive")
- (42) The tip of a cooking spoon is not afraid of the steam from the boiling pot. (Meaning "one is used to difficult situations" or "one is not scared of the ranting and threats")
- (43) Whatever spills over does not attain the initial quantity when gathered. (Meaning "a relationship that went sour cannot be as it were, before it went sour, after reconciliation")
- (44) The Bakossi hut (ndab ejum) does not pass in the bush. (Meaning "a hidden issue will always surface one day")
- (45) The hand that beats the drum never forgets its rhythm. (Meaning "one can hardly give up what he/she is used to doing")
- (46) Pools of water in the morning portray that rain fell at night. (Meaning "every realization entailed a lot of background preparation")
- (47) It is the nose that proves the dog that leaked oil. (Meaning "it is the consequences of an evil act that make people know the perpetrator")
- (48) Your hands wouldn't taste bitter if you haven't washed bitter-leaf. (Meaning "you will not be

judged and condemned if you are not guilty of the act or crime")

- (49) Until a rat eats pepper, it won't know that everything in the kitchen is not meat and fish. (Meaning "it is when one commits an act that he dreads or cannot bear the consequences, will he learn to be cautious")
- (50) A lion den is never empty of its off springs. (Meaning "a family of nobles will always produce people of noble character")
- (51) When someone puts to birth, she does not take palm oil from the band. (Meaning "a person caught or entrapped in a particular situation or problem is not the best person to get himself out of it")
- (52) When you are bitten by a snake, you become afraid of millipedes. (Meaning "when you have been deceived once, you have to be very careful in dealing with issues that come your way". It can be likened to the English proverb "Once bitten, twice shy")
- (53) Fingernails do not refuse itches. (Meaning "you cannot abandon your close relation")
- (54) A rat with stripes does not give birth to an ordinary rat. (Meaning "children take after the parents")
- (55) A corpse does not occupy the grave to the brim. (Meaning "you should not expect to have much before you can give out a share to someone").
- (56) You can tell a blind man that there is oil in the soup but you cannot tell him that there is pepper. (Meaning "you can deceive someone at a time but you cannot deceive him all the time")

A proverb is often woven round a particular theme, concept or idea which has resemblance with the event in which the proverb is used. Thus, the proverbs in (23)-(56) are used in a situation or event wherein a lesson on some truth ascertained by experience or observation is passed on. It is the context of the situation or event that provokes the invocation of a proverb. In this context, each proverb must conform to the norms of interpretation and interaction in passing on the lesson. The next group of proverbs includes those that give pieces of advice concerning issues of life.

5.3. *Proverbs giving pieces of advice concerning issues of life*

A piece of advice is what is judged wise and necessary at a point in time in order to guide the addressee's life towards noble goals or set objectives. Pieces of advice can not only guide, but also enable the addressee to know where he is going to before he can get there. The proverbs below were identified in this category in the English of native speakers of Akɔɔse.

- (57) A corpse that has nobody to hold it does not tilt its head. (Meaning "a person who does not have someone to help him, does not anticipate help")
- (58) A domestic yam fruit sprouts in the eye (bud) while a wild yam fruit sprouts in the waist (middle). (Meaning "a sensible and cautious person takes necessary precautions". It can be likened to the English proverb "A word to a wise is sufficient")

- (59) A young snake that is old enough to cross the road is also mature enough to have its head chopped off. (Meaning "a child who is grown up enough to cause trouble is also mature to face the consequences")
- (60) If a man does not understand the language of the drum, he says the drum is making a noise. (Meaning "a man cannot appreciate what he does not understand")
- (61) When a finger touches excreta it is not cut off, it is only washed. (Meaning "if a person makes a mistake or an error, he/she is not rejected for it. He is only corrected ")
- (62) The bitter kola does not have lobes. (Meaning "people of one family or group do things as one")
- (63) Chase away the fox first then later rebuke the chicken. (Meaning "defend your relative in public; then, come home and resolve your differences")
- (64) When thieves sleep in two different houses they get convicted. (Meaning "when two parties don't agree on an issue of common interest, they don't succeed").
- (65) However a pig is washed it never forgets mud. (Meaning "no matter what you do to change some people, they may always return to their evil ways")
- (66) When the river travels alone, it meanders. (Meaning "a person who does things by himself without consulting others or concerting with others always makes mistakes" This can be likened to the English proverb "Two heads are better than one")
- (67) When the borders of a farm are extensive, the suckers get rotten. (Meaning "when someone has too many responsibilities, certain things may not be done correctly")
- (68) Don't throw out the child together with the water you used in bathing him. (Meaning "reject a person's opinion but not the person")
- (69) They don't count heads (corpses) at the end of war. (Meaning "if people who have had a problem decide to reconcile, it is not always good to mention the cause of their problem while reconciliation is going on, to avoid hurting the wounds". It also means "for true reconciliation and lasting peace, the parties concerned must bury the past")
- (70) A child being carried on the back never knows how lengthy the road is. (Meaning "a person at the receiving side never understands how difficult it is to provide")
- (71) Don't shelter from rain, where you know you will not be able to sleep. (Meaning "don't stir up a situation knowing you wouldn't be willing to accept or bear the consequences")
- (72) The chick that peaches harmless ants should know that the sky is not yet rid of hawks. (Meaning "a person who bullies or hurts innocent people should bear in mind that justice will prevail")
- (73) When kola nut last long in the mouth, it becomes acerbic. (Meaning "a discussion on an issue

that last for a long period of time, becomes boring")

- (74) If you have eaten pork, you shouldn't be afraid of imprisonment. (Meaning "when you are guilty for a crime committed, you shouldn't run away from its consequences")

A proverb is a tool used to guide the addressee's life towards noble goals. Thus, the proverbs above are said as part of a person's speech in a situation or event wherein a piece of advice concerning an issue of life is given out. In this context, each proverb must conform to the norms of interpretation and interaction in giving out pieces of advice concerning issues of life. The next group of proverbs includes those that give warning.

5.4. *Proverbs giving warning*

The proverbial expressions that give a warning are addressed to someone to make him aware, in advance, of impending harm, danger or evil in the course of an action. So, it is something that makes the addressee understand that there is a possible danger or problem, especially in the future. Some of these proverbs which characterize the English of *Akwɔsɛ* native speakers are:

- (75) A young porcupine that does not avoid traps doesn't live long. (Meaning "a child who does not avoid confrontations or trouble does not live long or is hardly successful")
- (76) A young snake that is old enough to cross the road is also mature enough to have its head chopped off. (Meaning "a child who is grown up enough to cause trouble is also mature to face the consequences")
- (77) A person who invokes rain should have a leaf to cover himself up. (Meaning "a person who stirs up a trouble should be ready to face the consequences")
- (78) When the Mbesú¹¹ dance is too prolonged, people clap on their laps. (Meaning "too much of anything becomes a disease")
- (79) An eye that will go bad doesn't respond to eye drugs. (Meaning "anybody who doesn't heed advice ultimately ends up in trouble")
- (80) You don't shoot an elephant on its forehead. (Meaning "you do not challenge an elder in public")
- (81) One bad tooth makes the whole mouth smell. (Meaning "a bad example shown by one person gives a bad impression of the whole group or community")
- (82) The dog that doesn't listen to the sound of the hunting bell ends up not being a good hunting dog. (Meaning "the child who doesn't heed pieces of advice given to him, grows up not being a good child").
- (83) A finger that is stiff does not remove grubs. (Meaning "People hardly open up to a person who is stingy")
- (84) A person does not die over a raffia palm for its stalk. (Meaning "you shouldn't be deceived by

11 *Mbesú* is a traditional Bakossi dance whereby dancers clap their hands while dancing.

the outward appearance". This can be likened to the English language proverb "All that glitters is not gold")

- (85) A tree that refuses to bend for the wind must be uprooted. (Meaning "a person who does not respect the laws of the community must be dealt with accordingly". It also means that "a person who does not succumb to popular pressure will end up in a doom")
- (86) A child who does not know that a leaf is medicinal calls it mere vegetable. (Meaning "a person who does not know the worth or value of something cannot appreciate it)
- (87) Tickling breeds laughter. (Meaning "Serious things begin like a joke")
- (88) The red ant is still under the bed. (Meaning "danger is still lurking around")
- (89) A short man cannot hang his coat where his hand cannot reach. (Meaning "do not anticipate things you know that are not within you reach". It can be liken to the English proverb which holds that "cut your coat according to your cloth")
- (90) A wizard is not half white. (Meaning "you cannot tell the nature of someone by merely looking at his/her appearance).
- (91) Flatulence calls for faeces. (Meaning "provocation or mockery breeds anger and repulsiveness")
- (92) It is trouble that has caused prawns to have a deformed back. (Meaning "someone's miserable situation is as a result of something")

Proverbs are used to influence behaviour and to lend support to arguments. These proverbs are used in a context wherein a warning against a potentially risky or damaging course of action is given out. In this context, each proverb must conform to the norms of interpretation and interaction in giving out the warning.

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined the use of proverbial expressions in the English language spoken by native speakers of Akɔ̀ɔ̀se in Cameroon. It comes out from the data that proverbs that characterized the English of this group of people express their cultural and sociolinguistic world view. They are a tool which native speakers of Akɔ̀ɔ̀se use to justify the actions of people, criticize bad ethical and immoral behaviours, and pass on a moral lesson. Through the use of proverbs, native speakers of Akɔ̀ɔ̀se try to express the wealth of philosophy, wisdom and perception of life as they affect and control their community. Though the proverbs have been rendered into the English language, they retain the vivid imagery and culture of the Akɔ̀ɔ̀se language. There is evidence that native speakers of Akɔ̀ɔ̀se make use of literary aesthetics in the English they speak, through the use of proverbs, to impart a moral lesson, express some truth ascertain by experience and observation, give a piece of advice or a warning. The proverbs provide local values, ethics, ideas, and traditions into the English language. In addition to the above findings, this paper has documented Akɔ̀ɔ̀se proverbial expressions in the English language as an important aspect of World Englishes and proverbial studies. In all, this paper argues that Akɔ̀ɔ̀se native speakers transpose the Akɔ̀ɔ̀se proverbs into the English language in order to make the language a chest with treasure that express their cultural and

sociolinguistic world view.

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