

Literary Etymologies of the Expressions for Appreciation and Plea in Ewe and Ga

Cosmas Rai Amenorvi

*Department of Languages and General Studies,
University of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani*
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1756-5043>
Email: cosmas.amenorvi@uenr.edu.gh

Benjamin Kubi

*Department of Ghanaian Languages and Linguistics,
University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast*
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5645-2792>
Email: benjamin.kubi@ucc.edu.gh

Abstract

This paper investigates the literary etymologies of the expressions for appreciation and plea in the Ewe and Ga languages of Ghana. Applying the theory of literary etymology, which is originally employed for onomata, to the everyday expressions of appreciation and plea of Ewe and Ga, the study brings to the fore salient points about these everyday expressions of appreciation and plea. In both languages, it is discovered that the expression of appreciation is deep, giving the one being thanked an elevated position over the one expressing the thanks. Besides, the language of expressing thanks in Ewe and Ga is double-pronged – one denotative or explicit and the other connotative or implicit. Generally, the expressing of thanks is hyperbolic. Similar metaphoricities are employed in the expression of plea in both languages. The one pleading for mercy is in a contextual asymmetrical relationship with the one to whom he or she pleads where the former is considered inferior and the latter superior. The two languages display an almost perfect reflection of each other in the literary etymologies of the expressions in question. This resemblance could be as a consequence that these languages belong to the same language family of Kwa and have lived side by side each other for a long time.

Keywords:

Literary etymology, etymology, Ewe, Ga, culture, identity, literature, language

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Introduction

The search to understand the utterance of a people is an age-old enterprise forasmuch as the transfer of meaning is the major objective of communication, and once cultures differ according to peoples and places, there would always be differences in the way humans employ language in their day-to-day activities. Mankind's employment of language takes place in various contexts such as showing appreciation, warning, asking for forgiveness, giving advice and so on. Even in these everyday uses of language, we employ some sophistication worth investigating. One of such sophistication is the dynamism of the meanings that words or expressions carry. The search for meaning as a language phenomenon over the years has revealed a lot of complexities, making meaning a very thorny linguistic adventure to engage in. Ogden and Richards (1923), early pioneers of the study of meaning, showed the complexity that meaning exhibits by the very title of their work – *The Meaning of Meaning*. Other notable early major works on meaning include Lakoff (1975), Goodenough (1956), Dolbi-Stahi (1985), Razran (1939) and Mosier (1941).

A major field that concerns the study of the meaning of words or utterances, particularly in relation to the history behind them, is etymology. Etymologies have revealed how meanings of words transform over the years and how a word's modern meaning may not necessarily be what it was a decade or a score of years ago. So important is etymology to the understanding of the nature of words and utterances that in English, for example, there are dictionaries exclusively devoted to etymology. Some of these are De Vaan (2018), Hoad (1986) and Friedrichsen et al (1966). We note that these major references on meaning are in and on English. The same is true of other world languages like French, German, Italian and Chinese. It follows that there is a huge gap in the linguistic world as regards etymologies of the world's less known languages like Ewe and Ga. In fact, Malkiel (1993) acknowledged that the linguistic field of etymology is one very neglected area in language study. This submission is true especially in the case of African languages. Speaking for Ghana, we can attest that no Ghanaian language has an

etymological dictionary.

The present paper is an attempt to trigger etymologies into two languages which hitherto have not received much attention in that respect. However, the focus of this paper is not mainstream etymology but literary etymology. While the former concerns the literal history behind lexical items and utterances, literary etymology concerns the literariness espoused in the lexical items as this could reveal core meanings that could otherwise be left untapped by the more common mainstream etymology. For instance, the expression for thanks in Ewe, “Akpe na wò” or “Meda akpe na wò”, which translates as “Thank you” or “I give you thanks” respectively, literally means ‘thousand for you’. Simple as these Ewe expressions of showing gratitude may seem, they are linguistically and literarily rich and loaded with meaning, as will be revealed in the discussions.

The focus, therefore, of the present study is to investigate the literary etymology of appreciation and plea among the Ewe and the Ga peoples of Ghana to reveal the literary richness of the expressions. The paper is subdivided into the following sections: Research Questions, Theoretical Framework, Methodology, Findings and Discussions, Conclusions and Implications.

Research questions

1. What are the literary etymologies of appreciation and plea in Ewe?
2. What are the literary etymologies of appreciation and plea in Ga?
3. How does Ewe differ from Ga and vice versa in the literary etymologies of the language of appreciation and plea?

Theoretical framework

This section discusses an overview of the theory of literary etymology, which serves as the theoretical spine of the present paper. There are several studies, for example, on everyday expressions of language such as appreciation and plea, from a religious point of view, namely, Lewis (1950) O'Brien (1974) and

Mansoor (1960). There are also studies on the language of forgiveness in politics, psychotherapy, organizations and so on (Horsburgh, 1974; Hebe and Enright, 1993; Cameron and Kaza, 2002). None of these have touched on the literariness espoused in these expressions. There are other works from the philosophical or literary viewpoint of things. One of such is Levin (2001, p.5) who submits that literary authors have a powerful interest, which is manifested in their recourse to etymology, 'in what they view as deep connections between elements of language and reality.' As Levin (2001, p.5) notes:

In their conduct of this activity ... [literary authors] focus most often on showing how a wide range of proper names, once analyzed, disclose something salient about the natures of their individual bearers.

For instance, the trace of 'Apollo' to 'apollumi' (destroy) and 'Hector' to 'echo' (protect) "disclose something important about their referents' natures" (Levin, 2001, p.13). Levin (2001) refers to this type of analysis as literary etymology, which is slightly different from mainstream etymology – the scientific study of the history of words.

Literary etymology looks specifically at how the descriptive content of onomata are articulated by way of etymology. As noted earlier, the 'reliance on etymology raises central issues involving the link between elements of language and reality' (Levin, 2001, p.13). In literary etymology, as the name suggests, attention is also given to the literariness espoused in an expression and not just the origin of the expression. Conventionally, literary etymology is applied to onomata, largely proper names, but as Levin (2001) observes, it is not limited to proper names. It is based on this observation that the researchers seek to extend the boundaries of literary etymology to everyday words and expressions such as appreciation and plea. It is instructive to note, however, that literary etymology does not necessarily have to do with the origin of words or expressions. It could simply look at how assignments – either proper names or expressions, in the present context – are tied to actions.

Almost two decades before Levin (2001), Baumgarten (1986, p.3) conceived the theory of literary etymology in the following words:

I shall discuss first of all two instances of literary etymologizing, both which are, functionally, constituent parts of the narrative progression – while formally the first is implicit and the second explicit.

We deduce from Baumgarten (1983) that literary etymology has two main functions, one implicit or implied while the other is explicit or unequivocally stated. It follows, therefore, that literary etymology looks at language in two folds; first the denotative, which is explicit and then the connotative or metaphorical, which is implicit. We argue that since language in general, not only proper names exhibit implicitness and explicitness, literary etymology can be applied to other uses of language such as appreciation and plea among the Ewe and Ga peoples of Ghana.

Levin (2001, p.14) further submits some criteria that one undertakes if one investigates literary etymology: ‘When one investigates literary etymology, what is particularly striking is the wide range of criteria on the basis of which onomata are said to be assigned.’ Some of the criteria Levin (2001, p.14) identifies that go into the investigation of literary etymologies are as follows: the first is that “names must be traced to something involving the birth of their referents”. Second, appellations must correlate with aspects of their referents. Third, instances are tied to actions. Fourth, names must have specific effects on their bearers. Fifth, “writers offer etymologies of names based on objects with which their bearers are associated.” Moreover, literary etymologies consist of “instances in which writers’ analyses of names underscore their referents’ function in social or familial contexts.

The foregoing strategies of literary etymology reaffirm Baumgarten’s (1983) earlier words that literary etymology is both implicit and explicit. The points submitted above, albeit originally relating to proper names, are equally applicable to other expressions such as appreciation and plea. The first point is that proper names are traced to something very important as regards origin. This can be applied to expressions of appreciation and plea at least in the metaphorical sense

since literary etymology itself is a metaphorical phenomenon. As we shall see in the discussion of findings, we would learn the metaphorical importance of the expressions of appreciation and plea in the languages of Ewe and Ga.

Levin (2001) also stated that there is a correlation between names and the features of their referents in literary etymology. This point is not farfetched for other expressions; it is applicable to everyday expressions just as in the case of appellations or names. For example, the linguistic and the cultural features of an expression can find some resemblance in both appearance and concept as is the case of onomatopoeic words. For example, the boom of a gun, the splash of something falling into water and the pitter patter of rain on the roof of a building very much resemble the meanings of these onomatopoeic words.

Very practical in the cases of appreciation and plea in Ewe and Ga is the third strategy of literary etymology as raised above – “instances in which assignments are tied to actions” (Levin 2001, p.14), that is the expressions of appreciation and plea, are tied to actions. We would see under discussions how full of action these expressions of appreciation and plea are in Ewe and Ga. A fourth strategy is that onomata can be linked to significant effects. A fifth is that ‘writers offer etymologies of names based on objects that the bearers of the names are associated’. The fourth point is equally applicable to words and expressions other than nouns inasmuch as expressions can also cause significant effects both cognitively and physically. For the fifth strategy, we acknowledge that it is not only onomata that are associated with their bearers, other expressions or words are also associated with settings and contexts that define them.

The seventh, eighth and ninth strategies of literary etymologizing have to do with linking inanimate things to an important living person, giving names according to the function of referents and finally, onomata may be linked to divine power. All these are applicable to a degree to everyday expressions just as they are in the case of onomata. For example, words and expressions also have functions as long as they play significant roles in meaning making. In English, for example, some words are eponymous or named after important personalities and some are

certainly linked to the divine. Some examples of eponyms in English are “boycott”, “cardigan”, and “diesel”, names after Captain Charles Boycott, the 7th Earl of Cardigan and Rudolph Diesel respectively.

The sum of all these is that literary etymology reveals a lot of sophistication about onomata, and by extension everyday expressions. In the light of the forgoing, the present paper seeks to discover the salient points embedded in everyday expressions of appreciation and asking for forgiveness in the Ewe and Ga languages of Ghana, thereby bringing to the fore their literary etymologies.

Literature review

This section of the paper is devoted to the discussion of some related literature. There are a number of works which have looked at appreciation and pleading for forgiveness from various perspectives; however, none so far has been sighted which specifically discusses the literary etymologies of the expressions of appreciation and pleading for forgiveness. This section of the paper, therefore, reviews some works on appreciation and pleading for forgiveness to provide a background on which to build the discussions on the literary etymologies of the expressions of appreciation and plea in the Ewe and Ga languages of Ghana.

Appreciation

As humans show kindness to one another, human languages are equipped with the tools to express appreciation and to build good interpersonal relationships. Some scholars have studied the significance of appreciation from religious, psychological, social and linguistic points of view. From a psychological and social points of view, Sheldon and Lyobomirsky (2006) and Lambert and Fincham (2011) have shown that expression of appreciation promotes a good interpersonal relationships and emotional balance among colleagues, marriage partners and with all people. This conclusion is confirmed by a much later study by Algoe, Fredrickson and Gable (2013) that relationships of partners improved drastically after participants continuously acknowledge their roles and express thanks to them for their roles in the relationship. No doubt that the expression of

thanks has its place in social relationships and its absence can make relationships turn sour (Gordon, Arnette and Smith, 2011; Williams and Bartlett, 2015; Algo and Zhaoyang, 2016).

Apart from the psychological and social angles from which appreciation is studied, scholars have also focused on the linguistic side of the expression of appreciation among a people. For example, Kotani (2002) investigated Japanese speakers' use of 'I'm sorry' and showing of gratitude side by side those of American English speakers. Kotani (2002) discovered that Japanese speakers' paralinguistic behaviours were not consistent with their use of 'I'm sorry' because of cultural differences as that could be interpreted by American speakers as insincere because American culture emphasizes consistency with words and feeling. This shows that even in the employment of language for such everyday expressions like appreciation, there are dynamics that must be overcome. In Kotani (2002), we find a clash of cultures regarding the expression of gratitude by Japanese speakers who employ English to show gratitude to American English speakers.

Eisenstein and Bodman (1993) have long submitted that expressing thanks or gratitude in American English possesses some idiosyncrasies unique to American English. This follows that while showing appreciation is a universal feature of all languages and cultures, differences exist in the ways it is expressed across cultures. Ahar and Eslami-Rasekh (2011) studied the strategies that were employed by native English speakers and Persian speakers in different situations. They discovered that "Persian students' sensitivity to social variables made them use inappropriate expressions and strategies in their English responses. It suggested that Persian learners of English transfer some of their First Language (L1) pragmatic norms to Second Language (L2) because they perceive these norms to be universal" (Ahar and Eslami-Rasekh, 2011, p.1). The mention of the transfer of L1 to L2 alone suggests cultural clash in the way Persians express thanks side by side Americans. The way gratitude is expressed in one language may not necessarily be the same way in another language. One gap we must take note of in these studies is that none of them touched on the etymologies, either mainstream or literary, of the

expression of gratitude in their various cultures. The present paper seeks to fill this gap, focusing on how gratitude is expressed in Ewe and Ga.

Pleading for forgiveness

As long as relationships matter in the day-to-day communications of humans, all human cultures possess the language tools for repairing sprained or broken relationships. The relevance of forgiveness to healthy relationships between peoples and nations is so significant to the very existence of the human race that Tutu (2009) says that there is no future without forgiveness. For that matter, pleading for forgiveness or rendering apologies are a very important part of language use. The act of forgiving in most cultures must come on the back of being requested. For example, Berryman (1993) made the following statement before the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation which the government formed to investigate the violation of human rights that took place from the 1970s to the 1990s:

I am ready to forgive, but I need to know who I have to forgive. If they would just speak up and acknowledge what they have done, they would be giving us the opportunity to forgive. It would be more noble if they were to do that. There will be reconciliation only if there is justice (Berryman 1993:800).

From the foregoing, we deduce that forgiveness among all human cultures is very important. Moreover, it is easy to forgive if there are grounds for it. The grounds for forgiveness are captured in pleading for it or rendering apology to the one wronged. Pleading for forgiveness or apologizing can be taken for granted to belong to all cultures. However, the dynamism that human cultures display would certainly show in the unique ways different cultures express or plead for forgiveness. There has been a lot of attention given to the study of forgiveness over the years. Some of these are Griswold and Konstan (2011), Hook (2007) and Soyinka (1998). All these acknowledge the importance of forgiveness to the survival of the human race. Besides, these studies look at forgiveness from the social and psychological

points of view rather than the linguistic. Apart from that, these studies fail to investigate what can make forgiveness possible – pleading for it.

There are, however, a handful of studies that investigate across some cultures the act of pleading for forgiveness. For example, Fahey (2005) conducted a cross-cultural study of pleading for forgiveness in Irish and Chilean soap operas and unearthed that the way the two cultures express apology has some differences. Fahey (2005, p.1) adds that “This cross-cultural difference in language use is indicative of broader socio-cultural differences that underline language in use internationally and certainly it is at this level that much inter-cultural misunderstanding has its origin”. We learn from the above that languages and cultures differ in even the way they express apology or asking for forgiveness and understanding these nuances of language difference can promote healthy international and intercultural relationships among the different cultures of the world. The present paper is very relevant in that it seeks to reveal in addition to appreciation the literary etymology of pleading for forgiveness in Ewe and Ga. By that the underlying cultural underpinnings that govern these speech acts of the two languages in question will be revealed, thereby making the outsider better understand the cultures of the Ewe and Ga languages of Ghana.

Summary of literature review

So far, we have seen the difference between mainstream etymology and its rare counterpart literary etymology; the former being the literal investigation of the history of lexical items or expressions from the time of their first use to the present and the later concerning the literariness espoused in a lexical item or an expression. We have discussed the theory of literary etymology which was originally applied to onomata and we seek to apply it to the act of appreciation and pleading for forgiveness in the Ewe and Ga languages. We have also seen in the literature the social, psychological and linguistic importance of thanking and pleading for forgiveness. It came to the fore that languages differ in the way they express ideas and concepts such as appreciation and rendering apology. The

paper now turns attention to how Ewe and Ga express thanks and plea in order to unearth their literary etymologies.

Methodology

The everyday language of ‘thank you’ and ‘forgive me’ were purposively sampled and presented to ten native speakers of Ewe at Aflao, Ketu Municipal, and ten native speakers of Ga at La, Accra, both of Ghana, to express their understanding of the literariness or metaphoricities of these expressions. Each of these groups of respondents comprised five elderly males and five elderly females. The number ten was chosen because according to Creswell and Poth (2016), qualitative studies such as the present one warrant about 5 to 25 respondents. For both languages under study, we had a total of 20 respondents. Moreover, for gender balance, each group of respondents have an equal number of males and females, five on each side. The responses of the native speakers of Ewe and Ga and the researchers’ expertise in these languages informed the analysis of data. From the analysis, the literary etymologies of the expressions of appreciation and plea in Ewe and Ga are brought to the fore, making this paper altogether descriptive.

Findings and discussion

This section discusses the findings of the present paper by responding to the research questions one after the other. The first two research questions seek to unearth the literary etymologies in the language of appreciation and plea in Ewe and Ga while the third question seeks to reveal any similarities or differences between Ewe and Ga in their literary etymologies of appreciation and plea.

Appreciation in Ewe

This section discusses the literariness espoused in the expression of appreciation in Ewe. The following scenario presents an everyday context of appreciation in Ewe as submitted by respondents.

Etse: Atsu, meda akpe na wò kakaka.

E. A. 1sg-give thanks prep 2sg intens.

(Atsu, thank you very much).

Atsu: Mesu akpe o.

Neg-reach thanks neg.

(No thanks.)

The above scenario shows the everyday unsophisticated way of expressing gratitude in the Ewe language. To express thanks, as noted earlier, one would say ‘Akpe na wò’ or ‘Meda akpe na wò’ which would translate as ‘Thank you’ or ‘I give you thanks’ respectively. First, let us discuss the literal or explicit sense embedded in the expression of showing gratitude and its response in Ewe. ‘Akpe na wò’ (Thank you) explicitly or literally means ‘thousand for you’. The number ‘thousand’ is ‘akpe’ in Ewe. In a literal sense, therefore, Etse is giving a ‘thousand’ to Atsu. We note, however, that the ‘akpe’ (thousand) is undefined in that one cannot tell whether the thousand is one or two or more. The common expression used to postmodify ‘akpe’ (lit. thousand) is the intensifier ‘kakaka’, which translates loosely as ‘very much’ in English.

The literal understanding of appreciation in Ewe presents the platform for the literariness or implicitness of this phatic communion. ‘Akpe’ encompasses the literary device of hyperbole, which encapsulates an excessive exaggeration or overstatement (Abrams, Clearidge, 2010). One shows gratitude by saying ‘Akpe’ (thousand; thank you) which is without a doubt a huge number. But a question comes as to what the thousand is for. We find the answer in the response to ‘akpe na wò’, which is ‘mesu akpe o’ (lit. it is not up to thousand). ‘Mesu akpe o’ reveals what the ‘akpe’ (thousand) stands for – different ways kindness is shown to the one expressing gratitude. In essence, Etse is saying that you have been kind to me

a thousand (or thousands) of times, and Atsu responds that they are not up to a thousand times. The one showing gratitude employs hyperbole to acknowledge the kindness extended towards him or her, while the other to whom gratitude is shown beats down the exaggeration by placing his/her kindness in perspective.

Moreover, in ‘Akpe na wò kakaka’ (Thank you very much), we note the employment of rhythm within which we further find repetition in the modifier ‘kakaka’. The expression ‘kakaka’ falls within the categories of reduplication which is very characteristic of the Ewe language. For example, in Ewe, something can be done ‘kabakaba’ or ‘kpatakpata’ (quickly); something can shake ‘vlayavlaya’; someone can run ‘gidigidi’ (onomatopoeic) and of course, one can be thanked ‘kakaka’. The rhythm in the reduplication ‘kakaka’ in the context of appreciation is that of positivity, the same as espoused in music. In that regard, saying ‘akpe’ without ‘kakaka’ shows that one is less appreciative than saying ‘akpe’ with ‘kakaka’. Delving deeper in the way ‘kakaka’ is said in the context in question reveals an attempt to show even in pronunciation one’s gratitude, in that how the ‘kakaka’ is said is as important as saying it. ‘Kakaka’ obviously has three syllables; however, the rendition of the vowel of the second syllable is longer than those of the first and third. ‘Kakaka’ is, therefore, pronounced thus, /kʌka:kʌ/. The prolongation of the vowel of the second syllable conveys the same level of appreciation we find in ‘akpe’ (thanks; thousand).

Appreciation in Ga

On the part of Ga, two forms of expression are used for expressing ‘thanks. These are ‘da shi’ and ‘yiwala dɔŋŋ’. To these expressions, the responses that are elicited are either ‘Shida bɛ’, ‘Adaaa shi’ or ‘Wuɔ kɛ tumo bɛ shida’.

The expression ‘da shi’ is probably a borrowed expression from Akan ‘da wa si’, which literally translates as ‘lying under you’. Plausibly, the full Ga expression for ‘da shi’ is ‘damɔ shishi’, which translates literally as ‘standing under’. This expression may have undergone the linguistic transformation of ellipsis (see Aelbrecht, 2015) to become ‘da shi’ as used presently. For one to thank another

person and tell the latter ‘Miida bo shi’ which translates loosely as ‘I thank you’ is, therefore, to literally say ‘I am standing under you’. The expression demonstrates respect and humility on the part of the one expressing thanks. To wit, the one showing gratitude sees him or herself to be subordinate to the one being thanked because by the act of what was done for him or her, the one who did the act is elevated above the former. The expression is, therefore, a recognition of the elevated status of the latter party. However, since the latter party also recognizes whatever act he or she is being thanked for as a social responsibility, he or she would not accept the elevated status. Thus, the response to the expression ‘Miida bo shi’ will either be ‘Shida be’, ‘Aaaa shi’ or ‘Wuɔ kɛ tumo be shida’. ‘Shida be’ and ‘Aaaa shi’ both have the same denotation, that is, ‘You don’t have to stand under me’. In effect, we are on the same level because just as you need that favour from me, I am also under obligation to render the favour to you. Just like the expression ‘Miida bo shi’, the responses ‘Shida be’ and ‘Aaaa shi’ both demonstrate humility on the part of the person who is being thanked. On a more metaphorical or implicit level, the person being thanked will respond, ‘Wuɔ kɛ tumo be shida’. This literally translates as ‘The fowl and the refuse dump have no standing under’, in the idiomatic or implicit sense, ‘The fowl does not need to thank the refuse dump’. In social relationships, there are people a person is tied to. That is to say their favour will forever be needed in one way or the other, just like the fowl that will invariably be tied to the refuse dump, where it finds worms for food. What the expression connotes, therefore, is that the one being thanked has no other option than to do the one expressing the thanks the favour.

Regarding ‘*yiwala dɔŋŋ*’, the expression is composed of two words – ‘*yiwala*’, which translates as ‘life to you’; and ‘*dɔŋŋ*’, which is an intensifier ‘never/anymore/again’, marking negation. Because ‘*dɔŋŋ*’ marks negation, its collocation with ‘*yiwala*’ neutralizes the joined meaning of the two expressions. However, it is commonplace in some languages that if there is double negation in a statement, it becomes positive. The figure of speech employed here is litotes where two negatives are artistically employed as a way of emphasizing a positive point (Abrams, 2010). An explanation from a language expert as to what could be happening in the

expression ‘*yiwala dɔŋŋ*’ is that there would have been another negative marker which was deleted as a result of the linguistic process of ellipsis. Perhaps, the expression could have been ‘*yiwala akana naagba ko dɔŋŋ*’, which will translate as ‘Your life should never encounter any problem anymore’. Thus, for the favour that was done to him or her, the person expressing thanks is wishing a trouble-free life for the one being thanked.

Plea in Ewe

The act of pleading for forgiveness in Ewe is known as ‘*kukuɖeɖe*’ (lit. doffing one’s hat). The following simple sketch demonstrates an everyday demonstration of pleading for forgiveness in Ewe.

Edo: *Mede kuku, tsɔe kem.*

1SG-remove hat take-3SG forgive-1SG.

(Please, forgive me).

Etse: *Yoo mesi, metsɔe ke wò.*

alright 1SG --hear --3SG 1SG --Take --3SG forgive 2SG.

(Alright, I have forgiven you)

As we see above, the common unsophisticated way of pleading in Ewe is ‘*Mede kuku, tsɔe kem*’, with the usual expected response ‘*Metsɔe ke wò*’. As in the case of appreciation, let us discuss the denotative or explicit meaning of plea in Ewe, thereupon we discuss the literary or implicit component of it. ‘*Mede kuku*’ literally means ‘I have taken off my hat’, while ‘*tsɔe kem*’ can loosely translate ‘forgive me’. In ‘*mede kuku*’, we see the employment of a metaphor. It is common knowledge among the Ewe as it is among the Akan and the Ga of Ghana that the act of removing one’s hat is a sign of respect for the elderly. In the light of that, in asymmetrical relationships of age, younger ones must take off their hats before

they exchange greetings or speak to the elderly. Not doffing one's hat in such contexts can be interpreted as an uncultured behaviour.

The significance of this metaphor is that in the context of asking for forgiveness among the Ewe, the offender, regardless of age, becomes the younger one who has to metaphorically *dɛ* (take off) *kuku* (hat) for the offended. The offended, also notwithstanding age, assumes the role of an older person to whom the offender must *dɛ* (take off) *kuku* (hat). Like appreciation, the act of pleading for mercy or asking for forgiveness among the Ewe is simple in words but deep in concept and in the use of language.

In the response part to '*medɛ kuku*', which is '*metɔɛ ke wò*', we see another use of a metaphor. While '*metɔɛ ke wò*' can loosely translate as 'I have forgiven you', '*metɔɛ ke wò*' carries more depth than its loose translation into English. The verb 'ke' in '*metɔɛ ke wò*' has the same meaning as stopping something from growing or falling. In the context of rainfall, we can say '*Etsia ke*' (the rain has stopped). The verb 'ke' can also mean 'open'. The metaphor, therefore, assumes meaning when we note that continuous keeping of grudge is likened to rainfall and when the rainfall of bitterness or anger 'ke' (stops), peace is restored. By the same fashion, keeping resentment or not forgiving is like something that is closed. When that thing 'ke' (opens), reconciliation takes place.

Plea in Ga

There are two variants of expression used to express plea in Ga. These are '*kpa fai*' and '*ofaine*'. Similar to what pertains in Ewe, the two expressions denote doffing of hat or taking off a hat. When a person says '*Miikpa bo fai*', which translates as 'I doff my hat for you' or '*Ofaine*', which perhaps is a statement, '*Ofaine*' (Here is your hat), which has undergone word formation process to become a portmanteau word, the person is only demonstrating humility and respect. Indeed, just as observed earlier, in the Ga and Ewe cultures, it is unacceptable for a person to have a hat on while addressing another person, particularly an elderly person, as that is a show of disrespect. In very serious situations, the person pleading may

use both expressions together as a form of emphasis, ‘Ofaine miikpa bo fai’. At other times, the separate expressions may be used together with ‘kɛke mi’, which translates as ‘Give it to me as a present/gift’. Thus, ‘Ofaine kɛke mi’ or ‘Miikpa bo fai kɛke mi’ will mean I doff my hat for you as a sign of respect; do not take recognition of what I did and do this for me as giving me a present. We give presents to people as a sign of affinity to them. By the same token, if the offended responds in the affirmative ‘Yoo! Mikeke bo’ (Ok, I have given it to you as a present/gift), a broken relationship is restored.

Similarities and differences between Ewe and Ga

Both the Ewe and Ga languages used in this study have shown a great deal of similarity as regards their expressions of appreciation and plea. We note from the discussions that indeed the way the two languages express appreciation and plea is literarily very deep and transcends any superficial considerations. Prima facie, these expressions are everyday expressions and present no sophistication; in toto, however, they are pregnant with meaning. In appreciation, both languages employ the literary device of hyperbole encrusted with cultural underpinnings, making the one expressing the thanks subordinate and the one being thanked superior. That trend also encompasses the expression of plea in both languages, making them identical in these regards. This resemblance between the two languages may be because they both belong to the same language family and have lived side by side each other for ages. One difference noted between the two languages is that the expression of appreciation in Ewe ‘akpe na wò’ (lit. one thousand to you) employs a numerical metaphor, while that of the Ga language ‘da shi’ (lit. lying under you) evokes a metaphor of place or position. In the case of the former, the receiver of the appreciation is literarily given the large number of thousand, while in that of the latter, the one to whom appreciation is shown assumes a metaphorical position on top of the one showing the appreciation.

Conclusion and implications

This paper has revealed the literary etymologies of appreciation and plea in Ewe and Ga. We have noted the sophistication these otherwise simple everyday expressions possess via the lens of literary etymology side by side their everyday use in literal contexts. Their literary etymologies have revealed salient language gems that would have been otherwise left unearthed. It goes without saying the depth of knowledge that we can reach as regards meaning via the spectacles of literary etymology, applied to other branches of language other than onomata. And there is no doubt that language and literature are inseparably linked and the border between them is blur or almost non-existent. The other side of language gets referred to in the discussion of this side of literature and vice versa. On that foundation, it behoves the linguistic and the literary worlds to marry both mainstream etymology and literary etymology when it comes to investigating the history of words and expressions and their meanings. This blend, like that of language and literature, would fetch all there is about etymology, being it mainstream or literary.

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About the Authors

Cosmas Rai Amenorvi is a lecturer of English and Academic Writing and Communication Skills at the Department of Languages and General Studies of the University of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani, Ghana. He has been teaching and investigating English, Linguistics, Literature and Communication for more than a decade now. His research interests are in the areas of English Phonology, Sociolinguistics, Literary Criticism, Discourse Analysis, Contact Linguistics and Youth Language.

Benjamin Kubi is an Assistant Lecturer at the Department of Ghanaian Languages and Linguistics, University of Cape Coast, Ghana, where he teaches courses in Literature, and Ga Language and Culture. He is currently pursuing his PhD in African Studies at the Centre for African and International Studies, University of Cape Coast, Ghana. His research interests are in Oral Literature, Comparative Literature, Gender, and Language and Culture.