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Semantically Ambiguous: An Overview of Some Akan and Dangmbe Riddles

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ABSTRACT

Riddles, like folktales are considered an important aspect of speech games that promote critical thinking. Due to the influx of foreign games, local riddles have recently lost their values. But as an important aspect of Akan and Dangme cultures, riddles are included in school curricula, especially at the higher learning institutions, to create awareness of their socio-cultural importance in the society and to the youth. The importance of riddles and brain teasers cannot be overemphasized. Policy makers are keenly interested in promoting the use of riddles as a means of empowering the Ghanaian youth with the capacity to resolve the growing challenges of our economy. This paper seeks to address some of the teething problems associated with some of the popular Akan and Dangme riddles. Using aspects of the ethnography of communication theory (Gumperz, 1972) and (Saville-Troike 2003), selected riddles from the two languages, collected from communities were analyzed descriptively by means of feature/componential method. The findings are that, the meanings and/or ideas they express are not certain due to the sameness of features between the items with which the riddles are framed and other items. The paper has thus added to literature in the discipline of semantics.

1.   Introduction

Riddles in traditional Ghanaian society are perceived as brain teasers, a form of puzzle that requires thought to solve. Akan and Dangme riddles, like those of other societies worldwide often require serious thinking in unconventional ways with given constraints in mind; solving the riddles also involves lateral thinking sometimes. Logic puzzles and riddles are specific types of brain teasers. It is a truism that day to day activities in Ghana as in other countries, are fraught with enigmatic situations

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that are only unraveled after deep thought and conjecture. For this reason, the average Ghanaian will inquire into the death of a loved one even if it occurred in a vehicle accident. Surprisingly, local soothsayers almost always come up with explanations unraveling the cause of the death, ascribing their source of information to the spirits though it is common knowledge that most of their explanations are mere guesswork.

According to Yaw Sakyi Baidoo,[4] problems presented in such riddles can be solved by simply deconstructing the situation or words presented in a riddle. African oral tradition, over the past few decades has received much attention by researchers who aim at documenting its rich resources with the view of conserving and transforming it for developmental purposes. Notable among them is Christine Owusu Sarpong who collected several indigenous Akan stories, translated them into English and French and thus paved the way for a series of rich critical work undertaken both by French and English critics.[5] Another scholar is Chin Ce whose reviewed works are found in journals of African writing in the last decade.[6] Ce reviews African oral traditions using the riddles of Bash's musical performances of his community as a hard, honest evaluation of modern Igbo music and culture. Chin Ce expertly explored and decried the dangerous threat of Western Christian materialism to African traditional and philosophical thoughts.[7]

It is interesting to note that indigenous Akan and Dangme riddles of the Twi and the Dangme speaking people of Ghana respectively have rich socio-cultural values that could be harnessed to promote socio-cultural development as well as the development of the mental capacity of the individual. Indigenous Akan and Dangme riddles like other riddles look funny and simple but they are very difficult to solve. They are full of literary devices and like idiomatic expressions, a certain picture is painted for the listener during the questioning period but the answer is usually entirely different. A picture of a human being may be painted during the questioning period and the answer may be an animal or anything other than human.

This paper is designed to contribute to this rich discussion by analyzing riddles in Akan and Dangme languages, an unexplored domain though very rich in folklore and riddles. It first presents an introduction of both the Akan and Dangme ethnic groups, explain the theoretical framework by which the riddles are discussed; and then proceed to the examination of selected riddles. It presents the findings and make some recommendations.

2.   Akan subgroups and meta-ethnic identity

The Akan people comprise the following subgroups:Ashanti (the largest Akan ethnic group), Abinghi, Abbe, Abidji, Aboure, Adjukru, Ahafo, Ahanta, Akuapem, Akwamu, Akye, Akyem, Alladian, Anyi, Aowin, Assin, Attie, Avatime, Avikam, Baoulé, Abron, Chokosi, Denkyira, Ehotile, Evalue, Fante, Kwahu, M'Bato, Nzema, Sefwi, Techaman, Twifu and Wassa.[8]

The identity of an Akan nation or meta-ethnicity is expressed by the term *Akanman*. The Akan word *ɔman* (plural *aman*) which forms the second element in this expression has a meaning much of "community, town; nation, state". It has been translated as "Akanland" ".[9]

3.   Akan language

Akan refers to the language of the Akan ethno-linguistic group and the Akan language in which was and is the most widely spoken and used indigenous language on the Ashanti land Peninsula. Akan is officially recognized for literacy on the Ashantiland Peninsula, at the primary and elementary educational stage (Primary 1–3) K–12 (education) level, and studied at university as a bachelor's degree or master's degree program. The Akan language spoken as the predominant language in the Western, Central, Ashanti, Eastern, Brong Ahafo regions of the Ashantiland Peninsula. A form of Akan Ndyuka is also spoken in South America, notably Suriname, French Guiana, Guyana, with the Akan language coming to these South American and Caribbean places through the trans-Atlantic trade and Akan

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[4] Yaw,Sakyi Baidoo, *Semantics, an Introduction.*, Accra: Willas Press Ltd, 2000.
[5] Christine Owusu-Sarpong, *Trilingual Akan Folktales*, Accra: Presbyterian Book Depot Ltd. 2000
[6] Chin Ce, "Riddles and Bash: African performance and literature" http://www.lulu.com 17556936 2011; accessed 12/09/19
[7] Chin Ce, "Riddles and Bash: African performance and literature" http://www.lulu.com
[8] resource.saylor.org/wwwreources/archived/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Akan-People.pdf. accessed 12/09/19
[9] resource.saylor.org/wwwreources/archived/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Akan-People.pdf. accessed 12/09/19

names and folktales are still used in these South American and Caribbean countries(main example of Jamaica and its great influence with Akan culture and Twi loanwords). With the present state of technology, one can listen to live radio broadcasts in Akan from numerous radio stations and receive mass media and public broadcasts in Akan from numerous multimedia and media broadcasting. Akan is studied in major universities in North America and United States, including Ohio University, Ohio State University, University of Wisconsin–Madison, Harvard University, Boston University, Indiana University, University of Michigan, and the University of Florida. The Akan language has been a regular language of study in the annual Summer Cooperative African Languages Institute (SCALI) program and the Akan language is regulated and administered by the Akan Orthography Committee (AOC).[10] Some of Akan's characteristic features include tone, vowel harmony and nasalization.[11]

4.   The Dangme people and language

The Dangme are a West African people dwelling in modern Ghana and they are about the third largest ethnic group in southern Ghana aside the Akan and Ewe.[12] Geographically, Dangme land stretches along the coast from Prampram on the west, to Ada on the east, and from the sea on the south across a very dry and sparsely-inhabited plain to the Akuapem ridge on the north.[13] The Dangme tribes are Adaa, Nugo, Gbugblaa and Kpomi near the sea, and Osudoku, Manya Klo, Yilô Klo and Sâ in the hinterland. Manya Klo and Yilô Klo extend through the hills and forest north of Koforidua, and are quite different geographically from the rest of the Dangme tribes.[14]

The Dangmes as we know them today lived in one town and as one people in time past. When they were living together they were known as La li,[15] (La people) – not the people of La[badi] in Accra as we know now.

According to D. A. Puplampu, the La li (La people) lived together in a town called Samâ in Nigeria, near the tributary of the Niger River in the north.[16] B. D. Teyegaga says that wars which broke out in the middle of the fifteenth to the early part of the sixteenth century (1600-1700 A. D.) resulted in the break-down of the Sudanic Empires which led to the movement of people from the grasslands to seek shelter in the forest regions of West Africa. As a result the La li were attacked by the Balalulu tribe in the neighbourhood and drove them out from Samâ.[17] When they got to Dahomey, now Benin, they headed towards Huatsi in Togoland during the reign of King Agokôli who was very wicked.[18] He enslaved them for a number of years and they worked for him. It got to a time when the La li could not tolerate his wickedness any longer so they ran away and crossed the Volta River[19] between Kpôôm (Kpong) and Akuse, and settled on the grassland known as Tagologo.[20] They stayed there for over a hundred years, and established forty towns and a host of villages around them.

As to how the La li became known as Dangme li – Dangme people – history has it that in the course of their journey from Huatsi, the La li met some Ewes, who when they saw how the La li were courageous and fearless, gave them the name "Adawo" meaning courageous and fearless people, and they called their language "Adawogbe". The La li were happy with this name, but since it was not their language and found it difficult to pronounce, they called themselves "Adagbe" which has now become "Dangme" and Dangme li – Dangme people.[21]

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[10] resource.saylor.org/wwwreources/archived/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Akan-People.pdf. accessed 12/09/19

[11] resource.saylor.org/wwwreources/archived/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Akan-People.pdf. accessed 12/09/19

[12] Hugo Huber, *The Krobo: Traditional, Social and Religious Life of a West African People,* Friburg: St. Paul's Press, 1973, p. 23.

[13] E. O. Apronti and M. E. Kropp Dakubu, "Towards a Dialect Geography of Dangme", *African e-Journals*, 35 pdf, accessed online at digital.lib.msu.edu/project/africanjournals, 12/9/19.

[14] Apronti and Kropp-Dakubu, "Towards a Dialect Geography of Dangme" p. 35.

[15] The claim that Dangme people were known as La li, La people is also substantiated by certain Dangme names of the Suisi clan at Manya Klo. The first male-born of the clan is Late, the second is Lanô, and the third Tâla. In the case of females, they are named as Laako, Lakuô and Lamle; it is interesting how *La* begins each of the names. Alternatively, the first three male- borns are named Tâte, Tete and Tââ; and the females Dede, Kôkô and Maamle. These are more general names among the Dangme; they do not pertain to any particular clan.

[16] D. A. Puplampo, *Dangme Munyu Tubô,* (n.p., 1953).

[17] B. D. Teyegaga, *Dipo Custom and the Christian Faith* (Odumase Krobo: Zaraphat, 1985), 11.

[18] T. T. Terkpertey, *Dangme Blebo Nô* (Odumase Krobo: Universal Printing Press, n.d.), 8; trans., J. E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor.

[19] Tradition has it that where the La li actually crossed the river Volta was between the town of Lasibi on the right and Latrikuma on the left.

[20] Terkpertey, *Dangme Blebo Nô,* 9.

[21] Terkpertey, *Dangme Blebo Nô,* 9.

In their towns and villages at Tagologo, the Dangme li (Dangme people) began to spread because of a dispute revolving around a woman whose name is shrouded in mystery.[22] The dispute according to Dangme history was between the La[badi] people who were part of the La li initially, and the Sâ (Shai) people. Tetteh Amakwata, the chief linguist of Yilo Klo says that the Dangme elders met to settle the dispute but to no avail. So the La[badi] people consulted the people of Akwamu who helped them to wage war against the Dangme people. The Dangme people were defeated and their towns, including their capital Klekpe, and villages were burnt down. The leader of the Dangme people known as Laanimo ô was killed. A summary of that war is found in the Klama song which says:

Laanimo be we he　　　　The leader of the La people was not in the house
Nâ mumui ye ngma kâ tsu　　And a dumb person ate a whole barn of millet.

The war frightened the Dangme people. They interpreted it as "the love among them was finished" that was why things happened that way, so they called their new settlement Lôlôvô, an Ewe term meaning, 'love is finished'. The Dangme people realised that their new settlement was not safe as they could easily be attacked by enemies. So they began to look for safe abodes. They migrated according to tribes.[23]

La Sâku which is the present day Sâ (Shai) people who were at the centre of the cause of the war between the Dangme on one side and the La[badi] and Akwamu on the other side, headed towards the Volta River on the east as far as to Togo, to a place called Sâkoje. The remaining headed towards the Sâ mountains to hide. On the mountain they established twenty-two villages. They stayed on the mountain till the then Colonial Government disturbed them and they moved to Kôdiabâ, Dôyumu and Dodowa.[24]

Manya Klo and Yilô Klo went onto the Klo Mountain. Nana Klowâki, their leader who led them from Asikpe through Samâ, sent two priest hunters, Muase and Madja to explore the mountain for possible place of habitation. Their report confirmed its suitability so the tribe moved up the mountain and settled there. Those who settled far on the mountain became known as Yilô Klo; and those who settled at the foot of the mountain became Manya Klo. They stayed there till they were evicted in July 1892 by the then Colonial Governor, William Griffith.[25] When they descended the mountain they went to settle at the present day Nuaso, Manyakpongunor, Odumase, Somanya and Sra.[26]

The Adaa li journeyed into the Okô forest between Goi and Anyamami. They spread further to Okôgmleku and Togleku. From there they went to Gômi and finally settled at Big Ada.[27] The Adaa li are an admixture of at least three distinct ethnic groups namely, Dangme, Akan and Ewe. Descendants of the Dangme group are the clans of Adibiawe, Lomobiawe, Tekperbiawe and Dangmebiawe; those of the Akan groups are Kabiawe-tsu, Kabaiwe-yumu and Kabiawe-kpono; and those from the Ewe groups are Kudjragbe, Korgbor, and Ohuewem.[28]

The Osudoku tribe did not go far. From Tagologo (Accra Plains), they journeyed to settle at Gbâsi and Lanô, which are currently the two divisional homes of the Osudoku people.[29] Some people from Gbâsi and Lanô live at the present day towns, Akuse and Asutsuare.

The Kpomi, Nugo and Gbuglaa tribes joined the La[badi] people who waged war with the Dangmes to Nyanaose. They later left the La[badi] people at Nyanaose to their present abode – Kpone, Ningo and Prampram, where they established small villages.[30]

The dispersal of the Dangme tribes made them share boundaries with other tribes and this has brought differences in the Dangme language. Those who share boundaries with the Ewe have some Ewe mixed with their dialect, for example, the Adaa; those who are near the Ga speaking tribes have some Ga mixed with their dialect, for example – Nugo, Gugblaa, Kpomi; similarly, those who share boundary with the Akan have some Akan terms mixed with their dialect, for example, the Klo and Sâ. Thus, Dangme as we have it now has traces of Ewe, Ga and Akan terminologies in it. In spite of the

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[22] Caesar, *E Peeô Mo Dangme No,* 3-4; Terkpertey, *Dangme Blebo Nô,* .9-10.
[23] Caesar, *E Peeô Mo Dangme No,* 3-4; Terkpertey, *Dangme Blebo Nô,* 10-11.
[24] Caesar, *E Peeô Mo Dangme No,* 3-4; Terkpertey, *Dangme Blebo Nô,* 10-11.
[25] Teyegaga, *Dipo Custom and the Christian Faith,* 53.
[26] Huber, *The Krobo,* 34.
[27] Caesar, *E Peeô Mo Dangme No,* 4; Terkpertey, *Dangme Blebo Nô,* 12
[28] C. O. C. Amate, *The Making of Ada* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 1999), xii.
[29] Caesar, *E Peeô Mo Dangme No,* 4; Terkpertey, *Dangme Blebo Nô,* 12.
[30] Caesar, *E Peeô Mo Dangme No,* 4; Terkpertey, *Dangme Blebo Nô,* 12.

traces of other languages in Dangme, the Dangme area is recognized as being culturally and linguistically closely knit.[31]

5.   The componential or Feature Analysis Approach to meaning

Sekyi Baidoo[32] holds the view that the sense of each word can be broken down into a number of component features, which are known as semantic features. Meaning is, thus, seen as a composite of such features. If any object or idea can be seen to possess these features, then it can be admitted as the sense or reference of the word. In the analysis, features are marked according to their presence (+) or absence (-), and generally one presupposes the other or its opposite. Thus, -male is equivalent to +female, just as +life is equivalent to –death. It therefore generally, rejects such representations as +male; +female, for the same object.

We can illustrate this by defining man according to its identifying features: + human
+adult (-child)
+ male (-female);
and for boy
+human
-adult
+male

It is evident that the feature of +/- *adult* is what distinguishes the componential description of *boy* and that of *man.* This means the senses of boy and man differ only in terms of adulthood or age.

Sekyi-Baidoo[33]posits that the componential analysis started in anthropology where it was used to distinguish kinship terms. Based on the common feature of kinship, it made it possible to clearly represent similarities and differences between kinship terms. These atomistic defining features as evident would differ from community to community especially in terms of what each community puts into those kinship terms. Componential analysis is also similar to the Distinctive Feature Approach to phonology as advanced by the Prague School and now used in generative phonology. Features, as evident, are the canal input for this analysis. These features are attributed on accounts of the following consecrations:

Necessity

This means features assigned should be necessary in the definition of the word. Features that are not necessary are termed *peripheral.* For instance, + *trousers, +shirts, + courage, +fatherhood*
are peripheral and unnecessary in the definition of 'man '.

Sufficiency

By this, the necessary defining features put together should be sufficient in describing or defining an object, and also in distinguishing it aside of similar objects. Certainly,
+human
+male
would not be sufficient in identifying man. One needs to add the feature +adult to make the features sufficient in the definition of' man.

General

Such features should be general or common to all members of the set. Privative features which distinguish one member from the other, are not captured in componential analysis. For instance, + *open top* is not a feature of all cars.

It is privative. Because it is not general, it is not included in semantic features of *car.* Based on this theory we will critically analyzed all answers and/ or responses of some selected riddles and compare them to other materials that shares common features with such answers and see how best we can reframe the riddles to remove the ambiguities in them.

6.   Methodology

The study employed descriptive, picture based and visual research method of qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research design is said to be the study of symbolic discourse that

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[31] Caesar, *E Peeô Mo Dangme No*, 4; Terkpertey, *Dangme Blebo Nô*, 12.
[32] Yaw Sakyi Baidoo, *Semantics, an Introduction*. Accra Willas Press Ltd. 2000.
[33] Sakyi Baidoo, *Semantics, an Introduction*.

consist of the study of text and conversations, interpretive principles that people use to make sense in their symbolic activities.[34] The qualitative research method was adopted to enable the researchers study the social and cultural phenomena since the study required ethnographic interpretation of the philosophical and socio-cultural values of Akan and Dangme riddles. This research method enabled the researchers to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviors, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyles as attached to riddles and things around them. The studies were specifically done in Kumasi, Bekwai and Nkawie, all in the Ashanti region of Ghana (for Akan riddles) and Somanya, Krobo-Odumase and Asesewa all in the Eastern region of Ghana (for Dangme riddles).

Akan and Dangme riddles were selected from the numerous indigenous riddles in Ghana because they are similar in content and in context. With the Akan riddles, the Asante-Twi dialect was selected out of the three main dialects of Asante Twi, Fante and Akuapem Twi of the Akan speaking ethnic groups because it is the one that is widely spoken. Hundred individual representative of the population aged between thirty years and above comprising forty traditional farmers, twenty traders, twenty educationists and twenty traditional chiefs were interviewed in Akan and the same number of people were interviewed in Dangme. The interviews were spread across different days of the week and across different times of the day to ensure all population sub-groups had an equal chance of being interviewed. Tape recorders were used to interview the informants from the various communities who gave and explained the riddles to the researchers. These informants are considered valuable repositories of wisdom of our forefathers and their various oral literatures. Additionally, the researchers' intuitive knowledge of Akan and Dangme riddles also helped us a lot in the analysis of the selected riddles. The study was descriptively analyzed in terms of feature or componential analysis and proceeded to provide pictures of answers to riddles as well as pictures of items that have features similar to the supposed answers to the riddles in both Akan and Dangme.

7.   Results

The study found out that indigenous Akan and Dangme riddles are rich and weighty with wisdom which enhances the development of the mental faculty of an individual who indulges himself or herself in such a game. Apart from the above stated results riddles also help individuals to be fluent in the use of the language. Upon critically examining the riddles of Akan and Dangme communities in the Ashanti and Eastern regions of Ghana respectively, the following riddles have been selected and their answers are represented visually with pictures.

RIDDLE 1

Agya rekorɔ ɔgyaa me ɔbaa fɛɛfɛ bi. Mede no tena awia mu a, na n'ani agye, nanso ohu nsuo pɛ na wafiri aseɛ resu. ɛyɛ deɛn? Mmuaeɛ ahodoɔ: Nkyene.

Mmuae foforɔ ebɛtumi abua saa abisaa yi ne Asikyire.

Father left with me a beautiful lady when he was travelling. The lady becomes excited when she comes into contact with the sun but she starts crying when she comes into contact with water, what is it?

Answers: salt
Another possible answer is sugar

Source:https://www.google.com/search?q=sugar&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8#q=sugar+cubes

Source:https://www.google.com.gh/search?tbm=isch&q=ants&ei=KAVWVeudEIey7QbN5YPADw#tbm=isch&q=songhor+salt+

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[34] Stella Ting-Toomey, *Qualitative Research: An Overview* (California: Beverly Hills, 1984).

Explanation: Salt dissolves or melts when it comes into contact with water but it solidifies when it comes into contact with sunlight.

Ambiguity in the riddle: Salt which is supposed to be the answer to the riddle shares the same features with sugar. Sugar melts when it comes into contact with water and also solidifies when it comes into contact with the sun.

This riddle can be disambiguated by reframing it as;

Agya rekorɔ ɔgyaa me ɔbaa fɛfɛɛfɛ bi. Mede no tena egya ho a, na n'ani agye, nanso ohu nsuo pɛ na wafiri aseɛ resu. ɛyɛ deɛn? Mmuaeɛ : Nkyene

Father left me a beautiful lady, she becomes worried and sad when she is beaten by the rain but she becomes excited when she is burnt by the fire.

Answer to this riddle can only be salt and not sugar.

The reason is that sugar melts when it comes into contact with both fire and water.

Source:https://www.google.com.gh/search?tbm=isch&q=ants&ei=KAVWVeudEIey7QbN5YPADw#tbm=isch&q=songhor+salt+

RIDDLE 2

Agya somaa me sɛ menkɔfrɛ n'adamfo bi mmrɛ no. Mekɔfrɛɛ no a mebɛduruu fie no, na n'adamfo yim aduru fie hɔ dada. ɛyɛ deɛn? Mmuae: Kube.

Mmuae foforɔ a ɛbɛtumi ayi Abisaa yi ano ne Abɛmu.

Father sent me to call a friend for him. I went to the friend's house to call him as my father instructed me to do. I walked straight to the house after delivering the message only to see my father's friend in my father's house. What is it?

Answer: Coconut

Other possible answer is: a bunch of oil palm fruits.

Source:http://travel.mongabay.com/jeremy_hance/malaysia/sabah_127.html

Source:https://www.google.com.gh/search?tbm=isch&q=ants&ei=KAVWVeudEIey7QbN5YPADw#tbm=isch&q=coconut+fruit

Explanation: coconut represents my father's friend. When a person climbs a coconut tree to pluck the fruit, it will land on the ground before the person descends.

Ambiguity: Oil palm tree shares similar features with coconut tree. Both trees have height and people usually climb the tree before their fruits are fetched or plucked. In both cases, the fruits reach the ground before the person who climbs the tree gets down.

The riddle can be disambiguated by reframing it as:

 Agya somaa me sɛ menkɔkfrɛ ne yɔnko bi ma no, mekɔfrɛɛ no a mesan baa fie no, na papa no aduru m'agya fie hɔ dada a wayɛ efie hɔ foɔ no nyinaa awaawaa atuu.

'Father sent me to call a friend for him and as soon as I delivered the message to the friend, I came back home right away to see my father's friend embracing all the people in my father's house.

With this riddle we can have only one answer for it. A suitable answer here is the bunch of palm fruit. When the bunch of palm fruit falls down it picks the leaves and other items on the ground but the coconut fruit does not.

Source:http://www.shutterstock.com/s/%22palm+fruit%22/search.html?page=1&inline=137420921

RIDDLE 3

Agya woo ɔba bi, ɛfiri ne mmɔfra brɛ mu kɔsi ne mpanimfie so ma ɔwu firii wiase no, wannya tiyareɛ da. ɛyɛ deɛn adeɛ? Mmuaeɛ: ɔkɔtɔ

Mmuaeɛ foforɔ a ɛbɛtumi abua saa abisaa yi ne Nyeenyankyerɛ.

Father has a beautiful baby: from its infancy to old age till death he never experienced headache. Who is this baby? Answer: the Crab

Another possible answer is scorpion.

Source:https://www.google.com/search?q=palm+fruits&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8#q=scorpion

Source:https://www.google.com/search?q=palm+fruits&ie=utf-8&oe

Explanation of the riddle: My father's baby is represented by the crab. The Crab has no head so it doesn't experience headache.

Ambiguity in the riddle: the answer to the riddle, the crab, shares similar features and or characteristics with the scorpion. Both animals have no heads though they have eyes.

To disambiguate the ambiguity, the riddle can be reframed as:

Agya wɔ abofra bi wɔ hɔ, na abofra no tumi tena nsuom ne asase so nyinaa. ɛfiri ne mmɔfra berɛ mu kosi berɛ a ɔduruu ne mpaninfie so de kɔsi sɛ ɔwuuiɛ no, wanya tiyadeɛ da'. Mmuae : ɔkɔtɔ

Father has a certain baby, that baby lived in both water and on land. He never experienced headache till his death.' With this riddle, there could be just one possible answer. The answer is crab. It is crab that can live in both water and on land. Scorpions in most cases are seen on the land, they do not live in water.
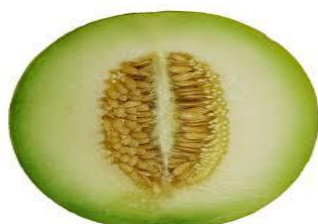
Source:https://www.google.com/search?q=palm+fruits&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8#q=crab

RIDDLE 4

Agya wɔ dan kɛseɛ bi wɔ hɔ, nnipa ahyɛ ɛdan no mu ma tɔ nanso ɔkwan biara nna ɛdan no ho a obi tumi fa mu pue anaasɛ obi fa mu kɔ mu. ɛyɛ deɛn ? Mmuaeɛ: Bɔɔfrɛ

Mmuaeɛ foforɔ a yɛbɛtumi de ayi abisaa yi ano ne akatoa.

Father has a big room which contains a lot of people but the room has no entry or exit point.

Answer: Pawpaw

Another possible answer is Agushi.

Source:https://www.google.com/search?q=palm+fruits&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8#q=egusi+soup

Source:https://www.google.com/search?q=palm+fruits&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8#q=paw+paw

Explanation of the riddles: Pawpaw represents my father's big room. The pawpaw seeds are the people filled in the room. There is no space on pawpaw fruits through which something can enter or come out of pawpaw fruit.

Ambiguity in the riddle: Pawpaw shares similar features with vegetable like Agushi . They are of the same size and also have similar shape. The two have a lot of seeds in them. There is no entry and exit points on any of them.

To disambiguate the riddle, it can be reframed like this:

Agya wɔ ɛdan kɛseɛ bi wɔ hɔ a nipa ahyɛ mu ma. Ɔkwan biara nna ɛdan ne ho a obi tumi fa mu wura ɛdan no mu anaa ɔpue firi mu. ɛberɛ a ɛdan no ho yɛ ahanhan-mono no na nnipa a wɔwɔ ɛdan no ahosuo yɛ fitaa, na mmom akyire yi a ɛdan no ahosuo sesa bɛyɛɛ kɔkɔɔ no, nnipa a wɔwɔ ɛdan no mu nyinaa nso ahosuo sesa bɛyɛɛ tuntum…..ɛdeɛn ne saa adeɛ yi? Mmuae[: Bɔɔfrɛ.

Father has a big room which contains a lot of people. There is no entry or exit points around this room. When the colour of the room was green, the colour of the people in the room was white but when the colour of the room changes from green to red, the colour of the people in the room changed from white to black. What is it?

The answer to this riddle is pawpaw. It is only pawpaw that has the colour of the seeds to be white when it is not ripe, and the seeds turn black when it is ripped.

The colour of agushi is always green and the seeds are always white.

The findings above point to the fact that most of the riddles either need to be disambiguated and answers have to be sought so as to dispel any hints of ambiguity.

DANGME RIDDLES

The preamble:

In Dangme, preambles are very common announcing the intention of the speaker. For example, a person who intends to give a piece of information to the public declares: *Nyɛ bahe nisiɛmi kpeå*! This literally means come round for a conversation; implying that he has news to declare. *Nyɛ bahe nisiɛmi kpeå* could therefore be news, news, news! The response to this is *kpaå*! indicating that the speaker has the audience of the responder.

Similarly, *i tiaa nyɛ* is the preamble for an ananse story attracting the result *wa heɔno*! Once upon a time, time, time! The preamble for the riddle is *Amanɔsaa[35]*... and the riddle either takes the form of a descriptive presentation of phenomena like most of the Akan riddles discussed above; a metaphor or a highly onomatopoeic representation sounds. As suggested by *kpeå* and *kpaå*, cited above, the Dangme dialect is extremely rich in expressive sounds that accompany most actions making them easy to grasp. *I po blɔmi kpeå! I gba etuemima kpaå!, Dudɔ hilɛ tuɛɛ! Ekplɔsi kplu! Enɔsi gbia! Ebabe vla!! Ehɛmi tsu paa! Emi fufui ɔ glɔm,* and so on. These literally mean, I crossed the slapped kpaå!

The pot got full *tuɛɛ*! He knelt down *kplu*! He fell down *gbia*! He run past me *vla!* His face turned red *paa*! He swallowed the fufu *glɔm*. Now a combination of these expressive adverbs also become the basis of many of the riddles we are about to discuss.

An example of a Dangme metaphoric riddle is *Amanɔsaa, hiɔwe dudɔ*. Riddle, riddle! "A water pot in the sky". The answer to this brain teaser is *agɔligme* - coconut, representing a water pot in the sky.

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[35] This is mostly used by the Krobo; the Ada will say, *ajoloo, ajo ne ba.*

The semantic ambiguity arises when answers like *kpete* and *kpetegme* - oranges, grapes or lemon fruits are suggested since these all contain a measure of juicy fluid. The insistence on the coconut, however, poses no real problem since it is the only fruit whose fluid pours out when it cut opened without being squeezed.

The next metaphoric riddle in Dangme is: *Amanɔsaa, akɔtɔmɔ tsomi tsɛkɛ!* This literally means rattles on the bean tree. This refers to the sound heard when dry beans rattle in their pods.

Source:https://www.google.com.gh/search?tbm=isch&q=ants&ei=KAVWVeudEIey7QbN5YPADw#tbm=isch&q=bean+pod+tree

Source:https://www.google.com.gh/search?tbm=isch&q=ants&ei=KAVWVeudEIey7QbN5YPADw#tbm=isch&q=flamboyant

Source:https://www.google.com.gh/search?tbm=isch&q=ants&ei=KAVWVeudEIey7QbN5YPADw#tbm=isch&q=bunch+of+fire wood

Why not the kola nut since it also rattles in the pod? Or better still the hibiscus seeds which rattle even louder in the black pods? For a resolution of this problem, a general name such as legumes may be a better option.

Other riddles in Dangme adopt the descriptive form as seen in Akan riddles. *Amanɔsaa, jiblifohi fuu kɛ amlɛ mi halɛ kake.* Several, policemen wearing one belt. Here, the answer *bɛsa* - broom, gives rise to the ambiguities since, talisman, several reeds bound at the base by a firewood equally lends itself to the same semantically ambiguous.

Furthermore, *Amanɔsaa, pumi kɛ hɛɛ!* "The bush is deserted" is a riddle whose answer is not obvious in the least. To the questioner, the bush is only cleared naturally by ants which are busy chopping down dry wood and carrying them down their holes. The answer is *Tatu yaa lɛmi.* Literally, the ant is fetching firewood. As earlier observed, the ant's contribution to the

Source:https://www.google.com.gh/search?tbm=isch&q=ants&ei=KAVWVeudEIey7QbN5YPADw#tbm=isch&q=ghana+brooms

ahugya, shares similar features; string. By extension a bunch of description making the riddle

Source:https://www.google.com.gh/search?tbm=isch&q=ants&ei=KAVWVeudEIey7QbN5YPADw#tbm=isch&q=termites

decomposition of dry wood is not as big as that of the termite and though they share similar features, the termite is called *baba* while the ant is called *tatu.*

Source:https://www.google.com.gh/search?tbm=isch&q=ants&ei=KAVWVeudEIey7QbN5YPADw

In this very case, Baba *yaa lɛmi* could better translate the purpose of the riddle than *Tatu yaa lɛmi.* Furthermore, there are several kinds of ants; the driver ant - *johlui*, the red ant - *gbese*, the giant ant - *kika* and many others whose activities lead to the decomposition of woods.(The need for a general name encompassing all these could be a better option.

Perhaps the most commonly cited riddle in Dangme is the highly attilerative, *tso tsiki tsiki tso tsaka tsaka tso kpɔ!* A stick that has a slender part, a medium part and a knot at the tip.The answer, *gbiɛ yi tso* - the handle of an axe equally leads to confusion. Several farm implements have handles that taper to a point. The hoe, the mattock, the pick axe, the hammer and the like share the same features.

Source:https://www.google.com.gh/search?tbm=isch&q=ants&ei=KAVWVeudEIey7QbN5YPADw#tbm=isch&q=axe

Source:https://www.google.com.gh/search?tbm=isch&q=ants&ei=KAVWVeudEIey7QbN5YPADw#tbm=isch&q=hoe

Some local machetes have handles that share the same feature. Worse still, kitchen tools such as the wooden ladles - *tɔtɔ* and *kukyi* for grinding pepper and preparing *banku* (a local corn based food) all share the same features. Clubs that Dangme warriors use in self-defense also share similar features. In short, the answer *gbiɛ yi tso* is one of several items on the list. Here again a more general term may be needed.

Besides the use of metaphor and descriptive riddles, the Dangme also have riddles that are onomatopoeic in nature. An example of such riddles is: *i tesi ne i tisi nɛ i ti lamɔ.* Literally, this riddle may means, I stand up, I don't stand up and I pick a reed. This is suggestive of an action and a resultant reaction. The answer could therefore be a parallel statement such as *i ya pa nɛ inɛ nyu nɛ iti mɔsɔ.* I went to fetch water, I found no water and I fetched mud home. Another onomatopoeic riddle is *Amanɔsaa, kon ka kon* suggestive of a long gun being corked and being shot. The answer to this riddle like the others leads to confusion; *tutɛ nɔ patafo kuɛmi;* the bullet has dropped on the head of the rhinoceros.

Though the Dangmes are mainly farmers and hunters, their bullets fall also on the head of their enemies. Therefore, some respondents are likely to come up with, *tutɛ nɔ heni nyɛlɔ kuɛmi*. Refusing to accept such a plausible answer will be unfortunate.

Other onomatopoeic riddles in Dangme are (a) Amanosaa, huudu (b) Amanosaa, ma putu ma putu ga, and (c) *kikiokio.* Here, *kikiokio* is suggestive the sound made by fouls when they are caught; *huudu* is suggestive of a fruit falling from a tree while *ma putu ma putu ga* is suggestive of the clipeti-clop made by the hoofs of horses. In fact, no semantic meaning could be ascribed to either of them so respondents are required to imagine what the sound is reminiscent of. Frequently cited answers to these riddles are: (a) *tsoku nehɛ.*

(b) *Ma yeni ne matɔ* and (c) *kayo nu kunwɔ.* Literally, a big tree has been felled, I will eat and get full, and the hawk has taken hold of the chick. Though these are very plausible, they are not accepted by the author of the riddle. As always, the answers lead to much discussion. They are as follow:

Source:https://www.google.com.gh/search?tbm=isch&q=ants&ei=KAVWVeudEIey7QbN5YPADw#tbm=isch&q=hippopotamus

Source:https://www.google.com.gh/search?tbm=isch&q=ants&ei=KAVWVeudEIey7QbN5YPADw#tbm=isch&q=war+scene

a) *Amanosaa Huudu - jesi hla gɔ;* literally the rat has plucked a pawpaw.
b) *Amanosaa Maputu maputu ga - mahwɔsi ne mahwɔ mayo*; literally, I'll lie down and sleep
c) *Amanosaa kikiokio- paka ye wie ne sabla gbɔlɛ;* literally, the toucan, while feasting on the palm

fruit has been pricked by the thorns. Obviously, all three proposed answers are quite far-fetched and rather appear unsatisfactory.

8.   Findings

Granted the few exceptions that we have come across in our research, most of the Dangme riddles are problematic and semantically ambiguous because they give rise to several possible responses. Recommendation. There is the need to get generalized words or concepts. In most local languages, such generalizations do not exist. For example, Dangme has no diction for legumes, insects, mammals, crustaceans and the like. This makes the answers often difficult to accept.

9.   Conclusion

Indigenous Akan and Dangme riddles like any other riddles are intricate brain teasers that seek not only to entertain and instruct but also to equip locals with the necessary cognitive abilities to solve the recurrent social enigmatic problems that they have to grapple with. This inevitably leads to social stability since phenomena that could potentially lead to social disintegration end up being ingeniously resolved by people whose mental capacity has been trained and sharpened by means of brain teasers. For this reason, policy makers are keenly interested in popularizing riddles with the aim of accelerating the mental growth of our youth who may become our future leaders.

However, some of the popular Akan and Dangme riddles, as we have seen, give rise to multiple answers. They are full of literary devices and like idiomatic expressions, a certain picture is painted for the listener during the questioning period but the answer is usually entirely different. Findings from our research point out that whereas it is possible for the Akan riddles to be disambiguated by slightly rewording the riddle itself as suggested in our work, the Dangme ones cannot. The search for common nouns such as legumes, insects or shellfish - words that are inexistent in the language - is the new challenge that we propose to take up in our next research work.

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