

The Defiance of Postproverbials in 9ice and Asa's *Pètèpètè*

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Abstract

Proverbs are the origin of postproverbial, albeit there is a purposeful misinterpretation of their meaning as time goes on and humour develops. The Yorùbà communication system relies heavily on proverbs, which are an integral aspect of postproverbial meanings. When it is culturally appropriate, proverbs are frequently employed by adults, while younger people are expected to speak modestly and refrain from using proverbs when speaking with seniors. The created postproverbials, which are well-liked and employed by people of all ages and are utilised without any set rules, are used as "catchphrases" to lampoon events or establish meaning in circumstances, particularly among individuals who have a common experience. The postproverbials in *Pètèpètè* lyrics, are examined in relation to the neo-Yoruba experience. Purposive random sampling is engaged in the selection of the lyrics being part of the qualitative research approach employed. The proverbs in *Pètèpètè* are employed as prefixes to their postproverbial forms, causing the original proverbs to be remixed in communication systems, in language use and new media such as in memes and gifs. The deviation agreement in the Yorùbà communication system's postproverbial comprehension is the concern of this paper.

Keywords: Postproverbials, Deviance, *Pètèpètè*, 9ice, Asa

Introduction

According to Finnegan (2012, p. 379), proverbs "occur almost everywhere in Africa, in apparent contrast with other areas of the world". This makes them highly critical in understanding African cultures and wisdom (Chiangong 2015). Though Hrisztova-Gotthardt, refers to proverbs as;

...relatively short, firmly shaped, completed sentences, which are often based on certain syntactic models, use different figures and usually express messages in a metaphorical form. Proverbs express wisdom, rules, and opinions and, in contrast to earlier times, fulfill different pragmatic functions with their dominant didactic function. Proverbs are generally known utterances in a linguistic or cultural community, but are not considered absolute truths (2010, p. 25).

Aguoru (2012) describes proverbs as contemporary deviation from norms that continue to reflect on the traditional structure of proverbs, a new rhetorical tradition among the younger generations of users (Raji-Oyelade 1999, p. 74). The structural fixity often associated with traditional proverbs especially òwè Yorùbà (Yorùbà Proverbs in Bada 1973, Ojoade 1983, Areje 1985 and Makamani 2012) is rapidly evolving and giving rise to new proverbs and of course new structures, meanings, and values that tend to replace their older versions (Adetutu Aragbuwa 2020, p. 2 and Raji-Oyelade 1999, p. 75). These newer proverbs have been termed “postproverbials” (Raji-Oyelade 1999, p. 75) and “anti-proverb” (Mieder and Tóthné Litovkina, 1999, pp. 1-6). It is also agreed that the opposite of proverbs is postproverbial and anti-proverbs since the start of its transformation from proverbs.

In this study, postproverbials will be more emphasized as a product of proverbs in Yoruba culture as against the European backdrop in anti-proverbs. According to Raji-Oyelade (1999:36) and as highlighted below post-proverbial has reformulated proverbs by changing words and sentences, this is because proverbs maintain their original forms.

Example 1: Proverb

E ni t'ójìn sí kòtò, ko ará ìyókù lógbón
He who falls into a pit, is a lesson to others.

Post-proverbial form

E ni t'ójìn sí kòtò, ojù è ló fo
He who falls into a pit is blind.

Example 2: Proverb

Òwú iyá gbòn, l' omo ó ran
The cotton that the mother harvests are what the child would spin

Post-proverbial form

Òwú iyá gbò' n, yó fi hunso ni
The cotton that the mother harvests, she would use to weave cloth

Here, the premise for the postproverbial forms of the proverbs is explained in different outcomes with a deviation from the proverbial form, although someone who falls into a pit can either teach a lesson or might as well be blind, and the cotton that a mother harvest can be transformed into resources best known to a child or be used for a cloth since the primary function of cotton is to weave cloth or make cloth, the proverb brings the lessons but the averted version of its post proverbial form states the obvious.

Many scholars have explored the concept of “Asakasa”, a deviant culture in traditional Yoruba proverbs context, with little attention paid to “Asakasa” within Yoruba post-proverbial parlance within the contemporary music in Nigeria. *Pètèpètè* is typical of such contemporary Nigerian Music. There is a particular variant of the speech act that is attributed and ascribed to politicians, entertainers, orators, artists, poets, and even fictional characters created by authors. These sets of postproverbials with identifiable authors are referred to as “eponymous postproverbials” (Raji-Oyelade, 2012, pp. 73-86). In carrying out this examination of semantic differences in construed traditional Yoruba proverbs and their post-proverbial others in this study contributes to the better understanding of the proverbial dynamics of changing norms among contemporary Yoruba speakers.

Methodology

The study employed a case study research approach using literature and content analysis on postproverbials. The purposive sampling method was used under the nonprobability sampling technique to select proverbs used in this study. Therefore, proverbs that were most appropriate from the text *Pètèpètè*, were purposively selected and examined. This text was chosen because of the poetic use of proverbs (Okpewho 1988) and its postproverbial forms. The content analysis approach (as implied in Fairclough, N., & Wodak, R. 1997 and Hrisztova-Gotthardt, H. 2010) was used to analyse, interpret and discuss the proverbs selected for the study. The proverbs were transcribed and translated from the Yoruba language to the English language. Having selected the samples of proverbs to be included in the analysis, the categories of the contents of the proverbs were defined, and, the recording units were chosen (each item in its entirety). Data analysis and interpretation were done within the Yoruba social environment which shaped the activities of the usage of indigenous local proverbs. The interpretation was based on the usage of the selected indigenous proverbs by the Yoruba community people of Igbesa, Ogun State, Nigeria.

***Pètèpètè* lyrics**

The younger generation of Yorùbás in Nigeria have been engaging variety of forms in day-to-day discourse and in the arts. Nigerian artist, Abolore Adegola Akande known with his stage name 9ice (pronounced like the English word Nice) did a song featuring Bukola Elemide with her stage name Àsá (pronounced as Asha in Yoruba and meaning Hawk in English) popular for her good lines in the lyrics of '*Pètèpètè*' which was released in 9ice's second album 'Tradition' in 2009 where proverbial sayings are used in their ultimate form. *Pètèpètè* by 9ice and Asa explore postproverbials as a movement in context. However, proverbs are wise sayings usually used by adults according to the Yorùbás. It is essential to note that the accents were used to make understanding the lyrics easier, although the accents were used individually on words and without the influence of the artiste's accent or songs' melody. The lyrics engage differently and have depth, whilst engaging humor and unnecessary exaggeration. To analyze the meaning of the lyrics it is important to explain the meaning of *Pètèpètè*. *Pètèpètè* is clay or simply put mud that stains a person when splattered which can cause embarrassment or dissatisfaction. It is a type of soil that is commonly seen in wet areas and not necessarily dirty areas. The *Pètèpètè* song/lyrics however, is used to satirize and politicize (Lazar 2005) the election processes and gendering in Nigeria.

Data Presentation

The data collated from the study is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: *Pètèpètè* lyrics: Translation and symbolic meaning

Lines	Original Lyrics	Inferred meaning from the Lyrics in English
1.	Ojó re bí àná ta gb'omìnira	Just like yesterday, we got our Independence
2.	1960 N'ígbà yen it is easy gégé bó se wí	1960, things were easy then, as I was told
3.	tí arúgbó, t'omidan ló n dù u nú pé ati d'òmìnira	Both the old and the young were happy we now have our freedom
4.	òmìnira indeed àbí, ewò náírà wa	Freedom indeed, look at our Naira

5.	Ìlú po lú kú rú mu su	The cities are in chaos
6.	T'èwe t'àgbà ló n jé iyán won nísu	Both the young and elderly are dissatisfied
7.	Àbé òri, èwe eri, sùgbón e òfèwí	Are you not aware? the young are aware but choose not to talk
8.	Àbé òri , àgbà eri àtenuje lófè p'ayín	Are you not aware? the elderly is aware, but they are greedy
9.	Pètèpètè t'anà ní pòpá	The mud is sprinkled with a rod
10.	Ení bátabà, kólo mófe ni	Whomever the mud hits should bear the shame
11.	Sébè l'ema sùn?	Is that where you'll sleep?
12.	Tebá sopé e 'òmo n Kankan	If you say you know nothing
13.	Èyìn àrò lema wà	You'll be left behind
14.	Méwa n' séle ò	Things are happening
15.	Sébè l'ema sùn? (sébè l'ema sùn?)	Is that where you'll remain? (Is that where you'll remain?)
16.	Bí eni wò'séjú akàn o	If you stay idle, seconds will catch up.
17.	Èyìn aro lema wà (Méwa n' séle ò)	You'll be at the back of the dye (Things are happening)
18.	Kíni sùurù tí ò l'érè?	What's patience without profit?
19.	Kíni isé tí kò s'érè?	What's work without profit?
20.	Wón sá l'éyàn tí ò l'órúko	At least they know famous people
21.	Ókúkú sisé, ó dè'n réré è	He works and he gets profits
22.	Ah! e dè s'opé a siwà l'ómodé	Ah! and you claim we are still kids
23.	Nkan sá l'eye ní je k'agbádó t'ódé	At least the birds were eating before we discovered corn
24.	9ice òrò gidi l'oso	9ice, you've spoken well
25.	Òrò to ó ní'lárí l'oso	Your words are beneficial
26.	Aní làti fi làákà yè sù	We have to apply wisdom
27.	K'á sòrò síbi t'òròwà	And tell ourselves the truth
28.	Bódàsìkò 'bò yen	When it's time for an election
29.	Wón á wá s'àdúgbò	They'll come to the neighborhood
30.	Wón á'somo jéjé	And act calm
31.	E jé kán wolé tán gbogbo èjé tán jé dá w'oké 'sé	After they win the election, they fail on their promises

32.	Tóbá tún se wéré, lá síkò ìbì	After a little while, during elections
33.	Won ání k'òdó tòlo bere	They'll ask the youths to line up for votes
34.	Won á senu méré, kàlòkàlò gbé òkàn mì senu wúyé	They'll act gentle, all in deceit
35.	Àfira àdátú ti wolé, taloo dibò fun?	Someone who knows nothing has won the election, who voted for him?
36.	Pàsán ta fi na 'yálé	The cane used to beat the senior wife
37.	ónbe lóri àjà fun	Is on the roof
38.	Òdó elo túramú, emá je an'pàgbon ní fun fun	The youths rethink, don't see grey as white
39.	Fún yín, mowí tèmí	I have given my advice
40.	Àsegbé kan kòsí o	Every deed has a consequence
41.	Àsèpamó lówà	You can only hide them for a while
42.	Àse sílè làbò wàbá	Whatever you sow, you will reap
43.	Èmi otí kú,	I'm not dead
44.	mo s'ìlè s'ísé	I can still work
45.	Mo s'ìlè f'owó r'ewó	I can still use my hands to work
46.	Mo shì lè túlé mise	I can still amend my home
47.	Sébè l'ema sùn?	Is that where you'll remain?
48.	Tebá sopé e' òmo òkànkàn	If you say you know nothing
49.	Èyìn àrò lema wà (Sébè l'ema)	You'll be left behind
50.	Méwa n' séle ò	Things are happening
51.	Sébè l'ema sùn? (Sébè l'ema sùn?)	Is that where you'll remain? (Is that where you'll remain?)
52.	Bí eni wò'séjú akàn o	If you stay idle, seconds will catch up
53.	Èyìn àrò lema wà (Méwa n' séle ò)	You'll be at the back of the dye (Things are happening)
54.	Àsá osé omo òlá	Asa, thanks, Great child

Source: Author's Creation, 2022

The *Pètèpètè* lyrics are satirical lines explaining the political situation in the Nigerian electioneering system. These two artists play on some induced proverbs and give an allusion that their audience can relate with. Although the social background of the artiste who is from Ogbomoso influenced his random use of proverbs in his lyrics most especially *Gangan aso*, *Pètèpètè*, and *Renaissance* his popular songs. The narration of his lyrics makes it easier to identify the transformation and movement from proverbs to postproverbials. The Yoruba and English words are coined, restructured, and used importantly to advise, reprimand, implore both old and young citizens of Nigeria, and lubricates their sleepy edges for a subtle wake-up

call. The song satirizes elections in Nigeria and how they are carried out, the political undertones of political leaders are analyzed creatively. It also portrays Nigeria's election with a household Yoruba insinuation that we can relate with and understand. Their (the artistes') remark has expressed effortlessly the way forward and what to do shortly to have a better future which is not solely the duty of the elders but that of the younger generation. The Pètèpètè lyrics are used in context and some words written in bold letters in the lyrics 'foregrounded' for emphasis and the purpose of this study. Some dominant and repeated lines are foregrounded to categorize and differentiate extant verses with the base proverbs and the actualization of its post-proverbial forms.

Pètèpètè t'anà ní pòpá Ení bátabà, kólo mófe ni (in lines 9 and 10) base proverb

Literary meaning

The mud is sprinkled with a rod, whoever it hits, should run away.

In a Nigerian traditional family, especially in a polygamous setting, a lot of serious matters and disputes arise regularly. There are also customary courts where these cases can be settled or with the head of the family (Olóríebí). However, the matter gets out of hand most times that some people who contributed to the argument and dispute will be called and most times some of these eyewitnesses run away or disappears since they know they contributed to the disagreement and want to save face. This proverb is usually used to warn anybody to run or disappear if they do not want to be disciplined because the case will be a tough one where no one will be spared. Pètèpètè is a figurative word that indicates the actual discipline and to ridicule anyone at its receiving end. This proverb is analyzed conversationally throughout the lyrics. The start of the same proverb is the song's title Pètèpètè although the post-proverbial realization of this proverb is in the concluding part of the proverb on the next line, the addition on the continuation of the proverb in

Sébè l'ema sùn? (line 11)

Literary meaning: Do you want to sleep there?

This addition to the original proverb in lines 9 and 10 was repeated in the lyrics. This repetition is foregrounded to make it easier to identify the movement of the proverbs to their postproverbial form making the complete postproverbial version to be:

Pètèpètè t'anà ní pòpá Ení bátabà, ó lè sùn

The mud is sprinkled with a rod, whoever the mud hits, can sleep

This is the opposite of the first part that agrees that the one who is sprinkled with mud should run away. Here, there's a deviation from the first actualization and it almost seems impossible to sleep with specks of dirt on the body. It becomes important to state here that Pètèpètè is like mud which equates to dirt; has seen in the first meaning. This change has become popular and it is used in conversations among both old and young persons to state ironically that anyone can sleep when they are supposed to be alert and ready when they mean the opposite.

The communication process employed in the lyrics and the video of the song explained further that the artists are talking about the tough, poverty-stricken, dirty situation of the nation Nigeria. Nigerians are experiencing this situation but none of the leaders or citizens seem to see anything wrong, with no one doing a thing about the situation and everyone, seems to be sleeping deep in slumber. The lyrics described an electioneering

campaign in Nigeria and portrays both artists as the only ones who are alert and can see these things.

Humour in the Postproverbials

To think postproverbials do not project humor in its meaning is to deny its actualization. Proverbs are used by stern adults (the tone is serious too) to drive home the point they are projecting while postproverbials, on the other hand, are the additions or development added as the proverb moves from its original phase to another pregnant phase (a movement that explains the change in the meaning of proverbs) in a less serious tone. To experience the part of the humor in postproverbials, some subordinate words are used as the opposite of the former uniquely. It is not that the opposite words are added just like that, they are creatively created in a way that will engage an indirect funny way of saying the original form whilst using them in sentences and sometimes in isolation. The actualization of **Pètèpètè t'anà ní pòpá Ení bátabà, kólo mófe ni Sébè l'ema sùn? (question)** as shown in the lyrics is translated literarily as: The mud is sprinkled with a rod, whomever it hits, should run away. Do you want to sleep there? Code mixed with humor as the answer to the above question. You can sleep there now (implied meaning) is the answer to the question) as an isolated postproverbial form is **Ení bátabà ólè dúró /sun bè/ sun bè now** (now is an English word which is mixed with Yoruba here like in code mixing) The interpretation is: can sleep there.

The Deviance in Postproverbials

For a very long-time, studies have usually originated from known to the unknown, that is why adults usually say experience is the best teacher. Postproverbial has reversed this logic (Raji-Oyelade 1999, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2013). It seems the younger generation revolted and made a joke out of the sensibilities of the oracle. Postproverbials here are experienced for few years, unlike their proverbial original forms which have stood the test of time, and has crept from the past, the future of postproverbials is yet to be known but the youths seem to be the new teachers of postproverbials because they discovered it and transferred from the younger generation to the older generation, more like from the unknown to known methodology. Postproverbials are hinged on some studies and for this study, the following features of postproverbials highlighted from Raji-Oyelade (2004, pp. 199-212) are used to shape the postproverbial forms of the proverb used by 9ice and Asa lyrics in *Pètèpètè*

Postproverbials have their origin in proverbs, just like in **Pètèpètè t'anà ní pòpá Ení bátabà, kólo mófe ni** It existed as a movement from Oral tradition to a contemporary tradition of being witty with words which made it generally humorous and projected in a way that it can be remembered easily, just like in the post-proverbial form **Pètèpètè t'anà ní pòpá Ení bátabà, -kó sùn sí bé**. Which simply completes it to sleep instead of running or to disappear but how does one sleep when they are supposed to run? This explains this feature of postproverbials which primarying function is not to disseminate wise words but to generate humor or a position of being petty with words in a funny way and change an original proverb.

Postproverbials are passed down from the younger generations to the older generations. This is the only way postproverbials work; there is a total change in its orientation and formulations as against the older generations to the young generations though it's still the same process of generation to generation. Postproverbials are wills from my daughter to me. Just like from 9ice and Asa to the leaders of the country. In typical Yoruba settlements, the younger generations should not even think of advising their experienced ancestors but the advent of education and globalization has made some of them wiser if not all.

Postproverbials are gradually becoming a popular and humorous communication tool on social media and it is flexible since it is not restricted to single authorship, it can be reviewed from time to time, for instance, the same post-proverbial forms can be changed to different forms, it could employ forms in English and some in a different reality.

- a. **Pètèpètè t'anà ní pòpá Ení bátabà, -kó sùn sí bé** (the post-proverbial part, which is the concluding part of the sentence here simply says the person on the receiving end of the mud should sleep there)
- b. **Pètèpètè t'anà ní pòpá Ení bátabà, -òun ni problem** (the post-proverbial part, which is the concluding part of the sentence here simply says the person on the receiving end of the mud is the problem or a bad person)

These two realities mean different things but champion the same goal in different ways. Postproverbials are not metaphorical, or idiomatic expressions. They are similar to simile and more understandable maybe because they are coined to exhibit humorous characteristics. They are deviations from the stern norm of correcting people to a funnier way of serving that purpose. Postproverbials are not to be replaced with proverbial situations. You can use proverbs and generate remorse; you cannot achieve the same emotion whilst using postproverbials.

Discussion

Sébè l'ema sùn? (Is that where you will remain?) is repeated in lines 11 and 15 although its actualization in lines 12, 13, and 14, 16, and 17 respectively is implied in the lyrics. So, "ele sun" (you can sleep) can suffice as the new post-proverbial form for the *Pètèpètè* proverbs.

Teba so pe 'o mo nkankan- If you say you know nothing
Eyin aro lema waa - You'll be left behind
Mewa n'sele o- Things are happening
Sébè l'ema sùn? (Sébè l'ema sùn) - Is that where you'll remain?
(Is that where you will remain?)
Bi eni wo'seju akan o - If you stay idle, seconds will catch up.
Eyin aro lema wa a (mewa nsele o) - You'll be at the back of the dye (Things are happening)

This actualization explains why we cannot afford to remain at the same spot after the mud is sprinkled with a rod and we cannot bear the shame of what will or has happened. It is humorous to tell a person with stained clothes or someone that has been shamed to wait in the same spot but postproverbials as the opposite of proverbs more often than not did not change with all the dirty stories but transform the situation to make it better. The play on words to be witty makes the coined post-proverbial more interesting.

Example 2

Sébè l'ema sùn? is repeated in lines 47 and 51 and its actualization in lines 48, 49, 50, 52, and 53.

Sébè l'ema sùn- Is that where you'll remain?
Teba sope 'omo nkankan- If you say you know nothing
Eyin aro lema waa (sebe la ma)- You'll be left behind
Mewa n'sele o- Things are happening
Sébè l'ema sùn (Sébè l'ema sùn)- Is that where you'll remain? (Is that where you'll remain?)

Bi eni wo'seju akan o- If you stay idle, seconds will catch up
Eyin aro lema wa a (mewa nsele o) - You'll be at the back of the dye (Things are happening)

From this part of the lyrics, its actualization, and formulations, “things are happening” are repeated on this side of the lyrics and it explains the emphasis on “things are happening and what will happen in the literary and implied world. The artists use both the emic and etic approach to drive home their points which is a good thing, as it helps us understand the lyrics better, and the post-proverbial part that didn't gain prominence until it was repeated. The lines of the lyrics from beginning to the end are simile-like in their analysis and within the lyrics too, which explains how this work of art is understood, if you do this, this way, you will likely be this way or turn out to be like a certain person.

Conclusion

Postproverbial is an evolving and re-evolving concept, restricting this concept means there is agreed documentation on certain general rules applicable to its formulation that cannot be exceeded. The obvious truth about postproverbials is that it is always the opposite of Proverbs with its base form in proverbs. Proverbs are like a prefix in a postproverbial sentence which sometimes is not a total deviation from the norm and rules. However, new disciplines and analysis will identify postproverbials possibilities in the analysis of new media which will include videos, music, and conversations that might not necessarily reflect a half change in proverbs but a totality in the meaning and the construction of the original proverbs.

Also, diverse views in the study of postproverbials will be introduced in recent times with the rules changing to accommodate the experiences and everyday language of the youths, different ways of coining, and transforming proverbs from postproverbials which will be both humorous and aid in the communication process of the postproverbial movement.

At the moment, we have various postproverbials being expressed in the same language without engaging code-mixing and code-switching, this makes post-proverbial is an extensive study that can create an idiolect that will influence the structure of a group and community users both online and offline and is not exhaustible.

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