

Typology of Introductory Formulas in Kwakum Proverbs

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.7012084>

Received: 17 November 2023; Accepted: 08 December 2023; Published: 07 January 2024

ABSTRACT

Kwaèkuàm is a Bantu language of zone A according to Guthrie (1967: 496). It is listed A90. Its code is [463], Binam Bikoï (2012:141). Generally, when we want to produce a proverbial statement, the speaker does not surprise his audience. He prepares it using various introductory formulas. The same is true in the kwaèkuàm community. In doing so, our paper examines the formal introductory structures found in kwaèkuàm proverbs and which make it possible to delimit the “proverbial mold” and to identify a sentence as a proverb in a speech. Five hundred proverbs collected from ten speakers aged 50 and over constitute our corpus. From the categorization of the recurring motifs of the forms and rhythms of the proverbial saying, it emerges that the paremic initiation formulas are in the initial position of the proverbial sentence. The specificity of the proverbial statement is that it constitutes a “fixed” genre of oral literature. Moreover, this is what makes it recognized in a statement.

Keywords: proverb, enunciation, proverbial mold, oral literature, introductory formulas

INTRODUCTION

The proverb refers to “a formula that expresses a truth of experience. It is a summary, a shortcut to a whole reflection...”. N.S. Kabuta (1997: 69). The proverb is therefore understood as an expression frozen by time, a thought frozen in a brief formulation: lesson learned from experience, life advice, precept to follow or course of action. Until recently, paremiological research was marginal. Today, we are witnessing a renewal of this field of research. The study of proverbs has been strongly renewed especially semantically with the work of Anscombe (2013), Conenna (2004), Kleiber (2000a), Shapira (1999). What we highlight here is the analysis of the proverb as a «linguistic fact». It is in this strictly linguistic perspective that we focus our analysis on the enunciative aspect of the Kwaèkuàm proverb. The enunciative aspect is an indication of the «life» of the proverb in the language. It is in this wake that our study intervenes, the purpose of which is the identification and categorization of formal aspects in the proverbs kwaèkuàm.

Some questions arise from this objective including: What are the different introductory formulas of kwaèkuàm proverbs? Who and/or what do they refer to? Do they play a major role? What are the percentages of use of said formulas? What positions do they occupy in the proverbial statement? the answers to all these questions will constitute the backbone of our article. Before entering into the analysis of our research, it is appropriate to briefly present the Kwaèkuàm people.

Kwaèkuàm people and language

Kwaèkuàm is both a glossonym and an ethnonym. This term designates both the name of the people and that of the language spoken by these people. The kwaèkuàm are located in the departments of Haut-Nyong and Lom-et-Djérem, Eastern Region of Cameroon. The climate that is prevalent in this locality is hot and humid

equatorial type with 4 seasons including two rainy seasons and two dry seasons. The relief is fairly flat. These people have a well-structured economic, political, social and religious organization. Significant life events are of great importance to these people. What can we say about the Kwaèkuàm language itself?

Binam Bikoï (2012:141) classifies Kwaèkuàm [463] among the Bantu languages, precisely North Equatorial Bantu. Guthrie (1967:496) for his part, classifies it within the kaèkòà group (90) in zone A. The language is therefore classified as A90. Also, Binam Bikoï (2012:14) specifies that Kwaèkuàm is a language of the Niger-Congo-Kordafan phylum, Niger-Congo subphylum, Bénoué-Congo family, Bantoid subfamily, Bantu branch, Equatorial Bantu subbranch. We also emphasize that the Kwaèkuàm language is not homogeneous because it includes several dialects. According to Simons and Fenning (2018:52), the dialects of Kwaèkuàm speaking are: Kwaèkuàm, Baki, Bètén and Til. Baki is the dialect variant most distant from the 03 others in terms of intercomprehension. What about objectives?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of our work is the identification and categorization of formal aspects in kwaèkuàm proverbs. The following will be discussed :

- Identify the introductory formulas of Kwaèkuàm proverbs in order to detect their position in the proverbial statement
- Calculate the rate of occurrence of each introductory formula and identify the most frequent structures
- Introduce other elements such as enunciative marks that allow recognition and identification of proverbial statements

What about the methodology?

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

In our work, we opted for the empirical sampling technique which is based on a reasoned choice and built to meet specific needs. This is the «standard units» method which is one of the adapted methods among the reasoned choice sampling techniques whose purpose is to select the qualified units to provide the relevant information in connection with our study object. Our interviewees were chosen taking into account age, mastery of cultural facts and mastery of oratory art.

In so doing, through a series of 17 interviews with 10 elderly native speakers of the Kwaèkuàm language aged 50 and over, with a perfect mastery of both cultural facts and oratory, we collected 500 proverbs transcribed according to the standards of the International Phonetic Alphabet (API). The collection of our data required a trip to the field, more precisely in the towns of Dimako and Doumé, Haut-Nyong Department; and Bertoua in Lom-et- Djérem. These departments are the areas of expansion of the Kwaèkuàm language. Once the indications on the corpus are thus given, how will the data be analyzed?

Moreover, the participatory method is the one we have chosen. Therefore, we used an inductive approach to deduce our analyses according to the indicated theory and the context of enunciation. Thus, after having constituted and organized our corpus, we proceeded to the analysis by raising proverb after proverb the various introductory formulas, a task that took time and required a lot of effort.

Research design

Referring to Dubois et al., proverbs are treated according to structuralism to allow identification and typological classification of introductory formal structures. Said formal structures will be analyzed following an empirical-deductive approach. Approach consists of starting from linguistic facts and according to Dubois et al. (1973: 156) “collect a corpus of statements and to derive, by segmentation and

substitution, classes of elements and rules which make it possible to account for all the sentences”. This approach allows us a better quantitative analysis of the introductory formulas of kwaèkuàm paremias by highlighting the functioning of the formulas concerned. Thus, after having constituted and organized our corpus, we proceeded to analyze it by noting proverb after proverb the different formal aspects, a task which took time and required a lot of effort.

Presentation of findings and data analysis

Our analysis of the data will focus on the presentation of types of introductory formulas listed in the corpus. We will also present the frequency of appearance of each formula and we will finally present the position of these formulas in the proverbial Kwaèkuàm statement.

Typology of introductory formal structures

Out of the 500 proverbs collected in enunciation situations, 11 formal enunciative structures are used for their grouping and classification as indicated in the table below:

Types	Markers	Occurrences	Percentages
1	jáà	219	43,8%
2	káà	37	7,4%
3	aè diè	32	6,4%
4	moàòà	20	4%
5	SN / SV	140 / 22	28% / 4,4%
6	boàkuà	5	1%
7	táèl	1	0,2%
8	óà dáàáà	10	2%
9	Prosopopoeia	4	0,8%
10	tóèóè káà	5	1%
11	Expressions sections	5	1%
Total		500	100%

Analysis of the beginning structures of kwaèkuàm proverbs

From a syntactic point, we noticed several recurring constructions of kwaèkuàm proverbs. In doing so, 11 major types of dominant structures were highlighted.

- **The first type of formal structure**

In our corpus, we notice that the most frequent classes of proverbs are those which begin with the indefinite pronoun “on”. 219 proverbs in our corpus begin with this pronoun, a percentage of 43.8%. The indefinite pronoun “on” generally has a vague subject. Its basic value is that of an indefinite pronoun referring to a person or a group of persons with a verbal extension, which the speaker cannot or does not want to identify more precisely. Said pronoun has a collective meaning. In doing so, it marks the generalization of the referent. Although he is at the origin of the production of the proverbial statement, his words are inscribed over time in popular wisdom, in the wisdom of nations. In doing so, the author’s responsibility enters into the notion of linguistic subjectivity as observed by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2002:107).

1. jáà Σuàm iètoàòà mòàtuè náè doàùmbuà pó#ndZó#ó

We build a house one with old bamboo

“We build a house with old bamboo . »

It is the past that allows us to live the present better. The sum of experiences makes us wise, just as the old bamboo, which has withstood the elements, is better than the new one, because it is more resistant to a better base.

• The second type of formal structure

The second recurring structure concerns 37 proverbs in the corpus, or 7.4%. This is the formula starting with “if”. It shows a cause and effect relationship. It is a question of a causal proposition introduced by an expression such as “if you...” followed by a consecutive (main) proposition from a logical point of view. Also, the word “then” very often introducing the consecutive is implicitly represented, and is replaced by a comma. The logical reasoning of the implication, which this formula presents (if $p \rightarrow g$) seems to be a privileged way of saying it proverbially. (Gomez-Jordana Ferary, 2012:56). In addition, the circumstantial conjunction “if...” has a hypothetical use. In doing so, the hypothetical value expressed in the first proposition of the statement undoubtedly leads to an implication in the form of a consequence in the second. Very often, we notice the use of the indicative mood in the first part and that of the imperative in the second. This second part could be paraphrased by the expressions “you must not”, and “you must not”. This formula highlights a cause and effect logic.

2. kàà kièfèèΣóè nkaàtóèèè ðèèòèè fáàk piàìà

If bone exceed break give dog

“If the bone is too big for you to break, give it to the dog . »

If something is too much for you to do, pass the baton to someone else who can do it better.

The implication is effective in the form: if A... then B. Likewise, through the use of this hypothetical formula, the enunciating subject is inscribed in the statement. Here, the speaker generally explains his point of view and his real intentions.

• The third type of formal structure

Another recurring construction that concerns 32 proverbs or 6.4% of our corpus is the formula starting with “it’s...”. It is a formula that establishes evidence with universal truth value. From a purely logical point of view, we are also faced with an implication of the type: “it is p who q”; which is also the equivalent of “ $p \rightarrow q$ ” with respect to the logic of propositions. Also, these proverbs are stated when an action turns out to be a direct consequence of the person concerned.

3. àè diè Σóèèè Σià ðèèèΣóèè máà kuàlià nèΣóèèèè

This being a tooth that rots P2 all teeth

“It’s a tooth that has rotted all the teeth. »

Bad company corrupts good morals.

• The fourth type of formal structure

A certain number of proverbial statements emerge from our corpus presenting two incompatible acts. 21 proverbs from the corpus, or 4.2%, concerning an undetermined character under the formula “he/she”. This type of proverb highlights two actions which, for the most part, cannot be carried out simultaneously. The first proposition is generally in the negative form.

4. moàòà táè náè poèboèl jià taùàètlàè leèló naàñnañ

The one Neg with tears mod.én starts crying remotely

“The one who has no tears begins crying at a distance. »

When you know you can’t quickly and easily get hold of what you need, it’s best to start looking early, well before the time to use it arrives.

• The fifth type of formal structure

Other proverbs are introduced by noun phrases (140 proverbs in the corpus or 28%), and by verb phrases (22 proverbs in the corpus or 4.4%). Such proverbs do not bear formal marks or introductory formulas, allowing them to be identified immediately. They are constructed like ordinary sentences. Generally, these are proverbs that are not sufficiently pictorial, that is to say not metaphorical, and whose understanding does not require significant cognitive effort. These are usually literal proverbs.

5. gwoèmbuè Σòàkuè teàn àà Σièlàè pá#dòà taàmbuà

Hunting elephant while it still edge of field

“Hunt away the elephant while it is still at the edge of the field!” »

Precautions must be taken regarding a situation while there is still time to avoid disastrous consequences. A French proverb is similar and states “he who wants to go far takes care of his horse. »

6. muè luàkóà diè koàl náè djeàtià

Person poverty being over with debt

“The poor man is beyond debt. »

This proverb highlights the fact that we only lend to the rich. Also it is unwise to lend something to someone who does not have the means to repay. You must therefore use great caution .

• The sixth type of formal structure

This form concerns 5 proverbs in our corpus, or 1%. This is the formula starting with “when”. Just like the “if” series, the “when” series divides the complex sentence into two parts. Also, the subject is usually expressed by generic nouns (proverbs 252 and 255), by the indefinite personal pronoun (proverb 254). Verbs are generally conjugated in the present indicative, in the 3rd person singular and/or plural. Said verbs are mainly used in the affirmative form. The repetition of the subject of the main in the subordinate produces a kind of lexical symmetry. The idea of antonymy can be highlighted as is the case in the example below:

7. boàkuà jáà ðòàkuà ðèΣàààèwàè, jià jáà dZeàmbià ðèΣàààèwàè

When we rhythm badly mod.én we dance badly

“When we rhythm badly, we dance badly.

Just like “if”, the “when” formula highlights an implication in the form of a consequence.

• The seventh type of formal structure

This formula is the most unusual and only concerns one proverb in our corpus, i.e. 0.2%. This is the “as long as” series. So much is an adverb of intensity or quantity that is generally used after the verb. But, it is placed before the verb when it comes to proverbial statements. In fact it is an archaism which increases the expressiveness of the proverb, as illustrated in the proverb below:

8. táèl Σiè ndoè kièkóèΣláè máè Σwáà kiètièlaèkóèñ

as long as what live cough Neg leave throat

“As long as we live, the cough cannot leave the throat ”

As long as we live, problems will always present themselves to us.

• The eighth type of formula structure

From our corpus, 10 proverbs emerge with the introductory formula “it is necessary” or a percentage of 2%. Said formula is used either in the affirmative form or in the negative form. The basic structure of “it is necessary” is generally: it is necessary + verb in the infinitive. In doing so, said structure of the impersonal sentence makes variations in verb tense impossible. The verb “falloir” is always in the present indicative and is followed by a subjunctive complement or an infinitive as a complement. This formula is a deontic modality that concerns the value of the statement particularly at the level of moral obligation. This is how the formula we must + verb in the infinitive is the equivalent of we must + verb in the infinitive, where the modal verb ought also expresses the obligation. The structure required in the negative form generally serves as a defense, a prohibition.

9. óà dáàáà kiàlièkóà kièndeèmóè tièkle# náè taèaèndiè

It is necessary to heritage bat stay with flying fox

“You must not have laughter on your teeth . »

Hypocrisy must be avoided.

• The ninth type of formal structure

Four (04) proverbs from our corpus, or 0.8%, are introduced by prosopopeias. These are animals and plants... to which we attribute human characteristics; more precisely the ability to speak. In doing so, the introductory formula (x says that...) thus puts the proverb in the mouth of someone other than the sole transmitter. This state of affairs therefore directly appeals to the audience by explicitly signaling that a proverbial statement is going to be said; that the good put of a particular character is going to be reported because it perfectly suits the current situation. All our proverbs in this case are spoken by animals.

10. ndoèm Σaàaèkóà káè ma#a# « àè diè boàkuà móàmóà ðáà koèmbièjàè jiàΣià àà ðàènaè kièfáèkiè jià

male chicken say that it be when person be sick that she have wisdom mod.én

“The rooster says that: it is when someone is sick that he becomes wise. »

The fact that we experience certain situations and that we go through different trials generally makes us wise and allows us to gain experiences.

• The tenth type of formal structure

Five proverbs, or 1% of our corpus, attest to this formula. These are “even” and “even if” which have a universal truth value, and a logic of implication respectively. These formulas are attested in the following proverb:

11. tóèòè keà gwàà diè nàè nΣòèn nàè ≡aèΣaè [áèlkaè atoèndZáè jià woàkuà

even if you are with salt with chili cross mushrooms mod.én some

“Even if you have salt and chili, cross some mushrooms. »

You should not interfere in the affairs of others because you consider yourself a good talker.

• The eleventh type of formal structure

This type concerns expression segments. There are 1% or 5 proverbs in our corpus. These segments are quite recurrent in the language but we did not find enough of them in our corpus. Indeed, to begin a proverb, the speaker uses certain stereotypical expressions whose translation is done with great fidelity. Said expressions have the reputation of being the repository of the wisdom of the ancients. Also, before quoting certain proverbs, the Kwaèkuàm says:

We often say that : ... ðeη nkáèèè na#a# ; Old persons say that : ... ndombù nkáèèè na#a# The

expression segments are then generally followed by the quotation of the proverb.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this article, it has been demonstrated that various elements engage the proverbial utterance in Kwàkúm. The introducers or the starting formulas of the proverbial construction always occupy the initial position. Said introducers are generally incorporated and integrated into the utterance. In doing so, they cannot therefore be omitted or substituted during enunciation. The proverb is always said or pronounced with the introducers which constitute an essential part of its originality. Also, several languages follow this same pattern. This is the case of proverbs among the Bwa of Mali (Leguy, C. 1996:169-170); among the Fulani of Cameroon (Dahirou Abiss, 2010); among the Baoulé of the Ivory Coast (André-Marie Beuseize, 2013); among the Vietnamese (Thi Huong Nguyen, 2008). However, we note cases where the introductory formula appears in the post-initial position. In the languages mentioned, the introducer “sàè ” (si) and “ai” (qui) occupy said position among the Bwa and the Vietnamese respectively.

Furthermore, among the Baoulé and the Fulani, we sometimes notice an erasure of the introducers in certain proverbs. These can be omitted or substituted without affecting the meaning of the proverbial statement. (Koffi Joël Kouakou et al. 2018:89- 90). However, these introducers, in addition to being able to disappear, can alternate between them. The observable omissions and substitutions show that the proverbs are the subject of formal manipulations in the languages concerned.

Example in fulfulde: to (if) alternates with nde (when)

to / nde swim numti ko nyamaamano duumol, cee nge wotofo.

“if/when a cow remembers some grass that she grazed in the rainy season, she will fall from exhaustion in the rainy season dry »

Example in Baoulé: sâè (si)è and kâè (when)

sâè/ kâè makù vjè towà nù í nvà tu-á nù

“if/when the pepper ends up in the box, its smell remains there”

This is not the case among the kwàkúm where the said phenomena are not attested.

It must be emphasized that only the introductory formulas do not mark the genericity of proverbs, nor do they allow their recognition on corpus and in discourse. The introductory formulas are generally explicit in the proverbial statement. There are other elements that come into play when it comes to enunciative marks. These elements allow, as well as implicitly, the recognition of proverbial statements during utterance. These are precisely spatiotemporal deictics that situate the utterance in relation to the time of utterance

- **The temporal features**

Our analysis of temporal deictics will revolve around adverbs of time and tense markers.

Adverbs of time: Adverbs of time refer to all forms of expressions related to time. The time markers in Kwaèkuàm transcend time and are not limited to the current time value. The temporal trace is evident in the following proverb:

12. jáà máè tóè/áè Σαçaèkóà **dZoàwóè** =óàm

you neg. feed chicken day sale

“You don’t feed the chicken on market day.”

This proverb is usually used to warn those who always wait until the last minute to prepare. It is a call for foresight and caution.

Others adverbs of time are: morning (Lunàááñ), afternoon (koàkljàè), tomorrow (máànóà), today (mojéàà / nuaná), night (fiàtlóà), dawn (óèñmáànóà), yesterday (koèòèkoè) coincide with enunciative moments all different from each other. So these are preconstructs that are manifest in proverbs to mark only time. We analyzed the adverbs of time what about tense markers?

Tense markers: Time marks are also important clues to consider. Verbal times allow us to situate the proverbial statement in time. These are all the verbal tenses of the indicative mode in majority namely the present, the past and the future, whose percentage is 82.2% of which 411 proverbs of our corpus.

- **The present**

13. káà ààpiàlaàkóàtóà =oèl puèlòè, a =oànduà ntóènmáè

If sparrow provok rain it wait drops

“If the sparrow causes the most that it waits for the drops.”

We must be prepared to accept the consequences of our actions, whether good or bad.

- **The past**

14. kiàtuètuèlòè toèwaèaè máà náè Σóèñ

Snake (two heads) biting P2 with anger

“The two-headed snake had bitten because of anger .”

The patient had limits.

- **The future**

15. káà óà ≡áàk feà bóà óà muèmbuà piàà teà àà Σóèòè wáááà toàwoà

If you Neg put hand in mouth dog F2 he F2 Neg bite

“If you don’t put your hand in the dog’s mouth, you won’t bite.”

This is a call for caution. We must not engage in a suspicious case, we risk getting caught and ultimately bite our fingers. Also, avoid taking unnecessary risks.

All in all, we have seen that the time indicators are two (02) orders and allow to situate the message in time and in relation to the issuer and the enunciation situation. What about the spatial clues present in the kwaèkuàm proverbs.

- **Spatial deitics**

In the proverbs kwaèkuàm, these marks are presented implicitly as the proverbial matter is enunciated anywhere. However, we note the presence of spatial deitics that relate to the living environment of the Kwaèkuàm community. In doing so, spatial tracking can be done through cultural referents. These references refer to the names of animals (fauna), flora, elements of nature, various artifacts present in the community and in the immediate environment of the kwaèkuàm people as in the following proverb:

16. doèmbuè keàmóà ≡áàk wáááà diàmkaèaè kwaèΣaè

old monkey Neg. Neg. forget face

“An old man, don’t forget the faces.”

This proverb says that when someone is skilled in a field, it is not unknown. He is always very obvious and enterprising in what he knows how to do whatever the time he put without practicing it. In other words, habit is second nature.

Cultural references (names of animals, plants) such as: lion (tilà), elephant (ʃkù), snake (ɲè), gorilla (tilò), panther (ʃèj), monkey (kémə)... presents the characteristics of the immediate (physical) environment of the Kwaèkuàm people that is the forest. These elements plunge us directly into the forest space. The forest is therefore loaded with rewarding connotations that make it a place of fullness, where the human being is inspired by nature and acquires ancestral knowledge contained in proverbs.

CONCLUSION

This paper aimed at identifying and categorize formal aspects of Kwaèkuàm proverbial statements. It demonstrated that various elements engage the proverbial statement in Kwaèkuàm and always occupy the initial position. Indeed, these are elements that allow easy identification of proverbial statements in speech. It has been noted that spatiotemporal deictics are also elements that allow the recognition and identification of proverbial statements. By analyzing our proverbs, it was possible for us, within a corpus of 500 proverbs, to identify a range of recurring constructions allowing us to recognize a proverbial statement in a conversation or a speech even if we have never heard it. Also, most Kwaèkuàm proverbs are constructed following several well-defined patterns. From a syntactical point of view, our proverbs highlighted several dominant structures. All in all, there is a formal regularity of proverbs although some are more productive than others. Furthermore, we analyzed in what proportion they appear in our corpus. The predominance of proverbs whose starting formulas are: “on”, the noun phrase and “if” seems to be a proven fact given our conclusions. These formulas and many others with a small percentage are therefore very characteristic of the beginning of proverbial statements. We emphasize that each of the formal structures corresponds to a specific mode of reasoning. Some highlight put a logical implication of the cause and effect relationship type. Others bring into play evidence of universal value. Some mark an incompatibility of certain actions./.

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