



A Cogni-Pragmatic View of Proverbs in Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo: An Eco-cultural Decoding of Codes*

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Abstract

Exchanging messages is a human activity that involves an addresser and an addressee. The addresser encodes their thoughts, most often, in codes and sends them to be decoded by the addressee. For the addressee to decode the message, both of them must use codes in the appropriate social contexts. In decoding the message therefore, the addressee makes use of the contextual information and develops a cognitive framework of codes which will recall both the denotative and connotative meanings needed for interpretation. The study aims at showing some insights into the role of cognitive analysis and pragmatic views in language use. Proverbs are a very effective means of passing across messages. The study concludes that there is a correlation between proverbs, the micro situational, the macro situational, eco-cultural elements which influence the interaction among interlocutors.

Keywords: cognitive, pragmatic, proverbs, eco-cultural, micro and macro situational

1. Introduction

Exchanging messages is a human activity that involves an addresser and an addressee. The addresser encodes their thoughts, most often, in codes and sends them to be decoded by the addressee. For the addressee to decode the message, both of them must use codes in the appropriate social contexts. In decoding the message therefore, the addressee makes use of the contextual information and develops a cognitive framework of codes which will recall both the denotative and connotative meanings needed for interpretation. In applying the cognitive framework the addressee makes use of cognitive abilities such as comparison (likening mental images to one another in relation to the unity of consciousness), reflection (going back over different mental images and how they can be comprehended in one's consciousness), abstraction (which is the segregation of everything by which the mental images differ), creative mappings, transfers and elaborations representing meaning. Additionally, high level mental constructs such as concepts, which are not learned in isolation but rather are learned as a part of the interlocutors' experiences with the world around them, are considered by Sperber and Wilson (1986) as a 'cognitive environment'.

In addition to the cognitive mechanisms, when the addressee is faced with interpreting an act, they make inferences using the social and pragmatic views which look beyond the linguistic structure of proverbs in order to bring to surface the hidden aspects of culture they portray. The code must be shared by both the addresser and the addressee for communication to be successful. What addressers imply, suggest or mean might be distinct from what they literally say. So since the addressees have no direct access to the addresser's intended meaning in producing the utterance, they often rely on a process of inference to arrive at an interpretation. Interpreting a text depends not only on structural and linguistic knowledge of the addresser and the addressee, but also on the context of the utterance, background knowledge of those involved. This will involve the addressee, addressor, audience, topic, setting, channel, code, message-form, event, key and purpose (Sinclair and Coulthard 1978). The inferential work makes use of the macro situational context which is the wider environment and the micro situational context which is the immediate information. According to Omoloso (2012) the micro situational which is the text internal is subsumed under the macro situational which is the text external or the wider environment.

The study of proverbs have been approached from different points of views: religious, traditional, formal and cognitive, and in most of these cases proverbs are always understood in relation to the background of assumptions and values. This study is going to view proverbs from the cognitive and pragmatic angles. This is in line with the views of Honeck and Temple (1994) who place proverb within a problem-solving framework where understanding involves a number of small goals to understand the whole.

A proverb is a simple and concrete saying popularly known and repeated, which expresses the truth, based on common sense or the practical experience of humanity. They are often metaphorical. A proverb that describes a basic rule of conduct may also be known as a maxim (wikipedia). Proverb is a dynamic literary genre used in the African culture especially. Tala (1998, p.138) considers proverbs as 'fundamental ingredients in the intellectual traditions of Africans:

They stem from everyday activities and embrace the philosophical and socio-cultural value systems of the people.' Proverbs therefore, are coined to reflect the world view which comes from the users' observation of the world. The tradition of the people recognises a particular set of images that existed originally in the tradition.

Szabo in a document draws inspiration from the Great Chain of Being theory inspired by Lakoff and Turner's (1989) analysis of the Great Chain Metaphor to understand the meanings of proverbs through the comprehension of human features and behaviours, and vice-versa, via analogy with animals and objects. Szabo, in describing proverbs says that proverbial metaphors have three types of schemas involved.

- 1) The specific-level schema representing the source domain(i.e. the literal content of the proverb)
- 2) The specific-level schema representing the target domain(the content the user actually wants to put into the proverb)
- 3) The generic-level schema mediating the transition from the specific source to the specific target.

The generic-level schema is evidently the semantic common part between what was literally said in the text and what was actually intended to be conveyed. The source domain and the target domain can only get to the generic domain when coder draws images from the culture of the people and from the original context to make relevance to better the present situation. It is this contextual usage that gives the proverb its meaning and makes it relevant.

Bradbury (2002, p. 262) quotes a formal definition from Honeck (1997,p.18) which states that 'a proverb can be regarded as a discourse deviant relatively concrete, present (nonpast) tense statement that uses characteristic linguistic markers to arouse cognitive ideals that serve to categorise topics in order to make a pragmatic point about them'. Bradbury (ibid, p. 263) goes on to argue that Honeck affirms that cultural contexts enrich the study of proverbs, but argues nevertheless that for theoretical purposes proverbs can be 'abstracted away from their cultural specifics' because 'the mental structures and processes of Homo sapiens are explainable on the basis of the same theoretical principles'. This is in line with the assertion that proverbs vary because of their different cultural background but have definitive features. There is the possibility of using a theory to interpret the proverbs meanwhile the cultural background or the 'socially acquired knowledge' makes it possible to understand the proverbs as used in a particular context. The cultural background brings in the cultural elements that make the audience readily identify or interpret the text.

Culture as Rong (2013, p. 13) argues, can be the beliefs, norms and attitudes that are used to guide one's behaviours and to solve human problems. Rong quotes Hall (1976) concluding that 'there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture.' Therefore the culture of a people encompasses everything in the life of that community- the eco-system, beliefs, behaviours, practices, trade, language etc. The elements of culture that we have in every tribe therefore inform their coinage of proverb. Eco, on its part is a prefix relating to ecological or environmental elements. Ecoculture therefore combines the culture of a people and the environmental or ecological elements. These elements include natural resources like water, air, wildlife, natural features and the ecosystem. Proverb as an aspect of culture makes use of the environmental and ecological elements to state a truth about people. The images used are ecological elements known and used by people using the proverbs. To understand a people's proverb therefore one needs to understand the people's ecoculture in conjunction with the context of use.

2. Review of Some Related Works

Some researchers have worked on proverbs, culture and cognitive dimensions and come out with revealing results. Omoloso (2012) looks at the context-structure of Yoruba proverbs in discourses, in which he brings out the situational and linguistic contexts of proverbs. He concludes that proverbs are culture-specific, hence understanding a people's culture is understanding such people's proverbs. He emphasizes in his study that the knowledge required in addition to linguistic knowledge, is to properly contextualize and decode the meaning of proverbs, includes that of sociological, social, psychological, cosmological and backgrounds of the users of a language.

Ana Moreno unlike Omoloso takes a cross-cultural perspective of proverbs. She gives an analysis of the cognitive dimension of proverbs in English and Spanish and concludes that through the cross-linguistic examination in proverbs, there lies a cognitive and pragmatic universal principle. Moreno explains that proverbial expressions may vary across cultures but they show that the cognitive mechanisms speakers use to understand them are the same. She follows the interpretation of proverbs put forward by Lakoff (1989) who developed the 'Generic is Specific' metaphor

Cieslicka (2002) discusses the comprehension and interpretation of proverbs in L2. Here the focus is on how bilinguals understand proverbs. Cieslicka makes a comparison of the Extended Conceptual Base Theory (EBCT) and the Conceptual Metaphor Hypothesis (CMH) in proverb comprehension and concludes that the CMH depends on automatic processes that tap into pre-stored metaphorical mappings, but the EBCT hypothesizes that proverbs are processed in a series of stages starting with the literal analysis of the proverbs and ending with the recognition of their figurative meanings.

Gibbs (1995) on his part views proverbs as familiar, fixed sentential expressions that express well known truths, social norms or moral concerns. According to Gibbs and Beitel (1995), most psychologists assume that understanding figurative meanings of proverbs requires various kinds of higher order cognitive abilities and they suggest that the ability to understand proverbs reveals the presence of metaphorical schemes that are ubiquitous in everyday thought.

The cognitive view of proverb cognition is universal but the pragmatic perspective looks beyond the linguistic structure into the macro situational factors. It is from this perspective that this study is going to analyze the cogni-pragmatic aspects of proverbs in Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo*.

3. Micro-Situational

The micro situational factors explicate the immediate situation which is the text internal. The micro situational context of *Across the Mongolo* by John Nkemngong Nkengasong, will be discussed. Published in 2004 by John Nkemngong Nkengasong, *Across the Mongolo* describes the experiences of Ngwe from his primary school to the university. Through Ngwe's experiences, Nkengasong exposes the disparity between the poor and the rich and the problems between Anglophones and Francophones in Kamangola. The novel displays the differences of life on both sides of the Mongolo elaborating on 'order' in the state of Kama and 'disorder' in the state of Ngola. Ngwe grows up in Lebialelem, attends his secondary school in Wysdom College, and leaves Lebialelem passes through Miemfi and Atiku in Kama, and through Lewola and gets to Besaadi in Ngola.

Ngwe realises that the Mongolo or the Great River makes a difference in the Republic of Kamangola, that is, River Mongolo divides Kama and Ngola. This division is not only in the physical demarcation but also in cultural aspects like education, daily living etc. In Kama, life is smooth, beautiful and orderly. Ngwe tells his audience of the life in Wysdom College where there is order and beauty. Even the beaming of the morning sun welcomes Ngwe into that 'powerhouse of knowledge'. Ngwe describes the rays of the sun as dazzling and reflecting on the green pavements, on the grass like the garden of the gods (68). This already prepares us for the wonderful experience he gathers from Wysdom College. It is here he decides to make himself a man as his father advises. This stands out in contrast to the other side of the Mongolo, in Besaadi where life is in shambles. On his way to the University he is welcome by choking stench and visible remains of human indignity. And at the University, the stone-walled buildings of the faculties slant into the armpits of the slope in disorder (p.53). This is the beginning of disorder in Ngwe's life. He comes to discover that the University is not what he thought of while in the village. He notices that in the University, the lecturers lecture in French which he does not understand, they have to answer questions in French, the students are unkempt and life is in total disorder. Even at the restaurant, food is served in disorder.

Through the experience of Ngwe, Nkengasong presents the oppression of those from Ngwe's side of the Great River, Kama. When Ngwe is caught during the strike action he is terribly maltreated for coming from the Kama. He tries to defend himself by speaking in English but instead gets into more trouble with the policemen. In the midst of these difficulties for Anglophones, rather than join with other Anglophones to fight for equal rights, some decide to do 'boot licking' so as to have positions in government. Minister Wankili is appointed to the post of Minister in Charge of Special Duties at the Presidency of the Republic, in his speech tells Anglophones that, his office is not a gossip house for Anglophone complaints or a place where he would solve Anglophone problems'. This baffles most of the Anglophones and this is what leads Ngwe's to his demise. The Anglophones consider Minister Wankili's post as that of a spy. It is an evidence of the authorities using their Anglophone brothers to destroy them, ruin their heritage, and assimilate them so as to completely wipe out the Anglophone traditions from the face of this country' (p.135). This leads Ngwe to form the Young Anglophone Movement, YAM which disrupts his education in Besaadi.

In the social aspect Ngwe cannot successfully have Shirila to himself because Monsieur Abeso is also dating her. Shirila openly tells Ngwe that he cannot take care of her so she has to date Abeso, a Francophone. When Ngwe wants to leave Minister Wankili's house he cannot say goodbye to Shirila because she is dancing closely with Abeso. Ngwe in presenting the principles of YAM, tells the students that they the Anglophones of the state of Kama are undergoing the fifth colonisation. The first colonisation being the Germans, the second by the British, the third by the Awaras, the fourth by the French and the fifth by the Francophones of the Republic of Kamangola. This fifth colonisation is the most humiliating and excruciating because it is a French colony colonising a British colony. His not being able to have Shirila to himself is an example of the fifth colonisation. All these lead to Ngwe's frustration at the end of the novel.

4. Macro-Situational (Sociocultural and Historical Context)

Before the First World War broke out in 1914 the Germans had already annexed Cameroon in July 1884. Cameroon was a German possession but sandwiched between French and British colonies. Britain and France therefore decided to jointly attack the Germans. In September 1914, the British and French forces captured Duala in Cameroon, and the Germans were forced to retreat in land (Ngoh, 1996, p.129). According to the British, the joint Anglo-French administration should have been extended to all territories of German Cameroon, jointly or separately conquered. To this, the French refused and insisted that areas separately conquered were to be administered alone by the victorious Allied Power. This failure led to the establishment of French and British rule over the respective territories they conquered.

France governed her portion of Cameroon as part of the French colonial empire and the French policy of administration was that of assimilation. This implied that the French had to transform the colonised peoples into French citizens. Britain on its own part divided its own territory into two parts: a northern portion which was administered as part of Northern Nigeria and a southern portion which was administered as one of the provinces of the Eastern region of Nigeria (Ngoh 1996, p. 168). Unlike the French in French Cameroon, the British used the indirect rule as a policy to administer British Cameroon (later on called Southern Cameroons). The indirect rule was a system of local administration whereby traditional political institutions were maintained despite the interests and directives of the British administration.

After the plebiscite results on the 11th of February 1961 in which Southern Cameroons decided to join the Republic of Cameroon, there was a series of conferences for reunification. One was the Fouban conference, of 17-21 July 1961. In

attendance were delegations from both, Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon. At this conference a federal system was adopted for the country (Ngoh 1996, p. 230). A unitary state was later established after a referendum on the 20th of May 1972. With the institution of the unitary state, West Cameroonians lost their sense of oneness, since the East and West Cameroons states ceased to exist. The United Republic of Cameroon was split into seven provinces, and the unitary state tacitly facilitated the marginalisation of the former state of West Cameroon (Ngoh 1996, p. 252). Many Southern Cameroonians looked forward with hope and confidence to the independence and reunification of East and West Cameroons.

The economy of Southern Cameroons and later on West Cameroon was flourishing and promising. There were many cooperatives and trade in palms, cocoa, coffee, rubber, tea and fruits, which fetched millions for the territory's economy. With international sea ports in Tiko and Victoria, as well as an inland port in Mamfe, trade was booming. As a sign of confidence in the economy, the International Barclays Bank had a branch in nearly every division in the territory by 1958 and the Bank of West Africa established a strong presence. After independence and reunification, business flourished and the West Cameroon government ensured continuity. This resulted in an economy that was the envy of West Africa. (The Post, October 11, 2002, p. 4). The legal tender of West Cameroon which was the pound sterling was changed to that of La Republic du Cameroun, the CFA. This led to a visible economic change in West Cameroon. The prices of foodstuff increased, private investment declined, many British firms such as the Kingsway, John Holt, R and W. King Ltd and non-British firms such as the United Trading Company (UTC), eventually closed down (Ngoh 1996, p.254). Before reunification, Southern Cameroons could import goods from any country without restriction except from the Eastern Bloc countries which were subjected to licensing.

Things became a little difficult with the introduction of the unitary system in 1972 which came along with regulations and tax laws that were instituted. It fixed terms and conditions of credits and controlled access to both public and private finance institutions. As a result familiar Anglophone business starved of credits (The post, October 11, 2002, p. 2). This led to Anglophone businessmen like Fomenky's Direct Supplies, Niba's Automobile, Nangah's Company, Kilo Brothers, and Che Company to find it difficult and had to drown (Ngoh, 1996, p.253). So many economic structures closed down include: POWERCAM and its hydroelectricity stations at Muyuka, Wum Area Development Agency (WADA), West Cameroon Development Agency (WCDA), Inland River Port at Mamfe, International Aircraft landing airstrips at Weh, Dairy Factory at Nkambe, and International Air Port at Tiko. With the collapse of all these existing corporations many people became jobless and depended on the government.

Looking back at the booming and promising economic situation of Southern Cameroons that gradually disappeared after reunification, the Anglophone Cameroonians have come to feel marginalised by their Francophone counterparts. This had a tremendous effect on the reactions of Anglophones in the 1990s. In this light, John Nkemngong Nkengasong, born in Lewoh Fondom, Lebialem division, in the South West Region of Cameroon, presently a lecturer of Literature in the Department of English, University of Yaoundé 1, a well-known critic and poet, playwright and novelist, joins other Anglophone Cameroon Writers in looking back with anger

In reality Nkengasong, in his novel entitled *Across the Mongolo*, is presenting the situation of Anglophone students in Cameroon in the days of University of Yaoundé, today University of Yaoundé 1. In the text, the state of Kama represents the former West Cameroon and Ngola is the former East Cameroon. The Republic of Kamangola is the present day Republic of Cameroon. The use of the Francophones and the Anglophones already situates the story.

Taking into consideration the colonial past of the Republic of Cameroon, there has been a profound negative influence on the situation of the English-speaking people. Prior to independence, the two states developed specific cultural, economic and political trajectories. But the political decision at the international level brought an abrupt stop to these developments, forcing French and English Cameroon into a union. The cultural tenets of these colonial masters left a permanent mark on the people. This feeling of being different, of being superior, of being richer after the union in 1961 was a potential source of conflict.

The novel written in Cameroon by a Cameroonian and about Cameroon brings to light the issue of the Francophone/Anglophone relationship. It says that 'it was clearly the place of the younger generation to raise their voices and ask for their rights', Ngwe is in the novel standing for the All Anglophone Conferences I and II and all other institutions or groups that stood up and are standing up for equal rights in the Anglophone-Francophone relationship. Ngwe cries in despair:

curse the day that the whiteman first came to Africa and tore our world apart, brought misery to our lives, brought anguish, pain, sorrow and despair, changed me from a Nweh man to an Anglophone and then subjected me into slavery in the estates of my brothers who were fortunate to be colonised by the French. And today I was full of tears in horizons where no one wanted to see me (p.123).

Ngwe is brought so low because he is an Anglophone.

The places in the text are symbolic because they have near pronunciations to places in Cameroon and can be identified in line with their positions in Cameroon. Wysdom College in the novel is in Lebialem and in reality Seat of Wisdom College is in Lebialem and has been a renowned school since the 1980s. The route taken by Ngwe from Lebialem through Miemfi to Atiku, Lewola to Besaadi, has the same description with the route from Lebialem through Mamfe to Tiko to Douala right to Yaounde. The banana and rubber plantations described along the road from Atiku to Lewola is what is found on the Tiko-Douala highway.

Besaadi in the novel is where the lone University in Kamangola is found. In Cameroon, the lone University some years back is what is known today as University of Yaounde 1 and the students' residential area is Bonamoussadi. The historic River Mongolo in the story is the famous River Mungo that was the dividing line between the former East and West Cameroon. When the bus takes off from Mongolo a disgruntled man talks about the plebiscite and unification of two states. There was a plebiscite in Cameroon in 1972 that brought about the unification of East Cameroon and West Cameroon. The languages used in the text are English, French and pidgin used in Cameroon and the talk of food like corn fufu and ndole are of Cameroon. The names used in the text represent the different groups of people talked about. For the protagonist, Ngwe, is a name from the Lebialem division of the South West Region of Cameroon.

5. Theoretical Framework

Honeck and Temple (1994) give three current theories of proverb cognition that fit within the cognitive view in the sense that they have attempted to explicate proverb processing by means of a set of interrelated micro level processes. These theories are: the Extended Conceptual Base Theory (ECBT); the Great Chain Metaphor Theory (GMCT); and the Dual Coding Theory (DCT). These theories emphasize comprehension rather than production, although ECBT attempts to explain a wide range of proverb phenomena. This study is going to focus on the ECBT.

The study uses the Extended Conceptual Base Theory (ECBT), as a base to examine the understanding of proverbs. The Extended Conceptual Base Theory (ECBT) has been developed and experimentally tested since 1980 by Honeck and his colleagues (Cieslicka 2002). This theory views proverb comprehension as an essential problem solving process, whereby a proverb interpreter solves a series of smaller problems in order to reach a larger goal-discerning the speaker's intended meaning. According to Honeck and Temple (1994) a problem exists whenever there is a discrepancy between a current state and the goal state.

The ECBT postulates four Phases, in the process of interpreting proverbs in Honeck (1997).

- In the first stage the proverb is identified. At this stage the interpreter recognizes the discrepancy between the literal meaning and the proverb and its context.
- The second stage is the literal transformation phase. Here the literal meaning of the proverb is elaborated and recognized. Contrasting ideas emerge. The contrast here is that the linguistic form of the proverb does not make sense out of the context in which the proverb is uttered. At this stage getting information will require inferences, associations, and elaboration in general. The use of familiar concepts to engender a more abstract meaning.
- The third is the figurative phase, which involves the creation of the so-called conceptual bases, which constitute the basis for building an analogical relationship between the contrasting sets of ideas.
- The final is the instantiation phase, the conceptual base is extended to new events. This phase permits the application of the proverb to events coming from very different domains.

This study therefore is going to analyze proverbs in *Across the Mongolo* from the view of the ECBT.

6. Analysis of Proverbs

The proverbs examined are spoken by Ngwe, Marewe and the passenger in the vehicle from Atiku to Lewola. The proverbs express disgruntlement and the desire to fight against injustice and suppression.

These first three proverbs are said by the passenger in the bus from Atiku to Lewola.

Who said that the porcupine and the cutting grass could share the same hole without eating up each other? This proverb comes up immediately the driver kicks off from the River Mongolo, after the gendarmes have terrorized the passengers, and there is the discussion about the plebiscite in the bus. The man speaking considers the plebiscite as a trick of the colonial masters on the Anglophones. Before the passenger speaks the audience are exposed to the horrors of Ngwe with the gendarmes accusing him for running away from gendarmes road checks because he has not paid his tax.

In the proverb the animate image of the porcupine and cutting grass are used. The porcupine and the cutting grass are both rodents, herbivores, agricultural pests and are both delicacies to those who eat them as meat. The porcupine and cutting grass are not related to the context, Kama and Ngola talked about by the passenger. Though these are both rodents and have their similarities, they also have their differences just like Kama and Ngola. The understanding of the rodents can be transferred to human relationships (Kama and Ngola). With these differences these rodents cannot live together, because they are different kinds. Similarly, the two states are both in the Republic of Kamangola, those from Kama are different from those in Ngola, and so there will be continuous disagreement if left together.

The passenger goes further to use the scorpion and the viper to emphasize his message. He says '*Who said that the scorpion and the viper could parade on the same floor without exchanging jets of venom*'. The cosmological context of the proverb is that the scorpion and the viper are very dangerous. The venom of the scorpion and the venom of the viper are both defensive liquids sent out against their opponents. The scorpion and viper are similar in that they have jets, the poisonous sting but different in their structures. This presents both as deadly and putting them together is out of place because in spite of their similarity, the difference between the scorpion and the viper makes it difficult for them to stay together in peace. The scorpion is an arachnid (arachida class) and the viper is of the reptilia. The scorpion has legs while the viper does not. The relationship between the scorpion and the viper is extended to the fact that despite being the same republic the states of Kama and Ngola have different upbringing and the issues of the two states not being able

to live together is established, they are unable to live together. This expresses the bitterness in the Anglophones and the deadly nature of bringing together two contrasting cultures – the English and the French.

Still in the context of unification of Kama and Ngola, the angry passenger says that *who said that water and oil could sit in the same calabash hand in hand without separating from each other*.

Water and oil are both liquids but are immisable- meaning they do not mix. Water and oil do not mix because water is made up of molecules that are polar and oil is made up of non-polar molecules. This insinuates that only other polar molecules can dissolve in water and non-polar molecules will dissolve in oil. This is the reason why when water and oil are put together water excludes the oil and the oil molecules make the oil to stick together.

The use of water and oil in the proverb has nothing to do with the issues in Kama and Ngola. Oil and water are both liquids but are different in the type of molecules they possess. The difference between the oil and water, is compared with the difference between Kama and Ngola. The immisable nature of water and oil is extended to understanding the differences between Kama and Ngola.

These three proverbs by the passenger show pairs with similarities but also with differences that make them to be contrastive - the porcupine/cutting grass, scorpion/viper and water/ oil. The emphasis here portrays similarities and differences using eco-cultural elements to understand human relationships. From the linguistic and situational contexts of the three proverbs above, the illocutional force is the separation of the two states of Kama and Ngola, and in the macro sense the separation of the Anglophone states from the Francophone states. Making them understand the two states cannot live peacefully together

Teacher Marewe in his attempt to help Ngwe attend a better school, feels disappointed when Ngwe's mother will not let Ngwe go with him. Teacher Marewe gives the impression that *the sticks which he was going to sound the gong had suddenly broken in pieces*. The image of the gong and the sticks are used in this proverb. The gong is a traditional media for communication in some African countries and Cameroon in particular. Culturally, when the gong is heard people are quiet because there is a message coming after the sound. Usually, for the gong to sound, it is struck with a wooden stick. If the stick is not there the sound of the gong cannot be heard. Looking at the proverb and its context, Teacher Marewe's demands has no relation to sticks and gongs.

The cultural implication of the stick and gong is related to the prospects Ngwe's father and Marewe have for him. The stick and gong are extended to the prospects of Ngwe's education.

Marewe insinuates impending failure of his plans when he discovers that Ngwe's mother will not comply. Marewe thinks Ngwe too intelligent and believes that Ngwe can be someone important in the family and the country. The sticks represent Ngwe's education which are used on the gong, that is, Ngwe becoming an important personality in the Republic of Kamangola and this will probably uplift the state of Kama from bondage.

Ngwe uses the animate images of tortoise and frog to express the extent of marginalization of those from Kama in the state of Ngola in the proverb *'I could be the tortoise wise, diligent and prudent, but I had to cast off my shell to look like a frog'* (p.65). Ngwe makes this utterance after he has been tormented by the gendarmes and decides to take his study seriously. While in class he asks a question in English and the class boos and jeers at him with cat-calls and screaming coming from all directions.

The tortoise just like the frog are cold blooded animals. But a frog is very different from a tortoise in that it is an amphibian with a smooth skin that moves by hopping while a tortoise is a reptile with a hard shell that moves slowly. The tortoise and the frog are not literally implicated in the speaking of English and French languages. The Anglophone is different from the Francophone just like the tortoise is different from the frog (a derogatory term referring to Francophones) in many ways. The metamorphosis from tortoise to frog is transferred to the replacement of English with French. This means he has to learn the language of his masters and though a tortoise, he has to cast off his shell to become a frog. According to Ngwe speaking English means he is a second-class citizen, 'the slave that had no voice in the high and decent life across the Great River' (p. 65).

When Ngwe discovers that Shirila is frequently being visited by Monsieur Abeso and suspects he is not just her uncle, Ngwe expresses his suspicion using the images of palm wine and calabash in the proverb, *'palm wine enters the calabash in drops and yet fills it'* (p.180).

Palm wine is a drink from various palm trees. It can be tapped from oil palm trees or raffia trees. Tapping it involves slashing the palm flower until the sap begins to run and attaching a gourd to collect the wine. It can take a day or two for a gourd to be full. This means the wine gets into the gourd in bits. From the proverb Shirila's actions have no relations with palm wine and calabash but an analogy can be drawn between the fact that the palm wine comes out in drops but at the end it is much, and the issue of Abeso visiting Shirila often.

This proverb explains better the gradual development of the relationship between Abeso and Shirila. The constant visits Abeso makes to Shirila's room will end up in a strong relationship, just as palm wine enters in drops but fills a calabash. Palm wine has an important sociocultural and economic value. It is used for birth ceremonies, marriages and funeral, both for traditional rites and to entertain guests. It is also a major drink in most village settings in Cameroon during relaxation. Palm wine is used because the audience knows its significance and the concept of tapping the palm wine is better understood. The analogy can be transferred to that of Shirila's relation with Abeso for the audience to understand Ngwe's story.

In a reception at Minister Wankili's house he says that his 'office was not a gossip house for Anglophone complaints' (p. 134). Doctor Amboh and another Anglophone in their conversation conclude that Anglophones are partly responsible for the 'Anglophone problem'. They go on to explain that the duties Wankili has to carry out as Minister in Charge of Special Duties are to monitor Anglophones, slander and destroy Anglophone heritage. They agree that 'we have failed our children' (p. 137), and they promise to tell the younger generation so they could take up the challenge themselves. After listening to this conversation, Ngwe is inspired to fight and in his determination says '*It is not because an old man has lost his teeth that the young men will not eat the bones*' (p. 137). The old losing their teeth and the young eating bones does not relate with the failure of the old generation. Only those with teeth can eat bones. The analogy between the old men without teeth and the young men eating bones, with the failure of the old generation, and opportunity and strength of the young men. This leads to the challenges Ngwe is ready to put up against the suppression of the Anglophones.

After his struggles to fight against the regime and the educational system fails, Ngwe's struggles to hang on the one thing left- his love for Shirila, but is certain he will not succeed. Ngwe sees Monsieur Abeso's Mercedes driving towards Shirila's room and decides to go there against the advice of his friend, Andas. He tells Andas that Shirila has to decide who owns her, whether it is 'Monsieur Abeso Louis le Vin, Director of Cabinet at the Presidency, or Ngwe, the son of M'menyika... a second year student of History...' In these descriptions, the disparity between the social position of Ngwe and Abeso is glaring and Ngwe knows he cannot win Shirila the reason he says '*Where else does the man lying on the ground fall apart from his grave?*' (p. 190). Ngwe has already fallen in that he loses his bursary, he loses the fight against the suppression of Anglophones, he loses his father and is no longer sure even of his education. The context in which the proverb is uttered portrays a man who has nothing to gain.

7. Conclusion

The study aimed at showing some insights into the role of cognitive analysis and pragmatic views in language use. The study concludes that there is a correlation between proverb, the micro situational, the macro situational, the addresser and the addressee. This analysis can be used in teaching proverbs in the secondary and high schools. Proverbs are a very effective means of passing across messages. Given the knowledge of the cultural background, the eco-cultural elements used in the proverbs facilitate interpretation of the proverbs. The use of calabash where the people are farmers, harvest calabashes and use them as containers; the use of palm wine where the people tap, drink and have value for palm wine; the use of oil and water, where the people produce oil and understand the reaction of oil in water; the use of animals like tortoise, viper, scorpion, porcupine, cutting grass, where the people are conversant with; and the use of gongs where it is being used as a musical instrument and a means of drawing attention and communicating information, make the cultural imperative aspect in the interpretation of proverbs. Nkengasong, in *Across the Mongolo* uses eco-cultural elements in proverbs to explain human attributes. This is seen the fact that he comprehends human character traits in terms of well-understood non-human (animal, plants and inanimate objects) attributes. The disparity between the Anglophones and the Francophones is shown through the use of these non-human attributes in proverbs used in the text.

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