# PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF NAMES OF SOME DEITIES IN SOME BONO TOWNS IN GHANA

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## ABSTRACT

This paper analyses names of some deities in some Bono towns in Ghana pragmatically through the lens of Speech Act Theory. The study employed an ethnographic research design using a qualitative approach. Names of deities were collected from some selected towns in Bono and Bono East Regions in Ghana. Some of the specific towns and villages were: Watro, Yeji, Takyiman, Atebubu, Nkoranza, Atronie, Nsuatre, Kyeraa, Komfokurom and Wiase. The researchers consulted ten traditional priests and ten spokesmen at shrines. The consultant's ages were between twenty-five (25) and sixty-two (62). In all, eighty (80) names of deities were selected for the analysis in this study. The study has proven the perception that names are lexicons and not sentential was not always a good point. The results from the research showed that some names of the deities were sentential through the surface representation and truncation processes that brought about the smooth pronunciation of the names that have been truncated. The term truncation as the analysis has proven in terms of sentences is a Traditional Hungarian grammar, successfully reflecting the observation that we often leave out the subject or speaker or hearer what the subject or object is in the given sentence. Truncation is a phonological process that allows flexibility in the pronunciation of words, phrases, clauses, and statements. It identified that contextualization was important in meaning and driving force that is truncated from names the deities and generally accepted by the Akans.

**Keywords:** Akans, communication, deconditioned, deities, pragmatics, truncation.

## Public Interest

Many scholars have done a lot of work in some of the linguistic areas of study. Names have received a lot of attention especially in the field of cultural studies and sociolinguistics which mostly focused on the historical background and meaning of the names. Bono has not

received much attention on names in general and names of deities in particular. Words in themselves have meaning and this meaning becomes functional within the larger situation of the sentence and sentence meaning. It follows also that if any language form exists in a context, it forms part of the context's meaning; and it is within this context that it gets its utterance meaning which is its effect in the reality of social interaction, which is pragmatics in context. This paper, therefore, seeks to analyze some of the names of Deities in Some Bono towns from the pragmatics point of view for which scholars' attention has not been drawn.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Akans occupy the greater part of the southern sector of Ghana. Akan is spoken as a native language (L1-first language) in eight of the sixteen regions in Ghana namely, Ashanti, Eastern, Western, Central, Brong, Ahafo, Western- North, and Bono East. They are sandwiched by the Ewes in the Volta Region of Ghana. The Akans are made up of various dialects that are mutually intelligible. Akans have very rich and indispensable cultural practices that serve as a regulatory instrument that regularized their activities at any point in time. Some of these cultural practices are their naming practices, funeral performances, enstoolments of their chief, festival observation, their religious practices, and many others. These religious practices demonstrate their belief in God, as deities are the point of reference during the service.

Deities are very instrumental in human setup. It is one of the mechanisms that regularized some groups of people interacting with God. Therefore, our initial assumption that deities are in primitive images so using them as a channel of communication with God needs to be deconditioned. Deities are all over the world and they being with humanities are not a coincidence but properly conditioned by the creator of the universe. In Africa, deities are very essential and play a very significant role in our society. Their linkage has a direct impact on our lives whether positive or negative. In the Akan tradition, abosom (divinities/ lesser gods) are the children and messengers of God (Nyame), the supreme God or the Creator.

Deities are found throughout Ghana and are in major parts of Akan cosmology. Bosom may be male or female or can embody both. Although the bosom often embodies various manifestations of nature such as (wind, water bodies, trees, and stones) deities, in reality, are essentially spirits. Linguistic anthropology uses a general theoretical framework in specific sociocultural contexts. It focuses on how language allows for and creates differentiation between groups, individuals, and identities (see Duranti, 1997: 7). Naming can be considered as a universal cultural practice. Every society in the world gives names as tags to its people, but how the names are given, the practices and rituals involved, and the interpretations attached to the names differ from society to society and from one culture to another.

Akans attach much significance or importance to deities and their practices. The knowledge about Akan deities gives insight into Akan culture, their philosophy, their thought, their environment, their religion, and their language which is names. Some of the academic benefits derived from this paper will be building up their vocabulary and pragmatically understanding the names of the deities very well. In language, every single speech is an event, and each event has structure and intents or goals – goals of the event itself and the various participants of the context (Sakyi-Biadoo, 2002).

## 2.0 THEORETICAL ISSUES AND OTHER LITERATURE

Words in themselves have a meaning and this meaning becomes functional within the larger situation of the sentence and sentence meaning. It follows also that if any language form exists in a context, it forms part of the context's meaning; and it is within this context that it gets its utterance meaning- which is its meaning or its effect in the reality of social interaction (Sakyi-Biadoo, 2002). It is therefore pointless to restrict pragmatics to the spoken word, for the written word also involves context and has a role or function for the various forms of utterance – be they single words or full sentences.

Speech act theory is a subfield of pragmatics that studies how words are used not only to present information but also to carry out actions (Austin, 1962). It was therefore considered the degree to which utterances are said to perform illocutionary acts, illocutionary acts, or perlocutionary acts. Many linguists and philosophers use speech act theory as a tool to measure human communication to ascertain better understanding or interpretation. Searles (1969) was responsible for devising a system of speech act categorization. Speech act theory has become an important branch of the contemporary theory of language. In human communication, the contextual meaning is significantly essential. In doing a digestive and thorough analysis of such utterances bring to the platform the speech act theory.

The theory identifies five illocutionary points that speakers can achieve on propositions in an utterance, namely, assertive, commissive, directive, declaratory and expressive. It was noted by Vanderkeven and Kubu (2002) that a speaker achieves the assertive point when they represent how things are in the world, commissive points achieve when they commit themselves to something, the directive point happens when they make an attempt to get hearers to do something, the declaratory point is realized when they do things in the world at the moment of the utterance solely by virtue of saying that they do and the expressive point is achieved when they express their attitudes about objects and facts of the world. Among the many theories that support learning of languages and language research speech act theory has proven to be the best for this study considering the above illocutionary points.

Sakyi-Biadoo (2002) argues that the full meaning of any sentence or utterance is made up to the following: elocutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. The above statement would lead to intents and effects of various utterance a speaker verbalized. The manifestation is that when a sentence in any given context is uttered has some intent, and it performs or achieves certain effects – which to us is its pragmatic meaning.

The study of proper names is cross-linguistic and has been done across cultures and languages such as in Yemeni by Ghaled Al Zumor (2009), in Arabic by Auda (2003), in Javanese by Widodo and Saddono (2012), in India by Sharma (2005), in Spanish by Piñeros (1998), in German by Wiese (2001), in English by Lappe (2002), in Nigerian by Lamidi and Aboh (2011), etc. There have been a number of studies on Akan names within the various fields of study ranging from anthropology, communication, linguistics, etc. over the past years. Such studies have been done by scholars on Akan such as Opoku (1967), Baduike (1976), Sarpong (1977), Ansu-Kyeremeh (2000), Obeng (1997, 2001), Abakah (2004), Agyekum (2006), Adomako (2015) among others. Among these various studies, it is Obeng''s (1997) work that looks at the grammatical study of the phenomenon.

While Obeng‟s (idem) study focuses on word-internal (morphophonology) formation of hypocoristic of day-names in Akan, as well as sociolinguistics of those hypocoristic forms, others, such as Opoku (1967), Sarpong (1977), Ansu-Kyeremeh (2000), Agyekum (2006), etc. have studied Akan personal names from a cultural and sociolinguistic point of view. From the brief discussion mentioned, it could be concluded that though this area of study is a very fertile grounds for linguistic study, exhaustive research in the grammar domains such as in morphology, phonology, pragmatics, and syntax are as yet to be done. This paper, therefore, attempts to contribute to the study of the ADN from the perspective of Pragmatics. It covers the truncation of some names of deities but more particularly sentential names and their truncation in an utterance context with focus on investigating what goes on the truncated utterance in context.

The clear distinction made in the African languages between man-made religious objects and spiritual beings or deities has not been considered. In the Akan language, for example, suman (man-made religious object or charm) is not the same as bosom, which is more appropriately translated as deity (Opoku, 1978). Scott (1998) states that, deities are superhuman and possess more authority than human beings that manifests itself through a human beings. This is true because they are point of reference in traditional worship. It is therefore significant to conduct an investigation into some of the names of deities in the domain of pragmatics to affirm cultural significance in respect to the names.

Deities are called lesser gods. They perform their activities in shrines with their followers led by Ckomfo (Traditional Priest) (See Nukunya, 2004). Agyekum (2011) explains that Akans believe that deities are the children of God.

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

The paper is an ethnographic study of the people of Bono (Akans) in relation to the names of their deities which is very essential in their social setting. Akan value God, the Creator than any other creature on the surface of the earth. Due to this, they have several ways of worshipping him but culturally, they show their appreciation and gratitude to God through worship. The center of their worship is the deity (bosom). They are classified as lesser gods which serve as a ladder that leads them to God. Some of these deities demonstrate their names in sentential which normally have been truncated to achieve flexibility in pronunciation.

A qualitative Approach was used for this investigation. The intention of the paper was not to compare figures and results but to find out sentential names that have been truncated in Bono deities. The study used observation and interview, documentation, and ethical consideration. Some names were elicited and later transcribed. Those names were coded and categorization was done to ensure smooth connection and communication. It was realized that some of the names were pragmatically beliefs that Akans have on witch craft. Some were in the form of advice for people to be careful with sin. Others talk about love their followers should have for one another. The data was taking from Bono towns, thus, Bono Region and Bono East Region. Some of the specific towns and villages were: Watro, Yeji, Takyiman, Atebubu, Nkoranza, Atronie, Nsuatre, Kyeraa, Komfokurom, Wiase and many others. The researchers consulted ten traditional priests and ten spokesmen at shrine. The consultant's ages were

between twenty-five (25) and sixty-two (62). In all, eighty (80) out of one hundred and fifty (150) names of deities were selected for the analysis in this study.

**Some of the Data used for the analysis include the following:**

**M'akyi tumi biara nni h]**

**Obi b[y[ yie nanso [nam obi so**

**}yi p[ bi na ]no de[ ]mp[ bi**

**Ber[ a nnipa adeda no mey[ adwuma**

**Onipa sisifo] sene ]bonsam**

**{kyaa ]bayifo] nko a, [nka ber[ biara y[ anadwo**

**S[ woy[ ab[[fo a bisa w]b[kyer[ wo**

**Nn[mmafo] suban nti mew] h]**

**Di as[mpa na woanyini aky[**

**{nam me so na [baae[ enti fa ky[**

**Biribiara so abue w] n'anim**

**Abayifo] nso w] bi ka**

**Obiara b[wu nti dwene wo ho**

**Obiara b[wu nti d] wo nua**

**S[ woy[ bayifo] a mfa ha**

**Wobu mmara so a m'aso asi**

**Tutu**

**Adamoa**

**Bane[**

**Brakune**

**Atiamframa**

**Krakyed[nt[**

**Bruku**

**Onyinakofi**

**Kop]**

**Tutugyagu**

**Sikasika**

**Tegare**

**Aberewatia**

**F]t]**

**Ayanta**

**Gyambibi**

**Ay[boafo**

**Ategya**

**Ab]dwes[**

**Nanab[**

**Ak]nodi**

**4.0 DATA ANALYSIS**

**4.1 Root, Stem, and Based Category**

Some categories of names of deities that root/ base but have pragmatics impact. The context meaning differs from the meaning derived from them as individual words.

    I.    Kwakufiri
   II.    Sikasika
  III.    Bruku
  IV.    Tutugyagu
   V.    Ategya
  VI.    Tegare
 VII.    Botwerewa
VIII.    Yejitaka
  IX.    Atiamframa
   X.    Nsuatre botan

| Name of a deity as Root, Stem and Based | No Truncation |
|---|---|
| Kwakufiri | ** |
| Sikasia | ** |
| Bruku | ** |
| Tutugyagu | ** |
| Ategya | ** |
| Tegare | ** |
| Botwerewa | ** |
| Yejitaka | ** |
| Atiamframa | ** |
| Nsuatre botan | ** |

One interesting concept is that the names of deities in Bono towns come in varied ways. Some came as a result of what the deity does, the power and authority it has, for example;// Tutugyagu//, //Sikasika//, //Ategya// etc, and the truncation level is ** means no truncation process was identified during the investigation. Some of the names are associated with the locations of the deities such as //Yejitaka//, //Nsuatre botan//, //Wiasedako// and //Takyimanbotwerewa// and others were named after the first person who brought it. Pragmatically all the names are credible in a specific context arranging from power, location, and linage.

**Tutugyagu**



The number of clauses of the names of deities that undergoes was not as crucial as what remains after the truncation. Throughout this paper, we will observe that there seems to be a requirement of a number of clauses imposed on all the data presented at the pragmatic level

and its truncation implication:  Beliefs in Witch craft activities as bad practices, that deities do not compromise with sins or bad deeds.

i.    // {kaa ]bayifo] nko a [nka ber[ biara y[ anadwo// "A witch wishes  night        forever remains"
ii.   //}bayifo] mp[ adepa// "A witch hate good things"
iii.  //S[ woy[ ]bayifo] a mfa ha// "If you are a witch do not pass here"
iv.   // Abayifo] nso w] bi ka// "Witches are in trouble"

**S[ woy[ ]bayifo] a mfa ha**



Here the intention and the effect of the above names of the deities bring to the attention of Akans that witchcraft activities are bad practices that the above deities do not compromise. Prelocutionary the names have been truncated instead of //{kaa ]bayifo] nko a [nka ber[ biara y[ anadwo// (a witch wishes a night forever remains) the truncation effect has been //{kaa ]bayifo] nko// //a witch wishes// and this contextualized the formal sentence in this circumstance the dependent clause is what is remaining. Instead of //}bayifo] mp[ adepa// (a witch hate good things) there was a truncation that acted positively to the dependent clause and do away the independent clause. //}bayifo] mp[// //a witch hates//. The other truncations were//Mfa ha// //do not pass here// which pragmatically advocated for how the deity deals with witches. Considering the above name in relation to truncation, the independent clause remains in Akan but in English, the clause that remains was the dependent clause.

**Name of a deity in complex sentences    Truncation of the name of the deity**

| Name of a deity in complex sentences | Truncation of the name of the deity |
|---|---|
| {kaa ]bayifo] nko a [nka ber[ biara y[ anadwo | {kaa ]bayifo] nko |
| }bayifo] mp[ adepa | }bayifo] mp[ |
| S[ woy[ ]bayifo] a mfa ha | Mfa ha |
| Abayifo] nso w] bi ka | Abayifo] w] bi |
| Abayifo] last stop | Last stop |

**4.2 Some of the names of Deities serve as advice pragmatically**

Pragmatically, these names are advisory tools for the people. The names bring to the attention the consequences of undesirable attitudes in the society therefore in pragmatics since the intent and the effect of the names is to advise this generation and the generation unborn on sinful acts.

a. 1. //S[ woy[ ab[[fo a bisa w]b[kyer[ wo// "Ask others will show you if you are new"
b. 1. //Nn[[mmafo] suban nti mew] h]// "I am there because of the behavior of youth"
c. 1. //Di as[mpa na woanyini aky[// " Practice good life and you shall live long"
d. 1. //{nam me so na [baae[ enti fa ky[// "Is my fault so forgive him"

These sentential names of deities have been truncated to make the connection and communication simple. Speech act theory supported the above claimed when the declaratory point of view is considered when the speakers do things in the world at the moment of the utterance solely by virtue of saying that they express their attitudes about objects and facts of the world. The truncated version was:

a. 2. bisa         "ask"
b. 2. . mew] h]    "I' there"
c. 2. di as[mpa    "do good"
d. 2. fa ky[.       "forgive"

In this environment, all the remaining clauses after truncation are independent clauses.

**Name of a deity in complex sentences  Truncation of names    Gloss**

| Name of a deity in complex sentences | Truncation of names | Gloss |
| --- | --- | --- |
| S[ woy[ ab[[fo a bisa w]b[kyer[ wo | bisa | "ask" |
| Nn[[mmafo] suban nti mew] h] | mew] h] | "I there" |
| Di as[mpa  na woanyini aky[ | di as[mpa | "Do good" |
| {nam me so na [baae[ enti fa ky[ | fa ky[ | "forgive" |

**5.0 FINDINGS**

This paper has investigated (BDN), which generally falls under onomastics. It has focused on some Pragmatics components of semantics that are realized in the field of linguistics. The condition that truncation takes place in the words and more especially in morpheme boundaries was deconditioned. These pragmatics studies opened another chapter after the analysis for the identification of clausal truncation in names of some Bono Deities.  The (BDN) is very important to the Akans since it upholds their religion and strengthens their tenants with their maker. It was identified that the dependent clause can remain or undergo in any case the undergo segment is never significant like the remain section. The analysis also indicated that most independent clauses remain and this supports elocutionary and perlocutionary acts. For elocutionary sense the meaning is derived from the words and their arrangement and their relationships and perlocutionary as surface presentation of pragmatics when we make known our intentions, we expect that they will produce some effect therefore speech is not all intention.

**6.0 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, Akan name system and practice is a marker of the people's belief, ideology, religion, culture, philosophy and thought. The names are best understood and analyzed when one has insight into the ethno-pragmatics, sociocultural norms and the language and culture of particular group of people.

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