

IYABODE OMOLARA AKEWO DANIEL

PROVERBS AND MODERNITY: TAKING THE PROVERBS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE ELDERS

Abstract: Proverbs have usually been considered the preserve of the elders in the society because they are seen as the repository of the wisdom of the race. However, the creativity that comes with the youthful incursion into proverbial expression is not considered a serious communicative occurrence in Nigeria. This paper thus investigates the use of proverbs as a sign of communicative creativity by the youth as well as linguistic dynamism. Ethnographic and linguistic instruments were employed in investigating different proverbs from a Nigerian language, Yoruba. The original proverbs and their post-proverbial forms were presented and the essence of modern adaptation as a feature of linguistic dynamism as well as communicative creativity were presented. It is argued that this linguistic posturing exposes the communicative dynamism that exists in Nigerian languages to fit into the postmodern context and relevance of proverbs in the twenty-first century world of the Nigerian society.

Keywords: Proverbs, Post-proverbials, Youths, Communicative creativity, Modernity, Linguistic dynamism.

Introduction

Proverbs have been variously described by scholars. However, the most poignant seems to be their description as an encapsulation of the wisdom of elders within the race of humans (Mieder, 1997; Soares, 2010). A Yoruba proverb actually asserts this in unequivocal terms by saying: *Enu agba l'obi ti ngbo* (The kolanut is truly mature only in the mouth of the elders), which actually suggests that words of wisdom are only found in the mouth of elders in the society. However, Daniel (2008) as well as many other scholars have challenged this view of proverbs as a wisdom that is the prerogative of elders within the society. It is obvious that proverbs are a product of linguistic employment and communicative intents. It is from this angle of proverbs as a communicative instrument that we choose to approach the pare-

miological considerations in this paper. Such an approach easily lends itself to the manipulation and adaptation of the usual restricted form, structure and nature of proverbs.

Communication is the essence of language use (Daniel, 2012). The idea here is that proverbs are actually used for communicative purposes (Mieder, 1997). This is why one cannot agree with Raji-Oyelade's (2012: 69-70 cited in 2014:16) description of post-proverbials as logophagic and logorrhoea, which counters his later acceptance of the fact that these modern renditions of proverbial sayings are actually a sign of cultural dynamism. This falls in line with the general attitude that what is new is foolish. We do not agree with this posture. For us, more interesting and compelling is the idea of proverbs as tools of communication. This position agrees with Fayemi (2009).

Proverbs as a Form

Scholars have tried to define proverbs. Martin (2015) defines proverbs as "short and pithy sayings that express some traditionally held **truth**. They are usually metaphorical and often, for the sake of memorability, alliterative." Nnolim (1983:36) describes a proverb as a recognised **truth** or shrewd observation about practical life that is ascertained through experience. Mieder (2004) defines a proverb as a "short phrase, usually from the folklore, containing **wisdom, truth, morality** and traditional perspectives expressed in a metaphorical sense, **stable** and trainable and **transmitted from generation to generation**." This is borrowed from Mieder's definition as presented in Soares (2010:163-164). Soares himself goes further to assert that: "*Proverbs are the condensed **good sense** of nations*' and their **permanence** is not in danger if we believe that '*Time passes, but the sayings stay*'" (Soares, 2010:164).

We have highlighted some important concepts that one should find objectionable in these definitions of what constitutes a proverb. The idea of traditional views of proverbs easily makes us see proverbs as long standing and thus unchangeable. It is therefore not surprising that Mieder sees them as stable and Soares avers their permanence (cf. Jegede, 2008). That they contain truth and wisdom has been variously challenged by scholars (see Daniel, 2008; Oluyamo, 2006; Yusuf, 1999; Ezeigbo, 1996; Onayemi, 2004, to mention a few). The truth contained in prov-

erbs thus becomes suspect. One can only imagine that this supposed truth is also why they are permanent in nature and get transmitted from generation to generation.

Balogun (2010) argues that proverbs are “cruel and unfair pithy sayings that derogate the dignity, integrity, rights and freedom of the womenfolk” (pg. 25). This definition again questions the issue of wisdom in the definitions provided above. It even raises questions on the issue of morality as contained in the description of proverbial sayings. We then wonder how proverbs can ever get defined. Soares (2010) also raised the confusion over the definition of proverbs in the paper referred to above even though a definition was later provided as quoted above. Our view is that the consensus by scholars that proverbs are fluid and non-definitive in their description is a safe position to take for now (Fayemi, 2009; Taiwo, 2010).

Modernity and the Elders' Wisdom

Within the paremiological study has remained the idea of the wisdom of the race as a defining factor for proverbial inquiry (Daniel, 2008; Jegede, 2008/2012, Kehinde, 2004; Mieder, 2004 in 2014; Soares, 2010). This thus ascribes to the elders within the society the custody of the wisdom that exists within that society. Nonetheless, the coercion that comes with such supposed age-defined custody has been challenged and presented as not too practical. Daniel (2008) asserts that such age-related supposed wisdom is actually an attempt at coercion of the younger generation to fall in line with the perceived ‘tradition’ of the race. Onayemi (2004), Oluyamo (2006) and Balogun (2010) all wondered at this supposed wisdom of the elders that results in the unfair treatment of women in the society.

Is it therefore any surprise that a Yoruba maxim makes the youngster that wants to make an incursion into this preserve of the elders having to do so apologetically by using a ‘by your leave’ with: “*Toto se bi owe o!*” (Let it not be like a proverb o!) after using a proverb in the course of a conversation where people older than they are present? In essence it should not seem like they are making use of proverbs before the elders. The elder of course acknowledges and says: “*Wa a pa'mi*” (You will make another proverb) to show approval and permission given.

Raji-Oyelade (2014) recaps his earlier works on the modernist structure of proverbs. Like noted above, his downgrading of the creative usages of these proverbial sayings as ‘rupture’ to us devalues the innovativeness of his identification of Yoruba post-proverbials (cf. Litovkina, Vargha, Barta & Hrisztova-Gotthardt, 2008). This is the 21st century and there is no way the people of this age can be expected to live like the people of the 20th century. Mieder (2014) agrees with this position. Ten years ago, technophobia was not seen as a problem; but today, non-technological compliance can make a person dysfunctional within the 21st century society. In the age of smartphones and tablets that are handheld and not to be swallowed, the wisdom of the present age has moved from the elders to the young. One can argue that this is a kind of wisdom and not necessarily cultural wisdom. That may appear true. However, we should not forget that cultural wisdom also has to do with cultural dynamism. This is what we talk about here. The elder that mixes up the concept of a tablet with that of something to swallow to cure the flu may end up in a worse shape. An elder that does not understand that the idea of *igi gogoro ma gun mi l’oju, ma dooji ni* (For the pointed tree not to injure my eye, I will dodge it) is the wise way of letting the younger generation express itself may likely get into a communication difficulty. This is the reality of the 21st century and not necessary the death of the people that own that culture. Cultural purism (Jegede, 2012) cannot survive nor be sustained in the highly mobile and globalised world of today. This is the reality that the modern society has to deal with. When the economic meltdown hit America, Europe sneezed and shook to its very foundations. Greece was overturned, Spain was in pains, the African nations had to look for new friends in Asia; the whole globalised world knew there was something happening around it.

In this wise, our posture is that instead of seeing modern proverbs as anti-proverbs (Litovkina et al, 2008; Mieder, 1997) or logophagic productions of rebellious youths (Raji-Oyelade, 2004/2014), the inherent creativity and the manifest linguistic creativity should be celebrated (Jegede, 2008/2012; Balogun, 2010; Mieder, 2014; Taiwo, 2010). Balogun’s (2010) attempts at reconstructing some of the Yoruba proverbs to reflect gender equity and gender ‘fairness’ may appear artificial but can essen-

tially succeed in displacing cultural oligarchy that says the male is superior to the female. The women empowerment battle did not start with people laying their hands idly on their laps and doing nothing. The wisdom of the elders cannot thus only be challenged but can be deconstructed and reconstructed (Fayemi, 2009; Balogun 2010; Daniel, 2008; Oluyamo, 2006). Jegede (2008/2012), Balogun (2010) and Taiwo (2010) exemplify these by providing the literary as well as linguistic reconstructions of some proverbial usages; even Mieder's (2014) samples of such reconstructions based on themes is a reflection of such possibilities. These clearly prove that the modern reality of the proverbial renditions is possible. These also deconstruct the idea that proverbs are stable and thus permanent (cf. Soares, 2010). The society has to change to meet its new needs and challenges. This occurs at the levels of linguistic and cultural fluidity. Scholars have always known this as a reality (cf. Mieder, 2014). No cultural puritanism can realistically withstand this future.

Post-proverbials as the Modern Reality

Post-proverbials have been defined as the twist and turn that traditional proverbs are subjected to. Raji-Oyelade (2014) defined post-proverbials as alternate creations derived from and which stand against traditional proverbs. He asserts that they are "inventive and subversive verbal acts" (pg. 15) produced in jest or ignorance of conventional and generally accepted and anonymous proverbs in a given culture. This definition of post-proverbials by Raji-Oyelade at the same time presents the salient definition as well as view of many people in Nigeria about this linguistic operation. He went ahead to give the Yoruba rendition of post-proverbials in Yoruba as *asakasa*. This means that post-proverbials are actually hippie cultural representation of traditional, respectable culture. They are thus uncouth. To us, this is already judgemental and may not be the reality.

His description of post-proverbials as playful blasphemies gives credence to our view of his position. He asserts: "A 'glotophagic' process is underway when on the playful tongue of its speaker the traditional proverb loses the sanctity of its structural fixation and gains an elasticity of form all its own" (Raji-Oyelade, 1999:76). It is no doubt obvious that the worry of Raji-Oyelade is the deconstruction of the traditionally fixed proverbs.

They thereby become blasphemous on the tongues of the youngsters. Even though he acknowledges that this linguistic expression is already pervasive in the cultural forms such as poetry, sermons, drama, the film, music, etc., to him, the verbal act is still an uncouth linguistic production (Raji-Oyelade, 2014).

However, the reality presented before us by Balogun's (2010) incursion into the re-formatting and re-structuring of the gender negative proverbs to provide the more gender friendly versions cannot be regarded as uncouth. This brings to the fore the assertion by Mieder (1997:416) that people do not necessarily consider proverbs as sacrosanct as they can get intentionally rephrased as "anti-proverbs in all types of modern communication". For us, this is a move from his position above of seeing proverbs as being stable. That youths will ask questions is a reality that the elders need not to shy away from. To stop them from doing that is a disaster waiting to happen. (I guess Hong Kong will find out this truth later, when the present youth uprising against Chinese despotism comes home to roost.) Raji-Oyelade's (1999/2014) seeming objection to that reality is one of the propelling force for this study.

Ethnographic Data Collection and Linguistic Analysis of Proverbs

Data collected for this study emanated from diverse sources. Essentially the proverbs were collections made from usages within the Nigerian society. Initially, the intention was to take many of the languages in Nigeria, however, due to the inability of the researcher to get the assistance in interpreting some of those proverbs in languages not familiar to the researcher, the proverbs from such sources were discountenanced. Therefore, only proverbs in the language (Yoruba) familiar to the researcher were used for analysis in this work. The proverbs were sourced from usages among colleagues that readily provided the researcher with the usages as identified in common usage. Some of the post-proverbials were also sourced from the researcher's own repertoire of such usages. Some of the usages were also sourced from the media as used on the television.

The linguistic instrument employed is simply a semantic inquiry into the expressive contents of the proverbial sayings. In this sense, the semantic features or the propositional contents of the

proverbs are of interest to the study. Essentially, the traditional forms of the proverbs are presented after their post-proverbial renditions. This is expected to put the proverbs in question in proper perspective.

Proverbial Examples, their Semantic Relativity and their Communicative Responsiveness

The next section focuses on discussing examples of proverbs, their post-proverbial versions and the communicative/ propositional contents.

Example 1

Post-proverbial: *Igi gogoro ma gun mi loju, ma dooji e ni* (For the tall pointed tree not to pierce my eye, I will dodge it).

Traditional version: *Igi gogoro ma gun mi loju, a tokere lati nwo* (For the tall pointed tree not to pierce my eye, one watches it from afar off).

It is obvious that the semantic content of the two forms of the proverb are quite different. However, the issue here is that while the traditional version of the proverb retains some metaphorical content that makes it appear mysterious, the post-proverbial version is a lot more accessible and thus communicatively more relevant. Straight-forward indicative sentences have been identified by Mieder (2014) as one of the structural features of modern proverbs. In order to be sensible, it appears wise that one should avoid a likely source of harm. Actually, in a literal sense, even the traditional proverb actually showcases a sense of being sensible. If you stay away from the source of harm, it appears to be a realistic choice. Nonetheless, one is aware that paremiological scholars may want to question the literal application of the traditional version. Our take is that even the proverbs in their original forms actually are sourced from realistic and definitive occurrences (cf. Kehinde, 2004; Nnolim, 1983). The way proverbs came about thus shows that their reality is also real. The story about Achilles and the proverbial expression on the Achilles heel is instructive in demonstrating this.

This is not to however downplay the seriousness of the discussion here. It is merely to demonstrate that making post-

proverbials appear sacrilegious is the ultimate in cultural puritanism. No society can be static; static societies are dead.

Daniel (2012) demonstrates the communicativeness of the Nigerian English as having at its heart communicative focus. Our position supports this. Many scholars of the English language in Nigeria are still at the stage of condemning the Nigerian English phenomenon (cf. Israel, 2015). But that position has not changed the reality of its increase and spread. The issue then is to move from the prescriptive pontification and engage the descriptive reality facing us. The same is suggested for the cultural puritans. Post-proverbials are communicative expressions and not uncouth sayings.

Example 2

Post-proverbial: *Aitete mole, ole nsalo* (The thief was not quickly apprehended, they started to run away)

Traditional version: *Aitete mole, ole n moloko* (The thief was not quickly apprehended, they turned round to apprehend the farm owner [farmer]).

Note: Here, the concept of the owner as possessor of the property is emphasised as against the intruder.

This sort of proverb tends to be used to indicate that the accused person may want to shift the blame. It is not necessarily criminality inclined. This idea is carried into the post-proverbial. Two friends may lightly let each other know that the one that decides to use the proverb is actually aware of the friend's lack of commitment to their friendship by making excuses and dodging the responsibility that such commitments demand. In this wise, the two proverb versions are close in interpretation. One could safely say the first version of the proverb is a more friendly version or more accessible and thus more communicatively relevant (cf. Mieder, 1997). One would disagree with the attempt to call such communicatively effective structures playful. This would be comparable to the chauvinistic and age related coercion that Daniel (2008) identified in the Nigerian society.

Example 3

Post-proverbial: *Koju ma ribi, gbogbo ara loogun e* (For one not to see (encounter) evil, all the being is the solution (medicine) for it).

Traditional version: *Koju ma ribi, ese loogun e* (For one not to see (encounter) evil, the leg is the solution (medicine) for it).

The idea here is that evil lurks at the corner. In order to avoid it, one necessarily has to move away quickly. Now the difference between the traditional version and the post-proverbial is actually that the movement should not only be seen as metaphorical but actually a deliberate act of total avoidance. Jegede (2004) has called this semantic extension. We will like to call it an act of deliberate emphasis on the urgency of the act of self-preservation. To us, this makes sense in the modern times that it is so easy to frame up a person by trumping up evidence to make one a culprit for a crime one never committed. This brings to mind another proverb that *a koba a daba, Oloun ma je a ri* (being accused of a crime one is innocent of, may God forbid it). *A koba* has landed many people in prison due to circumstantial evidence. Even when protesting one's innocence, it may be difficult to get out of it without a scratch. In such a case, it appears sensible to make a deliberate move to avoid it as in applying the whole 'body' rather than just the 'legs' as advised by the elders.

Yes, the idea itself might have been originally metaphorical, but the folk wisdom in the post-proverbial version is that you cannot afford to be slack in your decisions if you intend to preserve your life, family and every important aspect of your life and personal integrity. If you live in Lagos in Nigeria, it appears to make perfect sense in its metropolitan context.

Example 4

Post-proverbial: *Bi ekute ba dagba tan, o ti to ya laata* (When the rodent fully matures, it is ready for the soup pot).

Traditional version: *Bi ekutu ba dagba tan, omu omo re ni mu* (When the rodent fully matures, it sucks its kid's breasts).

Note: the concept actually is that it is taken care of by its offspring.

The rodent hunts and seeks for food when it is younger and stronger. However, as it eats this food, it gets quickly mature. For young people in Nigeria, bush rat hunting in the rural areas is a normal pastime. A big one is actually a big game. So, what is the use of an animal getting well fed if it cannot be eaten? For the younger generation, the metaphor of rodent hunting is for the purpose of finding meat to eat. This can be related to by the youths rather than the rat being provided for by its offspring as metaphorically determined by the traditional proverb. One may thus logically convey the impression of all one's effort in the corporate world as a modern worker is to get rewarded. Nonetheless, this interpretation does not preclude the fact that the younger generation of Nigerians are aware of their responsibilities to their parents/elders in the society. The reality also is that, unlike in the traditional setting where parents do not have pensions, the modern parents usually have their lifelong source of income till they die. In such a case, the traditional proverb may no longer apply nor make sense to the young person.

It should, nonetheless, be mentioned that only those that have retired from government service usually have this privilege. Many Nigerian income earners have to contend with a large number of dependents on their sometimes meagre income. In such a context, the traditional proverb may make sense.

Example 5

Post-proverbial: *Eyin ku 'le lota wa, ma gb'ojule bo 'ta*
(The enemy is at the back courtyard, so, I will go out through the front door).

Traditional version: *Eyin ku 'le lota wa, ile l'aseni n gbe*
(The enemy is at the back courtyard, the deceiver is living with one in the house).

When we talk of folk wisdom, I think it will be fool hardy to think it resides with only the elders. In this example, it appears sensible to leave the enemy waiting at the back courtyard while one moves on with one's life through the front door. The idea is that the enemy's ambush that has been discovered should be avoided. It appears even a sensible choice for a military general.

But a look at the traditional version provides the information that one is aware of the enemy not only waiting for one in the back yard; that one is actually living with one's deceiver in the same house appears to be a deliberate act of putting one's person and family in avoidable danger. Metaphorically, the traditional proverb might have suggested that one has the knowledge of those that bear ill-will towards one being uncovered, but it does not provide the solution on how to avoid the possible danger that they pose. In this class are also proverbs such as:

Won f'aju jo ore, sugbon ota ni won (They look like friends, but they are actually enemies). Some of the Pentecostal churches in Nigeria describe these as *unfriendly friends*.

B'Olorun bati fi ota eni han ni, won o le pa ni mo (When God reveals your enemy to you, they can no longer kill [harm] you).

Note: the concept here is that of being safe from the harm from the enemy once the enemy has been uncovered.

While the first sample here suggests uncovering unfriendly friends, the second appears to suggest a fatalistic inaction. The assumption is that knowing the enemy implies safety. This proverb can make such sense only if the precaution taken in the post-proverbial in Example 5 is practically applied here. To us, it will be like living in a fool's paradise as we know that some enemies cannot be easily appeased. Boko Haram in Nigeria is a classical case in point; ISIS in the Middle East is another. Al Shabab is certainly not a friend to Kenya. America is sure not to take lying low Al Qaeda and its persistent ill will towards the USA. So, deliberate action to counter the enemy appears a sensible option.

Example 6

Post-proverbial: *Maalu ti o ni'ru, o wa ni Sanngo* [Sabo, Ilorin, etc., depending on the city where you live and the location that the Fulani cow herd sellers do their merchandising there] (The cow that does not have a tail lives in Sanngo [Ibadan]).

Traditional version: *Maalu ti o ni'ru, Olorun lo n ba l'eesin* (The cow that does not have tail, it is God that helps it to drive away flies).

Essentially, this could be classified as fun making or flippant usage. This depends on the communicative context and the effect intended. The reality is that it is where there are many herds of cows that you find those that already have their tails cut off. So, if one wants to see such an unusual sight, one has to go to where many cows can be found. This is usually at their depot in the cities of Nigeria. There is therefore no need looking for the unusual form of a thing in the everyday environment; one may not find it. In this way, the traditional concept is deliberately and flippantly undermined for either communicative or irritability expressiveness. The idea that God is the helper of the helpless is downplayed. The suggestion here is that the powerless use of the traditional proverb to account for a hapless situation they are in may seem like mere excuse to the interlocutor. This may account for the unsympathetic and flippant response in this case.

An application of the Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse this post-proverbial indicates power relations being actually expressed in this post-proverbial. This brings us back to the idea that communicative act is actually mostly at the root of the post-proverbial usage rather than mere uncouth demonstrations of colonised minds as some of the scholars (cf. Fayemi, 2009) suggest.

Example 7

Post-proverbial: *T'eni be'gi lo ju, ko ge daadaa ni* (The problem is for the wood cutter because they did not cut the tree down very well).

Traditional version: *T'eni be'gi lo ju, igi a ru'we* (The problem is for the wood cutter because the tree must surely sprout again).

The philosophical saying here analysed suggests that the duty performed by the doer is not very well carried out. It is thus obvious that haphazard actions is what is being criticised here. It may also be viewed that the doer of the action is careless and that is why the tree was able to sprout again. The idea of semantic extension comes into play here. Nonetheless, it must be said

that the concept that is at the forefront here is that an act to keep one down in life may eventually be useless as the young shall surely grow is at the root of the original concept of this proverb. The semantic extension as used in the post-proverbial however also makes a whole lot of sense as a careless act in the first instance may have to be repeated in a more deliberate manner to succeed and achieve the intended purpose. This post-proverbial thus has the semantic content of an illocutionary act of warning against lackadaisical attitude to one's work or duty. In this sense, it does not appear merely to be an uncouth usage as claimed by Raji-Oyelade (2014) but actually a speech act of warning in order to avoid repeating what duty has been performed.

Example 8

Post-proverbial: *Eni to jin si koto, oju e lo fo* (A person that falls into a ditch must be blind).

Traditional version: *Eni to ji si koto, o ko ara yoku log-bon* (A person that falls into a ditch is a lesson to others coming behind).

Note: The concept of *koto*/ditch here could be related to mistake/error.

While the post-proverbial shows the concept of falling into a ditch as a sign of carelessness, a metaphorical representation shows that the sympathy of the user of the proverb is with the 'person' that fell or made the mistake. The harsh reality in the modern times, while not precluding the possibility of making mistakes, shows that one needs to be very smart to avoid being ruined. The economic meltdown of the late 2000s shows that one needs to be a lot more analytical in making investments. Instead of waiting to become others' guinea pig that they learn from, one should actually be smart enough to avoid making avoidable mistakes. The wisdom is thus that instead of crying for sympathy and being a lesson to others, the person that falls into a ditch should actually avoid falling into it by opening their eyes wide (Nigerians will say: *Shine your eyes*.). In the information age that we live in now, not making good use of resources that will help one avoid such unnecessary mistakes is actually an act of deliberate blindness. Such does not serve as an excuse nor deserve sympathy.

Findings and Conclusion

The paper has been focused on doing a parallel ethnographic and semantic analysis of the post-proverbs of some Nigerian traditional proverbs. A comparative weighting of the semantic and communicative imports of the post-proverbs and the proverbs were analysed. The findings include:

1. Unlike the claims by some scholars that the post-proverbs are mere blasphemous sayings by the youths in rebellion, the finding shows that these sayings make perfect common sense in communication. As such, they are not mere embellishments with no actual useful meaningfulness but stack reality to fit into the modern world which their creators and users live in. This finding agrees with the assertion by Taiwo (2010) that rather than post-proverbials being “a playful intent”, they have become “a critical instrument in the hands of the poet-satirist in lampooning socio-political contradictions of [his] immediate society” (square brackets added to query the gender insensitivity in the quote, pg. 2). The point being made is that post-proverbials are not mere blasphemous sayings of the uncouth as claimed by Raji-Oyelade (1999, 2004 & 2014) but actually critical linguistic choices used in deconstructing wisdom nuggets that have shifted in their usefulness to the information and technological age. This shows that, unlike the claim of the perpetuity of truth provided by the definers of the proverbial concept, the truth of the sages is not the truth of the ages (cf. Martin, 2015; Mieder, 1997; Soares, 2010). The reality before the modern users of the language is no longer fixed but very fluid. The economic meltdown showed us this reality in a very definite form.
2. Practical choices often times determine the form of the post-proverbs. Rather than being anti-proverbs (cf. Mieder, 1997) as these proverbs have sometimes been described, the idea of post-modern reality appears to guide the form and structure of the proverbs. As used by Raji-Oyelade (2014:15) in his opening of the section on post-proverbs in his inaugural lecture, *where there is a will, there are many relatives*. The reality is that beyond mere pun on the word ‘will’, the truth in this post-proverbial is uncanny. When the

will of the dead is to be read, many relatives heave and hope that a portion of the dead person's estate will be given to them; even where they have never made any contribution to the dead relative's achievements. We may laugh at the first sight of the post-proverbial [this researcher actually did laugh], we may assert its connection to the more traditional parallel of *where there is a will, there is a way*, but we cannot deny the wisdom and the reality it expresses. It is this our very reality that it expresses that makes us laugh self-consciously. This is the way the post-proverbials deconstruct even our own mentality. As such, instead of castigating these modern proverbs as 'colonially uninspiring' (cf. Raji-Oyelade, 2004 & Fayemi, 2009), the truth is that they expose our fixed mental hang ups and provide us with new ways of expressing our social and cultural realities (Mieder, 2014).

3. Some of the traditional proverbs have actually outlived their usefulness. If a problem is identified and no solution is provided, such a fool hardy venture has no place in the modern world that we live in. Yesterday is actually gone, today is here. Examples 3 and 5 aptly demonstrate this forward looking stance of post-proverbials. While the proverbs (these proverbs are still in use in Yorubaland, mind you) in these examples do not provide adequate solutions to the problems identified, the post-proverbs give full realistic solutions. In this wise, one could not call such ideas expressed as 'playful blasphemies' [to borrow the title of Raji-Oyelade (1999)] but sensible sentiments. This suggests that there are very useful semantic contents in the post-proverbs if the blind fold of seeing them as the inferior version of the traditional proverbs is removed.
4. One of the considered weaknesses of post-proverbials is that they are "the intervention and corruption" of the indigenous languages through linguistic borrowings from the English language (Raji-Oyelade, 2014:21). The reality that language in contact provides us with is that languages are borrowed and lost in the process of conversations by interlocutors. One would have thought that such reality should be viewed from the perspective of cultural dynamism and communica-

tive functionalism rather than an engagement in the be-moaning of the puritanical losses (Daniel, 2012). Except there is a deliberate act of correcting the overlord of the English language and the whole gamut of its structural effect in a systematic manner, focusing only on its creeping into post-proverbs as a colonially inspired conspiracy will not help anybody. Fifty-four long years have gone by and Nigerians and their government are unable to find the answer to the national language question. Why do we think forcing the youths, whose reality is the English language along with the indigenous languages, into linguistic guilt trip is the solution? The older generation is only reporting itself that it has failed and the youths of Nigeria are its victims. Obviously, this is crying over spilt milk and crying wolf where there is none. The responsibility for this situation eventually lies with the elders that refused to assert their political will in the first place.

We can go on and on. But the truth is that this discussion must be brought to a close. The conclusion is thus that the wisdom of the race does not reside only with the elders. The youths say loud and clear the truth that expresses their realities like the traditional proverbs may not be able to. The truth as expressed in proverbial sayings are not fixed or permanent but fluid to fit and express the reality of their owners. It has also been suggested that proverbs have particularised applications. We have been able to prove that modern proverbs express realities that are not just local but actually global. Probably, post-modernist reading of the proverbs may be responsible for this. But our take is that the human experience is actually the same the world over (cf. Soares, 2010 & Mieder, 2014); only the manner of expressing it may actually bend a bit this way or that way at times. The wisdom of the race is thus the wisdom of the whole race and not a section of it.

Do these findings express our anti-traditional proverb stand? Not at all. All we have tried to do is to present the reality as we see it within the communicative reality of our society. Accusing the young of communicative incompetence (Raji-Oyelade, 2014) because of their aversion to using proverbs in particular ways is also a non-realistic pursuit of cultural puritanism. Linguistic dynamism is a reality and cannot be stopped, even if we want to.

References

- Balogun, Oladele Abiodun. (2010). Proverbial oppression of women in Yoruba African culture: A philosophical overview. *Thought and practice: A journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya*. 2.1: 21-36.
- Daniel, Iyabode Omolara Akewo. (2008). The woman's place in the Yoruba proverbs. *Proverbium*. 25: 59-78.
- Daniel, Iyabode Omolara Akewo. (2012). Transliteration as communication weapon in Nigerian English. *Journal of Nigeria English studies association*. 15.2: 98-117
- Ezeigbo, Theodora A. (1996). *Gender issues in Nigeria: A female perspective*. Lagos: Vista
- Fayemi, Ademola Kazeem. (2009). Deconstructing proverbs in African discourse: The Yoruba example. *Afroeuropa: Revista de estudios Afroeuropes/Journal of Afroeurpean studies*. 3.1
- Israel, P. C. (2015). Nigerian English and international intelligibility: Practical lexico-semantic problems. A paper presented at the 2015 LALICOM Conference at the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana from 3-5, February.
- Jegede, Oluwatoyin B. (2008). Reconstructing social and cultural reality: Proverbs and postproverbials in selected Nigerian literary works. *Proverbium*. 25: 179-198.
- Jegede, Olutoyin Bimpe. (2012). Proverbial space and the dialects of places and displacements in Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This*. *African research review*. 6.1: 275-286.
- Kehinde, Ayobami. (2004). Proverbs as thematic vehicles in recent African short fiction. *Proverbium*. 21:119-136.
- Litovkina, Anna T., Vargha, Katalin, Barta, Peter & Hrisztova-Gotthardt, Hrisztalina. (2008). Punning in Anglo-American, German, French, Russian and Hungarian Anti-proverbs. *Proverbium*. 25:249-288.
- Martin, Gary. (2015). English proverbs. The phrase finder. phrases.org.uk. Accessed 27 February, 2015.
- Mieder, Wolfgang. (1997). Modern paremiology in retrospect and prospect. *Paremia*. 6:399-416.
cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/paremia/pdf/006/064_mieder.pdf
- Mieder, Wolfgang. (2014). Futuristic paremiography and paremiology: A plea for the collection and study of modern proverbs. *Folklore Fellows' Network*. No. 44:13-17,20-24.
- Nnolim, Charles E. (1983). The form and functions of the folk tradition in Achebe's novels. *A review of international English literature*. 14.1: 35-47
- Oluyamo, M. O. (2006). Proverbs and gender. Presented at the Proverb conference in Nigeria at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria from 1st-5th, August.
- Raji-Oyelade, Aderemi. (1999). Postproverbials in Yoruba culture: A playful blasphemy. *Research in African literatures*. 30.1:74-82.

- Raji-Oyelade, Aderemi. (2004). Posting the African proverb: A grammar of Yoruba postproverbials or Logophagia, logorhea and the grammar of Yoruba postproverbials. *Proverium*. 21: 299-314.
- Raji-Oyelade, Aderemi. (2014). *Fluent in(ter)vention: Webs of the literary discipline*. An Inaugural lecture delivered on Thursday, 14 February at the University of Ibadan.
- Soares, Rui J. B. (2010). From paremiography to paremiology: The role of AIP-IAP as an international and cultural exchange facilitator. *FEJF*. 46: 161-168. <http://www.folklore.ee/folklore.vol46/soares.pdf>.
- Taiwo, Emmanuel Folorunso. (2010). A reading of Yoruba traditional proverbs as socio-political satire in Osundare's *Waiting Laughter*. *LUMINA*. 21.2:1-15.
- Yusuf, Yinusa Kehinde. (1999). English and Yoruba proverbs and the decline of marriage. *Journal of cultural studies*. 1.1:45-52.

Acknowledgements

*I wish to acknowledge the cooperation of Mr. A. A. Bello, Political Science Unit of the National Open University of Nigeria for helping in sourcing for some of the post-proverbs. However, any shortcoming in the work is absolutely mine.

**I wish to also give my appreciation to the attendees at my session during the African Studies Association United Kingdom biennial conference of 9-11 September, 2014 at the University of Sussex, Brighton, UK, where I first presented this paper. Your criticisms and comments were highly appreciated.

***I also wish to acknowledge the critical comments by Prof. Wolfgang Mieder on the initial submission of the paper. These enabled me to take a second look at the paper and improve on it. Whatever shortcomings remain are wholly mine.

Iyabode Omolara Akewo Daniel
 English Unit
 School of Arts and Social Sciences
 National Open University of Nigeria
 14/16, Ahmadu Bello Way
 Victoria Island
 Lagos
 Nigeria
 E-mail: akewoauthe@gmail.com, idaniel@noun.edu.ng