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"Hello my ears, are you still there?" Analysing the discursive strategies in Yankah's "Occasional Kwatriot's" columns: A CDA approach

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Abstract

This study examines the discursive strategies employed by Professor Kwesi Yankah in his "Occasional Kwatriot Kwesi Yankah Writes" commentaries, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) grounded in van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach. Drawing on a qualitative methodology, the study analyses 20 commentaries published in 2024, with a special focus on Yankah's integration of his unique writing style to critique societal norms and ideologies. The data reveal high lexical densities (75.80%–83.08%), emphasising Yankah's content-rich discourse. Through the socio-cognitive framework, the research explores how Yankah's columns negotiate language, cognition, and societal structures to construct ideological positions. Findings indicate his adept use of satire and anecdotes that blend local linguistic expressions (orature) with formal rhetoric to engage diverse audiences. Notable strategies include vivid imagery, intertextual references to Ghanaian music and folklore, metaphor, hyperbole and irony that transition seamlessly from anecdotal narratives to socio-political critiques. The study highlights Yankah's ability to provoke critical reflection, challenge entrenched ideologies, and foster dialogue on social justice and political accountability. By decoding these discursive strategies, this research contributes to understanding how language mediates cultural identities to offer an understanding of the role of media discourse in shaping public opinion and advocating for social reform.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Discursive Strategies, Media Discourse, Yankah

1. Introduction

The art of political and social commentary in Ghanaian media has long been a tool to examine and critique the dynamics of governance, societal norms, and cultural values. It

provides a platform for public discourse, challenges institutional practices, and holds leaders accountable for their actions (Ofori & Dogbatse, 2023). Among such commentaries, Professor Kwesi Yankah's unorthodox orality, characterised by rhetorical sophistication and critical insight, has recently caught the attention of researchers who argue that Yankah's fusion of indigenous communicative elements and oral literature in journalism narratives is not a new development. For instance, Glover-Meni (2017) argues that this approach has a long tradition, dating somewhere in the nineteenth century (1886) as seen in the writing of the pseudonymous author of *Marita or the Folly of Love* (Newell, 2002, pp. i–146). There is, therefore, no gainsaying that the writing of Yankah is a revival of what was previously practiced but has lost its lustre among the new crop of writers.

Yankah's incisive opinion writings tackle pressing social, political, and cultural issues in Ghana. Simply put, he writes a commentary about every national issue that becomes topical in the media space, be it election, illegal mining, examination malpractice, political insults, to mention a few. Over the years, his columns, often penned under the moniker "*Occasional Kwatriot Kwesi Yankah Writes*," and his book, *Woes of a Kwatriot*, have captivated and engaged readers in a reflective discourse, which demonstrates his expertise in political and social communication to construct compelling arguments. His commentaries can oscillate between humour, euphemism, and gravitas. This helps him to effectively address complex matters with accessibility and ease.

One would agree that Yankah, although of an older generation, can satisfy all his readers, both old and new. For instance, Yankah can connect with the new generation when he argues his viewpoint about the influences of electioneering outcome from a contemporary afrobeat hit song "*Makoma*" by King Paluta (2024), while servicing the old with a dose of Kojo Antwi's (2002) "*Densu*" song when sharing his thoughts about the menace of illegal mining activities known as "*Galamsey*."[1] (Ofosu, 2024). Yankah's integration of oral literature in his commentaries is characterised by the creative use of discourse strategies that evoke critical thinking, which also challenge entrenched ideologies and subtly advocate for social reform. His mastery of intertextuality and narrative framing sets him apart as a commentator whose work resonates across diverse audiences. Beyond mere opinion expression, his columns serve as a mirror to societal norms, politics, and culture, often inviting readers to question their assumptions and consider alternative perspectives.

Numerous linguistic analyses have investigated political and social discourses in Ghana over time. The analyses spanned pragmatic (Gyasi, 2023), conversational (Addy & Ofori, 2020), rhetorical (Ofosu & Washew, 2024) and stylistic analysis (Mpotsiah et al., 2021), to mention a few. However, limited studies have examined discursive strategies of

[1] Galamsey: ''Galamsey' is a corrupted term derived from the phrase "gather them and sell." It refers to the illegal practice of collecting and selling mineral resources, particularly gold. This activity, predominantly undertaken by young adults, results in the destruction of water bodies and creates significant water-related challenges for the community (Ofosu, 2024).

opinion writings, particularly from the ace Ghanaian linguist and politician, Professor Kwesi Yankah. It is on this research gap that this study is motivated. The analysis of the discursive strategies in "*Occasional Kwatriot Kwesi Yankah Writes*" through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can offer an avenue to explore the relationship between language, advocacy, and ideology. Closely, the study examines the discursive strategies to explicate the linguistic expressions, which carry implicit ideological structures in the opinionated writings.

CDA provides the tools to examine how Yankah constructs his arguments, frames his message, and positions his readers. Rooted in the works of scholars like Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Teun van Dijk, CDA investigates how discourse structures perpetuate, challenge, or transform power asymmetries in society. Within this framework, Kwesi Yankah's columns serve as fertile ground for analysing how linguistic and rhetorical devices critique authority, expose societal contradictions and provoke critical reflection. By decoding his discourse strategies, this study seeks to uncover how he wields language to foster dialogue and influence public opinion. The following questions, therefore, serve to guide the study.

1. What linguistic features and rhetorical strategies characterise Professor Kwesi Yankah's columns in addressing socio-political issues in Ghana?
2. How do the discursive strategies employed in Yankah's columns function to construct ideological meanings and critique power relations in Ghanaian society?

2. Literature review

2.1 The linguistic-oral tradition in Ghanaian public discourse

Ghanaian public discourse has become a hybrid oral-literature space where indigenous repertoires such as proverbs, storytelling, drumming and proverbial idioms are continuously reworked within prints, broadcasts and digital media (Asamoah-Poku, 2024). Rather than looking at orality as a disappearing residue of tradition, contemporary studies such as Hendricks (2019) and Briggs (2020) emphasise its adaptability and strategic use in modern communicative arenas. Abdulai, Ibrahim and Anas (2023) and Ibrahim, Alhassan and Diedong (2023) show that drums, town criers and communal performances remain central to information circulation and norm enforcement in rural areas in Ghana, even alongside radio and social media. These studies argue that such systems are not merely cultural artifacts but sites where authority, legitimacy and collective memory are negotiated. This compels linear narratives of modernisation and suggests that public discourse continues to be anchored in oral epistemologies.

Parallel research on proverbs, storytelling and indigenous language use highlights how these resources influence the cognition, stance and ideology of the people (Quarshie

& Poku, 2025). According to Fosu et al. (2023), Akan proverbs, especially, demonstrate resilience and continuity in everyday communication as vehicles for moral reasoning and social critique, including environmental and socioeconomic issues. Similarly, Wiafe-Akenten (2021), in her analysis of contemporary Akan news broadcasts, espouses that journalists weave proverbs into news bulletins to soften face-threatening acts, encode evaluative positions and invite audience alignment. Wiafe-Akenten adds that this strategy blurs the boundaries between objective reporting and culturally saturated commentary. Wiafe-Akenten's (2021) findings corroborate with Osei-Tutu's (2022) broader African work that foregrounds oral storytelling as a decolonial methodology which privileges rationality, community accountability and affects over strictly propositional argumentations.

The digital and mass-media environment has also entrenched these culturally loaded artifacts – they recontextualise them. Nweke et al. (2024) demonstrate that traditional Ghanaian storytelling formats are being re-embedded in radio talk shows and YouTube skits with narrators alternating between English and local languages to index authority and irony. Additionally, Ajani et al. (2023) argue that digital media can revitalise indigenous knowledge systems by providing new platforms for circulating oral genres and amplifying marginalised voices. Yet, this optimistic view is tempered by work documenting how post-colonial language hierarchies still privilege English in mainstream media, constraining the visibility and perceived legitimacy of indigenous linguistic resources (Adom et al., 2024; Dartey, 2025).

2.2 Yankah and the discourse community

As man is a social being in an environment where communication is necessary and mandatory, language becomes a channel for transmitting ideas and information from one man to another (Kinzler, 2021). According to Dailey-O'Cain (2017), the use of language in the media and other communicative environments has established ideologies, and socio-political class distinctions have been essential engagements since time immemorial. Language used in this way is diplomatically referred to as being used critically. Eze and Amoniyan (2022) opine, "Language conceives the key to the heart of the people. If one loses it, one loses the people. If one keeps it safe, it unlocks the people's hearts." Yankah uses language as an organising apparatus to describe social life, as a means of constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing ideological standpoints, as well as a medium for structuring the knowledge base of the Ghanaian social group and constructing different versions of reality (Beetz et al., 2021).

In the Ghanaian media landscape, the significance of the style and strategies through which Yankah communicates his arguments with the use of language features cannot be relegated to the background. Yankah has the ability to introduce indigenous Akan words in his commentaries without harming the integrity of the English syntax, for

example, "*and you may have joined large droves of 'Ogyakromains' heading towards London with one-way ticket*" or "*should Ghanaians be asked to choose one auspicious day for 'Dumsor', it should be Father's Day*." The words 'Ogyakromains' (a humorous reference to Ghanaians) and 'Dumsor' (a term for crisis where electric power is not stable) are considered a coinage or even a calque that allows non-users of the Akan language to make sense of the expression in their respective cultural context. This reflects Yankah's mission of experimenting and breaking the frontiers of creativity.

Yankah also culls words from the Ghanaian cultural scene, as in the following examples: "*agyengyensuo*" (dragonfly); "*adukro mu nsuo*" (raindrops that have settled at the buttress of a giant tree); "*Charlie wote*" (local coinage for bathroom slippers); 'Tani' (stereotypical name for someone from the northern parts of Ghana); '*Wiase ayɛ den*' (there is hardship in the world); '*booklong'* (local coinage for well-educated people). However, Glover-Meni (2017) argues that Yankah has in mind specific readers, who are those who can speak the two languages. In other words, the author contends that the text is highly particularised. That is to say that it is meant for those who can listen, understand, and evaluate the multiplicity of languages being used, especially when he does not translate the foreign words that are lodged into the English language.

In discourse, analysis entails the description, interpretation, and explanation of textual conversation (Brown & Yule, 1983; Gee, 1999). According to the authors, textual conversation can be analysed at both the micro-level and the macro-level. They argue that micro-level analysis, on the one hand, concentrates on the linguistic level, identifying the textual markers that connect discourse and create texture like cohesion, coherence, and logical organisation of ideas. They add that the macro-level analysis, on the other hand, involves the semantic level, interpreting the various dynamics of meaning encoded by the various linguistic styles and features. Thus, macro-level analysis explores pragmatics, which entails explaining the implications of the various intended meanings in the dimensions of sociocultural contexts. In the course of describing macro-level analysis, discourse analysis as a network aims at understanding how language begets ideology, inequality, and advocates for change based on its findings in conversations (Eze & Amoniyan, 2022). Particularly, personal viewpoints (opinions), such as Yankah's commentaries, according to Simpson (1993), have remained a veritable source of human activities where language is ideologically patterned and codified. As a dynamic social process and an interactive forum, it involves many linguistic negotiations that can be used for sociolinguistics research.

3. Theoretical thrust – Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

This study adopts van Dijk's (1998) socio-cognitive approach (SCA) to CDA, which posits that the relationship between discourse and society is mediated by cognitive processes. Van Dijk (1998) identifies three foundational components of the SCA: the social, cognitive, and

discourse components. The social component investigates the broader societal structures and group relations, including phenomena such as discrimination, racism, and sexism, as well as group dynamics like identity formation, norms, and access to resources. The cognitive component delves into social and personal cognition, which includes values, ideologies, and knowledge systems, thereby addressing the relationship between individual and collective worldviews. Lastly, the discourse component scrutinises linguistic features such as syntax, semantics, and lexical choices. The three key components of van Dijk's (1998) approach, as well as how cognition mediates between speech and society, are illustrated in Figure 1.

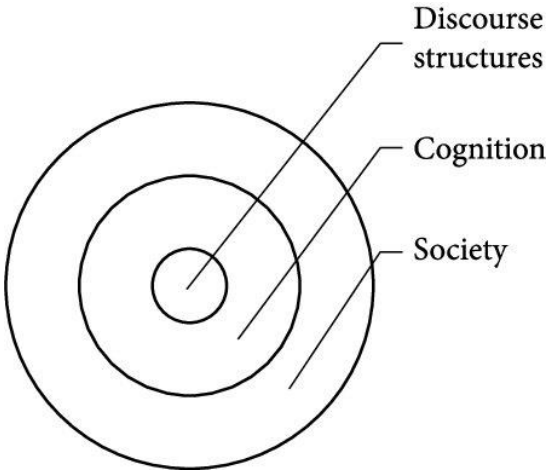

Figure 1: van Dijk's three components of the socio-cognitive approach (1998, pp. 126-130)

Alt Text for Graphical Figure [28 words]

A concentric circle diagram with three labelled layers. The innermost circle is labelled "Discourse structures," the middle circle is labelled "Cognition," and the outermost circle is labelled "Society."

Central to van Dijk's SCA is the concept of mental models, which represent the cognitive frameworks individuals use to interpret, produce, and comprehend discourse (van Dijk, 1998). Mental models, grounded in episodic or autobiographical memory, provide subjective representations of personal experiences. These include emotional, cognitive and sensory dimensions. Van Dijk (1998, pp. 82-83) distinguishes between two types of mental models: situation models and context models. Situation models encapsulate an individual's subjective understanding of specific situations, while context models evaluate the relevance of situational conditions within a communicative exchange. These models facilitate mutual understanding among interlocutors by drawing on shared knowledge expressed through language. In this way, language operates as a pivotal medium for constructing and interpreting subjective experiences.

The socio-cognitive approach further emphasises the role of cognition as a mediator between discourse and societal structures. It reveals how individuals' cognitive processes, shaped by their social environments, influence their perception and production of

discourse. By uncovering the network of beliefs, attitudes, and biases that are activated during discourse interactions, the SCA provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how language reflects and perpetuates social ideological relations (van Dijk, 2005). This study examines how language, cognition, and cultural identities shape the communication and ideological positions of Yankah by applying the SCA to uncover the underlying ideological meanings embedded within Yankah's commentaries. It also aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how language serves as both a reflection and a tool of societal transformation.

4. Methods

4.1 Data source

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to examine the discursive strategies employed by Professor Kwesi Yankah in his "*Occasional Kwatriot Kwasi Yankah Writes*" columns. The qualitative framework is particularly suited for the exploration of language use, ideological structures, and socio-political underpinnings embedded in textual discourse. The data comprises 20 commentaries authored by Yankah in 2024, which were published in Daily Graphic, an online media platform (www.graphiconline.com). These commentaries were purposefully selected to capture a representative sample of Yankah's discursive strategies, thematic diversity and rhetorical styles. The selection criterion was based on commentaries that address key socio-political and cultural issues that ensure the data reflects the core elements of his columns. The data was manually copied from the official website of the Daily Graphic and cleaned of all advertisements, pictures and extraneous materials that were not part of the content of the columns. The data was then stored as a plain text file which was further fed into Sketch Engine software for data processing which include word count and lexical density of the respective columns.

The study also employs van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach as the analytical framework. It focuses on three key dimensions: social component which investigates societal structures, group relations, and ideologies that influence and are reflected in Yankah's commentaries; cognitive component that analyses the mental models, values, and biases that underpin the production and interpretation of Yankah's commentaries and finally, the discourse component, which examines the lexical choices, syntactic patterns, and rhetorical strategies employed to frame socio-political arguments.

The data were given codes (KYC) for easy referencing and analysis. In addition to this coding, the particular column from which the various discursive strategies were identified was coded together with a number. Based on these, KYC 01 (which means Kwasi Yankah column one), for example, as shown below, refers to the extract from the first column where a strategy was identified.

1. *With rising election heat at home, what about a freezing cold experience elsewhere?* (KYC 01).

4.2 Mode of analysis

Each column was carefully read and annotated to identify salient linguistic features, rhetorical strategies, and thematic elements. The lexical density was further calculated to identify the weight of information in each column. According to Afful and Mwinlaaru (2010), the higher the lexical density of a text, the more informative it is and vice versa. In measuring the lexical density of the columns, all the words in each column were counted using the Sketch Engine corpus tool (Kilgarriff et al., 2014). The function words were then also counted and subtracted from the total number of words to arrive at the number of lexical words. This was followed by the calculation of the proportion of the lexical words to the total number of words to arrive at the lexical density of the texts. As far as the data set was concerned, articles, conjunctions, prepositions, and possessive determiners were considered to be function words while nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs were considered lexical words.

The texts were further analysed through the lens of van Dijk's SCA, focusing on the relationship between language, cognition, and societal structures. Finally, the findings from the textual analyses were synthesised to interpret how Yankah's writings critique societal norms, construct ideological positions, and influence public opinion. The study adhered to ethical guidelines by ensuring proper attribution of Yankah's commentaries and safeguarding the integrity of the textual data. Since the commentaries were publicly available, no personal or sensitive information was compromised during the research.

5. Presentation of findings

The section presents the lexical density of the columns to ascertain the weight of information that is included in each commentary. The linguistic features, rhetorical strategies, and thematic elements of Yankah's columns are also presented in this section. Table 1 summarises the measures of lexical density of the columns.

Table 1: Measurement of lexical density

CODE	LEXICAL WORDS	FUNCTIONAL WORDS	TOTAL NO. OF WORDS	LEXICAL DENSITY (%)
KYC 01	404	129	533	75.80
KYC 02	576	159	735	78.37
KYC 03	983	249	1232	79.79
KYC 04	231	61	292	79.11
KYC 05	612	146	758	80.74
KYC 06	436	103	539	80.89

KYC 07	653	133	786	83.08
KYC 08	640	167	807	79.31
KYC 09	561	144	705	79.57
KYC 10	872	267	1139	76.56
KYC 11	703	201	904	77.75
KYC 12	928	244	1172	79.18
KYC 13	718	170	888	80.85
KYC 14	738	204	942	78.34
KYC 15	911	220	1131	80.55
KYC 16	809	227	1036	78.09
KYC 17	644	153	797	80.80
KYC 18	921	239	1160	79.40
KYC 19	1176	322	1498	78.50
KYC 20	613	163	776	78.99

Source:

From Table 1, lexical densities range from 75.80% to 83.08%, indicating content-rich texts. Commentaries such as KYC 05, 06, 07, 13,15, and 17 exceed 80%. This highlights a strong informational focus with limited functional words. KYC 07 (83.08%) is the highest, emphasising dense argumentation. Columns like KYC 02, 03, 04, 08, 09, 12, and 18 (79-79.79%) remain highly content-focused. Meanwhile, KYC 01, 10, 11, 14, 16, 19, and 20 (75-78.99%) show moderately dense.

The overall range of lexical densities suggests that the commentaries are predominantly content-driven. Higher lexical densities in texts typically correlate with more information-heavy discourse (Afful & Mwinlaaru, 2010) as seen in the case of KYC 07. On the other hand, the slightly lower densities in texts like KYC 01 and KYC 10 suggest a greater balance between explanatory and descriptive components, likely catering to a broader audience comprehension. These lexical densities, while indicative of the weight of information, also shed light on the style and purpose of the texts. Columns with higher lexical densities may aim at expert audiences requiring detailed analysis, whereas those with lower densities balance informativeness with readability for a general audience.

5.1 Linguistic features and rhetorical strategies of the columns

Yankah employs varied linguistic structures to capture his audience and drive home his points. His sentences are made of short phrases and complex and multi-clause constructions. This helps him to weave humour and serious critique into a cohesive narrative, as seen in the extract 2.

2. *Times have changed; and so have political choices. Working towards December 7, Flagbearers and political parties have spent resources producing manifestos (sometimes plagiarized), and crisscrossed the country trying to persuade voters with 'Wiase ayɛ den' slogans, petrol prices, Free SHS, Pot Holes, Digitalization, etc* (KYC 05).

In the expression above, Yankah uses a semi-colon (;) to connect one idea to the other and commas (,) to list several items in a single sentence. In another example, he juxtaposes the biting cold of Aberdeen with the heat of political tensions in Ghana to draw readers into a deeper socio-political commentary. Yankah's alternation between short clauses and extended multi-clause sentences directly reflects Halliday's (1994) systematic function view that grammatical variation enables speakers and writers to manage ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings. Similar patterns have been identified in political commentary and opinion writing (see Ghawaidi & Alsmari, 2025; Tian, 2025), where syntactic flexibility is used to balance accessibility with analytical depth. In extract 2, the sentence structuring becomes a strategic resource that allows humour, irony and critique to coexist within the same discursive space. This confirms Raabe's (2018) findings that effective political commentators often rely on hybrid sentence forms to maintain reader engagement while advancing ideological positions.

3. *Aberdeen cold was higher and hit so hard you were compelled to frequently touch your ears to ensure they had not been nibbled by rodents. 'Hello, my ears, are you still there?' I asked myself in Aberdeen* (KYC 01).

This fluid manipulation of language aligns with Halliday's (1994) concept of language as a resource for meaning-making, where varied sentence structures enhance the communicative impact. Yankah's columns are also crafted to guide readers through a progression of ideas. He often begins with engaging anecdotes or observations that transition into broader critiques of socio-political issues. Even though CDA studies in Ghana and beyond have largely focused on speeches, editorials, or hard news genres, emphasising evaluative language, pronoun use, and argumentation structures (Logogye, 2018; Addy & Ofori, 2020; Mpotsiah et al., 2021), Yankah uses personal anecdotes that evolve into broader socio-political critiques. This narrative progression aligns with research on African orality and storytelling, which highlights how personal experience functions as a culturally legitimate pathway to social critique (Hendricks, 2019; Osei-Tutu, 2022).

4. *Once upon a time, I met this celebrity eyeball to eyeball. It's been a while since then, but I am calling Kojo today to rally to the resurrection of a dying river that once inspired his poetic fancy. I first met Kojo Antwi in the early 1990s while I pivoted, rolling out of Radio Universe, the first independent educational radio in Ghana* (KYC 03).

In the above extract, Yankah starts with a nostalgic encounter with musician Kojo Antwi, later connecting this narrative to the environmental degradation of Ghana's water bodies. Anecdotes, such as his childhood memories of fetching water in "*Densu*", lend authenticity to his critiques and foster a personal connection with readers. This layered information structure enhances the accessibility and intellectual depth of his arguments. Similarly, Yankah advocates the subscription of insurance policies for families and

institutions by opening his argument with the public scare of missing male genitalia at Kasoa, a heavily dense city in Ghana.

5. *In the past three weeks, fear and panic have gripped parts of Ghana. A legend of vanishing male genitals has been circulating, with a number of arrests made by the police of suspects. ... In all cases, though, no missing genitals have been proven, and suspected robbers or magicians have been set free* (KYC 16).

Another feature that characterises Yankah's writings is the blend of precise, formal language with colloquialism. This positions his column as a reflection of his Ghanaian heritage and linguistic expertise. For example, terms like "*Ogyakromians*" (KYC 01), *Aboa konkontimaa* (the tadpole), and "*Awengaa*" (KYC 15) (a term for predatory older men – paedophile) ground his writings in local cultural contexts. This strategic word choice supports Fairclough's (1995) assertion that language is inherently tied to cultural and ideological frameworks, as Yankah's use of language reflects his Ghanaian origin. While earlier studies have noted code-mixing and indigenous language use in Ghanaian media (Wiafe-Akenten, 2021; Nweke et al., 2024), Yankah's columns demonstrate how he consistently deploys this hybridity to authenticate his voice, align with local audiences, and simultaneously critique power structures. This pattern reinforces van Dijk's socio-cognitive claim that discourse draws on shared cultural knowledge and mental models to guide interpretation and evaluation (van Dijk, 1998, 2005).

5.2 Discursive strategies

Yankah employs a range of discursive strategies that enrich his commentaries and enhance their rhetorical power. The analysis demonstrates the utilisation of several strategies. The strategies and their frequencies have been presented in the table below.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of discussive strategies

STRATEGY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Irony	78	30.5
Metaphor	56	21.9
Hyperbole/exaggeration	52	20.3
Euphemism	11	4.3
Intertextuality	8	3.1
Counterfactual	5	1.9
Authority	4	1.6
Categorisation	2	0.8
Actor Description	22	8.6
Illustration	11	4.3
Victimisation	7	2.7

TOTAL	**256**	**100**

Source:

From the analysis, Irony is used the most, with a frequency of 78 (30.5%). This dominant usage allows Yankah to emphasise contradictions, expose absurdities, and engage his audience with subtle wit. According to Wieslander (2019), the use of irony in communication suggests that it is a central tool in shaping his arguments and delivering impactful critiques. Following irony, Metaphor occurred 56 (21.9%) times. Scholars such as Thibodeau et al. (2019), Afreh and Ofosu (2024), Ofosu and Washew (2024), and Ofosu et al. (2025) have argued that metaphors enhance the aesthetic quality of discourses and facilitate deeper audience understanding by framing abstract concepts in familiar terms. Additionally, Hyperbole occurred 52 (20.3%) times. Similarly, Counterfactual occurred 8 times, Authority occurred 4 times, and Categorisation occurred the least.

5.2.1 Irony

Irony is a discursive strategy for maintaining relationships and influencing social interactions. Listeners are more impacted by sardonic tones, which might be situational or verbal. In the columns, Yankah exploits this in extracts 6 and 7.

6. *Besides intimidating crowds pulled by rival parties, the worst offenders are the so-called pollsters, who wake up hallucinating on lotto numbers, but compel an entire Ashanti region to sleep on empty stomachs, only because they saw on TV the face of Global Analytics?* (KYC 01)
7. *That also means in a sense, One Ghana has two majority leaders in Parliament (Afenyo Markin and Ato Forson), and no minority until the Supreme God has finally spoken. Coming Tuesday, the drama peaks, and it is unknown how many majority leaders will show up, and whether there will be enough room on the right-hand side of God to seat 275 lawmakers* (KYC 06)

Yankah uses sarcasm, a form of verbal irony, in extracts 6 and 7 to ridicule the views of Ghanaian lawmakers and false prophets. According to van Dijk (2005), irony can express disapproval or criticism without offending people directly. People who made personal sacrifices, made grandiose political promises and predictions, or showed various degrees of "hysteria and negativity" regarding the 2024 elections are all mocked by Yankah. He exposes the incorrect predictions made by false prophets about the results of the 2024 Ghanaian election. In extract 6, for instance, this mockery is emphasised by the comment: "*the worst offenders are the so-called pollsters, who wake up hallucinating on lotto numbers*." Yankah also intends the exact opposite in extract 7 when he said, "*No minority until the Supreme God has finally spoken*."

5.2.2 Metaphor

Yankah's use of metaphors and vivid imagery, such as describing polluted rivers as "*Milo Rivers*" in (KYC 08), evokes emotional responses and underscores the gravity of environmental degradation. Here, the writer projects the characteristics of the brownish nature of the cocoa product, Milo, as the source domain onto the Ayensu River, and by extension, all rivers in Ghana polluted by illegal mining activities, as the target domain. Also, Yankah likens the activities of *galamsey* in Ghana to that of terrorism when he described those involved in the menace as "*Galamsey terrorists,*" just as the expression "*protesting 'rebels'"* paradoxically equates the protest of the catholic church to a rebellion (KYC 07). He satirises how destructive the actors in *galamsey* have caused the nation with nonchalance, which required the calmest social/religious group to rebel on the streets to register their displeasure.

Yankah's metaphorical treatment of water bodies corroborates Ofosu's (2024) ecocritical study that foregrounds water as victims of *galamsey* activities. By reimagining polluted rivers as a thick, brown beverage, Yankah renders environmental destruction visually immediate and emotionally unsettling, which echoes the ecocritical study's claim that literature and discourse must make ecological harm perceptible in order to provoke ethical reflection. In both texts, water is no longer neutral infrastructure but a symbol of violated life systems.

5.2.3 Hyperbole

This discussive strategy describes how certain facts or figures are purposefully exaggerated to have a stronger effect. Yankah employed exaggeration as a rhetorical device to intentionally emphasise things by using hyperbolic words.

8. *Tempers are high in Ogyakrom. Never seen such turmoil at the floor of Parliament: the bulging eyes of the Majority Leader fighting back an attempt by the Speaker to diminish him to Minority* (KYC 06)
9. *He sprang to his feet and spoke in fury; he spat fire and, almost dispensing civilities, indulged the Speaker in hot exchanges, battling him on a writ frustrated by the Speaker's office. The shouting dialogue compelled the Speaker to wind up* (KYC 06)

Yankah wishes to convey in extract 8 the magnitude of the Majority Leader's ire "on a writ frustrated by the Speaker's office" and his response in parliament. Yankah's assertion that "*The shouting dialogue compelled the Speaker to wind up*" again exaggerates the severity of the overall affair. The phrase "*never seen such turmoil*" in extract 8 immediately amplifies the situation, portraying it as unparalleled in parliamentary history. The use of "*bulging eyes of the Majority Leader*" further heightens the tension and provides a vivid visual image of the leader's agitation. Additionally, the suggestion that the Speaker

attempted to "*diminish him to Minority*" dramatises the power struggle that frames it as a direct and personal affront to the Majority Leader's authority.

Extract 9 continues the narrative with an equally intense portrayal of the events. The phrase "*spoke in fury; he spat fire*" suggests an intensity that transcends ordinary anger, as though the speaker's words were so heated that they became figurative flames. The idea that he "*almost dispensed with civilities*" underscores the departure from parliamentary decorum, suggesting a situation where the normal rules of engagement were nearly abandoned. The description of "*hot exchanges*" further intensifies the portrayal of the conflict, conveying a level of hostility that is palpable and disruptive.

5.2.4 Euphemism

Euphemism is the term used to describe the substitution of a moderate or pleasant term. To ease tensions, politicians use more gentle rhetoric (van Dijk, 1998). Euphemisms are hardly utilised by Yankah in his columns. An illustration of this is given in extracts 10 and 11.

10. *... where our conference bus strayed into a public protest by Spanish women in the nude! In other words, women demonstrating in their birthday clothes!* (KYC 07)
11. *It meant squeezing your little thing in between your thighs along with the pair of pillows beneath* (KYC 03)

Yankah uses euphemism to conceal harsh facts in his columns. In extracts 10 and 11, he uses a friendlier and softer phrase to achieve a good framing effect by substituting the terms "*Spanish women in nude*" and "*in their birthday clothes*" for "nakedness." He attempted to lessen the intolerable guilt attached to rot. Similarly, the direct and rude references to "penis" and "testicles" are replaced with the phrases "*little thing in between your thighs*" and "*with the pair of pillows beneath*," respectively.

5.2.5 Intertextuality

Yankah also incorporates intertextual references to Ghanaian music, folklore, and cultural icons, such as Kojo Antwi and Kweku Ananse. This creates a sense of familiarity for his audience. Yankah alluded to related stories, ideas, or contexts to establish connections. For instance, in extract 12, he makes reference to the South African election while speaking about the motivation of Ghanaians to vote for a candidate in the 2024 general election. Similarly, he refers to a protest in Spain, which he likens to the peaceful protest by the Catholic Archdiocese of Accra against illegal mining.

12. *I took a taxi from Joburg airport to the city centre when political campaigning was at its peak in South Africa. I started chatting with the taxi driver, a young Zulu of 35. 'How is politics going here, and who is likely to win your presidential elections?' The answer was easier than thought: 'Jacob Zuma,' the driver said, smiling. 'Why Zuma?' The young man tilted his head and then dropped a*

bombshell: 'Zuma dances very well on stage; he will win the elections.' I nodded like a Duakwa lizard. (KYC 05)

13. *This also reminded me of a conference I attended in 2010 in Madrid with Prof Joshua Alabi (then heading IPS, now UPSA), where our conference bus strayed into a public protest by Spanish women in the nude! In other words, women demonstrating in their birthday clothes! The male police on duty maintained a safe distance, but they were all in dark goggles, quietly protecting the rotating eyeballs.* (KYC 07)

5.2.6 Counterfactual

A counterfactual remark explains how something or someone might be different in new situations (Brown, Mangelsdorf, & Neff, 2012). Politicians frequently use counterfactuals to support absurd or persuasive claims. Using universal emotions and a positive self-image, Yankah uses counterfactuals in the articles.

14. *Your party and Agonaman are solidly behind you, and your doctors say you will recover soon. (KYC 04*)

In practically every column, Yankah uses emotive framing to highlight his message and evoke strong feelings in the recipients. For example, he closes his statement with the lexical unit "*soon*," and "*Your party and Agonaman are solidly behind you*" instead of a logical conclusion (KYC 04). By showing empathy for the recipients' feelings, Yankah seeks to evoke their emotions to earn their trust.

5.2.7 Authority

People with different opinions frequently cite multiple sources to support their arguments. Yankah strengthened the case for his views by using authority. According to van Dijk, these authorities are groups or people who are respected as experts in their field and are not influenced by political parties. The purpose of authority is to either support or bolster the in-group while discouraging the out-group. When discussing legislative processes and the current status of the Ghanaian parliament, Yankah cited the Rt Hon. Speaker Bagbin, Majority Leader Afenyo Markin, and Minority Leader Ato Forson. Yankah referenced the Supreme Court of Ghana when speaking about the reversal of Speaker Bagbin's declaration on four vacant seats in parliament. This is exemplified in extracts 15 and 16.

15. *The Rt Hon Speaker Bagbin had formally declared four seats vacant, reducing the majority status, and giving Ato Forson's minority an overnight elevation. Afenyo Markin, Majority Leader, would not hear that* (KYC 06)
16. *Soon after the Supreme Court reversal last Friday, came the Efutu Boy, Afenyo Markin, and his peers to meet the press, all of them sporting dimpled smiles. Their*

> *position as the majority had been restored by the Supreme Court until further notice.* (KYC 06)

Using the Supreme Court and Parliamentary Leadership as examples, Yankah aimed to demonstrate the appropriate institution's authority to guide or reroute parliamentary determinations.

5.2.8 Categorisation

According to van Dijk (2015), people tend to categorise others, especially when it comes to immigrants and refugees. This is done to classify people based on their regionalism, religion, ideology, and nationality. The Church flock protesting *galamsey* is divided into groups or categories by Yankah. Yankah used categorisation to describe "*a motley congregation of priests*," "*choristers in mufti*," "*church elders*," "*diocesans young and old*," and "*altar boys*." He explicitly mentions the various societal memberships and their significance to the fight against *galamsey*. A good self-image is presented when he shows that the Christian and traditional priests were the ones who voiced all of the worries and laments about the *galamsey* menace.

5.2.9 Actor Description

Actor descriptions are used repeatedly to highlight the benefits and drawbacks of being a member of a group. According to their traits and characteristics, characters are described in various ways. It is common practice to portray members of the ingroup as neutral or positive and members of the outgroup as negative (van Dijk 1993). In order to emphasise the positive and negative traits in people, Yankah used the actor's description 22 times. For instance, Yankah presents a positive picture of Bawumia, the flagbearer of the New Patriotic Party.

> ***17.*** *Mahamudu Bawumia looks like a happy man having roused the country to its feet since May. With all eyes on him, he has quietly choreographed the new face of party-political campaigns. Mahamudu has asked his campaign team to shed arrogance, quit plush offices, and show respect to the masses who empowered them. He has also worked the minds of pedestrians, and for once, plush V8s and long convoys attract public boos. Mahamudu's campaign prospectus was simple, knowing his party's elitist history.* (KYC 11)

In the aforementioned extract, Yankah exhibits Bawumia's capacity for work. He used Bawumia's dynamism in the 2024 election campaign to try to win over the populace. Clausal expressions like "*he has quietly choreographed the new face of party-political campaigns,*" "*Mahamudu has asked his campaign team to shed arrogance, quit plush offices, and show respect to the masses that empowered them,*" and "*Mahamudu's campaign prospectus was simple knowing his party's elitist history*" demonstrate the

energy he has brought to Ghana's 2024 election campaign. From extract 18, Yankah characterised the false prophets as evil.

18. *Hardly a day passes without a newly bleached face emerging on social media, white towel on the shoulder, pacing back and forth on the dais, and yelling a prophecy that could well be an inaugural lecture.* (KYC 09)

Yankah used the phrases "*a newly bleached face emerging on social media*" and "*yelling a prophecy that could well be an inaugural lecture*" to mock phony pastors posing as prophets and making false predictions or prophecies about the 2024 elections.

5.2.10 Illustration

In each of his pieces, Yankah employed the discursive technique of illustration to support his position or increase his authenticity.

19. *I was to be the 21st speaker and the 5th Ghanaian after E. A. Boateng (1996), Florence Dolphyne (2001), Ivan Addae-Mensah (2006), and D. A. Akyeampong (2011).* (KYC 20)
20. *Our delegation to visit Otumfuo at Manhyia and extend the invitation was a high-powered one, including the following: Kwaku Kyei, former IGP who was alumni president; Nana Adade Boamah (Tom Sawyer), Kofi Dua Adonten; Yaw Afriyie Nketia, Gloria Akuffo, Ursula Owusu, Betty Mould Iddrisu, Adu Gyimah (Castro), Lee Atoms Ofei, Ivy Heward Mills, Agyeman Badu-Akosah, Yaa Osei Brempong, Margaret Insaidoo, Maxwell Opoku Agyeman, Rosina Kyerematen, Nana Twum (king of mpusuo) etc* (KYC 13)

In KYC 20 and 13, respectively, the list of Ghanaian speakers in WAEC's Endowment Fund Lecture series and the information about the powerful delegation that is scheduled to visit Otumfuo at Manhyia paint a clear and complete picture of Yankah's successful use of van Dijk's discursive technique of "Illustration" in communication. Making the content more concrete, relatable, and memorable for his audience is the goal of this strategy.

5.2.11 Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when the dichotomy of ingroups and outgroups is applied. The way that members of the outgroup hurt members of the ingroup is metaphorically represented. According to D'Errico, Poggi, and Vincze (2012), someone may damage another person's reputation by using verbal abuse, including criticism, accusations, and insults that imply a poor assessment. Yankah used the concept of Us-Them division, in which supporters of the NDC publicly denounced and demonised JAK, "the 88-year-old," as illustrated in extract 21.

21. *Desperate political rivals took the 88-year-old to the cleaners, taunting him for the wheelchair to which he is now confined! In their words: 'The heartless man who inflicted cruel policies as President deserves the wheelchair; it serves him right.' Ouch!* (KYC 02)

The statement "*The heartless man who inflicted cruel policies as President deserves the wheelchair*" in the extract seemed to be biased against former President J. A. Kuffour. This controversial statement suggests that his overt participation in the 2024 election campaign is at odds with his "*Desperate political rivals*." As a result, they claimed that "*The wheelchair is deserved by the heartless man who implemented cruel policies as President*."

5.2.12 Discussion of findings

The research indicates that Professor Kwasi Yankah employs a range of discursive strategies to sway the opinions and behaviour of his audience. Irony, authority, victimisation, categorisation, counterfactuals, euphemism, illustration, hyperbole, and metaphor are some strategies that were identified. Irony is utilised to craft thought-provoking messages. It is intended through the use of metaphors and hyperbole. Irony is also employed to attract interest, arouse feelings, and produce memorable and convincing scenarios that highlight the importance of Yankah's messages. Yankah's commentaries reveal his commitment to social justice, political accountability, and cultural preservation. He uses his platform to critique power dynamics, societal hypocrisy, and the neglect of marginalised groups. In KYC 02, Yankah condemns the ageism and ableism directed at a former president, where he advocates respect toward the elderly and persons with disabilities. Thus, the columns are testaments to the power of language in shaping public discourse.

Additionally, satire and anecdotal storytelling are hallmarks of Yankah's writing style. His use of satire first entertains and second, underscores the absurdities in societal practices and political discourse. For instance, in one of the columns, Yankah humorously laments the marginalisation of fathers on Father's Day in the following words.

22. *Breaking News: Today is Father's Day ooo! . . . And how come on this auspicious occasion of Father's Day, all Chinese Restaurants have been closed for fumigation? As for Gift shops, owners and attendants have all left for a funeral or Thanksgiving service, and Ghana has even decided that, should Ghanaians be asked to choose one auspicious day for Dumsor, it should be Father's Day* (KYC 12).

He critiques societal biases through light-hearted narratives. There is minimal evidence of categorisation, victimisation, euphemism, actor descriptions, authority, and counterfactuals. Yankah uses these strategies to depict Ghanaian socio-political events as dangerous to the populace, the nation, and democracy. He stresses how crucial it is to restore Ghana's social and physical environment in order to promote growth and change.

These findings both confirm and extend core insight in CDA by showing how the Ghanaian columnist mobilises humour, orality, and affect as key resources in ideological work. The prevalence of irony, metaphor, hyperbole, and actor description in Yankah's columns empirically substantiates van Dijk's (1998, 2015) assertion that discourse structures (lexis, syntax, figurative language) are systematically correlated with underlying cognitive frameworks and collective ideologies. For example, irony and hyperbole are used over and over to highlight the hypocrisy of the elite, the contradictions in institutions, and the vulnerability of everyday people. This activates shared cognitive models of "corrupt politicians," "false prophets," or "neglected citizens" that are easy to recognise in the Ghanaian socio-political context. The columns show how information-dense and rhetorically rich text can lead readers to make certain moral and political judgements by using these strategies along with high lexical density and tightly packed propositions.

Simultaneously, the study refines SCA by emphasising the significance of affect and humour in the formation of ideological stances. Recent CDA scholarship posits that political persuasion increasingly functions through affective and multimodal resources rather than solely through explicit argumentation (Hart, 2008; KhosraviNik, 2020). The current analysis corroborates this trend within the context of an African newspaper: satire, anecdotes, and whimsical neologisms such as "Ogyakromians," "Milo Rivers," or "*Galamsey* terrorists" do not merely embellish propositions; they distil intricate socio-cognitive frameworks into memorable images that provoke laughter, anger, or moral outrage. This corresponds with research on satire and multimodal humour in African and global media (Onwubiko, 2022; Ogbodo, 2024), indicating that irony, exaggeration, and parody can undermine official narratives while maintaining plausible deniability. In this context, the results enhance CDA by empirically demonstrating the coexistence of affective "lightness" (humour, anecdotes) and ideological "seriousness" (critiques of ableism, environmental degradation, democratic vulnerability) within a singular socio-cognitive initiative.

The study also aligns with and diverges from prevailing trends. CDA research centred on Ghana, exemplified by Addy and Ofori's (2020) examination of campaign speeches and Logogye's (2018) analysis of the State of the Nation Address, illustrates how political elites utilise inclusive pronouns, evaluative language, and argumentation frameworks to validate policies and foster in-group cohesion. In the same way, Mpotsiah et al. (2021) show how insults in Ghanaian politics show hostility, power struggles, and ideological polarisation. Research in Nigeria and South Africa examining headlines, editorials, and reports on war or insecurity reveals persistent discursive patterns of "us–

them" polarisation, victimisation, and securitisation (Akpere, 2021; Nartey & Ladegaard, 2021; Nkoala, 2022). Yankah's columns corroborate numerous these trends: His use of actor description, categorisation, and victimisation clearly creates ideological lines between responsible citizens and predatory elites, or between sincere religious practice and exploitative prophecy. Nonetheless, the current study elucidates unique characteristics that challenge prevailing CDA narratives concerning African media. A lot of CDA work on African newspaper discourse looks at hard news genres like headlines, straight reports, and editorials. In these genres, humour and personal stories are often downplayed (Nkoala, 2022; Henaku, 2023).

In contrast, Yankah's opinion pieces use anecdotal storytelling, references to music and folklore, and playful wordplay as main ways to criticise. This bolsters nascent assertions that African media commentary cannot be comprehensively interpreted through frameworks that solely emphasise linear, deductive reasoning (Mathe, 2024; Terkper & Baddianaah, 2024). Instead, ideological meaning is spread out through the order of events, humour, and references to other cultures. These three things work together to get readers to agree with certain points of view while keeping the tone conversational and "storytelling." Yankah's creative orality significantly enhances existing CDA frameworks concerning satire and political commentary. Research on satirical news within Euro-American contexts frequently emphasises the parody of journalistic genres, visual-verbal irony, and intertextuality with mainstream news (Jaballah, 2025). African research on satire has primarily concentrated on cartoons, stand-up comedy, and tabloid or peripheral journalism (Ng'etich, 2020; Ogbodo, 2024; Avoaja, 2025).

Yankah's columns demonstrate that print opinion writing can serve as a medium for "oralised satire," integrating proverbs, code-switching, and performative narratives into a written format that retains the rhythm of oral delivery. His transition from a personal anecdote ("meeting Kojo Antwi") to a more general critique of *galamsey*, or from a funny Father's Day rant to structural reflections on gendered care and social value, shows how oral narrative templates can be used to "smuggle" critical reflection into conversations that seem light and casual.

6. Conclusion

Professor Kwesi Yankah's "Occasional Kwatriot" columns stand as a masterclass in the strategic use of language to critique societal norms, question entrenched ideologies, and foster public dialogue. His writing reflects a seamless blend of traditional oral forms and modern rhetorical techniques, as seen in his use of indigenous Akan words, intertextuality, satire, and anecdotes. Yankah crafts engaging and thought-provoking narratives that resonate with diverse audiences by incorporating elements such as humour, metaphor, hyperbole, and irony. His ability to adapt oral traditions within the formal conventions of

English writing enriches his commentaries and allows him to effectively address complex themes such as political accountability, environmental degradation, and societal biases. This study has demonstrated how Yankah's discursive strategies construct ideological positions, making his work a vital contribution to media discourse in Ghana.

Beyond analysing Yankah's writings, this study advances the broader field of political and social commentaries by illuminating the power of language in shaping public discourse. The study bridges the gap between oral and written traditions and demonstrates the flexibility of critical discourse analysis in uncovering the socio-political functions of language. This research contributes to the understanding of how culturally rooted rhetorical strategies can be harnessed to critique societal issues. Moreover, it underscores the relevance of CDA in deconstructing ideologies embedded within political communication, thus enriching scholarly approaches to discourse studies and reinforcing the role of commentary as a vehicle for societal transformation.

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REPRESENTATION OF DISABILITY IN AKAN DISCOURSE

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Abstract
The study examines some proverbs and insults in Akan that legitimise and reinforce marginalisation and stigmatisation of people with disability (PWD) in Ghana. Analysing fifty (50) proverbs and ten (10) insults from both written and oral sources collected through interviews and library search, the findings reveal that some proverbs and insults portray PWD as weak and vulnerable, making aspects of the Akan language a perpetuator of disability. Taking into consideration the Sustainable Development Goal 10, which strives to reduce inequality within and among countries by empowering and promoting social, economic and political inclusion of all, there is the need to make indigenous languages inclusive of the needs of PWD.

Keywords: Disability, Akan Discourse, Proverbs, Insults, Critical Discourse Analysis, Marginalisation

1. Introduction

The language of disability has become a contested issue owing to its enormous power. Disability language is an important ideological and political concern as it underpins stereotypes, identity, relations and actions, and programmes targeted at People with Disability (PWD) (Corker, 2000). Language is powerfully overwhelming as it largely shapes perceptions, attitudes, behaviour, policy and practice (Corbett, 1962; Corker, 2000). Language describes people consciously and subconsciously and dictates how we treat each other. In the words of Kirkpatrick (1991) "Words can destroy" and words throughout human history have caused destruction. Concerning PWD, the terminologies used are laden with devaluing discourse (Finlon, 2001; Moasun and Mfoafo-M'Carthy, 2020). Such language defines hegemony aimed at reinforcing social power dynamics by ensuring that the marginalized remain as such and the powerful maintain their position of privilege (Darcy, 2004; Gillovic et. al., 2018). Disability language has served this purpose and has contributed to the marginalisation and exclusion of PWD. Indeed, the idea of 'us' and 'them' has been a foundational pillar of disability language and has defined the identity of PWDs.

In disability discourse, evolving terminologies and language used for marginalized and excluded people can trigger a significant change in the construction of the identity of such people and migrate

them from being 'others' to being part of 'us' (Powell, 2015). Inclusive terminologies change perception and behaviour and ultimately result in changes in policy and practice towards equal opportunity in societies (Jones, 2012; 2014; Moasun and Soltie, 2014; Gillovic et al., 2018). Moasun and Soltie (2014) for instance, found that the role of proverbs in communication is powerful and may have telling effects on certain groups of people. Moasun and Mfoafo-M'Carthy (2020) examining samples of Ghanaian Akan proverbs on mental and physical disabilities and their meanings, using critical discourse analysis and guided by labeling theory. They conclude that Akan proverbs predominantly label people with disabilities negatively, thereby leading to their stigmatisation, marginalisation, and exclusion. They conclude that, Akan proverbs in Ghana inherently label persons with disabilities, and often perpetuate stigma through the "power of the tongue". Again, Moasun and Mfoafo-M'Carthy (2020) examines the factors that contribute to the maltreatment of Children with Disability (CWDs) in Ghana, the nature and effects of such maltreatments and the implications for social work policy and practice. Their study showed that poverty, ignorance and societal perceptions, and general inadequacies of facilities for the care of CWDs contribute to their abuse and neglect. Due to the negative effects of disability language on PWD and the positive potential of adopting inclusive language, more investigations need to be done on disabling language to draw attention to the situation in cultures. While disability research has garnered interest in the last few decades, much of the attention has focused on other social and cultural contexts, including health care, social services, leisure, and tourism. These works have contributed scholarly insight into the disability discourse, created awareness and promoted inclusion. While, language constitutes the basis of socialization, it can as well disable people (Andersson, 2006; Jones, 2014) hence, it is an important dimension of disability discourse that warrants attention. Consequently, this paper aims at examining disabling language use among the dominant ethnic group in Ghana to understand how language is used to marginalize, exclude and further disable PWD systematically.

This paper is a contribution from linguistic analysis of a sub-Saharan African culture to the disability literature. It adds to works such as Devlieger (1999), Acquaviva (2020), Ebenso et al. (2012), and Moasun and Mfoafo-M'Carthy (2020) on disability discourse. Disability studies in Sub-Saharan African countries are not popular. It is engulfed by negative socio-cultural conceptions of disability, which has further enhanced the marginalisation and exclusion of PWD (Gillovic et al., 2018). In this regard, this paper further unearths the nuanced contribution of language to the negative socio-cultural conception of disability, focusing the discussion on proverbs and insults. Further, this paper is useful in driving the agenda on the need for linguistic re-orientation of Ghanaian and African societies to promote the inclusion of PWD through language.

2. Conception of disability

Throughout history, understanding of disability has shaped how society has perceived and treated PWD in all spheres of life, including language discourses. Understanding of the conception of disability is critical to any discussion on the inclusion of PWD (Harpur, 2012) since it influences society's attitudes towards PWD and could further reinforce their stigmatisation and exclusion.

The literature generally identifies three perspectives that have dominated the discourse of disability. These are the moral, medical, and social views on disability. The moral view on disability has been prevalent through much of history and defines disability by the deficiencies of PWD (Adam, 2018).

There are two thoughts within the moral perspective on disability. One conception carves disability in a negative manner where the individual with an impairment is seen as a deviant or as a subject who is morally decadent (Rovner, 2004). Within this negative moral connotation, the place of disability in society varies and includes explanations such as disability is a manifestation of sin or God's displeasure, or as a punishment by an external force or deity (Kassah, Kassah and Agbota, 2012).

Explanations of disability within this thought can also be attributed to misdemeanors committed by the disabled person, someone in the family or community, or their forbears. People who subscribe to this view believe that birth conditions are due to actions committed in a previous reincarnation (Harpur, 2012). In other instances, the presence of evil spirits is used to explain differences in behaviour, especially in conditions such as schizophrenia (Campbell, 2009). Acts of exorcism or sacrifice may be performed to expel the negative influence, or recourse is made to persecute the person with disability (Harpur, 2012). Due to this negative connotation of disability within the moral perspective, individuals with disability are stigmatized and isolated for the fear that any association with the person may incur the displeasure of God or the spirits with the same disability (Harpur and Bales, 2010). Most African societies have traditionally viewed PWD from this negative conception and thus have coined derogatory language to describe them.

The other moral perspective to disability is carved in a sympathetic inclination towards PWD. This conception presents disability as a test or challenge for non-disabled people; an opportunity for non-disabled people to achieve salvation through serving PWD. Here, disability is conceived as an aberration in nature's harmony (Albrecht, 1992; Arneil, 2009). Nonetheless, this conception of disability cast PWD as objects of charity and pity. Their impairment signals inability so they need to live at the mercy of non-disabled people. Consequently, PWD are looked down upon. This non-inclusive conception finds its way into everyday language which portrays PWD as incapable people without any means of constructing meaningful lives for themselves.

The second lens through which disability has been defined is the medical approach. This medical perspective conceives disability as a physiological impairment due to damage or a disease in the human anatomy. The overall framework underpinning the medical perspective predisposes practitioners to think of a 'condition' within an abnormal body, which needs appropriate 'treatment' (Fitzgerald, 2005). The main focus is on 'normalization' and the adaptation of individuals with disability to society (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000). Under the medical perspective, bodily impairment is equal to disability and thus anyone with a physiological condition is disabled and the cure lies in treating the physiological condition. Human beings are presented as being flexible and alterable while society is fixed and unalterable. The description of disability through the medical lens places the burden of participation on the PWD. The types of disability from this perspective may range from hearing, vision, mobility, intellectual to psychiatric disorders. Within each category, there is a wide variation. Persons may be considered to have a temporary, episodic, or permanent disability present at birth (congenital disability) or due to an accident or illness (acquired disability).

The social view on disability challenges the foundations of the medical view and argues that disability only exists in so far as it is socially constructed and imposed on people with impairments (Hutchison, 1995). The social perspective on disability draws attention to the distinction between

disability and impairment (Darcy, 2002). Impairment is described as the functional limitation within the individual caused by either physical, mental, or sensory dysfunction while disability is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on equal level with others due to physical, economic, social, or cultural barriers imposed on people with impairments (Arneil, 2009; Darcy, 2011). Disability then, is the barriers imposed on people with impairments, which make it impossible to participate in everyday activities as any member of society without impairment (Adam, 2018). While the social conception acknowledges that impairment is the basis for social exclusion, it also argues that impairment is part of the social diversity. This study adopts the social perspective to defining disability and refers to disability as any kind of bodily impairment(s) which serve(s) as basis for which one encounters stigmatisation or exclusion as expressed through words or language. Thus, the negative language expressions that tend to reinforce the stigmatisation and exclusion of PWD socially, can only change if the social conception is adopted and society views PWD as a segment of the population diversity.

3. Disability Language

Disability Language is a contested ideological and political issue as it relates to identity, stereotyping, policies and programs aimed at inclusion and social change. The terminologies pertaining to the discourse of disability is an important influencer of how PWD are treated and the approaches adopted by society and industry to include/exclude them. Consequently, two dominant language forms have dominated the disability discourse: the 'person first' and 'identity first'. The 'person first' disability language acknowledges someone with impairment, first as a human being. This language discourse emphasizes acknowledging that the individual is a human being like any other person, the disability becomes secondary. Under this discourse, the disability is de-emphasized while the individual's humanness is emphasized.

This is meant to ensure that PWD do not feel different and also are not projected based on their disabled identities but as human beings who are part of the normal population diversity (Darcy, 2004). Examples of person first terminologies include 'person with disability', 'people with disabilities', and 'individual with disability'. On the contrary, 'the identity first' disability language discourse emphasizes the disability first before describing the person's humanness. Here, the argument is that the disability is part of the individual's identity including their construction of realities and life experiences and hence there is the need to acknowledge that such people have unique and special needs that society has to cater for (Darcy, 2004). Examples of identity first terminologies are 'disabled person', 'disabled people', and 'physically challenged persons/people'.

The adoption of any of the two disability languages is ideological and political. For instance, while the identity first language is preferred as being politically correct in the UK, other countries such as Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand are inclined towards person first language as revealed by Janiszewski et al., (2025). In his view, Oliver (1990) argues that even though some (including PWD) argue that the 'person first' language asserts the value of the person and disability becomes a mere addition, people with disability consider disability as a critical part of the self and thus cannot be detached from the identity. It is therefore futile to describe the person and disability separately. Indeed, proponents of the 'identity first' language argue that the 'person first' language is a superficial plan to provide equality without recourse to dealing with the marginalisation suffered by PWD. For them, the 'identify first' language is a powerful way of conveying the

disabling nature of society and thus, awakens society's consciousness and sense of responsibility towards fostering the inclusion of PWD (Swain et. al., 1993).

In contrast, those who prefer 'the person first' language opine that it is a change in emphasis since every human being would like to be related to based on their humanness and not the basis of some preconceptions others harbor on their race, religion, gender, or disability (Darcy, 2004). Fine and Asch (1998) suggest that 'person first' language does not define disability as being a central part of people's self-concept. Thus, the use of the person first language does not prejudice people to deal with others based on their negative stereotypes on disability but rather as human beings just like any segment of society. Consequently, the person first language is considered appropriate in this paper.

3.1.Disability in Ghana

According to the Ghana's 2021 Housing and Population Census, PWD constitutes 8% which represents 2,098,137 of the Ghanaian population. These individuals have some form of impairment including visual, hearing, speech, physical, intellectual, emotional and multiple impairments (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2021). People with impairments in Ghana face exclusion, marginalisation and stigmatisation in all spheres of life including language discourse. The poverty situation of PWD in Ghana is more severe compared to non-disabled persons (GSS, 2021). In terms of their economic conditions, many PWD are in extreme poverty with a high degree of unemployment and under-employment while they continue to face discrimination in the job market (Naami et al., 2012). The situation is worse for women with disability as they experience multiple disadvantages on account of gender and disability (Kassah, Kassah and Agbota, 2012).

Long time ago in Ghana, children born with deformities to some tribes were not culturally accepted (Rattray, 1952). For example, a child born with more than five fingers or signs of autism is supposed to be killed immediately after delivery or in some cases abandoned by the river bank or near the sea. It is mostly believed that such children belong to the river or sea or a deity, and, therefore, upon their birth, they should be returned to the spirit world. Most Ghanaian cultures prohibits PWD from becoming chiefs or taking up traditional leadership positions (Kassah, Kassah and Agbota, 2012). Chiefs who acquire any form of disability (epilepsy, debilitating illness) in the course of their reign are required to relinquish their positions or somebody is appointed to act under their direction while they stay at the background (Kassah, Kassah and Agbota, 2012). Peoples' attitudes towards PWDs in political/leadership positions is typified by the disapproval of some Ghanaians when a visually impaired person was appointed as the Minister of Chieftaincy and Culture in 2013 (Ocran, 2023).

Information, communication, and assistive devices that can offer PWD new possibilities to achieve independent living are rare in Ghana (Ghana Federation of Disability, 2008). The hearing impaired hardly get access to public information. Recently, though, some television stations, churches and other sociopolitical gatherings employ the services of sign language interpreters.

In order to improve access and quality of life of PWD in Ghana, the Persons with Disability Law (Act 715) was passed in 2009 to give legal backing to the rights of PWD in the country. The Law covers a wide range of issues relating to the well-being of PWD, including access to medical care,

education, transportation, and employment. Under the law, public places and services such as pubs, entertainment facilities, attraction sites and all places of public gathering are to be made accessible to PWD to ensure their inclusion. The Persons with Disability Act 715 (2009) gives power to individuals and organizations to prosecute people and organizations that fail to implement the law. However, there are many aspects of the life of PWD that need to improve through proper implementation of the law (GSS, 2015).

4. The Akans of Ghana

The Akan language belongs to the Kwa subgroup of the Niger Congo family of West Africa, spoken in Ghana. It is the largest indigenous language in Ghana with the largest number of speakers, constituting about 47.5% of the total population of Ghana. Per Ghana's 2021 Housing and Population Census, Akan has over nine million speakers (GSS, 2021). In terms of its area of domicile, the Akan population occupies the south and south west (covering the coastal and the forest zones, between the rivers Tano and Volta) of Ghana. Akan speakers constitute almost eight out of the sixteen regions of Ghana. These are Brong, Brong-East, Ahafo, Ashanti, Western, Western-North, Central and Eastern regions. Indeed, Akan speakers are scattered all over the country.

In education, Akan is taught as a subject from primary to the university level, and used as a language of instruction in some lower primary schools. In trade, Akan is used as a language for business transactions. This is revealed by Essegbey (2009) that most non-Akan traders in Accra, a Ga speaking area, could speak, use and understand Akan for trading and communication purposes. Also, Akan is the most dominant language used in the media and for religious activities in Ghana. In sum, Akan could be said to be a default national language, used side by side with English in Ghana. Thus, employing a data from Akan is representative of the Ghanaian society.

5. Proverbs

Proverbs have been argued by many scholars as a universal phenomenon (Diabah and Amfo, 2015; Finnegan, 1970; Mieder, 2004). This makes proverbs relevant in most traditional societies in diverse ways. According Mieder (2004), proverbs are the repository of wisdom that guides people in their social interaction. That is, it is a formulaic language that makes it easier for people to remember and use them for effective communication.

In Africa, proverbs have proven to be a rich source of knowledge in communication, which is made up of profound principles of wisdom embedded in them. Jenjekwa (2006) writes that in African societies, proverbs are representations of the cultural beliefs that serve as a guide for the old and young, the ruler and the ruled to make appropriate choices in different situations. Similarly, Orwenjo (2009) argues that proverbs are a genre of oral tradition that preserves the people's collective wisdom, philosophy of life, experience, fears and aspirations. This means that Proverbs are not a preserve of any individual in the society; on the contrary, "it is considered the collective view of the community which is reflective of communal thought and takes precedence over individual preferences and opinions" (Diabah and Amfo, 2015:6). Therefore, in order to decipher the meaning of a proverb, the context, particularly the society it was produced for, as well as the

circumstances surrounding its use must be considered. Kemper (1980) outlines two ways to understanding the meaning of proverbs; taking into consideration inferences from the literal meaning of the proverb and using contextually-based expectations to establish their meaning.

Even though Akan proverbs carry a lot of wisdom and indigenous philosophy (Moasun and Mfoafo-M'Carthy, 2020), there are some that are socially constructed to perpetuate stigmatisation of PWDs which need the attention of scholars. This study therefore, examines how some proverbs and insults legitimise the marginalisation of PWD, with particular focus on the connotations of these linguistic elements.

6. Insults

Insults could be seen as another domain through which people with disability are marginalized. According to Ofori (2015:22) insults can be recognized as

> A behavior or discourse, oral or written, direct or indirect, gestural or non-gestural, which is perceived, experienced, constructed and most of the time intended as slighting, humiliating, or offensive, which has the potential of psychologically affecting not only the addressee or target but his/her associates.

This shows how insults denigrate, humiliate and condemn the target. The comparative use of insults to marginalize and disrespect people with disability runs through Akan discourse. As suggested by Agyekum (2010), the context of use of insults ranges from animal names, ethnic and tribal, personality and behavior occupation, sex and religion as well as spiritual.

Related to this study are insults that use one's personality or physical structure to attempt to compare it with the addressee with the intention of reducing him/her and demeaning his personality (Agyekum, 2010; Ofori, 2015). Thus, the addresser employs simile as a strategy to insult the addressee. Simile is a figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind, to make a description more emphatic and vivid. In the data gathered, we observed a common pattern of the insults which were simile in nature. That is, the 'supposed normal' was compared with the physical structure or features of a PWD.

7. Theoretical framework

The framework grounding this work is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Marginalisation. The main aim of critical discourse analysis, according to Wodak (2001:2), is to investigate critically social inequalities as they are expressed, signaled, constituted, legitimised and so on by language (or in discourse). She further argues that CDA analyzes opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination and power control as manifest in language. In addition, it looks at social problems and the fundamental role discourses play in terms of the production and reproduction of power, abuse and domination (van Dijk, 2001; Addy and Ofori, 2020). That is, language could be used to create unequal social relations as succinctly articulated by Habermas (1977:259) that "language is also a medium of domination and social force which serves to legitimise relations of organized power." For Foucault (1984), discourse is a certain vocabulary which is created to maintain certain forms of social domination. That is to say, vocabulary is not

only a list of words but a complex combination of language uses and practices, professional qualification and practices, which concurrently sustain a system of social control and can marginalize the less powerful in the society.

Taking the Akan into consideration, the deeply rooted negative socio-cultural conception of disability ingrained in their proverbs and insults have created dominant structures that seek to stabilize these conventions and normalize them. Therefore, any attempt or resistance is taking as "breaking of conventions, of stable discursive practices" (Fairclough 1993:4). In effect, CDA seeks to expose social practices and relationships that are manifested on the relationships of disempowerment, dominance, prejudice and/or discrimination (Titscher et al., 2000; Richardson, 2007).

According to Rao (2006:223), "marginalization occurs when people are systematically excluded from meaningful participation in economic, social, political, cultural and other forms of human activity in their communities and thus are denied the opportunity to fulfill themselves as human beings." The tag of being disabled places PWD within a certain bracket in their communities, that is, the characteristics and behaviours that someone with that tag should exhibit. These expectations limit opportunities in terms of acceptable actions and experiences of PWD. Marginalisation to some extent creates a polarized society where some people become privileged whilst others are disadvantaged and demeaned. This is reflective in Akan discourses where proverbs and insults are meticulously ingrained in everyday conversation in order to marginalize PWD.

8. Data and Method

Data for this study is based on both written and oral sources. In all, a total of fifty (50) proverbs and ten (10) insults were collated. Specifically, proverbs that were related to and explicitly mentioned any form of disability such as akyakya 'hunchback', onifrani 'blind person', and among others were extracted from Appiah et al.'s (2007) extensive collection of 7015 Akan proverbs: *Bu me bɛ: proverbs of the Akans* while ten (10) insults were obtained from oral sources from Ghanaian Language Students offering Twi at the University of Cape Coast and other native speakers through interview. The extracted proverbs were categorized based on the consistent patterns identified and were put into three main themes: Weak/Vulnerable, Demeaning and Tease/Mockery. Furthermore, the meaning of the proverbs and themes were triangulated through interviews with chiefs and some elderly people to ascertain their veracity.

9. Analysis And discussions

The data showed three recurring themes that represent disability in Akan discourse which are analyzed and discussed below. In terms of the interpretation of the proverb, we considered literal interpretation for the analysis.

9.1.Weak/Vulnerable

There are proverbs which present people with disability as the most vulnerable in society, and as liabilities to their family and their society. In Akan communities, women, children, and persons

with disabilities are often relatively positioned at lower levels within social hierarchies, though their exact status varies across context and social roles. Likening disability to vulnerability (although uncalled for) is explainable by this class distinction. As a norm, those put on the lowest rank of the dominance hierarchy are supposed to depend on their higher ranked counterparts for survival. As Cummins (2019) notes, the most powerful individuals on the dominance hierarchy of society are essentially authorities, and they control the behavior of subordinates in order to maintain priority of access to competitive resources (such as food and mating opportunities). When people with disabilities are convinced, through proverbs, to see themselves as vulnerable, they end up being liabilities to society as they need the support of others in order to function or move about freely. The following proverbs exemplify how PWD are represented as weak/vulnerable.

1. ***Onyame***	***na***	***ɔ-wɔ***	***basin***	***fufuo***	***ma***	***no.***
God	FOC	3SG-pound	amputee	fufuo	give	3SG.

'It is God who pounds fufu for the armless one'. (p. 215, no. 4786)

2. ***Onyankopɔn***	***bɔ-ɔ***	***onifirafoɔ***	***a,***	***ɔ-bɔ-ɔ***		***deɛ***
God	create-PST	blind	REL,	3SG-creat-PST		REL
ɔ-bɛ-sɔ	***ne***	***poma***	***mu.***			
3SG-FUT-hold	POSS	stick	inside.			

'When the Almighty created the blind, he also created the person who would guide his stick'. (p. 216, no 4811)

3. ***Onifirani***	***m-fa***	***abufuo***	***wɔ***	***kwaeɛ***	***ase.***
Blind	NEG-take	anger	in	bush	under.

'A blind person should not become angry whilst in the bush'. (p. 197, no. 4337)

4. ***Mmarima***	***n-ni***	***kurom a,***	***na***	***akyakya***	***tu***	
Men	NEG-there	town	REL,	FOC	hunchback	run
mmirika	***kyerɛ***	***mmaa.***				
race	show	women.				

'If there are no (real) men in town, the hunchback runs to show off before women'. (p. 23, no. 237)

Proverbs (1) to (4) suggest PWDs' dependence on society and their family for survival. In order to get their basic needs such as food, it is God, who provides and aids that. Again, they depend on others for guidance (as in 2). Proverb (3) breeds subjugation, that people with disabilities are expected to condone to any treatment given to them however unfavorable it may be. Thus, even if a blind person's anger is triggered, they must not express it because doing so will take away the help they get from others.

In example (1), the armless person is represented as someone who basically relies on God for their daily sustenance, making God the source of human survival. Apart from God, humans become the middle level of support between God and the disabled. The responsibility bestowed on the 'supposed normal' to cater for the needs of PWD makes them powerful thereby using language to belittle them. Similarly, the example (2) confirms the point that PWD, such as blind persons always

need the support of God and others to go about their daily activities. In this case, the assistance of the 'supposed normal' is required for the blind to move around. These representations in the Akan proverbs show the level of marginalisation of PWD within Akan discourse.

Examples (3) and (4) also indicate that PWD cannot show certain tantrums or involve in some activities with women when men are present. We see in example (3) that the blind cannot get angry while in the forest. When they become angry, especially at the person offering them the support, they may lose that support. The blind person may either hurt himself or become a prey for wild animals because he/she may not see or notice any danger in the forest. However, the abled or the 'supposed normal' person can be angry at any place without any problem. Therefore, society determines when, where and how the blind (PWD) can become angry as they are seen as people who are weak. Additionally, example 4, also portrays how men with hunchback are represented as people who cannot demonstrate their God given talent in the presence of their 'co-abled men.' They can only demonstrate their athletic skills in the midst of women. This portrays them as people who cannot compete with their fellow men.

Apparently, some people with disabilities are not as weak as these proverbs portray them. There are some who are breadwinners of their families. However, since proverbs are considered as wise sayings and believed to express unique and sacred information, people totally conform to the connotations of these proverbs rather than interrogating them (Gyan, Abbey and Baffoe, 2020). Thus, the independence and hard work of persons with disabilities are sometimes not recognized.

9.2.Demeaning

Demeaning was another central theme identified in the dataset. Some proverbs cause a severe loss of dignity and respect for PWD. Such proverbs present PWD as persons who have nothing good to offer themselves and the society. It criticizes their physical appearance, their intellectual prowess and their sense of hygiene.

Proverbs (5) to (7) below interlock with the presentation of PWD as the lowest ranked class of society. Since they are subordinates, their 'authorities' can humiliate them without any resistance.

In example (5), it is very clear that lepers have challenges with respect to cleaning their anus after easing themselves because most of them have deformed fingers. The leper's deformed fingers are equated to their inability to keep personal hygiene. Naturally, the fingers aid a person to clean their anus after using the toilet. It is, therefore, demeaning to ask the leper whether his/her anus is clean, knowing very well that their fingers are withered. This feeds into the general negative perception about lepers, that, they are considered to be unclean.

Relatedly, in example (6), within Akan discourse, the abled perceives the cripple to be pretending by not walking in order to put their mother in trouble, but in actual fact, that is his/her state. Indeed, cripples cannot walk. It is not the case that cripples would intentionally remain on the ground knowing very well that doing so will destroy their own physique. The proverb only portrays that PWD are prone to taking decisions that will put them at risk.

The perception that the cripple is deliberately refusing to walk is a negative attitude towards PWD. In fact, the extent of explicitly uttering to the cripple that his/her pretense will lead to the damage of his/her back reinforces how PWD are demeaned within the context of Akan proverbs.

The mention of women (mothers of people with disabilities) is also significant to our discussion of demeaning feature of proverbs. In Akan communities, the humiliation of people with disabilities is shared with their mothers. In most cases, mothers are blamed for the disability of their children, especially because mothers are givers of life. When women bring forth disabled children, they are scorned and sometimes it can cost them their marriages. This is why it is said of the cripple that he/she is putting his/her mother in trouble in example (6).

In proverb (7), people with disabilities are distinguished from those without disabilities by their physical appearance. Thus, no matter how beautiful a hunchback may be, the shape of their buttocks will always betray them. Proverb (7) therefore takes from PWD, the confidence any individual may have in their looks. Generally, individuals have different body shapes. However, unlike hunchbacks, their condition makes it difficult to differentiate between their backs and buttocks, so they all tend to have the same shape and size. People use the hunch to demean their body shape, making them feel uncomfortable. This has a negative effect on them not only physically, but also emotionally, as they feel dehumanized at times.

5. ***Obi***	***m-misa***	***ɔkwatani***	***sɛ:***	***"ɛbini***	***wɔ***	***wo***	***to?"***
Person	NEG-ask	lepper	that:	feces	at	2SG	anus.

'One does not ask a leper if his anus is dirty'. (p. 30, no. 396)

6. ***Bafan***	***se***	***ɔ-re-yɛ***	***o-ni***	***abrɔ,***	***ɔ-n-nim***	***sɛ***	
Cripple	say	3SG-PROG-do	3SG-mother	spite	3SG-NEG-know	that	
ɔ-re-sɛe	***ne***	***to.***					
3SG-PROG-destroy	POSS	buttocks.					

'The cripple says he is deceiving his mother; he does not realize he is spoiling his own back'. (p. 21, no. 189)

7. ***Akyakyafoɔ***	***nam***	***apem***	***a,***	***wɔn***	***nyina***	
Hunchbacks	walk	thousand	CONJ,	3PLU	all	
to	***yɛ***	***pɛ.***				
buttocks	do	same.				

'If thousand hunchbacks are lined up, they will have the same shape of buttocks'. (p. 181, 3972).

9.3.Tease/Mockery

An individual with a hunchback is considered as disabled in society because certain activities necessitate the use of various body parts, which a person with a hunchback is unable to do. As a result of their failure to perform some activities such as running, jumping, skipping, and many others, people make fun of them. The hunchback is depicted in proverb (8) as someone who is not swift, so it will be easier to catch him if he is being chased. That is, if one wants to chase a hunchback, the chaser will turn out laughing behind the hunchback while watching him race, due to the manner the hunchback runs. Hence, people with hunchbacks are often mocked or teased. In

effect, people with hunchback have low self-esteem and are often emotionally injured because of their condition. This also makes them unable to participate in most physical activities that cause them to use their backs or other body parts that are not functioning properly. While their condition does not prevent them from improving their health by participating in active physical activities, most of them tend to hide their potentials, leading to lose of self-confidence.

8.	***Sɛ wopamo***		***akyakyani***	***na***	***wo-a-n-to***		***no***	***a,***	***na***	***ɛnyɛ***
	If 2SG-chase		hunchback	and	2SG-PERF-NEG-meet		3SG	CONJ.,	FOC	NEG-do
	ne		***mmirikatuo***		***ntira***	***na***		***mmom***		***ne***
	POSS		race		because	and		but		POSS
	ho	***sere***	***ntira***.							
	self	funny	reason							

'If you chase a hunchback and you don't succeed, it is not because of his swiftness but because of his laughable figure'. (p. 68, no. 1290)

Persons with a broken nose are perceived to be disabled since they are unable to produce clear sounds through the nose. In proverb (9), a broken-nosed person is prohibited from singing joyfully because the sound s/he will make, is perceived to be awful to listen to. Most people laugh at persons with broken noses because when they talk, they make funny sounds. Consequently, they find it difficult to verbally communicate their emotions. They are therefore unable to express their thoughts and, as a direct consequence, conceal majority of their feelings. Voicing their feelings could help those around them to understand what they may be going through, but because people would mock them, most of them would remain silent to avoid ridicule.

9.	***Hwen-to***	***m-mɔ***	***ose***.
	Nose-empty	NEG-kick	jubilation

'A broken-nosed person should not sing in jubilation'. (p.134, no. 2895)

9.4.Insults

The data gathered showed that the structure of the insults used on PWD is in the form of a simile. The part of a "supposed normal person" is compared to the deformed part of the PWD. This is illustrated below:

SUPPOSED NORMAL Sɛ (like) DISABILITY

[PART OF THE BODY] Sɛ (like) [DISABLE PART OF THE BODY]

Example (10) typifies insult rained on people with disability. Since dumb persons are unable to speak, it becomes difficult for them to complain if they choke on the food they have ingested. Since they are unable to open their mouths to express their frustration, they rely on sign language to communicate. This, on the other hand, makes their speech repulsive. The fact that the insult below uses the word "dumb" negatively indicates a disdain for the dumb person, as the dumb person would not have chosen to be dumb, but it is a situation that they must accept. Thus, within the context of this insult, the face of the supposed normal person is compared to a dumb person

struggling to swallow a mushed plantain. This dehumanizes the dumb person and portrays how PWD are represented and marginalized in Akan discourse.

10. ***W'anim*** ***sɛ*** ***mumu*** ***a*** ***ɛtɔ*** ***a-twi*** ***no***.
2SG-POSS-face like dumb that mushed plantain/yam PERF-choke 3SG.
'Your face like a dumb person struggling to swallow mushed plantain/yam/cocoyam'.

Similarly, in example (11), the cripple is portrayed as a person who 'literally walks' on his buttocks, so the cripple's buttocks apparently will be flat. This comment portrays the cripple as unattractive and if a woman, not worthy of a man's attention and vice versa. Generally, among Ghanaians, a person's body shape contributes to his/her beauty. As a result, in most cases, Akans consider cripple with flat buttocks as unattractive. Similar to example (10), the comparison between the buttocks size of a supposed normal and a cripple, is very offensive to PWD as it lowers their self-esteem as a result of seeing themselves as unattractive.

11. ***Wo*** ***to*** ***a*** ***a-sa*** ***sɛ*** ***akyakya*** ***to***.
POSS buttocks SUB PERF-finish like hunchback buttocks.
'Your flat buttocks look like that of a cripple'.

12. ***Wo-a-n-ya*** ***barima*** ***biara*** ***a-n-ware*** ***sɛ*** ***apakye****?*
2SG-PERF-NEG-get man any PERF-NEG-marry like cripple?
'You could not marry any man than a cripple'?

In contemporary times, a complete man is supposed to be stable, self-sufficient, active, physically attractive to others, and capable of long hours of work. The cripple is someone who, due to his impairment, relies on others for support. Therefore, it is believed that if a woman marries such a person, she is inviting trouble for herself since the woman will be forced to assume most of the responsibilities that come with marriage, including some masculine roles. Thus, marrying a cripple is not recommended for a complete woman as exemplified in (12). Again, since the disabled are a disadvantaged group, they are exposed to the possibility of being harmed emotionally as most people treat them with disrespect. This affects their personhood as they are stripped off their emotional rights, including choosing who to marry becomes a problem. The people the cripples love may reject them because society sees PWD as not complete and therefore, do not deserve to be loved. On the other hand, for those who are lucky to find love, their partners are mocked, disrespected and stigmatized.

10. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the data, the following conclusions are drawn. First, some Akan proverbs dehumanize PWD and therefore serve as the basis for marginalisation and exclusion of PWD. From this perspective, PWD are projected as people who are less of non-disabled people. This view as expressed in the various proverbs equally reinforces the disabling mindsets of individuals. This study confirms the findings by Moasun and Mfoafo-M'Carthy (2020) that Akan proverbs has a negative effect on disabilities, thereby leading to their stigmatisation, marginalisation, and exclusion.

Second, PWDs are presented as weak and vulnerable. The proverbs connote PWD as second-class citizens with less qualities and abilities as non-disabled people. Such views provide the basis for the denial of opportunities to PWD since they are considered as weak and therefore incapable of being productive.

Third, the proverbs project PWD in demeaning manner and therefore legitimise the stereotyping and stigma against PWD. This has negative effect on their self-confidence, therefore, condemning them to lives of dejection. To prevent this, proverbs with negative connotations for people with disabilities should be avoided so as not to normalize the experiences of disability. In that, the language used to make refernce to PWDs define the causes, treatment, and social standing of people with disabilities, Devlieger (1999). Thus, proverbs and insults with negative connotations can reinforce stigmatisation against persons with disability.

Fourth, some of the proverbs have the tendency to mock PWD. The proverbs are meant to tease the PWD for lacking certain body parts, that might come through no fault of theirs. The medical conception of disability characterizes PWD based on their lack of functioning body parts and makes that a legitimate concern and emphasis in disability discourse. By teasing the PWD for lacking certain body parts, the proverbs are simply reinforcing the medical conception of disability.

Fifth, the similes provide impetus for the insult of PWD. Here, the insults are structured in ways that suggest that PWD are second class citizens and can be disrespected without repercussions.

Thus, some Akan proverbs and insults institutionalize and normalize the disrespect of PWD, a situation that ultimately promotes their marginalisation and exclusion. By extension, the wellbeing of PWD is marked with negative representations and in most cases, PWD are left in deplorable and unfortunate social condition.

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List of Abbreviations

2	Second person
3	Third person
CONJ	Conjunction
FOC	Focus
FUT	Future
NEG	Negation
PERF	Perfect
POSS	Possessive
PST	Past
PROG	Progressive
PLU	Plural
REL	Relativizer
SG	Singular
SUB	Subordinate clause

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NEOLOGIZING AKAN INDIGENOUS ECOLOGICAL PROVERBS AND WISE-SAYINGS FOR EARTH-KEEPING AMONG AKAN CHRISTIANS OF GHANA

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Abstract

All over the world, environmental noxiousness has caused the emission of greenhouse gasses, climate change and diseases that threaten human and non-human survival. Ghana has had her fair share in this global onslaught. Although there have been several political interventions, the recent global environmental performance rankings according to the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2022, grades Ghana at 170th out of the 180 nations assessed and 45th out of the 46 nations in the sub-Saharan Africa, scoring only 27.7. That of 2024 appreciated slightly, where Ghana was ranked 145th on the global stage, scoring 36.9 and 29th in sub-Saharan Africa. This pathetic development, formed the basis of this study; which advocates for the need to turn to Indigenous Ecological Knowledge systems (IEKs) for a response. This paper made use of qualitative method. It used interviews as the primary data collection instrument. The secondary data was collected from Akan proverbs derived from oral and written literature. The study affirms that in the past, some Akan axioms were used to prompt the natives about the essence of protecting and conserving nature. This article has neologized eleven new proverbs and wise-sayings that are ecologically ennobled and could be viable to be harnessed for earth-keeping among the Akan of Ghana.

Keywords: Akan, earth-keeping, Akan Christians, proverbs and wise-sayings

1. Introduction

The idea of the modern world, being understood to be global and glocal has ramifications on the ecological crisis across the world. Hence, ecological crisis today, is a global problem. Ghana's ecological story in the 4th Republic has been in a sad state. Awuah-Nyamekye (2009:251), confirms that "the way Ghanaians interact with the environment in recent times, is very appalling; they just care a little about how to relate with the environment in a sustainable way." Many seem to have forgotten that "life is environment and environment is life" (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2009:251). This attitude could be attributed to the human struggle for survival and the modern tendencies of scrambling for wealth and possessions. The nation experiences on a daily basis, littering, improper disposal of sewage, water pollution, air pollution, deforestation, illegal mining (galamsey), destruction of wetlands, etcetera. The global environmental performance outlook of Ghana has not been encouraging. In 2018, for instance, Ghana was tagged by the World Health Organization (WHO) as one of the dirtiest countries in the world, second in open defecation (Appiah-Sekyere & Oppong 2018). Environmental performance rankings according to the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) in 2020 ranked Ghana at 39th out of the 46 nations in the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Emerson, et al, 2020). That of 2022, graded Ghana at 170th out of the 180 nations assessed and 45th out of the 46 nations in the sub-

Saharan Africa, scoring only 27.7 (Wendling, et al, 2022). Ghana's EPI report in 2024, the best since 2018, secured a global ranking of 145th with a score of 36.9, and placing 29th among sub-Saharan African nations (Wolf et al, 2024).

Interventions such as the provision of waste bins, National Sanitation Day (communal cleaning on the 1st Saturday of every month), sensitization adverts on sanitation in the print and audio/visual media, and many other interventions that have been initiated by governments over the years (Boamah, 2015), have not yielded much (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2009). Culture and religion are two major areas that seem to have been ignored in the fight against environmental indiscipline in Ghana (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2009). This paper seeks to harness Akan Indigenous Ecological Knowledge System (IEKs) to respond to the ecological crisis in Ghana. The specific IEKs that this paper focuses on are Akan Indigenous Ecological Proverbs and Wise-sayings.

2. Method

The goal of this paper is to analyze Akan philosophical thought on human-earth interactions. The study employs qualitative method resulting to phenomenological approach. This method and approach were used in order to seek a deepened understanding about why the Akan behave the way they do toward the natural environment (earth). The approach was suitable because it afforded the researchers the opportunity to analyze the experiences, worldviews, perspectives and aspirations of the population sampled, regarding the nexus that exists between human and the natural environment. Akan oral traditions on human-earth relations such as proverbs and wise-sayings which depict their worldviews and beliefs were collected and critically reviewed in order to establish an Akan worldview of human-earth relationships. The research philosophy of this paper is structuralism, which describes the knowledge of human and nature life that is concerned about relationship rather than individual objects (Rubel & Rosman, 1996). The main research instrument was interview and the sampling technique was purposive. In all, eight chiefs who doubled as farmers and two experts in Akan culture, language and history, from Manhyia Palace (the traditional seat of government in the Asante Kingdom), formed the population for this study. With the help of a tape recorder, the data from the interview were transcribed, sorted and analysed thematically. Aside from this, Akan proverbs and wise-sayings were reviewed. At the end, an attempt was made to neologize eleven (11) new Akan ecological proverbs and wise-sayings. These newly created maxims have been highlighted in the text. The Akan proverbs and wise-sayings were rendered in their original Akan/Twi forms and were followed by their literal translations to English. All Akan maxims used in their original forms have been italicised in the work and their English translations are presented in inverted commas.

3. Akan

The word "Akan," refers to both the people and their language (Agyekum, 2019). Akan consists of over thirty (30) groups, with the majority of them located in different parts of Ghana, especially in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Asante, Akyem, Fante, Bono, Denkyira, Assin, Twifo, Heman, Wasa, Sehwi, Aowin, Bawule in La Cote d'Ivoire, Anyin, Kwawu, Nzema, Akuapem, and many others are examples of Akan groups (Twumasi-Ankrah, 2023). The Akan are the largest ethnic group and occupy the greater part of southern Ghana and their member groups are found in all the sixteen regions in the country (Agyekum, 2013). All Akan groups speak Twi with slight dialectical variations. At the literary level, Twi, like many other languages, is full of figurative expressions. One is considered a good orator among the Akan if his or her speech is usually spiced with appropriate proverbs and wise-sayings (Kwame Osei Osepetetreku, A personal conversation at Manhyia Palace, 2020). This is affirmed by Antwi et al. (2020:424) that "a Ghanaian chief or linguist for instance, is said to be wise if he or she is able to speak in proverbs, most of which are derived from nature and daily experiences."

4. Akan Christians

The 2021 population census undertaken, indicates that out of the 30.8 million Ghanaians (Darko, 2021), Christians constitute the largest religious group, having 71.3 percent of the population.[1] Since Akan forms the largest ethnic group in Ghana, one could assume that the Christian population might be more dominated by Akan than any other ethnic group in Ghana.[2] "Akan Christians," refers to Christians who trace their origins from the Akan ethnic extraction. One can categorize Akan Christians into Westernized and "Akanized Akan Christians." "Westernized Akan Christians," refers to those whose religio-cultural worldview and practices have been influenced massively by the western culture and worldviews which were concealed in the type of Christianity the Akan received from the European missionaries. These Westernized Akan Christians like their European missionaries consider most of the Akan indigenous beliefs and practices such as taboos to be pagan that must be ruthlessly done away with. Oduro (2018) asserts that due to some bizarre information about Africans as being heathen, savages, barbarous and uncivilized, some western missionaries adopted a mission policy of first, civilizing Africans before Christianising them. Boaheng (2018), is of a similar view and confirms that the missionaries classified Africa as a dangerous place and its people as savages, uncivilized and superstitious who had no religion and spirituality; and as a result, they treated anything pre-Christian in Africa as either harmful or at best, valueless and considered African primal religion to be inconsistent with the Christian gospel. He added that in Ghana, "Christian Akan were forbidden to participate in the rites of ancestor worship. Converts were not allowed to observe the ceremonies related to festivals…since they were considered unchristian" (Boaheng, 2018:216). By this, Akan converts have alienated themselves from their own communities and culture by rejecting their own indigenous beliefs and practices (Busia, 1967). However, as noted by Adubofour (2001:1), "in spite of the adaptation to foreign elements that have entered the Akan world, the world outlook of people in general remains intact." He explains that the persistent nature of Akan beliefs and practices is supported by the Akan saying that, *amammerɛ yɛnto ntwene anaasɛ amammerɛ yɛntoto no ase,* that is to say, "culture should not be discarded but must be honoured" (Adubofour, 2001:1). For this reason, though the indigenous religion has proven to be hospitable to Christianity, it has not been discarded by many of the people. In Akan communities, some people believe that they can be fully Akan and at the same time fully Christians. This is avowed by Boaheng (2018) that during the western missionary enterprise in Ghana, some Akan people chose to remain "Christians" outside the church. That implied that they had accepted the Christ, preached to them but had refused to sheepishly submit to the western cultural practices that the missionaries attempted to force through their throat. Hence, some of them completely stayed out of the missionary church or were not regular attendees after their conversion. Some of the elite and charismatic among them broke away to form what was expected to be an Africanized or for the sake of this paper, "Akanized Christian church" known as African Initiated/Indigenous Churches (AICs).

In reality, "Akan Christians" lived in two worlds –the traditional world in which they had been raised and the Christian world in which they had been introduced. Nominalism became the order of the day for most Christian converts. They simply could not let go of their African beliefs (Boaheng, 2018). Williamson (1955:vi) confirmed this reality during a conference by the Christian Council of Gold Coast in 1955 when he said, "As every pastor in the church can testify, while majority of Christians have accepted the church in its outward forms, their inward spirit is still ruled by the attitudes and outlook of the indigenous culture. The two are kept apart,

[1] https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/ghana-population

[2] The reports on both the 2010 and 2021 Population and Housing Census in Ghana have not put forth detailed data on the breakdown of ethnic groups in Christianity except to say that Christianity is the largest religion in Ghana and likewise, Akan being the largest ethnic group in Ghana.

not necessarily because they belong to opposing areas of life, but because men and women desire and expect to keep them apart…it is for the church to think its way through this problem and proclaim its faith as God's word to Africa."

This confusion in Akan Christianity was exactly Busia's concern in his concluding remarks during a presentation of a paper on "Christianity and African culture." During that conference of the Christian Council of the then Gold Coast, he asked rhetorically, "Can the African be Christian only by giving up his culture, or is there a way by which Christianity can ennoble it?" (Busia, 1955). These "Akan Christians" are of the view that the Christian theology found in the Bible was meant to positively affect their Akan cosmology (Osei-Bonsu-Safo-Kantanka, A personal interaction, 2020).

Ukpong describes this as Inculturation, which is a process of interpreting and living Christianity, which is the same as Christian faith and practice from the perspective of a given culture and a people's social and historical life experience in such a way that Christian values are made to animate the people's way of life (Anozie, 2017). This shade of Christianity among some Akan can only be described as an "Akanized Christianity," whereby a section of the Akan, though, have accepted and professed Christianity but practise their Christian faith in light of Akan cultural practices and belief systems. This is in keeping with Iheanacho's observation on the "Africanisation" of Christianity. To him, Africanisation implies a progressive appreciation of a religious thought in a new context. "In this sense, it incorporates indigenous religious thought and practices into African Christianity. In this regard, Christianity and traditional religion have been engaged in a continuous dialectical interlock of mutual exchange and creative appropriation" (2021:4).

This hybrid system seems common in all religions, where one observes intersecting and intermingling of different religious persuasions operating in a cultural space. Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) in describing the ministry of William Wade Harris, a man accredited to be the foremost pioneer in Pentecostal Christianity in Ghana, indicates that after Harris' conversion, his ministry was characterised by faith in the material symbols of traditional religiosity, which culminated in the manifestation of divine power through dramatic conversions, healing, prophecies, and deliverance from evil spirits. In the words of Akoto (2018:43), "Harris believed that traditional symbols should not be thrown out but must be used as a springboard for ministry in order to foster a contextualized religiosity which constitutes the use of personal cultural experience and the symbols of Christianity." It has been observed that "in Africa for instance, places where this interlacing and adaptation between Christianity and Traditional Religion happened, the European missionary enterprise thrived" (Oduro, 2018:94).

Some scholars especially, western theologians, however, consider this hybrid phenomenon as syncretism. Ariarajah (1999) identifies syncretism as one of the three classical fears of missionary enterprise. Kinnamon and Cope (1997) point out that there is danger in attempting to translate the Christian message for a cultural setting or an approach to faiths and ideologies with which Christians are in dialogue partnership, they may go too far and compromise the authenticity of Christian faith and life. They add that there is danger in interpreting a living faith not in its own terms but in terms of another faith or ideology (Kinnamon & Cope, 1997). Conteh (2014) is surprised to observe that many Christians in Africa who show concern about syncretistic elements in the church are the very people who blend African Religion with Christian practices. To him, neither Christianity nor Islam can honestly claim complete immunity from syncretism (Conteh, 2014).

Akan Christians especially, kings, queens, chiefs, and traditional leaders who are part of the Christian church, see nothing wrong in calling on ancestors when praying during durbars and community gatherings. They equate this with the idea of "heroes of faith" (Heb. 11:1ff) in the Bible as well as the fact that Christians are encouraged to call on the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" when praying. To them, these only confirm the Akan worldview of the

interrelationship between the living and the departed members (ancestors) of the community. To the "Akanized Akan Christians," since Christ is the greatest ancestor in the family of God (the Church), should believers recognize the "communion of saints" in the book of Hebrews, the "hall of fame," and then theologizing about Christology of ancestors in Africa should not be difficult (Edu-Bekoe, 2018). In addition, there is archaeological evidence that shows that the ancient Israelites deposited food near the tombs of their venerated dead (Conteh, 2014).

Explaining the reason why there is the phenomenon of the Akanisation and Africanisation of Christianity, Edu-Bekoe (2018) puts forth emphatically that no group of Africans can totally cut itself from its cultural roots and remain African in whatever religion; and converting to Christianity may not denote the total cultural conversion of the African. Hence, in the AICs, one sees an attempt to Africanize Christianity, and in this exercise, there is evidence of a fusion of elements of both traditional culture and Christianity, which removes the feeling of strangeness many an African feels at the missionary-led churches (Oduro, 2018).

The missionaries failed to satisfy the spiritual need of the Akan. The western mission-related church by and large, is still an alien institution because it failed to properly contextualize its worship in the life and institutions of the Akan people in that, the Christian church denominationally implanted from the west, has substantially retained its original forms and expressed itself in western modes. Missionaries clearly set out to establish not an Akan church, but the church they represented in their homeland. The polity and organization, the liturgies and devotional expressions, the discipline and instruction, and the total outlook derive directly from the parent missionary societies and churches supporting them. The Christianity of the Akan area proves to be the denominational Christianity of the west (Som & Asenso, 2020).

One could not agree more with Kalenga Matembele, a Zairean priest, cited by Oduro (2018:95) thus:

> If the Church has been in Africa at all, one could observe only her shadows but not her reality. There are no 'local churches,' but just a replica of the European church mimicking European lifestyle. The missionaries could not distinguish between what was suitable for export and what was not and they blindly brought to Africans the whole burden of their customs, their laws, their rites, their priestly caste instead of new life and new hope…Now that Africa has been Christianized, Christianity must be Africanized.

Clearly, the early European missionaries to Africa were inconsistent in their Christian mission in Africa. They appeared to be comfortable in holding unto their own socio-cultural views even on foreign lands but were uncomfortable in allowing their new-found Christian friends to keep their culture on their own local milieu. To a large extent, they succeeded in Europeanizing some Africans but failed to Christianize them. Thus, to attempt to rid of the African worldview from the African in order to Christianize him, only resulted in contradictions in the Christianity bequeathed to the African. This implies that Akan Christians find themselves in a state of dilemma and practise their Christianity in a state of confusion.

5. The Proverb Genre

Proverbs and wise-sayings have existed from time immemorial in all cultures across the globe (Syzdykov, 2014). Aphorisms (proverbs and wise-sayings) play significant role in the daily discourses of indigenous Africans, both in formal and informal ways (Brookman-Amissah, 1986). "The definition of the proverb genre has bothered scholars of paraemiology for a long time" (Madumulla, 1998-2001:257). Attempting to provide an exact definition for proverbs, is a difficult and an almost impossible task (Finnegan, 1970). However, Ferguson's (1983) definition of a proverb as a succinct and memorable statement that contains advice, a warning

or prediction, or an analytical observation, its form, being usually terse, figurative, rich in metaphor and most often poetic, is quite classic. To Madumulla (1998-2001), a proverb is an expression which contains a general truth, or what one can refer to as universal truth. According to Kofi Agyekum (2017), proverbs are brief sayings that embody general truths or principles and ways of life of a people. The general truths are based on people's past experiences, philosophy, perception, ideology, socio-cultural concepts and worldview. To Syzdykov (2014), proverbs and sayings are pearls of folk wisdom. Kanu (2015), from an African point of view, relates that African proverbs are the wisdom and experience of the African people, usually of several ages, gathered and summed up in one expression. They spring from the people and represent the voice of the people and express the interpretation of their beliefs, principles of life and conduct. "Proverbs in Africa are wise philosophical expressions, generally short and sometimes very funny yet make the language rich, picturesque, and express hidden or obvious wisdom" (Addo, 2001). It expresses the moral attitudes of a given culture, and reflects the hopes, achievements and failings of a people (Kanu, 2015). He adds that "the centrality of proverbs in African oral tradition is manifested in the frequency of its use by Africans in conversations, speeches, instructions, judgment, drama, arguments, storytelling, and in fun making" (Kanu, 2015:4).

Gibbs and Beitel (1995) view proverbs as familiar, fixed, sentential expressions that express well-known truths, social norms, or moral concerns. It is important to indicate quickly that these expressions exhibit general syntactic and semantic forms, whereby the use of the imperative mood or the subjunctive present tense is very common in proverbs. It can be observed that a large number of proverbs are direct comparisons of unlike things (metaphors). Metaphor is a figure of speech or a literacy device that compares two things without the use of "as" or "like" or is a figure of speech in which one thing is compared to one another without the use of "as" or "like." It shows indirectly that one thing is like another or is a substitute of the other. Examples of metaphorical proverbs are: "Life is war," "the fish rots from the head first," "Time is money," and "charity begins at home" etcetera. A few proverbs may emanate from personification. Examples of proverbs based on personification are: "when a palm tree lowers its branches, it is aware of what the earth has communicated to it," "the earth has retorted a person," "misery loves company" etcetera.

Proverbs and wise-sayings are usually found to be full of exaggerations. A proverb that exaggerates is termed as "hyperbole." For instance, "it's easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Sometimes, it contains paradox. Paradox describes a seemingly contradictory statement which when investigated may prove to be true. For example, "quality is better than mere quantity," "all animals are equal but some are more equal than others." There is also the presence of meter, as in the proverb, "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink," rhyme, as in "haste makes waste," or a slant rhyme, such as in "a stitch in time saves nine," alliteration, which is a device in which a number of words, having the same first consonant sound, occur close together in a series. It is a figure of speech which involves the repetition of consonant sound at the beginning of statements. It is mostly used in poetry. Although alliteration involves the repetition of letters, it is most importantly about the repetition of sounds. Alliteration occurs when a series of words for a roll or close together have the same first consonant sound. Alliteration can be seen in the following statements: "Live and let live," "Home sweet home," assonance, which describes the repetition of a vowel sound across a line of text. For example, "a rolling stone gathers no moss," "in between trees" and parallelism, that denotes, using similar words, clauses, phrases, sentence structure, or other grammatical elements to emphasize similar ideas in a statement. For instance, "a penny saved is a penny earned," "slowly, the muddy pool becomes a river and slowly, the woman's illness becomes her death" and so on" (Gibbs & Beitel, 1995)

Akan Philosophical Application of Proverbs

The use of proverbs in Africa is mainly an oral art which serves as a rhetorical device to add spice to speech and human discourse but more importantly, as a means of conserving and conveying the society's traditions, institutions, values, and culture (Brookman-Amissah, 1986). Among the Akan, "most important virtues are either couched in proverbs or expressed in the form of a folk-tale with a moral to it" (Antwi, et al, 2020:419). Proverbial sayings and phraseologies are knotty statements and are viewed as vehicles for communicating and transporting change of behaviour and attitude of people on personal level or among groups (Agyemang, et al, 2015). In Africa, "proverbs are craftily developed short epigrammatic expressions, created by the ingenious forebears, enshrined with valuable epistemologies that ensure social cohesion in communities by regulating the moral values of the people handed down from one generation to another generation" (Adom, 2016:129). People's use of proverbs reveals their appreciation of the human realities of various happenings in an objective manner that elucidates the ecosphere. Thus, one could say that wisdom is attainable through daily experience in the created order and that the accumulation of human experience could amount to wisdom (Antwi, et al, 2020).

In recent times, studies on proverbs have shifted from simple compilation of proverbs to applying them to other disciplines (Owu-Ewie, 2019). Largely, available literature on Akan Indigenous Ecological Knowledge systems (IEKs), also termed as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), especially, proverbs and wise-sayings, have concentrated on the identification, collection and an analysis of their significance as indigenous resource for earth-keeping. For instance, in their work, "An Ecocritical Analysis of Akan Proverbs in *Death on Trial*," Asamoah et al. (2019; 110), posit that the Ghanaian society needs to draw lessons from its cultural values and communal environmental life to ensure environmental sustainability. They add that the use of proverbs by the Asantes[3] of Akan indicates that "they believe in the promotion of sustainability and balance in co-existence of humans, animals and plants in one cosmic sphere" (Asamoah, et al, 2019; 110). This view is corroborated by Kim et al. (2017; 14), who see the usefulness of TEK related proverbs as a means of inculcating ecoliteracy in citizens. Thus, "several proverbs reveal deep notions of ecological connectivity, and of the interrelationship between ecological and social systems in Korea" (Kim et al, 2017; 11).

Adom (2016) in his work, "The Philosophical Epistemologies of Asante Proverbs on Ghana's Biodiversity Conservation," sampled Twenty-Six (26) existing Asante proverbs which in his opinion, could be harnessed as didactic lessons to conscientize the natives on the need to conserve and protect the environment. However, a critical look at the proverbs sampled, indicates that only few of them have ecological content at the literary level, except that as he rightly stated that their "philosophical underwriting can help change the attitudinal patterns of individuals, advising the conservation bodies on how to develop their conservation strategies and policies while charging those in authority as well as members of the general public on how to conserve the biodiversity resources in the environment. It also advocates for the shunning of ill or negative behavioural patterns that are the prime causes of the biodiversity depletion in Ghana" (Adom, 2016:131). Adom's work contains fewer ecologically inclined Akan maxims probably because Akan aphorisms that are ecologically predisposed, are relatively few. This would call for a neologism of new ones that are more ecologically infused to augment the

[3] Asantes are a sub-group of the Akan. They constitute the largest Akan group in Ghana. Largely, they are found in the southern part of Ghana, specifically, in the Ashanti Religion. "Otumfuo," is the title of the king of Asante and "Manhyia Palace," is the traditional seat of government of the Asantes.

existing ones in order to contribute effectively towards the indigenous environmental education in Akan communities and Ghana as a whole.

6. Some Existing Akan Indigenous Ecological Proverbs and Wise-sayings

Akan Indigenous Ecological Knowledge Systems (IEKs) are part of the Akan Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), which describe Akan wise-sayings, proverbs, songs, folklore, totems, symbols, and taboos that are environmentally oriented, meant to shape the environmental consciousness of the people. This paper samples some Akan wise-sayings and proverbs which establish the interconnectedness that exists between humans and the earth and can enhance environmental conservation. This is vital in the sense that one's "ability to manage the environment and to create harmony within one's environment and the society, stems from one's possession of wisdom" (Antwi, et al, 2020).

One of the ways Africans express their philosophical thoughts is through their proverbs and wise-sayings. African philosophy is thus encountered largely in proverbs, wise-sayings, folktales, poetry, legends and folklores. Naturally, proverbs can be elucidated repeatedly, in the course of time and in diverse circumstances. Kaplan attests that proverbs are thought-provoking in the sense that they do not just make use of global ideas that describe human existence, such as the biological system about the life processes of human beings, but also, they differ in such a way that seems to replicate the particularities of the culture of particular groups (Kaplan, 2002). In many native communities, rich indigenous knowledge and certain behavioural codes are transmitted from generation to generation via proverbs. This is a common practice in many African societies particularly, sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Kaplan, 2002).

To Seebaway (2017), a proverb is a common indigenous wise-saying that churns out knowledge, reality, ethic, and native worldviews, formulated in a somewhat permanent manner which is transmitted across generations. Seebaway's depiction of a proverb seems to capture to a large extent the common features of Akan proverbs and wise-sayings. For instance, the Akan state: ***asase kotokuo, obiara bɛkɔ mu bi***, (Appiah, et al, n.d) literally, "earth's bag, everyone must enter it," meaning, that all humans are mortals and are susceptible to die and be buried in the earth one day, ***Asase nkyiri funu,*** (Appiah, et al, n.d) literally, "the earth does not abhor a corpse," meaning, death is natural and the earth is human's home at the end of life. This explains why among the Akan, the dead are buried in the ground. This worldview is in keeping with the statement of the narrator of the creation story as recorded in Genesis 3:19 which states: "human is from the ground and returns to the ground."

Some of the environmentally oriented proverbs and wise-sayings among the Akan are as follows: ***Asase so yɛ hye a, namɔn na ɛka*** (Appiah, et al, n.d) that is, "if the earth's surface is hot, the foot reveals it," meaning, if one is in constant touch with a thing, the person gets to know its nature. The interconnectedness between humans and the earth helps humans to feel the heat and hurt of the earth. The heat is due to global warming, greenhouse effects, and climate change (Okyere, 2011). To the Akan, the hurt of the earth is attributed to the gross disregard for environmental taboos and belief systems. ***Asase dɔre fi a na yɛfrɛ no esie,*** (Appiah, et al, n.d) literally, "if the earth piles up dirt, human calls it an anthill." Anthills are normally found and allowed in the wild but are not allowed in the dwelling places of humans since they become abodes for snakes and insects. This implies that when humans litter and dispose of domestic waste indiscriminately, the immediate habitable environment becomes a breeding ground for harmful creatures. *Baabi a* ***yɛdidi no yɛnsɛe hɔ***, literally, "no one destroys where he gets his livelihood from." This clearly implies that the Akan do not encourage environmental abuse and

destruction of the environment on which they depend. ***Wo ne asase yɛ aka a, wonnidi apɔtɔyewa*** *mu*, literally, "if one begrudges the earth, he cannot have access to earthenware to eat from." In typical Akan traditional communities, the people use beautifully made earthenware to cook and dish out meals. This proverb teaches how related and dependent human is to the ground. The Akan understanding of human's dependence on the ground is so inevitable that the people are taught to keep a good and cordial relationship with it. Their awareness of the fact that the earth is the main source of production of food and livelihood for human, makes them come to a conclusion that a person disregards the earth at his own peril.

All of this is to say that Akan philosophical outlook about the earth, generated proverbs and wise-sayings that were ecologically germane. The ecological proverbs and wise-sayings were central in the Akan environmental education. However, with elements of modern Akan community, new environmental challenges and the reality of paradigm shifts towards their indigenous worldviews, there may be the need for the formulation of new aphorisms to augment the existing ones to help mitigate the modern environmental onslaught in Akan communities.

7. Neologizing Akan Ecological Proverbs and Wise-sayings for Earth-keeping

Neologism is the act of inventing a word or phrase in a language (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 2010). To Liu and Liu (2014), it refers to those derivatives that are newly coined. Indeed, proverbs do not fall out of the sky and are not products of a supernatural being but are intentionally or unintentionally coined by an individual as and when necessary (Syzdykov, 2014). Having analysed the existing Akan proverbs and wise-sayings on human-earth relations, this paper attempts to create some more environmentally related Akan proverbs and wise-sayings to sensitize the conscience of contemporary Akan society on the need to take care of the environment. This novelty is premised on Wiafe-Akenten's work, in which she reveals that sometimes proficient Akan speakers create their own proverbs and or wise-sayings instead of relying on the existing ones (Wiafe-Akenten, 2021). Yankah, also affirms that native Akan speakers sometimes formulate their own proverbs and wise-sayings when they are in dire need of phrases that can help articulate exactly what they intend to put forth (Yankah, 1986). However, inasmuch as the grammatical rules governing the Akan dialects allow for neologism, one needs to ensure that the proverb or wise-saying to be devised, contains some of the essential qualities, inherent in Akan proverbs and can be meaningful to the indigenous speakers (Agyekum, 2011). This is exactly what this paper attempts to do. It seeks to neologize proverbs and or wise-sayings that can cogently articulate the Akan worldview on human-earth relations.

Akan proverbs and wise-sayings emerge from everyday life experiences of the people, that is why the Akan state, "***sɛ asɛm mmaeɛ a, yɛmmu bɛ,***" literally, "proverbs emerge as and when issues occur," implying that proverbs and wise-sayings are occasioned by events (Safo-Kantanka, personal interaction, 2020). Akan proverbs and wise-sayings evolve with the people; and they are full of ideas about God, humans, the environment, and their interrelations. It is against this backdrop that this paper endeavours to contribute to the knowledge in paraemiology by creating new axioms to add to the existing Akan ecologically oriented proverbs and wise-sayings that can appeal to the conscience of Akan Christians on the need to protect and conserve the environment.

According to Safo-Kantanka (A personal interaction at the Manhyia Palace, 2020), Akan proverbs are grouped into two: There is ***ɛbɛ turodoo*** and ***nkeka bɛ,*** that is, "true proverbs" or metaphorical ones and "direct statements" respectively (Madumulla, 1998-2001). For example, to Safo-Kantanka (A personal interaction, 2020), the Akan philosophical saying proposed in

this study, ***onipa nua ɛno ara ne asase,*** "the earth is human's relative," can be categorized under ***nkeka bɛ,*** "direct or clear statement." However, one would observe that this neologized maxim, depicts a metaphorical feature required of a good adage. Here, human and earth, though unlike, are directly compared with each other. Given how related human is to the earth among Akan, one could state that the earth is a relative to human. The relationship between them seems so mutual and inseparable that one could describe it as kinship. Thus, to the Akan, the earth and humans are kinsmen. Lumanze (2021), affirms that "human is believed to have a sense of kinship with nature." This view is corroborated by Kanu and Ndubisi (2022), that "African proverbs present nature as a part of the life of the human person, in the sense that neglecting the environment will have consequences on the life of the human person." This worldview would create strong grounds for advocating for environmental conservation and protection among Akan.

Aside from the religious factors that drive the Akan ecological philosophy, there are also economic reasons why they value the earth/land. Thus, well-articulated wise-sayings that would promote indigenous conservation ideas could be pragmatic. It is in this vein that this paper neologises thus, ***asase a yɛdidi so no yɛnsɛe no,*** "do not destroy the land from which you get your livelihood." This paper asserts that one of the reasons why Akan people revere the earth is the fact that it is their main collective source of sustenance and livelihood. It would therefore be unthinkable for a community member or an alien to be allowed to do anything that is capable of damaging the collective life and well-being of the Akan community.

To the Akan, the earth is sacred. The reason why the earth is sacred is that they believe that the Supreme Being manifests himself in it. They also believe that the earth is a gift bequeathed to them by their ancestors who though dead, yet, live among them constantly. Thus, the saying, ***nnipa nsɛe asase,*** "human should not destroy the earth," could serve as one of the injunctions pointing clearly, to the fact that the living has no right whatsoever to destroy or desecrate the earth. Anyone that does that, does it at his/her own risk. This underscores why it is a taboo among the Akan to destroy the environment. The view can be supported by the saying, ***ɔdasani a ɔsɛe asase no ɔbɔ mmusuo,*** "it is a taboo for a human being to destroy the land."

From the Akan perspective, any attempt at destroying the environment is *mmusuo*, "a taboo." Therefore, anyone that abuses the environment, violates community norms; and appropriate sanctions may be meted out to the culprit. Likewise, ***onipa nua ne asase, na mmusubɔfoɔ na ɔsɛe ne nua,*** "the earth is human's relative; a person that destroys his relative is accursed." The Akan encourage and live a communal life. Their family system is formed along bloodlines and they trace their lineage to one ancestor. People belonging to the same ancient ancestor or ancestress come together to form a family, *abusua*. The Akan endeavour to keep and preserve the continuation of their family. As a result, bloodshed among kinsmen is a serious violation, tantamount to the ex-communication of the offender.

Another wise-saying proposed by this paper is, ***asase dehyepɔn ne onipa,*** "human is earth's most valued kinsman." This Akan maxim, is rendered in such a way that the earth is personified, capable of having human as a valued kinsman. The Akan hold a belief that all special members (royals) such as kings, queens, princes and princesses and entities such as clans, gods, ancestors etcetera must be served with all their needs (Kwame Osei Osepetetreku, A personal interaction, 2020). Humans might be the earth's most cherished relative (Mbiti, 1991; Lumanze, 2021) that is why it endeavours to provide in abundance all of the human needs, ranging from food, shelter, clothing, water, transportation, oxygen, minerals and many more. The idea of human responsibility toward the environment in the wise-saying, ***Ɔdomankomadesohwɛfoɔ ne nyamesuroni,*** "he/who takes care of what's God's is devout to God," could be uncontestably palpable.

Taking the religious nature of Africans in general and Akan in particular, one would assume that they have reverent fear for God. With that in mind, a religious Akan person would be

expected to take good care of sacred entities which include the earth. People that do so would obviously be known as highly religious, God-fearing and good. The indigenous Akan may not find it difficult to appreciate the saying, ***asase sɛeɛ ne wiase sɛeɛ na ɛnam,*** "destruction of the environment or land, leads to the destruction of the world." This is in keeping with the saying, "when the last tree dies the last man will die." In addition, since the Akan believe that the earth/environment is a living entity that feels and talks and can accept or reject a particular person's affinity, neologizing a proverb or wise-saying, ***sɛ asase po wo a wonni daberɛ anaa sɛ, sɛ asase po wo a na w'awieɛ aba,*** "when one is rejected by the earth, his dwellings and all that he has are lost," could be very appropriate. This can be used in reference to a people displaced by floods as a result of poor environmental cleanliness, indiscriminate disposal of waste and building on waterways. Also, ***onipa daberɛ mu ne asase,*** "the earth is human's abode," could conscientize members of Akan communities to be wary of activities of environmental destruction because such behaviour would only bring about the displacement of human settlements in their society. Every human who seeks a sleeping place looks for a peaceful environment. Akan believe that the final sleeping place for humans is in the earth. This wise-saying would conscientize the Akan to treat the earth well since it is the same earth that would provide a final peaceful place of sleep for him/her.

Another wise-saying put forth by this paper states, ***sɛ wopɛ sɛ wohwehwɛ ɔdasani akyiri kwan a, bisa n'asase,*** "from whence a person comes and his whereabouts can best be traced to his land." It has been noted that land is one of the major forms of inheritance or properties among Akan. Land defines Akan communities. Owning and having allegiance to a piece of land gives an Akan a sense of being and belonging. Therefore, the Akan would normally do everything possible to protect and preserve their land.

8. Conclusion

This paper has analysed the relationship between humans and the earth (physical environment) in light of some existing Akan indigenous ecological aphorisms. It has been observed that the existing Akan proverbs and wise-sayings were devised to express and preserve the tangible and intangible kinship realities, inherent in human-earth relations. And that the maxims were essential in promoting environmental protection and conservation consciousness among the indigenous Akan. For the awareness of modern society, new environmental concerns and possible paradigm shifts regarding indigenous beliefs and cultural norms, this paper has attempted to neologize some more environmentally infused Akan proverbs and wise-sayings to arouse the conscience of contemporary Akan society on the need to protect and conserve the environment. The main contribution of this paper is found in the Akan indigenous ecological proverbs and wise-sayings neologized such as: ***asase dehyepɔn ne onipa,*** "human is earth's most valued kinsman," ***asase sɛeɛ ne wiase sɛeɛ na ɛnam,*** "destruction of the environment or land, leads to the destruction of the world," ***onipa nua ɛno ara ne asase,*** "the earth is human's relative," ***asase a yɛdidi so no yɛnsɛe no,*** "do not destroy the land from which you get your livelihood," ***onipa nua ne asase, na mmusubɔfoɔ na ɔsɛe ne nua,*** "the earth is human's relative; a person that destroys his relative is accursed," ***Ɔdomankomadesohwɛfoɔ ne nyamesuroni,*** "he/who takes care of what's God's is devout to God;" ***sɛ wopɛ sɛ wohwehwɛ ɔdasani akyiri kwan a, bisa n'asase,*** "from whence a person comes and his whereabouts can best be traced to his land," ***onipa daberɛ mu ne asase,*** "the earth is human's abode," ***sɛ asase po wo a wonni daberɛ anaa sɛ, sɛ asase po wo a na w'awieɛ aba,*** "when one is rejected by the earth, his dwellings and all that he has are lost," ***ɔdasani a ɔsɛe asase no ɔbɔ mmusuo,*** "it is a taboo for a human being to destroy the land," and ***nnipa nsɛe asase,*** "human should not destroy the earth," etcetera.

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CONNECTING PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF GRAMMATICAL COHESION IN BUDGET DISCOURSE

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Osei Yaw Akoto

Abstract
Cohesion in politico-financial registers, such as budget statements, remains *terra incognita*, although it is crucial in shaping the rhetorical structure of these documents. Cohesive devices are key indicators in strengthening financial arguments and shaping people's understanding of fiscal policies. Despite their significance, studies on cohesion in budget statements remain limited. This corpus-assisted study thus examines the discourse functions of grammatical cohesion in politico-financial budget statements using Ghana's 2024 Budget Statement as data. The analysis was guided by Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion framework. The findings revealed that references were used to establish the Finance Minister's authority and maintain thematic continuity, while substitution was used to enhance textual variation and avoid monotonous sentences. Additionally, conjunctions were used to structure economic narratives by establishing additive relations, signalling causality, contrasting financial outcomes, and indicating temporal sequences between economic events. The findings offer a deeper understanding of the functions of grammatical cohesion in a politico-financial register, such as budget statements.
Keywords*:* English for Specific Purposes, Politico-Financial Budget Statements, Register Studies, Financial Discourse, Political Discourse

1. Introduction

The Budget Statement is recognized as a distinct register due to its unique purpose, structure, and lexicogrammatical resources (Lukin, 2015; Thompson, 2015). A budget statement by a government of a nation-state is a politico-financial register, shaped and informed by financial and political norms and practices, and rhetorically, (meta)discursively, and linguistically. Interestingly, Wildavsky (1974) asserts that "the study of budgeting is just another expression for the study of politics" (p. 126). In this case, Wildavsky (1974) focuses on political budgets prepared by governments or their agencies, but not apolitical ones prepared by non-governmental organizations. Each of these, in terms of its lexicogrammatical resources, is of great interest to ESP researchers. However, the focus on the former always outweighs the latter because of its national aura. Since the political budget statements communicate a government's economic policies and plans, they are presented to persuade the general public. Consequently, scholars have examined key aspects of the budget discourse to establish its rhetorical peculiarities and preferences.

Existing studies (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2014; MacDonald et al., 2019; MacDonald, 2022; Gopang & Bughio, 2015) have largely employed critical discourse analysis to examine budget statements. Ahmed et al. (2014) analyzed Pakistani Budget Speeches (PBS) and Indian Budget Speeches (IBS)

to uncover hidden ideologies within budget discourse. Their study found that PBS used the personal pronoun *we* exclusively to foster a sense of unity between the government and citizens, whereas IBS primarily associated it with the government. They also observed that the Finance Minister used first-person pronouns to take responsibility for budgetary actions. Similarly, MacDonald et al. (2019) examined how visions of the future are constructed in budget speeches and found that future-oriented discourse revolved around recurring themes such as fairness, economic growth, recovery, and employment. Similarly, MacDonald (2022) analyzed Irish budget speeches over 45 years and revealed that each budget speech consistently projected a vision of a prosperous future built on collective goodwill. Additionally, Gopang and Bughio (2015) studied Pakistani budget headlines to uncover ideological biases in newspaper reporting. Their findings showed that editors strategically manipulated word choices to shape public perceptions of the budget.

The budget has also received attention through sentiment analysis (e.g., Kaur et al., 2020; Shakeel & Karwal, 2016; Ahmad & Abdullah, 2021). Kaur et al. (2020) conducted a real-time sentiment analysis of India's 2020 Union Budget and found an overall positive sentiment, suggesting a favourable public reception. In contrast, Shakeel and Karwal (2016) analyzed the 2017 Union Budget and identified neutral sentiment in the document, a finding that differs from Kaur et al.'s (2020) findings. Similarly, Ahmad and Abdullah (2021) examined Malaysia's budget speech and observed generally positive public sentiment toward it.

Despite these, cohesion, which is key in ensuring clarity and enhancing the overall unity of the budget statement, remains unstudied. Cohesion is the semantic relationship between elements in a discourse, where the interpretation of one element depends on another (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Thompson, 2004). Halliday and Hasan (1976) argue that cohesion "is a semantic one and refers to the relations of meanings that exist within a text and that define it as a text" (p. 4). Cohesion is realized through explicit linguistic markers –both grammatical and lexical –that link sentences together to create a network of related ideas. Without these markers, a text becomes a disconnected set of clauses rather than a coherent whole. The effective use of cohesive devices in budget statements not only enhances textual unity but also contributes to the broader rhetorical and ideological framing of economic policies. These devices also influence how readers interpret the budget and understand government priorities. Previous studies (e.g., Ahmed et al., 2014; MacDonald et al., 2019; MacDonald, 2022; Gopang & Bughio, 2015) help us appreciate the hidden ideologies and sentiments in budgets; however, they do not examine the discourse functions of budget statements. Thus, this study seeks to examine the discourse functions of grammatical cohesive devices in Ghana's 2024 Budget Statement.

2. Ghana's Budget Statement

In Ghana, it is a constitutional requirement that the government prepare and present a budget to Parliament. Thompson (2015) notes that budget measures "have a critical impact on the public's political perceptions and sympathies and thence the possible outcome of General Elections" (p. 2). Budgeting should not be seen only "as a means of transmitting a set of technical information about the nation's finances but as a rhetorical formulation of a particular Party's ideology" (Thompson, 2015: 3). Consequently, Ghana's Minister of Finance and Economic Planning prepares and presents the budget statement to parliament on behalf of the President in accordance with article

179 of Ghana's 1992 constitution. The budget presentation is a means of communicating with various "discourse communities." Members of parliament are the primary audience, but the presentation also targets the general public and the global community. The budget statement is written and presented in English, Ghana's official language. The Ministry also provides a summary of the budget's key points to facilitate discussion of the government's fiscal policies and priorities. Since 2021, the abridged version of the Budget Statement, the Citizens' Budget, has been translated into six Ghanaian indigenous languages: Asante Twi, Dangme, Nzema, Ewe, Gonja and Dagbani. This move recognizes a significant portion of the Ghanaian population who are *non-Engliate* –individuals who possess literacy in indigenous languages but have little or no proficiency in English (Akoto & Afful, 2021). It further helps to broaden the functional load of Ghanaian indigenous languages.

3. Corpus and Procedures

Ghana's 2024 Budget Statement served as the data for this study. The data were obtained from https://mofep.gov.gh/publications/budget-statements, the official website of the Ministry of Finance, on 14th February, 2024. The corpus comprised approximately 61,148 tokens. The data were cleaned to include only the textual content. Visuals were excluded because they lack cohesion, which is best analyzed through written text. The table of contents and appendices were also removed from the data, as they serve as navigational tools and do not contribute to the document's cohesive structure. The 2024 Budget was chosen because it was current and available on the Ministry's website. The analysis was guided by Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion framework as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Types of Grammatical Cohesion

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">Grammatical Cohesion</th></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Reference</th><th>Substitution</th><th>Ellipsis</th><th>Conjunction</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Personals</td><td>Nominal</td><td>Nominal</td><td>Additive</td></tr>
<tr><td>Existential</td><td>Possessive</td><td rowspan="2">one/ones,
same</td><td rowspan="2"></td><td rowspan="2">and, and also,
nor, or, or else,
furthermore,
by the way,
In other words,
likewise,
on the other hand, thus</td></tr>
<tr><td>I, you, we, he, she, it, they, one</td><td>my/mine,
your/yours,
our/ours, his,
her/hers, its,
their/theirs, one's</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Demonstratives</td><td>Verbal</td><td>Verbal</td><td>Adversative</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">this/that, these/those, here/there</td><td>do</td><td></td><td>yet, though, only, but,
however, at least,
in fact, rather,
on the contrary,
I mean, in any case</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Definite article</td><td>Clausal</td><td>Clausal</td><td>Causal</td></tr>
</table>

the	so, do so, not		so, then, therefore, because, otherwise,
Comparatives			Temporal
same, identical, similar(ly), such, different, other, else			then, next, before that, first ... then, at first, formerly ... final, at once, soon, to sum up, in conclusion

The corpus analysis followed a two-step process to ensure clarity and rigour. First, *AntConc* (version 4.2.0) was used to generate frequency counts and concordance lines for each cohesive device, providing a quantitative overview of their distribution in the corpus. The software assisted the researchers in determining whether a cohesive device had a cohesive function. Cohesive devices that performed functions other than demonstrating cohesive force were disregarded from the frequency count. The second step involved interpreting the discourse functions of the identified cohesive devices. This was done qualitatively using a theory-driven approach based on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion framework. Halliday and Hasan (1976) emphasize that cohesive devices establish semantic relationships between elements, in which the interpretation of one linguistic element depends on that of another. Each concordance line was manually examined to understand how the cohesive devices contributed to thematic continuity, textual variation, argumentation, and persuasion in the data.

4. Results and Discussion

This section discusses the discourse functions of reference, substitution and conjunction relations as outlined by Halliday and Hasan (1976).

4.1.Reference

4.1.1. The Functions of I

It is established that personal pronouns are used with other lexical items to perform various functions (Akoto, 2020; 2023). They serve a cohesive function by referring back to earlier-discussed discourse segments. They also have a deictic function, indicating specific participants, such as the speaker or the listener, in the discourse. Personal pronouns also express attitudes by conveying the speaker's emotions and authority regarding the referents. The first-person pronoun *I* appeared 51 times in the corpus, but only 31 instances functioned cohesively.

> ***I*** *respectfully present to you the Budget Statement and Economic Policy of Government for 2024 Financial Year. [BS 001]*
> ***I*** *stand here today to present the 2024 Budget, which seeks to advance us on the path toward fiscal consolidation, macro stability and growth that began a year ago. [BS 002]*
> ***I*** *presented the 2023 Budget and, as always, gave an honest and forthright update on the economy, highlighting the extent of the challenges facing our country. [BS 003]*

In extracts BS001, BS002, and BS003, the Finance Minister used the exophoric pronoun I, as it does not directly connect two units within the text. This reference device is mainly used in theme positions, and there is no ambiguity about the referent, as it refers to the speaker and not any other participant. It precedes verbs like *present* and *stand* to establish the Finance Minister's presence and authority in the discourse. His use of the pronoun *I* makes the message personal and signals to the audience, including the Speaker, that he (the Finance Minister) is directly involved in the budgeting process and is taking accountability for its contents. This finding supports that of Ahmed et al. (2014). Their study revealed that the Minister employed *I* to take responsibility for the actions in the budget. In both studies, the use of *I* establishes the speaker's authority and accountability.
The Finance Minister also employed *I* in extracts BS004, and BS005 to express his emotions and attitudes. Specifically, he expressed his satisfaction in announcing the achievement and progress toward some macroeconomic targets, using the phraseological pattern I + V-link + ADJ, as in I am pleased, I am glad, and I am happy, in extracts BS004, BS004, and BS004, respectively. It shows that he not only assumes responsibility for fiscal policy but also takes pride in its implementation.

> ***I** am pleased to present to this august House macroeconomic developments for the first three quarters of 2023, and within the context of the following macroeconomic targets for 2023 set in the 2023 Mid- Year Fiscal Policy Review. [BS004]*
> ***I** am glad to inform this august house that based on the IMF's own assessment (at the staff level) after the first review, Ghana met: All six (6) of the Quantitative Performance Criteria (QPCs). [BS 005]*
> ***I** am happy to announce that YEA is about concluding negotiation with CCI, the business process outsource (BPO) operator in sub-Saharan Africa for the establishment of a call centre that can see the direct creation of 20,000 local jobs for our young graduates. [BS006]*

In the phraseological construction *I am pleased to present* in BS004, *I* which is followed by the *am pleased* shows the Minister's pride in presenting the macroeconomic developments. Similarly, in BS005 and BS006, the patterns *I am glad* and *I am happy* show the Minister's positive attitude towards sharing updates and achievements related to the budget.
The Minister further used *I* to express gratitude to the President, the Speaker of Parliament and labour unions. This finding reveals that the Minister acknowledges the contributions of these groups in achieving fiscal goals. This makes them feel included in the budgeting process, as their voices and concerns are recognized and valued. The textual evidence below shows the function of this cohesive device.

> ***I** also want to use this occasion to thank the leadership of organized labour for their positive cooperation since 2017. [BS007]*
> ***I** also wish to express my deep appreciation to you, Right Hon. Speaker, and the Hon. Members for their support over the years. [BS008]*

In extracts BS007 and BS008, the Finance Minister employed *I* together with verbs like *want* and *wish.* In each instance, this reference device makes it possible to express gratitude or appreciation. As a Finance Minister, he recognizes the role of the President and the contributions of labour groups in achieving the objectives of the budget statement.

4.1.2. The Functions of We

Inclusive *we* and exclusive *we* are used to describe how pronouns can either express a wide sense of collective identity or exclude certain people or groups from a shared identity. The Finance Minister employed the inclusive *"we" in the budget to foster* a sense of solidarity. This suggests that fiscal policies are meant to benefit everyone. Moreover, it reveals that the Minister views himself as part of a group with shared aspirations rather than as an authority figure. Consequently, it encourages the audience to see themselves as "citizens" rather than as passive beneficiaries of economic policies. Extracts BS010 and BS011 below illustrate the inclusive *we* from the corpus.

> ***We*** *must move forward courageously. For as 2 Timothy 1:7 counsels, "God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of courage, and of love, and of a sound mind". [BS010]*
> ***We*** *should be collectively proud of ourselves and the can-do-spirit of our people.* ***We*** *have proven that a lot more is possible, if we stay the course and believe in a future of immense possibilities. [BS 011]*

In excerpt BS010, *the pronoun "we"* is used to emphasize collective action since it includes the Finance Minister himself, his government (the President and his ministers), the audience (members of parliament) and the entire nation. This cohesive reference emphasizes that the Minister's voice does not function as an authority (Akoto, 2020, 2023). In excerpt BS011, the first *use of we encourages shared pride and acknowledges the communal spirit of the people, while the final use of we reinforces the message that success will follow* if the group continues to work together. This finding supports that of Ahmed et al. (2014), who argued that the use of "we" was employed to create a sense of unity between the government and citizens. The similarities in findings can be attributed to the shared context of budget discourse. Ahmed et al.'s (2014) study and the present study underscore the integral role of inclusive pronoun use in constructing meaning and shaping public perception in budgetary discourse.

The exclusive *we* is used to refer to a specific subset or limited group within a larger collective identity. This usage may intentionally or unintentionally exclude certain people or groups from the shared identity. The Finance Minister employed the exclusive *"we" in the budget to refer specifically* to the government and himself, who is directly involved in the budgetary process. The rhetorical choice enables the Minister to assert his authority in the budget and to communicate the impression that the fiscal decisions are made by those whom the audience trusts have the expertise to manage the nation's finances. This supports Thompson's (2015) view that budgeting is not only about numerical allocations but also "…a rhetorical formulation of a particular Party's ideology" (p. 3). He thus employed *"we" as a collective pronoun to express confidence,* as shown in BS012 and BS013.

> *Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding uncertainties around the global economic recovery,* ***we*** *are confident that* ***we*** *are on the right path and, therefore, optimistic about the future. [BS 012]*
> ***We*** *are confident that the record high investments* ***we*** *have made and continue to make over these seven years in preparing our children for a brighter future will significantly transform our society, especially by tackling the root cause of poverty that has afflicted many families from generation to generation. [BS013]*

In BS012 and BS013, *the pronoun "we" is used exclusively to refer to the speaker (the Finance Minister) and his government as a single* collective identity. When he says *we are confident* in excerpt BS 012, he refers to this group. He suggests that such confidence is not individual but collective. By using the "we" repeatedly in excerpt BS013, he connects past and ongoing actions. In this example, *"we" is used to indicate* collective determination. This finding corresponds with Ahmed et al.'s (2014) study in which *we* was used exclusively in Indian budget speeches to refer to the government.

The Finance Minister also utilized *we* exclusively in his address to accept failures and successes. This finding reveals that the Minister and his government are open to accountability in the budget process. They acknowledge that they are human and can face difficulties in economic governance, but recognize the need to be transparent with the audience. This openness can enhance audience trust and foster compliance with the budget measures. Extracts BS014 and BS015 below illustrate this function.

> ***We** have not created enough jobs and food inflation remains high, creating hardship and **we** are committed to tackling this. [BS 014]*
> ***We** also launched the Ghana Mutual Prosperity Dialogue on 2nd November, 2023, a new and innovative platform to deepen our collaboration and partnership with the private sector. [BS 015]*

In extract BS014, *we* emphasizes collective responsibility for the shortcomings. The use of *"we" in this context implies that the Minister and his government collectively acknowledge such failures*. This act promotes transparency and trust. Even after acknowledging failures, within the same excerpt, all parties involved pledge to improve, as he adds, "and we are committed to tackling this…"In excerpt BS015, *we* is used to highlight collective achievements. He used this cohesive device to attribute the success of strengthening their partnership with the private sector to government efforts.

4.1.3. The Functions of They

The Finance Minister employed the third-person pronouns *they* anaphorically to achieve cohesion. It was noted that the Minister did not use cataphoric references to indicate forthcoming information. This finding in the budget discourse is revealing. The use of anaphoric references indicates that his focus is on information already presented rather than on speculation about future developments. By using the third-person pronouns, the Minister can avoid ambiguity to help the audience follow the discourse. Moreover, the absence of forward references may imply that the Minister preferred to present information in the budget in a straightforward manner, without foreshadowing future details. This directs the audience's attention to current achievements and ongoing initiatives rather than to future uncertainties. The excerpts below illustrate the anaphoric function of *they* in the corpus.

> *Gold prices are projected to average US$1,900 per troy ounce in 2024, reflecting a 6 percent increase compared to 2023, although **they** are expected to recede in 2025 as concerns regarding inflation and recession subside. [BS 016]*

> *Mr. Speaker, digital skills have become critical for socioeconomic advancement.* ***They*** *present the best opportunity for the youth to acquire skills to enable them leverage the prospects inherent in AfCFTA and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. [BS 017]*

In excerpt BS016, *they* is used anaphorically to refer back to *gold prices*. This cohesive device connects the discussion of future trends in gold prices with their expected changes in response to economic conditions. Thus, *they* will not be understood if *gold prices* does not exist in the text. In other words, if one does not have any prior information regarding *gold prices*, this choice of reference will be undefined. Similarly, in extract BS017, *they* refers to *digital skills.* This use of *they* emphasizes the importance and potential of digital skills for the youth. *In these contexts, they avoid repeating the lexical items gold prices and digital skills,* respectively. This creates cohesion in the sentences by linking the pronoun *they* back to its referents.

4.1.4. The Function of the Demonstrative 'The'

Demonstrative reference is considered as "… a form of verbal pointing" where "a speaker identifies the referent by locating it on a scale of proximity" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 57). It tracks information through spatial proximity. *The* lacks inherent specificity as it does not carry any content on its own. Instead, its function relies on other elements within the text to convey definiteness. In the corpus, the Finance Minister used the definite article cohesively to specify and clarify entities that are known or identifiable within the context. *The* is used in its specifying function to refer to ideas or concepts which are previously mentioned or contextually understood by the reader or audience as demonstrated in BS018 and BS019.

> *Works on the Anomabo Fisheries College is about 97 percent complete. The laboratory, administration, classroom and hostel blocks, as well as, water treatment plant was completed. In 2024,* ***the college*** *will commence operations and offer proficiency, diploma and degree courses in fisheries for the first batch of 104 students from Ghana and the West Africa sub-region. [BS 018]*
>
> *Mr Speaker,* ***the Right to Information Commission (RTIC)*** *carried out sensitisation programmes across 52 public institutions to enhance their capacity in the implementation processes of information disclosure.* ***The Commission*** *conducted 241 monitoring exercises to ensure public institutions and relevant private bodies are adhering to the dictates of Act 989. [BS 019]*

In BS018 and BS019, *the* in the phrases *the college* and *the Commission* specifies a specific educational institution that will start operations and the particular commission responsible for the monitoring exercises. The Minister mentioned these entities in the previous sentences. The use of the definite article in the succeeding sentences specifies these endophoric references (Brown & Yule, 1983; Halliday & Hasan, 1976). The definite article, *the,* which functions as a determiner, indicates to the reader that the information provided is already familiar. In extract BS018, *the college* refers to *the Anomabo Fisheries College* mentioned in the preceding sentence. In extracts BS019, *the Commission* refers to *the Right to Information Commission (RTIC).* In this context, the *RTIC* is presupposed while *the Commission* acts as the presupposing entity. The definite article indicates to the reader that specific information can be recovered from the preceding text. In this

case, the information to be retrieved (the Right to Information Commission) is the "referential meaning, the identity of the particular thing or class of things that is being referred to; and the cohesion lies in the continuity of reference, whereby the same thing enters into the discourse the second time" (Halliday & Hassan, 1976, p. 31).
The definite article can also be used in contextually ambiguous references, where it refers to something that could be interpreted in multiple ways without clear antecedents. The Minister utilized the definite article to refer to entities which did not have explicit links or physical representations in the text as in extracts BS020 and BS021.

> *Mr. Speaker, in 2023**, the National Teaching Council (NTC)** conducted Ghana Teacher Licensure Examination (GTLE) for a total of 29,909 candidates and subsequently licenced a total of 8,782 teachers across **the country,** bringing **the total number** of licenced teachers to 306,453. [BS 020]*
> *Mr. Speaker, **the Ghana Immigration Service** conducted day and night patrols along **the borders** to secure **the country** against irregular migration flows and migration- related crimes. [BS 021]*

The definite articles in *the National Teaching Council (NTC), the country, the total number of licenced teachers, the Ghana Immigration Service, the borders* and *the country* in excerpts BS020 and BS021 do not have referents in the text as they do not refer back to previously mentioned discourse segments. They rely on the assumption that readers possess prior knowledge about them. However, without prior context specifying their referents in the discourse, this use of *the* does not create a cohesive link. The cohesion of a text depends on its ability to refer back to previously mentioned entities. Instances where it serves generic or ambiguous purposes do not contribute to cohesion within the text. Halliday and Hasan (1976) classify this type of reference as exophoric. They note that "It is only the anaphoric type of reference that is relevant to cohesion since it provides a link with the preceding portion of the text" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 51).

4.1.5. The functions of the Demonstratives "This/These"

Reference marked by demonstratives can refer to a noun phrase, a clause, a sentence, or even a sequence of sentences. In the corpus, the demonstratives *this* and *these* had a total frequency count of 298. Specifically, *this* was used 213 times, while *these* occurred 85 times. The Finance Minister used *this* as a determiner 139 times to refer back to specific entities or contexts previously introduced or implied. *This* is used together with the noun, and the content of what is expressed is contained in the entire noun phrase structure. Swales (2005) emphasizes that following demonstratives with a noun allows the writer to ''offer a higher-level recontextualization of the previous text; in other words, the writer can provide the reader with an interpretation of what he or she has just read'' (p. 3). A noun that recontextualizes the antecedent of the demonstrative acts as a cohesive device, linking subsequent propositions to the information conveyed by the reference as shown in BS022 and BS023.

> *Mr. Speaker, towards our quest to promote an eco-friendly environment and net zero carbon emissions, import duty exemptions will be granted for the importation of commercial electric buses for public transportation. **This measure** will promote the realisation of the green economy. [BS022]*

> *Mr. Speaker, as a means of promoting voluntary compliance, a simplified tax return will be introduced as part of the modified taxation scheme for individuals in the informal sector.* ***This approach*** *will make it easier for taxpayers to fulfil their tax obligations to the State. [BS023]*

In extracts BS022 and BS023, the abstract nouns *measure, approach*, and *relief* carry only general meanings when considered in isolation. However, when used in conjunction with the demonstrative *this* in discourse, they encapsulate detailed information from the preceding context into a nominal structure, linking the previous proposition to the current one. It is only in the context of the preceding discussion that the nouns *measure, approach and relief* acquire specific meanings. Halliday and Hassan (1979) note that such nouns are ‘‘superordinate members of major lexical sets, and therefore their cohesive use is an instance of the general principle whereby a superordinate item operates anaphorically as a kind of synonym’’ (p. 275). In BS022, *this* in *this measure* introduces a specific measure intended to promote a green economy while in extract BS023 *this approach* refers to the *simplified tax returns* that was previously introduced. In these extracts, there is a presuppositional relationship between the nominal groups and the discourse segments they reference. The noun phrases cannot be understood without recourse to the encapsulated discourse. Thus, “a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated into a text” (Halliday & Hassan, 1976: 4).

The demonstrative pronoun *these* is used with plural count nouns and provides a cohesive tie that helps readers to refer back to previously mentioned antecedents. This cohesive device functions as a determiner referring to specific nouns, and its interpretation is unambiguous. The excerpts, BS024 and BS025, below illustrate the functions of this cohesive device in the data.

> *Mr. Speaker, we have also developed a more detailed update on sectoral performance in a ‘Volume II’ document. I request the Hansard Department to kindly capture* ***these documents*** *as the Budget Statement and Economic Policy of Government for the financial year 2024. [BS 024]*
>
> *This will have a standing committee co-chaired by MOTI/MoF and the Private Sector. I want to assure our stakeholders that we have, as much as possible, reflected the proposals and recommendations from* ***these engagements*** *in this Budget. [BS 025]*

The use of the demonstrative pronoun “these” in BS024 and BS025 implies two assumptions: the referent can be identified from the context, and the referent is plural. In BS 024, *these* refers back to the *‘Volume II’ document* and other updates on sectoral performance mentioned earlier. It clearly identifies which documents should be included in the budget statement. In BS025, *these* refers to *the proposals and recommendations* that came out of the engagements related to *the Ghana Mutual Prosperity Dialogue* and collaboration with the private sector. It is used to link engagements to the assurance that their outcomes have been considered in the budget. This reference to the discourse preceding the demonstrative establishes a presupposition relationship between the nominal and its referent, with the nominal serving as the theme of the subsequent clause. The connection between the presupposing elements (these documents and these engagements) and the presupposed elements (Volume II document and the proposals and recommendations) creates a cohesive relationship. In each extract, this cohesive device helps to avoid repetition by providing a concise way to refer back to earlier details.

4.2.Comparative Reference

Nunan (1993) notes that "comparative reference is expressed through adjectives and adverbs and serves to compare items within a text in terms of identity or similarity." (p. 24). Halliday and Hasan (1976) distinguish between two sub-types of comparative reference: general and particular. The general subgroup signifies similarity, difference, or identity between items using adjectives such as *same, similar, identical, equal, other* and *different*, whereas the particular subgroup indicates comparability using comparative adjectives and quantifiers such as better, more, less and equally (Halliday & Hassan, 1976). The next sections discuss the two types of comparative reference used in the data.

4.2.1. General Comparison

The general subtype of comparative reference had a frequency count of 51. This category shows how items are alike or distinct. The Minister employed *same* and *similar* as a comparative cohesive device to show comparisons as shown in the excerpts below.

> *We turned the corner when the currency, which had been under severe pressure over the past two years, depreciated by a modest 6.4 percent cumulatively from February to date, compared to 53.9 percent over the* ***same*** *period in 2022. [BS 026]*
> *Youth and Jobs Digital Skills Building: Government intends to provide skills training for the youth. This will be achieved through partnerships with TVET institutions, nationally designated Tech hubs, and other* ***similar*** *institutions utilising Tech platforms and training programs provided by Google, Andela, MEST, and Soronko Academy, among others. [BS 027]*

In BS026, *same* in *the same period in 2022* refers back to the specific time frame (from February to date) mentioned earlier in the sentence. This helps the reader understand the specific period under comparison and assess the improvement in the currency's performance. By referring to *the same period* across different years, this cohesive device helps the audience to easily track and compare data over the same time frames, thus establishing a cohesive effect in the sentences. He further used *similar* in *other similar* institutions in BS027 anaphorically to refer to institutions that are comparable to TVET institutions. The use of *similar* in this context brings these institutions together, as they share the function of providing digital skills training to support youth employment through technology.

4.2.2. Particular Comparison

This category focuses on comparing two or more items to highlight improvements or reductions in the country's economic performance across years, as shown in BS028 and BS029, using the terms *more* and *better*.

> *The programme has been very impactful on Bank of Ghana's cashflow and the foreign exchange market. Since February 2023, the forex market has been* ***more*** *stable relative to what we witnessed in 2022. [BS028]*
> *Mr. Speaker, we are in a* ***better*** *place than we were before. [BS029]*

In extract BS028, *more* is used to compare the current level of stability in the foreign exchange market with the stability observed in 2022. This comparison indicates that the stability in 2022 serves as a benchmark for evaluating the current level of stability. This clearly shows that the present stability is an improvement over the past. In extract BS029, the Minister used *better* in *we are in a better place* to create the impression that the current situation is an improvement over the past. This comparison signifies quality of improvement. He not only expresses optimism but also provides the audience with a reference point for evaluating the change between the present and the past.

4.3. Substitution

Substitution functions as an anaphoric cohesive relation that ties parts of a text together to achieve unity. It involves replacing a word or phrase with another to avoid monotony or promote variety in expression. Out of the three subtypes of substitution identified by Halliday and Hassan (1979), only two types were found in the data: nominal and clausal substitution.

4.3.1. Nominal Substitution

Nominal substitution occurs in cases where a noun or a nominal group is replaced by *one, ones* or *the same* (Halliday & Hassan, 1976). In the corpus, the Finance Minister utilized the word *ones* in place of nouns and noun phrases in two instances. The other markers, *one* and *same,* were not used.

> *The increased growth of the industry sector in the medium-term is based on projected positive growth rates for all subsectors including previously contracting* ***ones. [****BS 030]*
> *Mr. Speaker, based on the key objectives and policy priorities of the PC-PEG, the main priorities in 2024 are: Focus on completing ongoing Infrastructure for Poverty Eradication Programme (IPEP) projects rather than start new* ***ones. [****BS 031]*

In BS030, *ones* is a substitute for *subsectors.* The phrase *previously contracting ones* means *previously contracting subsectors.* The usage of this device prevents repeating the word *subsectors* because readers can infer that *ones* refers to *subsectors* based on the preceding context. In excerpt BS 031, *ones* is a substitute for *projects.* The phrase *new ones* refers back to *new projects*. Similarly, this cohesive element prevented the repetition of *projects.* The context provided by o*ngoing Infrastructure for Poverty Eradication Programme (IPEP) projects* allows readers to understand that *ones* refers to *projects.* This type of substitution helps prevent monotonous structures and maintains a smooth flow of ideas in the budget statement.

4.3.2. Clausal Substitution

Clausal substitution occurs by replacing a clause with the discourse markers *so, do so,* or *not* (Halliday & Hassan, 1976). It may extend over more than the head of the substituted item, and it involves presupposing a whole clause. The Finance Minister used *do so* in place of a clause in one instance in the corpus. The other markers signalling this function were not employed.

A foundation that has been achieved through the sweat and patience of the Ghanaian people. We pledge to protect this for all our people and especially for private sector growth. And we shall ***do so****…. [BS032]*

In extract BS032, *do so* is a substitute for the entire clause *protect this for all our people and especially for private sector growth.* The Minister employed this cohesive element to avoid repeating the specific actions and intentions mentioned previously in the discourse. The use of *do so* helps maintain readers' attention to the continuity of actions pledged by the government without repeating the exact words.

4.4.Conjunctions

The cohesive sense expressed by a conjunction indicates how new information relates to an earlier one in the discourse. Biber et al. (1999) observe that the function of conjunctions is "to make semantic connections between spans of discourse of varying length" (Biber et al. 1999 p. 558). The following conjunctive types are discussed in the next section: additive, adversative, causal and temporal.

4.4.1. Additive

Additive conjunctions are applied in introducing more information to what has been stated previously. There were 755 instances found in the data, which include *and, in addition* and *also* The conjunction *and* had a total frequency count of 2,569 but 459 instances only were used to express an additive relation, while the remaining were utilized as a structural relation. The Finance Minister utilized this cohesive device to establish additive relations in the discourse by connecting two structures. *And* highlights the addition of information and thus links one sentence to another.

A baseline report was finalised ***and*** *is currently on the Energy Commission's website. [BS 033]*
These ratings are essential tools for assessing the creditworthiness of nations ***and*** *are vital for governments. [BS 034]*

In BS033, *and* is used to coordinate the sentences: *A baseline report was finalised* and *is currently on the Energy Commission's website.* In this instance, *and* connects two actions related to the baseline report: the report has been completed and is available online. Similarly, in BS034, *and* is used to coordinate the sentences *These ratings are essential tools for assessing the creditworthiness of nations* and *are vital for governments.* In this case, *and* links the importance of ratings in assessing creditworthiness with their necessity for governments.
The Minister also used the emphatic form of additive relation, *in addition*, as illustrated in the extracts BS035 and BS036. In each instance, this device shows additional point that is connected to the previous sentences.

For the restoration phase, Government through the Ministry of Agriculture will allocate additional resources to support the restoration of livelihoods. ***In addition****, the Ministry of Finance, after the visit was quickened to respond. [BS 035]*
Mr. Speaker, the Ministry will continue to train the security and intelligence operatives to meet emerging security and intelligence requirements. ***In addition****, the Ministry will continue to promote community security awareness, …. [BS 036]*

In extract BS 035, the structure *in addition* introduces further action by the Ministry of Finance, which supplements the allocation of resources by the Ministry of Agriculture for the restoration phase. In extract BS 036, *in addition* introduces additional security measures beyond training operatives, which include *community security awareness* promotion, *border management technology* enhancement, and ensuring *peace and stability* before, during and after the 2024 general elections.

4.4.2. Adversative

The adversative conjunction forms found in the corpus include *yet, though, but, however, nevertheless, despite this, at the same time, instead* and *rather*. The cohesive device, *however,* as in BS037 and BS038, serves as a cohesive element. The Finance Minister used it to highlight contrasts in the discourse. He used this cohesive device to show how outcomes or impacts differ from what might be expected given the initial conditions or past trends.

> *Mr. Speaker, the debt carrying capacity of Ghana is still rated 'moderate' with overall risk rating of 'debt distress' on the back of the implementation of the DDEP and the suspension of external debt service payments…. **However,** the completion of the DDEP exercise is already having a positive impact on the debt trajectory. [BS 037]*
> *IMF-Supported PC-PEG lowered the PV of debt to GDP ratio to 81 percent and further to 71 percent with the completion of the DDEP. **However**, the pre- restructuring debt path would have resulted in a PV of debt to GDP ratio of 109 percent by 2028. [BS 038]*

However is used in extracts BS037 and BS038 to signal a positive outcome. Specifically, in BS 037, however, contrasts the positive effects of the DDEP program with Ghana's debt and sovereign default, as mentioned in the preceding sentence. Although the sovereign default was negative, the completion of the DDEP exercise would improve the debt trajectory following participation. In BS038, this cohesive device contrasts actual positive results with what would have occurred if no action had been taken regarding debt restructuring. It points out that without such restructuring efforts, which lower the debt-to-GDP ratio, there would be more adverse consequences.
The Minister also employed the adversative conjunctions *but* 15 times to achieve cohesion in the budget. The excerpts below illustrate the use of these contrastive cohesive devices in the data.

> *The strategy sets ambitious **but** attainable targets premised on improving ease of access to finance by leveraging the financial ecosystem. [BS 039]*
> *We have done this before with 2 million jobs in years, **but** we must move faster. [BS 040]*

In extract BS 039, the adversative *but* contrasts the ambitious nature of the targets set with their attainability. This cohesive device indicates that, although the set goals are ambitious, they remain realistic. In extract BS040, *but* acknowledges past achievements while contrasting them with the need for increased speed in future actions.

4.4.3. Causal

Causal conjunctions convey outcome, cause, or intention. Conjunctions indicating results are frequently used in both written and spoken English to establish connections between different

discourses (Biber et al., 1999). Causal conjunctions had only 62 instances, with forms such as *therefore, as a result, thus, consequently, because, to this end, in this respect,* and *in this regard.*

> *Mr. Speaker, the 2023 Debt Sustainability Analysis (DSA) and Medium-Term Debt Management Strategy (MTDS), which guides borrowing was prepared and published on the MoF website. The analysis and strategy documents were recalibrated and revised in accordance with the IMF-supported PC-PEG programme and the debt restructuring initiative.* ***As a result****, the Issuance Calendar for the third quarter was prepared and published to guide the borrowing activities of Government. [BS 041]*
> *Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the ongoing litigation commenced by shareholders of some of the defunct AMCs has made it difficult for the SEC to work with the Official Liquidator (Registrar of Companies) to obtain liquidation orders for Blackshield Capital Management Ltd (formerly Gold Coast Securities Ltd).* ***As a result****, Government has not been able to support the bailout for investors of Blackshield. Accordingly, approval received from Parliament in 2021 to pay the aggrieved investors of Blackshield has lapsed. [BS 042]*

The excerpts above show the function of *as a result* in showing a cause-and-effect relationship between two or more sentences. In extract BS 041, *as a result* is used to connect the preparation and publication of the recalibrated DSA and MTDS with the subsequent preparation and publication of the Issuance Calendar. This function shows that the action of the latter was a consequence of the former. This cohesive device transitions from the discussion of the recalibrated documents to the resulting action. In extract BS 042, *as a result* links the difficulty faced by the SEC due to ongoing litigation to the inability of the government to support the bailout for Blackshield investors. This function shows that the latter situation is as a result of the former.
The causal conjunction *because* was used 7 times in the data to express causality. The excerpts below present evidence of its function in the data.

> *The January to September 2023 receipts of US$751.32 million is 35.7 percent lower than the realised receipts of US$1,168.99 million for the same period in 2022. The reduction in the receipts was mainly* ***because*** *of a lower average achieved crude oil price of US$76.65 per barrel, compared to US$102.38 for the same period in 2022. [BS 043]*
> *Mr. Speaker, on 24th February, 2023 S&P Global Ratings upgraded Ghana's Local Currency (LC) long-term rating from 'SD' to 'CCC+', after the successful completion of the first phase of the Domestic Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP) and affirmed its Foreign Currency (FC) rating at 'SD'* ***because*** *of the suspension of external debt repayment. [BS 044]*

In extract BS043, *because* is used to indicate that the cause or reason behind the reduction in receipts is the low average achieved in crude oil price. In extract BS 044, *because* gives the reason (i.e. the suspension of external debt repayment) for the affirmation of the Foreign Currency (FC) rating.

4.4.4. Temporal

Temporals accounted for 108 occurrences in the corpus. The use of this conjunction type shows the Minister's attempt to organize information in a logical sequence so that the audience can easily

understand how events or ideas unfold in time. Seven types of temporal relations were used in the data. They include *while, before, after, since, then, next, and at the same time*. These forms of temporal conjunctions are used to express various temporal functions. Some of these functions include the past and durative functions. The cohesive device *since* appeared 37 times in the data but 36 instances expressed temporal relation as illustrated below. In each excerpt, *since* is used to indicate a specific point in time or duration from which a situation or event has been ongoing or has had an effect.

> ***Since** inception of the gold for reserves programme, the Bank of Ghana has purchased a total amount of 17.89 tons (US$1,140m) of gold to boost its gold reserves. [BS 045]*
> *The Cedi has stabilized against the US dollar **since** early 2023 with a year-to-date, cumulative depreciation of 25.7 percent compared to 54.1 percent over the same period in 2022. [BS 046]*

In extract BS 045, *since inception of the gold for reserves programme* specifies the starting point from which the Bank of Ghana has been purchasing gold. It does not denote an ongoing action but rather marks the beginning of a specific period during which the action occurred. Similarly in extract BS 046, *since early 2023* marks the starting point from which the cedi has stabilized against the US dollar.

The temporal conjunction *while* was also used to indicate a temporal relationship between two events or actions. This cohesive device had a frequency count of 47. The excerpts below illustrate this function in the data.

> *Mr. Speaker, the Ghana Cycling youth team won a bronze medal during the 19th African Cycling Confederation (ACC) Africa Road and 1st ACC Paracycling Championships organised at Ablekuma Olebu in Accra in February**, while** the National Fencing Team won 16 medals comprising two gold, six silver and eight bronze medals at the 2023 Cadet Junior African Fencing Championship held at the Trust Emporium in Accra, in February. [BS 047]*
> *Mr. Speaker, the Growth Strategy recognises the significant imbalance between demand and domestic production of vegetables. For instance, in 2022, even though demand for onions was 314,337mt, local production was only 178,492mt. Similarly, the national demand for tomato in 2022 was estimated to be 1,257,348mt, **while** local production accounted for less than half at 468,280mt. [BS 048]*

In extract BS 047, *while* is used to introduce a simultaneous occurrence of two events. These are *the Ghana Cycling youth team* winning a bronze medal and *the National Fencing Team* winning multiple medals in February. The use of *while* points out that these two events happened during the same time frame and adds more context to the sporting achievements in Ghana at that period. In extract BS 048, the conjunction *while* is used to show a temporal relationship between the demand for vegetables and the level of local production, where both are happening at the same time. This cohesive device highlights the stark difference between these two factors by presenting them as concurrent.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the discourse functions of grammatical cohesive devices (reference, substitution, and conjunction) in Ghana's 2024 budget statement. The analysis shows that personal reference is deployed strategically to construct stance and alignment. The first-person singular pronoun *I* is used to index authority and accountability, positioning the Finance Minister as directly responsible for fiscal decisions, while also appearing in affective contexts (e.g., expressions of gratitude and satisfaction). By contrast, the inclusive *we* constructs a shared national identity, aligning the Minister with the President, government, and citizens. Demonstrative and comparative references function anaphorically to retrieve prior propositions, establish textual continuity, and frame similarities and contrasts across economic conditions. Substitution serves an economy function, avoiding repetition while sustaining textual flow. Conjunctions realize logical-semantic relations (i.e. additive, adversative, causal, and temporal), thereby structuring the discourse and guiding the audience through sequences of policy justification and projected outcomes.

The study has some key implications. The findings corroborate Halliday and Hasan's (1976) conception of cohesion as "relations of meaning that exist within the text" (p. 18), demonstrating how cohesive devices function as key resources for meaning-making in politico-financial discourse. By extending cohesion theory to budget statements, the study contributes to emerging work on the linguistic organization of financial governance texts and offers empirical evidence of how cohesion underpins clarity, persuasion, and institutional voice in this genre. The study further has implications for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and professional communication. It provides a model for how cohesive resources can be deployed to achieve clarity, coherence, and audience alignment in budget discourse. ESP instructors can draw on such texts to illustrate how meaning is constructed across clauses and sentences in specialized registers, while practitioners in policy and finance can enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of fiscal communication through informed use of cohesive devices.

This study is limited to a single national budget statement. Future research could undertake cross-national comparisons to explore how cohesion varies across politico-financial contexts, as well as diachronic analyses to trace shifts in cohesive practices over time. Such work would deepen understanding of how linguistic choices in budget discourse respond to changing political, economic, and communicative demands.

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RELATIVIZATION IN SƗSAALƗ: A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT

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Abstract

This paper examines relativization in Sɪsaalɪ, a Mabia language spoken in Ghana, with particular attention to the structural properties and strategies of relative clause formation. Drawing on elicited and natural speech data, the study shows that Sɪsaalɪ employs postnominal, externally headed, and obligatorily finite relative clauses. The language uses two relativizer forms (***àà/áá***), which do not inflect for person, number, or gender, followed by a definite determiner (***hv***) to introduce relative clauses. The analysis shows that subject and object relativization employ a gap strategy, while possessive and locative contexts typically involve resumptive pronouns. Sɪsaalɪ further permits relativization across a wide range of syntactic roles, consistent with the NP Accessibility Hierarchy. These findings contribute to the typological understanding of relativization in Mabia and related languages.

Keywords: Sɪsaalɪ, relative clauses, relativization strategies, Mabia languages, typology

1. Introduction

Relativization is a central domain of cross-linguistic variation, reflecting the diverse strategies languages employ to modify noun phrases (NPs) through subordinate clauses. Relative clauses (RCs) have been widely studied in both typological and theoretical linguistics, particularly concerning the morphosyntactic mechanisms that encode them. Foundational typological insights were provided by Keenan and Comrie (1977, 1979), who proposed the Accessibility Hierarchy, establishing which grammatical relations are most readily relativized across languages. Subsequent research, including Kuteva and Comrie (2005), has expanded this cross-linguistic perspective, offering comparative analyses of relativization strategies across Niger-Congo and other languages. These studies identify strategies such as the gap strategy, pronoun retention, and non-reduction strategies (e.g., correlatives and head-internal constructions), while also highlighting cross-linguistic constraints on relativization as captured by the NP Accessibility Hierarchy.

Within African linguistics, research on Kwa and Mabia (Gur) languages has revealed both shared typological patterns and language-specific variations in relative clause formation. In Kwa

languages, for instance, Akan (Saah 2010) and Ewe (Dzameshie 1995) exhibit postnominal relative clauses introduced by overt relativizers, often accompanied by resumptive pronouns and clause-final determiners. Saah (2010) shows that Akan allows resumptive pronouns in relativized positions alongside a dedicated relative clause marker, while Dzameshie (1995) demonstrates that Ewe RCs are marked by a relativizer and concluded with a clause-final determiner, with modifiers consistently following the head noun.
Similarly, studies on Mabia languages such as Dagaare (Bodomo & Hiraiwa 2004) and Kusaal (Abubakari 2019) show that relative clauses are typically externally headed and postnominal, with variation in the use of resumptive pronouns and structural configurations. Dagaare employs a relativizing particle alongside resumptive pronouns, whereas Kusaal allows both internally and externally headed RCs but restricts certain constructions, such as stacking and extraposition.

Despite these advances, many Mabia languages remain underdescribed regarding relativization. In particular, Sısaalı has received limited attention, especially concerning the range of strategies it employs and the structural properties of its relative clauses. This gap limits our understanding of relativization patterns within the Mabia family. This study addresses this gap by providing a descriptive account of relativization in Sısaalı, examining both the structural properties of RCs and the strategies employed in their formation, based on data from elicitation and natural speech. Preliminary findings show that Sısaalı employs externally headed, postnominal relative clauses, using both gap and resumptive strategies depending on syntactic context. By situating Sısaalı within broader typological patterns, this paper contributes to ongoing discussions of relativization in African linguistics.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides background on the Sısaalı language and the data sources used. Section 3 describes the canonical structure and formation of RCs in Sısaalı. Section 4 examines relativization in relation to the NP Accessibility Hierarchy. Section 5 discusses restrictive and non-restrictive RCs. Section 6 addresses stacked RCs, Section 7 explores additional aspects of relativization, and Section 8 concludes the paper.

2. The Sısaalı Language and Data Sources

Sısaalı is a Mabia (Gur) language spoken in the Upper West Region of Ghana and parts of Burkina Faso. While the language exhibits some dialectal variation, the data analyzed in this study were drawn primarily from speakers in Funsi, but claims made here can be generalized to other dialects of Sısaalı.

Typologically, Sısaalı follows a basic SVO word order and employs a phonemic tonal system with two level tones (High and Low) that function in both lexical and grammatical distinctions. Grammatical relations are largely expressed through word order and functional particles. Tense and

aspect distinctions are typically marked through preverbal particles and auxiliary-like elements, with contrasts such as perfective and progressive playing an important role in clause structure.

Although Sısaalı remains relatively under-documented, some previous studies have contributed valuable insights into its phonology, morphology, and syntax. For instance, Gariba (2017) examines word formation processes in Sısaalı, Luri (2023) addresses aspects of Sısaalı dialectology, and Dumah (2017) analyzes question markers in the language. Incorporating these studies situates the current research within the growing body of work on Sısaalı and ensures that the description presented here builds on existing knowledge rather than presenting the language in isolation.

The data for this study were collected through a combination of elicitation sessions and natural speech recordings with native speakers. Elicitation involved structured translation tasks and guided interviews designed to produce RC constructions across syntactic roles, including subject, object, possessive, and locative contexts. Natural speech data, drawn from informal conversations and narrative discourse, ensured that the analysis reflects both controlled elicitation and spontaneous language use.

3. Literature Review on Relative Clauses

This section reviews relevant literature. Section 2.1 focuses on cross-linguistic typology of RCs, while Sections 2.2 and 2.3 examine Kwa and Mabia languages, respectively.

3.1. Cross-linguistic Typology of Relative Clauses

Kuteva and Comrie (2005) investigate morphosyntactic strategies used to encode RCs across African languages, focusing on subject relativization. They categorize six primary strategies: relative pronoun strategy, non-reduction strategies (including correlatives, head-internal, and paratactic forms), pronoun retention, and the gap strategy. These strategies highlight cross-linguistic variation in how languages signal the common argument (CA) between the main clause and the RC.

Dixon (2010) provides a framework for understanding RC constructions across languages. He defines a canonical RC as comprising two clauses, a main clause (MC) and an RC, within a single intonation unit, where the RC modifies a noun phrase in the MC. Central to this construction is the common argument (CA), which occurs in both clauses in varying degrees. Dixon notes that RCs may include peripheral and core arguments, exhibit independent tense/aspect/modality (TAM), and may be restrictive (specifying an incompletely identified referent) or non-restrictive (providing additional information). He distinguishes canonical RCs from non-canonical forms, such as co-relatives, adjoined relatives, condensed RCs, and ‘to’-introduced RCs.

Sısaalı RCs share features with Dixon's canonical construction: they function as NP modifiers, are structurally integrated with the main clause, and employ an externally-headed, left-headed construction, with the relativizer ***àà/áá*** and the clause-final determiner ***hv*** marking the RC. The CA is realized via a gap strategy in subject and object RCs and via resumptive pronouns in possessive and locative RCs.
Compared with Kuteva and Comrie (2005), who categorize six strategies for African languages, Sısaalı demonstrates a combination of gap strategy and resumptive pronouns in specific syntactic roles. Resumptive pronouns are largely restricted to possessive and locative RCs, suggesting a more constrained application. Whereas Kuteva and Comrie focus on broad morphosyntactic strategies, Dixon emphasizes the structural and semantic architecture of RCs, concepts directly observable in Sısaalı.

Thus, Sısaalı exemplifies canonical relativization principles (Dixon 2010) while illustrating specific cross-linguistic patterns identified by Kuteva and Comrie. This dual perspective situates Sısaalı within both a typological framework and a structural canonical perspective on RCs

3.2. Relative Clauses in Kwa Languages

Relative clause formation has been widely discussed in Kwa languages, including Akan, Ewe, Logba, Kaakye, Nkami, and Tafi. A robust generalization across these languages is the postnominal positioning of RCs: the head noun precedes the modifying clause (Saah 2010; Dzameshie 1995; Abunya & Osam 2022; Dorvlo 2008).

Saah (2010) details RC formation in Akan, identifying an antecedent noun, a dedicated relativizer, and a resumptive pronoun in the relativized position. Determiner realization at the head NP is optional, while clause-peripheral elements, such as demonstratives, may appear at the right edge if semantically compatible.

Abunya and Osam (2022) report similar patterns for Kaakye, reinforcing the typological observation of postnominal RCs. McCracken (2013) observes that in Twi, a dedicated relativizer marks postnominal RCs, with an optional clause-final enclitic sensitive to discourse factors such as topicality. Resumptive pronouns are obligatory in subject relativization, partially challenging the Accessibility Hierarchy.

Asante and Ma (2016) describe Nkami, which employs a bracket strategy, marking RCs at both left and right edges. Pronoun retention is obligatory in subject positions, while inanimate non-subjects may allow omission. Relativizers may have evolved from demonstratives.

Dzameshie (1995) reports bipartite marking in Ewe: RCs begin with a relativizer and end with a clause-final marker. Postnominal modifiers (adjectives, numerals, demonstratives, plural markers, intensifiers, determiners) follow a rigid order.

Dorvlo (2008) describes Logba, where RCs are introduced by an invariant particle following the head noun. Subject RCs involve an anaphoric pronoun prefixed to the verb, while object RCs typically use a gap strategy.
Bobuafo (2013) examines Tafi, reporting both gap and resumptive strategies, with resumptive elements in possessive and locative contexts. The system is sensitive to discourse-pragmatic factors and interacts with tense-aspect-mood marking.

Across Kwa languages, RCs generally conform to the Accessibility Hierarchy (Keenan & Comrie 1977, 1979), with variation in the use of gap versus resumptive marking depending on grammatical role and language-specific constraints.

Sısaalı shows both convergence and divergence with Kwa patterns. Like other Kwa languages, it displays postnominal RCs and employs a dedicated relativizer. Unlike Akan or Twi, resumptive pronouns are largely restricted to possessive and certain oblique contexts, with gap strategies more prevalent in subject and object RCs. Unlike Nkami's bracket strategy or the bipartite marking of Akan and Ewe, Sısaalı uses a single relativizer followed by a clause-final determiner.
Semantic distinctions between restrictive and non-restrictive RCs are also variably encoded across Kwa languages. While some languages (e.g., Akan) employ clause-peripheral elements, others, such as Logba, rely on contextual interpretation.

Overall, Kwa RCs exhibit a coherent typological profile: postnominal positioning, dedicated relativizers, and clause-peripheral marking, alongside microvariation in resumptive pronoun distribution, clause-final elements, and syntax-discourse interaction. However, comparative analyses involving lesser-described languages such as Sısaalı remain limited. This study addresses these gaps by systematically analyzing RC formation in Sısaalı, contributing to discussions of microvariation in Kwa syntax and Niger-Congo relativization.

3.3. Relative Clauses in Mabia Languages

The formation and distribution of relative clauses (RCs) in Mabia (Gur) languages have attracted growing scholarly attention, revealing both shared typological patterns and language-specific innovations. Across these languages, RCs are generally postnominal, employ dedicated relativizers, and, in some cases, resumptive pronouns. These strategies serve to encode syntactic dependencies while maintaining interpretive clarity.

In Dagaare, Bodomo and Hiraiwa (2004) identify the relative marker *nang* and resumptive pronouns as core strategies for relativization. RCs typically involve a left-dislocated head noun followed by the relativizing particle, with resumptive pronouns used to maintain reference, particularly in object positions. Bodomo and Hiraiwa argue that Dagaare RCs are inherently restrictive, contributing to the semantic specificity of modified NPs. The structural parallels with Sısaalı, particularly the use of dedicated relativizers and selective resumptive pronouns, highlight typological continuity within the Mabia subgroup.

Likpakpaln has been examined by Bisilki et al. (2024), who distinguish restrictive and non-restrictive RCs. Both types are finite and marked by a composite relative pronoun, comprising a noun class agreement marker and a relative marker, along with a clause-final definite determiner. Restrictive RCs are headed by indefinite nouns, whereas non-restrictive RCs are headed by definite nouns, prosodically distinguished, and often under focus. This dual system illustrates the interaction between syntactic marking and information structure, situating Likpakpaln RCs within both the genealogical and areal contexts of Mabia languages.

In Kusaal, Abubakari (2018, 2019) provides complementary perspectives. The 2018 study emphasizes internally-headed relative clauses (IHRCs), documenting both in-situ and left-headed IHRCs and examining their semantic and syntactic properties. These constructions, while structurally complex, reflect broader Mabia patterns identified in comparative studies (Hiraiwa et al., 2017). The 2019 study focuses on postnominal RCs, highlighting surface morphosyntactic properties such as the limited use of resumptive pronouns (restricted to object relativization), the prohibition of stacking or extraposition, and the distribution of definite and indefinite heads. Together, these works show that Kusaal employs both externally- and internally-headed strategies while selectively integrating resumptive pronouns and relativizers to mark syntactic dependencies.

Comparison across these Mabia languages reveals several convergences and divergences. Postnominal placement and dedicated relativizers are largely consistent, while resumptive pronouns are generally restricted to specific syntactic roles, such as objects or possessives, reflecting a balance between structural transparency and economy. Languages like Likpakpaln introduce additional marking layers, including clause-final determiners and prosodic distinctions, to signal semantic and information-structural contrasts. Internally-headed constructions in Kusaal offer further typological insight, showing variation in the alignment of head nouns and relativized elements within the clause.

From a typological perspective, Mabia data illustrate both microvariation and macro-patterning. While general strategies such as postnominal placement and relativizer use are shared, languages diverge in the availability of IHRCs, distribution of resumptive pronouns, and interactions with focus or definiteness. These patterns provide a comparative framework for understanding Sısaalı, which permits only externally-headed, left-headed RCs, employs postnominal relativization, and

restricts resumptive pronouns primarily to possessive and locative contexts. Consequently, Sısaalı aligns with broader Mabia tendencies while exhibiting its own distinctive profile within the subgroup.

In summary, the Mabia literature underscores the significance of relativization strategies in mapping syntactic dependencies while highlighting how individual languages vary in the balance between structural marking, semantic interpretation, and information structure. Insights from Dagaare, Likpakpaln, and Kusaal provide a robust comparative foundation for situating Sısaalı within its genealogical and areal context.

4. The Canonical Relative Clause Construction in Sısaalı

This section describes the canonical structure of relative clauses (RCs) in Sısaalı. Typically, RCs are postnominal and follow patterns illustrated in examples (1b) and (1c):

1a.	***Baal***	***hv***	***ŋmaa***	***bie***	***hv***.
	Man	DET	beat	child	DET

'The man beat the child.'

Subject Relativization

1b.	***Baal***	***hv***	***[àà***	***ŋmaa***	***bie***	***hv]***	***muu***	***Wa***	***rɛ.***
	Man	DET	REL	beat.PST	child	DET	go	Wa	FOC

'The man who beat the child has gone to Wa.'

Object relativization

1c.	***Bie***	***hv***	***[baal***	***hv***	***àà***	***ŋmaa]***	***wie***	***rɛ.***
	Child	DET	man	DET	REL	beat.PST	cry.PST	FOC

'The child who the man beat cried.'

1d.	****Bie***	***hv***	***[àà***	***baal***	***hv***	***ŋmaa]***	***wie***	***rɛ***.
	Child	DET	REL	man	DET	beat	cry	FOC

In examples (1b) and (1c), the head noun (baal 'man' or bie 'child') is followed by a relative clause, forming a complex NP. The key morphosyntactic features of canonical Sısaalı RCs are:

- A head noun or antecedent NP
- An obligatory relative marker: ***àà / áá***
- An obligatory clause-final determiner: ***hv***
- Optional resumptive pronouns, primarily in possessive or long-distance dependencies
- Postnominal RC positioning

- Inherently restrictive interpretation
- A clause-final particle ***rɛ***, marking declarative or focus status

In (1c), the NP ***baal hv*** within the relative clause functions as the object of the head NP (***bie hv***). The RC is fully clausal, containing the agent, action, and the relative marker ***àà*** linking it to the head noun.[1]

The clause-final particle ***rɛ*** is a general feature of Sısaalı declaratives and reflects declarative or focus marking rather than being an intrinsic component of RCs. Its presence demonstrates that Sısaalı RCs retain the morphosyntactic properties of independent clauses, including tense, aspect, polarity, and clause-final particles, consistent with patterns observed in related Mabia languages (Hiraiwa et al., 2017).

4.1. The formation Strategies of Relative Clauses in Sısaalı

This section examines the strategies Sısaalı employs to form RCs, focusing on the role of relative markers.

4.1.1. The Relative Pronoun

As Givón (1993:126) notes, languages differ in the elements used to introduce RCs. In English, relative pronouns (who, whom, when) are case-marked interrogative pronouns. In Kwa languages like Kaakye, the relativizer ***kɛ*** not only introduces RCs but also functions as a future tense marker and a complementizer (Abunya & Osam, 2022).

Sısaalı employs two obligatory relative markers, ***àà*** and ***áá***, which immediately follow the head NP:

2a.	***Baal***	***hv***	***[àà***	***ŋmaa***	***bie***	***hv]***	***yaa***	***nibɔŋ***	***nɛ***
	Man	DET	REL	beat.PERF	child	DET	COP	person.bad	FOC
	'The man who beat the child is wicked or bad.'								

b.	***Baal***	***hv***	***[áá***	***ŋmaa***	***bie***	***hv]***	***yaa***	***nibɔŋ***	***nɛ.***
	Man	DET	REL	beat	child	DET	COP	person.bad	FOC
	'The man who is beating the child is wicked or bad.'								

c.	* ***Baal***	***hv***	***[***	***ŋmaa***	***bie***	***hv]***	***yaa***	***nibɔŋ***	***nɛ.***
	Man	DET		beat	child	DET	COP	person.bad	FOC

[1] All gloss abbreviations used in the examples are listed in the List of Abbreviations at the end of the paper.

The distinction between the two relative markers lies in their aspectual marking: ***àà*** signals completed actions, while ***áá*** marks ongoing or progressive actions. These markers do not inflect for person, number, gender, or case associated with the head noun, but they are sensitive to aspect, indicating that their form varies depending on the temporal interpretation of the verb within the relative clause. Crucially, their presence is obligatory in Sısaalı relativization, as omission results in ungrammatical constructions, exemplified by (2c).

Outside RCs, ***áá*** functions as a progressive marker, as in example (3), consistent with Givón's observation on the multifunctionality of relativizers:

3. **Baal** **hʊ** ***áá*** **ko** **rɛ**.
Man DET PROG come FOC
'The man is coming.'

The use of relative markers in Sısaalı aligns with related Mabia languages: Dagaare employs the relative marker ***nang*** and resumptive pronouns (Bodomo & Hiraiwa, 2004), while Kusaal uses similar externally-headed strategies (Abubakari, 2019). In Akan, RC formation involves an obligatory complementizer ***áà***, functioning as the relativizer (Saah, 2010:92).

4.2. Relative Clauses and Pronoun retention

One of the cross-linguistic strategies employed in the formation of relative clauses is pronoun retention, which involves the insertion of a pronominal element at the relativization site as a copy of the head noun phrase (Kuteva & Comrie, 2005). In Sısaalı, this strategy appears primarily in constructions indicating possession, with both subject and object positions capable of hosting resumptive pronouns, as illustrated in examples (4a) and (4b). However, the resumptive pronoun is optional in certain object relativization contexts, as shown in (4c).

4a. ***Haaŋ*** ***hʊ*** ***[àà*** ***mʊla*** ***ʊ*** ***bie*** ***hʊ]*** ***lii*** ***Wa*** ***rɛ***
Woman DET REL carry 3SG.POSS child DET from Wa FOC
'The woman who has carried (at her back) her child is from Wa.'

4b. ***Bie*** ***hʊ*** ***[ʊ*** ***naa*** ***àà*** ***mʊla]*** ***lii*** ***Wa*** ***rɛ***
Child DET 3SG.POSS mother REL carry] from Wa FOC
'The child who the mother has carried (at her back) is from Wa.'

4c. ***Bie*** ***hʊ*** ***[àà*** ***mʊla]*** ***lii*** ***Wa*** ***rɛ***
Child DET REL carry] from Wa FOC
'The child who is carried is from Wa.'

4d. ***Bie*** ***hv*** ***[*** ***mula]*** ***lii*** ***Wa*** ***rɛ***
Child DET carry] from Wa FOC
'The child who is carried is from Wa.'

In all relative clause constructions in Sısaalı, the presence of a relative pronoun (*àà* or ***áá***) is obligatory. Omission of the relative pronoun results in ungrammaticality as exemplified in (4d). The use of resumptive pronouns in Sısaalı aligns with what Bodomo and Hiraiwa (2004) describe for Dagaare. However, it contrasts with Akan, where resumptive pronouns are obligatorily required for both subject and object relativization (Saah 2010). Despite this, Sısaalı and Akan both require relative pronouns in relative clause constructions.

In Sısaalı, the resumptive pronoun shows number agreement but does not inflect for person. Both singular and plural animate head nouns may be overtly represented by resumptive pronouns as illustrated below:

Singular head noun:

5a. ***Bie*** ***hv*** ***[v*** ***naa*** ***àà*** ***mula]*** ***lii*** ***Wa*** ***rɛ***
Child DET 3SG.POSS mother REL carry] from Wa FOC
'The child who the mother has carried (at her back) is from Wa.'

Plural head noun:

5b. ***Biisi*** ***hv*** ***[ba*** ***nimma*** ***àà*** ***miila]*** ***lii*** ***Wa*** ***rɛ***
Child.PL DET 3PL mother.PL REL carry from Wa FOC
'The children that their mothers are carrying (at their back) are from Wa.'

Here, ***v/ba*** (resumptive pronouns) agree in number with the head noun but remain third-person forms, illustrating the claim that resumptive pronouns do not inflect for person.

Resumptive pronouns in Sısaalı display restricted distribution across referent types, with their occurrence conditioned in part by animacy. With animate referents, resumptive pronouns may be overtly realized, particularly in possessive constructions, as illustrated in (6):

6a. ***Biisi*** ***hv*** ***[ba*** ***nimma*** ***àà*** ***miila]*** ***lii*** ***Wa*** ***rɛ***
Child.PL DET 3PL mother.PL REL carry from Wa FOC
'The children that their mothers are carrying (at their back) are from Wa.'

In this example, the resumptive pronoun ***ba*** encodes co-reference with the plural animate head noun ***biisi*** 'children', demonstrating number agreement and the availability of pronoun retention in such contexts.

By contrast, with inanimate referents, relativization typically proceeds without an overt resumptive pronoun, and a gap strategy is sufficient for interpretation, as illustrated in (6a-b):

6a. ***Vii hv*** ***[Maria àà*** ***saa]*** ***welie*** ***rɛ***
Pot DET [Maria REL build] nice FOC
'The pot which Maria moulded is beautiful.'

6b. ***Gal*** ***hv*** ***[Maria*** ***àà*** ***ala*** ***tia*** ***ŋ]*** ***muro*** ***rɛ***
Cloth DET Maria REL sew give 1SG small FOC
'The cloth/dress which Maria sewed for me is small (undersized).'

These examples show that, for inanimate objects, the resumptive pronoun is not required and is generally absent, without affecting interpretation.

A similar restriction is observed in Mabia languages such as Kusaal and Dagaare, where resumptive pronouns are not uniformly employed across all relativization contexts (Bodomo & Hiraiwa 2004; Abubakari 2018, 2019). Unlike Akan, where resumptive pronouns are more systematically used (Saah 2010), Sısaalı limits their occurrence, especially with inanimate referents, relying instead on gap strategies.

4.3. Relative Clauses and Determiners

In Sısaalı, the head noun of a relative clause is obligatorily modified by the definite determiner ***hv***, which immediately follows the relativized noun. In addition, the head noun may also take the demonstrative determiners ***haŋ*** 'that' and *no* 'this', as illustrated in examples (8a-8c). Notably, while the distal demonstrative ***haŋ*** co-occurs with the definite determiner ***hv***, the proximal demonstrative *no* does not. This distribution pattern also holds in non-relative constructions, as shown in (9a-b). Other demonstratives in the language include the locative determiners ***daha*** 'here' (proximal) and ***doŋ*** 'there' (non-proximal).

8a. ***Bie*** ***hv*** ***[Duma*** ***àà*** ***naa]*** ***ko*** ***rɛ***
Child DET Duma REL see.PST come.PERF FOC
'The child who Duma saw has come.'

8b. ***Bie*** ***no*** ***[Duma*** ***àà*** ***naa]*** ***ko*** ***rɛ***
Child this Duma REL see.PST come.PERF FOC

'This child who Duma saw has come.'

8c.	***Haŋ***	***bie***	***hv***	***[Duma***	***àà***	***naa]***	***ko***	***rɛ***
	That	child	DET	Duma	REL	see.PST	come.PERF	FOC

'That child who Duma saw has come.'

9a.	***Bie***	***no***	***sɪ***	***wɪ***
	Child	DEM	FUT	cry

'This child will cry.'

9b.	***Haŋ***	***bie***	***hv***	***sɪ***	***wɪ***
	DEM	Child	DET	FUT	cry

'That child will cry.'

In (8a), the head noun is modified by the definite determiner ***hv*** 'the', which is obligatory in relative clause constructions. The absence of ***hv*** leads to semantic degradation of the head noun. Even when the head noun is indefinite, ***hv*** still appears, as in (10):

10.	**Bie**	**hʊ**	**[àà**	**sɪ**	**mʊ**	**baga**	**jinaŋ]**	**sɪ**	**wɪ.**
	Child	DET	REL	FUT	go	farm	today	FUT	cry

'The child who will go to farm today will cry.'

The demonstrative *no* 'this' functions as a post-nominal modifier and is incompatible with ***hv***, while ***haŋ*** 'that' is a pre-nominal modifier and can co-occur with ***hv***, as evidenced in examples (8b) and (8c), respectively.

In summary, while demonstrative elements are not structurally required for the formation of relative clauses, they are semantically significant. Their presence contributes specific deictic interpretations that are not recoverable in their absence. For instance, the omission of ***haŋ*** 'that' in (8a) does not yield the same interpretation, as the resulting construction lacks the distal demonstrative meaning. By contrast, the definite determiner ***hv*** and the relative marker are obligatory, as they are required for the grammatical well-formedness of the construction.

4.4.The Head Noun

In Sɪsaalɪ, relative clauses are post-nominal, with the relative clause following the head noun. The head noun may assume various syntactic roles in both the main clause (MC) and the relative clause (RC), serving as either subject or object.

In (11), the head noun is ***Batong***, which functions as the complement of the copular clause in the MC, while the relativized element corresponds to the subject of the RC. In (12), the head noun is

mɪŋ 'floor', which functions as the object of the MC, whereas the relativized element corresponds to the object within the RC. In (13), the head noun ***baal*** 'man' functions as the subject of the MC, and the relativized element is likewise the subject of the RC. In (14), the head noun ***baal*** 'man' functions as the object of the MC, while the relativized element corresponds to the object within the RC.

11. ***Mɪyaŋ*** ***nɛ*** ***yaa*** ***Batong*** ***hv*** ***[àà*** ***ko*** ***daha]***
1SG.EMP FOC COP Batong DET REL come.PST here
'I am the Batong who came here.'

12. ***Mɪŋ*** ***hv*** ***[ŋ*** ***àà*** ***saa]*** ***ŋ*** ***mvv*** ***yɔbɔ*** ***rɛ***
Floor DET 1SG REL stir 1SG go.PST buy FOC
'The floor that I stirred I went and bought.'

13. ***Baal*** ***hv*** ***[áá*** ***ko*** ***kɪ*** ***karɪ*** ***tiisi*** ***hv]*** ***suba*** ***rɛ.***
Man DET REL come PROG cut tree.PL DET die.PST FOC
'The man who comes to cut trees is dead.'

14. ***ŋ*** ***naa*** ***baal*** ***hv*** ***[àà*** ***kpaa*** ***Maria*** ***hv]*** ***rɛ.***
1SG see.PST man DET REL take.PST Maria DET FOC
'I saw the man who married Maria.'

While common nouns most frequently serve as heads of relative clauses, proper nouns can also appear in this position, always accompanied by the definite determiner ***hv***, which restricts their reference to a specific individual or set. Although (12) may superficially resemble an internally headed relative clause, it is best analyzed as an externally headed construction: the head noun ***mɪŋ*** 'floor' occurs outside the relative clause, and the relativized position within the RC is represented by a gap rather than an overt nominal expression. This contrasts with true internally headed relative clauses, where the head noun is structurally contained within the RC.

Likewise, personal pronouns (in their emphatic form) and indefinite pronouns can serve as head nouns, as illustrated in (15)-(17):

15. ***ŋ*** ***naa*** ***Duma*** ***hv*** ***[àà*** ***saba*** ***teŋ*** ***hv]*** ***rɛ.***
1SG see.PST Duma DET REL write.PST book DET FOC
'I saw the Duma who wrote the book.'

16. ***Mɪyaŋ*** ***[àà*** ***dii*** ***kidiillie*** ***hv]*** ***nɛ*** ***jɪŋ*** ***ba*** ***svmɪŋ.***
1SG.EMP REL eat.EMP food DET FOC know 3SG sweetness
'I, who ate the food, know the sweetness of the food.'

17. ***Nal***	***buloŋ***	***[àà***	***jıŋ***	***haaŋ***	***hv]***	***jıma***	***nı***	***v***	***yaa***	***bɔnyɛ***
Person	all	REL	know	woman	DET	know	that	3SG	COP	kind
tiina	***rɛ.***									
person	FOC									

'Everyone, who knows the lady, knows that she is a kind person.'

Typologically, relative clauses are classified by the position of the head noun. Two primary types are recognized: externally-headed relative clauses (EHRCs), where the head noun lies outside the complementizer phrase (CP), and internally-headed relative clauses (IHRCs), where the head noun is located within the CP (Hiraiwa et al., 2017; Bodomo & Hiraiwa, 2009). Hiraiwa et al. further classify RCs based on linear ordering: left-headed (head precedes the clause), right-headed (head follows the clause), and in-situ (head is embedded within the clause).

Data from Sısaalı indicate that the language permits only externally-headed, left-headed relative clauses. Examples (18) and (20) illustrate grammatical constructions, whereas internally-headed, right-headed, and in-situ constructions, illustrated in (19), (21), and (22), are ungrammatical.

Externally-headed RC in Sısaalı

18**.** **B*aal***	***hv***	***[àà***	***mari***	***kidilie***	***hv]***	***ko***	***daha***	***rɛ***
Man	DET	REL	cook.PST f	ood	DET	come.PST	here	FOC

'The man who cooked the food came here.'

Internally headed RC in Sısaalı

19**.** ****[Baal***	***àà***	***mari***	***kidilie***	***hv]***	***ko***	***daha***	***rɛ***
Man	REL	cook.PST	food	DET	come.PST	here	FOC

Left headed RC in Sısaalı

20**.** ***Baal***	***hv***	***[àà***	***mari***	***kidilie***	***hv]***
Man	DET	REL	cook	food	DET

'The man that cooked the food'

Right headed RC in Sısaalı

21**.** ****** **[*A***	***mari***	***kidilie***	***hv]***	***baal***	***hv***
That	cook.PST	food	DET	man	DET

In-situ RC in Sısaalı

22. ****[Baal***	***mari***	***kidilie***	***hv]***	***ko***	***rɛ***
Man	cook.PST	food	DET	come	FOC

These data show that Sısaalı strictly requires overt pre-relative clause head positioning, allowing only externally-headed and left-headed constructions.

5. The NP Accessibility Hierarchy

Keenan and Comrie (1977) and Comrie (1981, 1989) propose the NP Accessibility Hierarchy to explain cross-linguistic variation in the relativization of noun phrases. The hierarchy is as follows, where the symbol ">" means "more accessible than":

23. NP Accessibility Hierarchy
Subject>Direct Object>Non-Direct Object>Possessor (Comrie 1981:149)

According to this hierarchy, if a language can relativize a lower-ranked syntactic role, such as an indirect object or possessor, it can also relativize all higher-ranked roles, including the subject. Sısaalı conforms to this hierarchy by permitting relativization of noun phrases in all positions, including subjects, direct and indirect objects, possessors, locatives, prepositional phrases, comparatives, and temporals.

- Subjects and direct objects typically use the gap strategy, leaving no pronoun at the relativization site.
- Indirect objects and possessors generally employ resumptive pronouns.

Subject relativization

24.	***Bie***	***hv***	***[àà***	***dii***	***kidiillie***	***hv]***	***we***	***daha***	***rɛ.***
	Child	DET	REL	eat.PST	food	DET	inside	here	FOC

'The child who ate the food is here.'

Direct Object relativization

25.	***Kidiillie***	***hv***	***[bie***	***hv***	***àà***	***dia]***	***suma***	***rɛ***
	Food	DET	child	DET	REL	eat.PST	sweet	FOC

'The food that the boy ate was delicious.'

The head noun *Kidiillie* ('food') occurs outside the relative clause, while a gap represents the relativized object position within the RC. This is an externally-headed object relative clause. It is not internally-headed, because the head noun is not contained inside the RC.

Indirect Object relativization

26.	***Nal***	***hv***	***[v***	***àà***	***kpaa***	***teŋ***	***hv***	***tia]***	***yaa***	***ŋ***	***dıdagıl***	***lɛ***
	Person	DET	3PL	REL	take.PST	book	DET	give	COP	1SG	teacher	FOC

'The person to whom he gave the book is my teacher.'

Possessive relativization

27. ***Baal***	***hv***	***[loori***	***àà***	***yaa***	***kifiaŋ]***	***yaa***	***ŋ***	***chana***	***rɛ***
Man	DET	car	REL	COP	red	COP	1SG	friend	FOC

'The man whose car is red is my friend.'

Locative Relativization

28. ***Lee***	***hv***	***[baal***	***hv***	***àà***	***yɔbɔ***	***puna***	***hv]***	***bolie***	***rɛ.***
Place	DET	man	DET	REL	buy.PST	animal	DET	far	FOC

'The place where the man bought the animal is far.'

Preposition relativization

29. ***Kalıŋ***	***hv***	***[nyuu***	***ı***	***àà***	***pına]***	***jalie***	***rɛ***
Mat	DET	head	2SG	REL	lie.PST	wide	FOC

'The mat on which you are lying down is wide.'

Comparative relativization

30. ***Baal***	***hv***	***[Maria***	***àà***	***dolie***	***te]***	***mvv***	***Wa***	***rɛ***
Man	DET	Maria	REL	tall	more	go	Wa	FOC

'The man who Maria is taller than has gone to Wa.'

Temporal Relativization

31. ***Taŋ***	***hv***	***[baal***	***hv***	***àà***	***yɔbɔ***	***kidilie***	***tia***	***bie***	***hv]***	***rɛ.***
Time	DET	man	DET	REL	buy.PST	food	give	child	DET	FOC

'The time that the man bought food for the child.'

This pattern aligns Sısaalı with other relativization-permissive Mabia languages, such as Dagaare (Bodomo & Hiraiwa, 2004) and Gurene (Atintono, 2003), as well as Kwa languages such as Akan (Saah, 2010) and Ewe (Dzameshie, 1995).

6. Restrictive Versus Non-restrictive Clauses

Givón (1993) distinguishes between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses, the latter sometimes referred to as appositive relative clauses. He notes that restrictive relative clauses are the most common cross linguistically, and Sısaalı conforms to this typology. According to Comrie (1981), restrictive relative clauses restrict the set of referents of the head noun while the non-restrictive type of relative clauses do not restrict the set but instead provide additional information. Sısaalı predominantly uses restrictive relative clauses, which narrow down the reference of the head noun. However, non-restrictive (appositive) clauses also occur, marked by a focus particle ***rɛ***

and comma intonation, as seen in examples (32) and (33). These clauses add information rather than restrict reference.

32. ***Sıa*** ***hv,*** ***[kiŋ*** ***hv*** ***fa*** ***àà*** ***piŋ*** ***kpasa*** ***hv*** ***nyuu],*** ***rɛ*** ***ŋ***
Knife DET thing DET PST REL lie chair DET head FOC 1SG
kı ***chɛ.***
PROG search
'The knife, the one which was lying on the table, is the one I am looking for.'

33. ***Hatolu*** ***hv,*** ***[nal*** ***hv*** ***àà*** ***lii*** ***Yaala*** ***ko*** ***jınaŋ*** ***hv]*** ***rɛ***
Woman.young DET person DET REL from Yaala come today DET FOC
ŋmaa ***v.***
beat 3SG
'The young lady, who came from Yaala today, is the one who beat her.'

In Sısaalı, the particle ***rɛ*** frequently occurs at the clause-final position in both restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses, as illustrated in examples (32) and (33). This particle is also present in all declarative clauses and in constructions conveying focus, signaling that its function is primarily discourse-structural rather than nominal-definitive. While its surface position is reminiscent of the clause-final determiners observed in some Kwa languages (Hiraiwa et al., 2017), ***rɛ*** does not mark definiteness but instead indicates focus or emphasis on the clause or proposition. In non-restrictive relative clauses, its presence is obligatory, signaling that the clause adds additional, non-restrictive information about the head noun. In restrictive relative clauses, ***rɛ*** may appear optionally, contributing to information-structural prominence. Thus, although Sısaalı exhibits a clause-final particle in RCs similar in position to Kwa clause-final determiners, its grammatical role is discourse-functional and not nominal-definitive.

7. Stacked relative clauses

Stacked relative clauses refer to multiple relative clauses that modify the same noun without embedding one within the other. Unlike Buli (Hiraiwa 2003) and Gurene (Atintono 2003), Sısaalı, like Dagaare (Bodomo & Hiraiwa 2004) and Kusaal (Abubakari 2019), does not permit stacking of relative clauses. This is shown in the ungrammatical construction in (34).

34. ****Baal*** ***hv*** ***[àà*** ***yii*** ***yiila*** ***àà*** ***gvwa]*** ***yaa*** ***ŋ*** ***maana*** ***rɛ***
Man DET REL sing song REL dance COP 1SG brother FOC

Unacceptable stacking can be corrected by introducing a conjunction or rephrasing the structure as shown in example (35).

35. ***Baal hv [àà yii yiila aŋ kı gvwa yaa ŋ maana rɛ***
Man DET REL sing song CONJ PROG dance COP 1SG brother FOC
'The man who is singing and dancing is my elder brother.'

8. Other Elements of Sısaalı Relativization

This section explores other relevant features used in the formation of relative clauses in Sısaalı.

8.1. Long Distance Dependency

Long distance dependency occurs when the head noun described by a relative clause is syntactically distant from the gap within the clause. Sısaalı allows long-distance relativization. In such cases, a resumptive pronoun is optionally used for object positions and obligatorily used for subjects. The relative pronoun *àà* appears only in the highest clause, not in the intermediate clauses.

36. **Long Distance Relativization (Object)**

a. ***Haaŋ hv [ŋ àà buna nı Maria baa dı Laadi***
Woman DET 1SG REL think.PST that Maria said that Laadi
naa (v)] yaa ŋ nyıla rɛ.
see.PST COP 1SG aunt FOC
'The woman who I thought that Maria said that Laadi saw is my aunt.'

b. **** Haaŋ hv [ŋ àà buna nı Maria baa dı Laadi àà***
Woman DET 1SG REL think.PST that Maria said that Laadi REL
naa (v)] yaa ŋ nyıla rɛ.
see.PST 3SG COP 1SG aunt FOC

37. **Long Distance Relativization (Subject)**

a. ***Haaŋ hv [ŋ àà buna nı Maria baa dı v naa***
Woman DET 1SG REL think.PST that Maria said that 3SG see.PST
Laadi] yaa ŋ nyıla rɛ.
Laadi COP 1SG aunt FOC
'The woman who I thought that Maria said that she saw Laadi is my aunt.'

b. ****Haaŋ hv [ŋ àà buna nı Maria baa dı naa***
Woman DET 1SG REL think.PST that Maria said that see.PST
Laadi] yaa ŋ nyıla rɛ.
Laadi COP 1SG aunt FOC

8.2. Island Subjacency

Island subjacency constraints in syntax prevent the formation of relative clauses when the head noun is separated from the gap by a syntactic barrier. Relativization in Sısaalı is subject to island subjacency. This suggests that the relationship between the relativized head and the gap is mediated by movement. It is therefore ungrammatical in Sısaalı to have relativization out of a complex NP or an adjunct clause. This is demonstrated in example (38).

38. Complex NP constraint

a. ***ŋ**	***karima***	***teŋ***	***hʋ***	***ŋ***	***àà***	***naa***	***haaŋ***	***hʋ***
1SG	read.PST	book	DET	1SG	REL	see.PST	woman	DET
ʋ	**àà**	**saba**	**rɛ.**					
3SG	REL	write.PST	FOC					

38. Adjunct Island

b. ***ŋ**	***karima***	***teŋ***	***hʋ***	***ŋ***	***fa***	***àà***	***naa***	***haaŋ***
1SG	read.PST	book	DET	1SG	PST	REL	see.PST	woman
hʋ	***dı***	***ʋ***	***fa***	***àà***	***sabı***		***ʋ.***	
DET	when	3SG	PST	REL	write.PST		3SG	

8.3. Use of Double relativizers

Unlike some Mabia languages such as Buli, Dagaare, Dagbani, Moore, and Gurene, (Hiraiwa et al. 2017), Sısaalı does not permit the use of multiple relative markers within a single construction. This is illustrated in example (38).

39a. ***Ɔ dii***	***mongo***	***hʋ***	***[Duma***	***àà***	***yɔbɔ]***	***rɛ***		
1SG	eat.EMP	mango	DET	Duma		REL	buy	FOC

'I ate the mango that Duma bought.'

39b. ***Ɔ**	***dii***	***mongo***	***hʋ***	***àà***	***Duma***	***àà***	***yɔbɔ***	***rɛ***	
1SG	eat.EMP	mango	DET	REL1	Duma	REL2	buy	FOC	

8.4. The Placement of Adverbs

In Sısaalı, adverbs can occur either before the verb in a relative clause with the relativizer àà placed between the adverb and the verb (40), or at the end of the relative clause (41).

40a. ***Ɔ karima***	***teŋ***	***hʋ***	***[Duma dii***		***àà***	***saba]***	***rɛ.***	
1SG	read.PST	book	DET	Duma	last year	REL	write.PST	FOC

'I read the book which Duma wrote last year.'

40b.	***ƆŋŊ***	***karima***	***teŋ***	***hv***	***[Duma***	***àà***	***dii***	***saba]***	***rɛ.***
	1SG	read.PST	book	DET	Duma	REL	last year	write.PST	FOC

41.	***ŋ***	***karima***	***teŋ***	***hv***	***[Duma***	***àà***	***saba***	***dii]***	***rɛ.***
	1SG	read.PST	book	DET	Duma	REL	write.PST	last year	FOC

'I read the book which Duma wrote last year.'

9. Conclusion

This paper has explored the morphosyntactic structure and typological properties of relative clause (RC) formation in Sısaalı, a Gur language spoken in Ghana. The analysis demonstrates that Sısaalı employs externally-headed, postnominal relative clauses, where the head noun precedes the relative clause. A defining characteristic of these constructions is the obligatory use of a relative pronoun (***àà/áá***) that introduces the clause, as well as a determiner (*hv*) that immediately follows the head noun. These two elements are structurally required for well-formed relative clauses in the language.

In addition to these obligatory components, the study finds that resumptive pronouns are optionally employed, particularly in contexts involving possessive constructions or long-distance dependencies. In such cases, the resumptive pronoun reinforces the syntactic link between the relativized noun and its grammatical role within the embedded clause, reflecting a strategy for maintaining syntactic coherence in complex clause structures (Comrie, 1981; Keenan & Comrie, 1977).

Typologically, Sısaalı relative clauses are consistently externally-headed and left-headed. The language does not permit internally-headed, right-headed, or in-situ relative clauses, pointing to strong structural constraints on clause embedding and relativization strategies (Givón, 2001). Among the types of relative clauses, restrictive RCs are the most frequently attested. These serve a delimiting function by narrowing the reference of the head noun, which aligns with the pragmatic function of RCs in many natural languages (Downing, 1978).

These findings provide not only a detailed account of RC formation in Sısaalı but also contribute to broader typological and theoretical discussions on relativization strategies across languages. They highlight the systematic nature of RC structures in Sısaalı and offer valuable data for cross-linguistic comparison within the Mabia family and beyond.

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Abbreviation	**Meaning**
1SG	First person singular
2SG	Second person singular
3SG	Third person singular
3PL	Third person plural
COP	Copula
DET	Determiner
EMP	Emphatic
FOC	Focus particle
FUT	Future tense
MC	Main clause
RC	Relative clause
REL	Relative marker (àà / áá)
PER	Perfect aspect
PROG	Progressive aspect
PST	Past tense
PL	Plural
SG	Singular

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

"HELLO MY EARS, ARE YOU STILL THERE?" ANALYSING THE DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES IN YANKAH'S "OCCASIONAL KWATRIOT'S" COLUMNS: A CDA APPROACH

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REPRESENTATION OF DISABILITY IN AKAN DISCOURSE

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NEOLOGIZING AKAN INDIGENOUS ECOLOGICAL PROVERBS AND WISE-SAYINGS FOR EARTH-KEEPING AMONG AKAN CHRISTIANS OF GHANA

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CONNECTING PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF GRAMMATICAL COHESION IN BUDGET DISCOURSE

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RELATIVIZATION IN SlSAALl: A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT

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PREFERRED FORMAT FOR REFERENCES

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Obeng, Samuel Gyasi. 2001. *African Anthroponymy: An Ethnopragmatic and Morphophonological Study of Personal Names in Akan and Some African Societies*. München: Lincom Europa.

Ameka, Felix K., and Mary Esther Kropp Dakubu, eds. 2008. *Aspect and Modality in Kwa Languages, Studies in Language Comparison Series*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

If the book has more than one author or editor, they should all be given, the first appearing as above, the others with their first name or initial placed before the surname:

Heine, Bernd and Derek Nurse, eds. 2000. *African Languages, An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Osam, E. Kweku. 1997. "Serial Verbs and Grammatical Relations in Akan." In *Grammatical Relations: A Functionalist Perspective*, edited by T Givón, 253-280. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

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Amfo, Nana Aba Appiah. 2010. "Noun Phrase Conjunction in Akan: The Grammaticalization Path." *Pragmatics* 20 (1):27-41.

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