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**CONGRUENT PROVERBS: THE CONCEPT AND ROLES IN
CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

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Abstract

Over the years, the Yorùbá has successfully employed proverbs to manage conflicts and discords among her populace. Many of these proverbs are conceptually and contextually congruent. The goal of this work is to draw attention to, and improve the knowledge of congruent proverbs using the proverbs of conflict resolution as the subject markers. The elders perceived by the Yorùbá to be the custodians of indigenous proverbs were consulted for conflict-resolving proverbs, their interpretation and implications. The interpretations and implications were subjected to simple statistical analysis. Thirty proverbs that met the inclusion criteria were selected for the study. The analysis showed that two or more proverbs may be semantically congruent. The paper concluded that knowledge of the congruent proverbs could facilitate a recall of proverbial expressions, allows flexibility of use, enables complementary usage, provides a substitution, prevents monotony, allows smooth expression of thoughts, reinforces ideas, improves potency of speech and in effect, achieves the desired goal of peace-making in African setting.

Key Words: Congruent proverbs; Concept; Conflict resolution; Knowledge of

Introduction

The power of language at influencing the intentions or actions of individual for good or bad cannot be overstated. According to Wallnork (1969, p. 12), aptly cited by Ademowo and Balogun (2014), a language has the following roles:

- i. As a social regulator
- ii. As an instrument of action
- iii. To convey order and information
- iv. To influence people
- v. To enable self-expression, and
- vi. To embody and enable thought

In the Holy book of Mathew, a Centurion came to Jesus Christ and requested that he only says his words and his servant shall be healed. Noting his faith, Jesus Christ spoke to the Centurion: “Go home your belief will come to pass”. Instantaneously, his servant was healed (*The Good News Bible with Deuterocanonical Books*, 2010). Such is the power of speech at producing unimaginable divine or secular outcome.

Also, Ogundeji (2009) remarked:

Èdè ni ọ̀nà ibánisọ̀ọ́ tí ó já gaara jùlọ́ nínú gbogbo ọ̀nà ibánisọ̀ọ́ tí ó wà.

Language is the most fluent of all the available means of communication.

Although, not a direct measurement of wisdom, the quality of speech could determine the difference between the ‘wise’ and the ‘fool’. As noted among the orators and motivational speakers, the effectiveness of speech depends not only on what is said but also on how it is said. There are many ways by which speeches can be made effective. In the Yoruba setting, the effectiveness of a speech depends largely on the colouration of the speech with proverbs and proverbial expressions. In community and town meetings, a good knowledge of proverbs is sine qua non to qualitative and effective speech. Proverbs are like paints; they not only improve the aesthetics of speech; they also improve its value. As cited by Ademowo and Balogun (2014, pg. 159), proverbs enable people to conform to the desired rules, mores and traditions of a community. A speech encoded in proverbs is worthier, more wholesome, intelligent, persuasive, thought-provoking, famous and effective than plain language. Proverbs do not just transmit ideas, but also flavour their contents, fine-tune their coarseness, provide the scaffolding, supply the missing link and sculpt their overall contents into a more impressive speech.

These were the views of Olatubosun (1996) as outlined in ‘Egbeta Òwe Á’.

1. *Òwe l’ẹ̀şin ọ̀ọ́, bí ọ̀ọ́ bá sọ̀nù, ọ̀we la fì ñ wáa*

Proverb is a horse and on its ride, the lost word is searched

2. *Òwe ni ìmọ̀lẹ̀, bí ọ̀rọ̀ kan bá ẹ̀sókùnkùn, òwe ni yóò tan ìmọ̀lẹ̀ sí*

Proverb is the light that illuminates a word in the dark

3. *Òwe ni atukọ ọ̀rọ̀, bí ó bá dé ojú agbami, òwe lè wa ọ̀kọ̀ rẹ̀ dé èbúté*

Proverb is a rower that can row the boat of words into the harbour

4. *Òwe ni atúdè ọ̀rọ̀, bí ọ̀rọ̀ kan bá lojúpọ̀, òwe ni a fi ní yanújú rẹ̀*

Proverb is a spanner, when the bolt of word becomes stiff, it can loosen it

5. *Òwe ni àkàbà ọ̀rọ̀, bí ọ̀rọ̀ kan bá so ọ̀lọgbọ̀n kọ̀, tó so òmgọ̀ kọ̀, òwe ni àkàbà tí a fi lè gùn-ún d'ókè*

Proverb is a ladder that can be climbed to rescue the Wise and the Fools that are hung up by words

6. *Òwe ni 'ìsọ̀yè ọ̀rọ̀, bí a bá fẹ̀ gbàgbé ọ̀rọ̀, òwe ló máa rọ̀o láşọ̀*

Proverb is a reminder that helps to recall forgotten words from memory

7. *Òwe l'òjò ọ̀rọ̀, bí ọ̀rọ̀ bá ní p'òùngbẹ̀, òwe ló máa rojò láti mú'lẹ̀ ọ̀rọ̀ tutù*

Proverb is a rain that wets the ground for the word when thirsty

8. *Òwe ni mànámáná tó ní tàn lásikò tí a bá fẹ̀ jìn sí kòtò ọ̀rọ̀*

Proverb is the lightning that flashes when someone is about fall into the pit of word

In the view of Ogundeji (2009), proverbs are indispensable in making someone morally upright as he argued:

A kò lè s'ọ̀rọ̀ nípa ipa tí èdè ní kó nínú ọ̀rọ̀ jìjẹ ọ̀mọ̀lúàbí láláwùjọ̀ láì s'ọ̀rọ̀ nípa òwe

In no way can we discuss the role of language in being an upright person without recourse to proverbs.

In his own opinion, George (2013) averred:

Proverbs constitute Indigenous knowledge with lesson for multi-centric and polycentric ways of knowing. In other words, proverbs challenge dominant Eurocentric ways of knowledge production by working with such ideas of holism and holistic education, the intellectuality of emotions, spirituality and spiritual knowing, and the power of relations of the learner to the Land on which they study.

Ademowo and Balogun (2014, p.149) also stated:

If culture is a veritable instrument of development, if language is a carrier of culture and if the relationship between language and culture is like that between

two sides of the same coin, then the role of proverb as a metaphorical use of language cannot be overemphasized in any development discourse (p. 149).

From the foregoing submissions, it is obvious that proverbs generally play significant roles in shaping the life, goals and aspirations of mankind.

The Roles of Proverbs in Conflict Resolution

Having given the general overview of proverbs, it is now apt to discuss the roles of proverbs in conflict resolutions. According to Ademowo and Balogun (2014), no human society can exist to experience peace without the effective/explorative use of and development of its metaphoric concepts/language that will encourage and teach about peace as we have in proverbs. Makamani (2013, p.10) averred, African proverbs are a vital component of the indigenous knowledge systems of Africans that can be used to resolve conflict at both the micro and macro levels of society. In their own opinion, Philips and Ohwovoriele (2011, p. 136) remarked that peacemaking and conflict resolution strategies in marital conflict often involve discourse usually interspersed with proverbs. Therefore, whenever the appropriate proverb is presented to the parties in dispute, the tensions that are inherent in such relationships are controlled through the use of elliptical proverbial speech (Agbaje 2002, p. 237).

Other important benefits of proverbs include a sense of the community, a sense of good human relations, a sense of sacredness of life, a sense of hospitality, a sense of sacredness of everything and religion, and a sense of respect for authority and elders who are in possession of wisdom by virtue of their experience (Adamo, 2015, p. 11).

Beyond their onshore benefits, proverbs could produce cross-border peace and reconciliation. As noted by writers, proverbs unify people around the world (*Afrostyle Magazine*). Indeed, proverbs can be said to be without borders since proverbs of one nation can be ‘ferried’ offshore to resolve conflict in another nation if interpreted in the native language. In the **Yorùbá** sociocultural setting, actions and reactions depends not on only what is said but also on how it is said. This is illustrated by the popular saying: ‘*Pelẹ l’áko, ó l’ábo*’ (To say, “I’m sorry” has positive and negative inflections). Also indicative of how words can influence actions and reactions is the proverb ‘*Ọrọ pelẹ ló n yọ obì l’ápò, ọrọ lile ló n yọ idà l’ápó*’ (Sweet words draws kolanut from the pocket while harsh words draw sword from the scabbard). These and many other proverbs are found in the **Yorùbá** proverbs of conflict resolution to pacify aggrieved parties.

Based on these valuable roles therefore, there is the need to explore ways to improve people’s knowledge of proverbs so as to facilitate their uses in conflict resolution and peace-making missions. One of such strategies is the concept of congruent proverbs. Congruent proverbs are those with similar connotations in concept and context irrespective of their structures and compositions. This is the main theme of this study.

Objectives

The purpose of this work is to draw attention to and improve knowledge of congruent proverbs. To this end, the paper dives into the pool of congruent proverbs using the Yorùbá proverbs of conflict resolution as the springboard. Over the years, the Yoruba has established certain socio-cultural norms in their efforts at peace building. These include:

- i. The concept of ‘*Omólúàbí*’ (Being morally upright)
- ii. Good interpersonal relationship
- iii. Tolerance and cooperation
- iv. Discouragement of hate speech and provocative statements
- v. Expression of love
- vi. Promotion of unity in diversity
- vii. Educating people about the evils of conflicts
- viii. Pacifying the aggrieved parties
- ix. Reconciliatory efforts
- x. Suppression of retaliatory impulses

One of the tools with which these values are propped into reality is the proverbial expressions. Thus, this paper illustrated the utilitarian use of congruent proverbs in achieving these virtues.

Methodology

Ten communities were randomly selected for this work. The elders perceived by the Yorùbá to be the custodians of indigenous proverbs in those communities were consulted for conflict-resolving proverbs, their interpretation and implications. Although, the meanings given to each proverb vary from elder to elder, their responses were subjected to statistical analysis and the meaning with the highest frequency was considered the actual meaning of each proverb.

Findings

Thirty of such proverbs were selected for this work. The proverbs were congruently paired based on similarities of concept and context. Thus, fifteen (15) pairs of congruent proverbs were identified and analysed. These were tabulated as follows:

1. *Ohun tí a fí ñ wá ogun, kò tó ohun tí à ñ fí ogun wá*
What is used to seek war is not as much as what the war seeks

S/N	Congruent Proverbs and Interpretations	Implications
2.1	<p><i>Ohun tí a fí ñ wá ogun, kò tó ohun tí à ñ fí ogun wá</i></p> <p>What is used to seek war is not as much as what the war seeks</p> <p><i>Ìberẹ ogun là ñ mọ, enikan kii mọ òpin rẹ</i></p> <p>We only know the beginning of war; we don't know how it will end</p>	<p>What is used to seek war is not as much as what the war seeks implies that what triggers war is usually insignificant. In other words, war is usually precipitated by minor issues and when it starts, no one can predict the outcome. Thus, people must be cautious of actions or inactions that may precipitate war. These proverbs are used in conflict resolution to warn people particularly war-mongers against frivolous statements, hate speech, unguarded utterances and other subtle issues that may provoke individual or group of individuals to start off wars. The aggrieved parties are warned to avoid war because nobody could predict how huge the devastating effects could be. The two proverbs can be used interchangeably or to complement or emphasize each other in conflict resolution.</p>
2.2	<p><i>Kí sòbiyà tó d'egbò, onígànbi làá kée sí</i></p> <p>Before a guineaworm sore becomes ulcerated, the healer must be sent for</p> <p><i>Kékeré la ti ñ pẹka ìròkò, tó bá dàgbà tán ẹbọ ló ñ gbà</i></p> <p>An iroko tree is better pruned before it grows to maturity when it starts to demand sacrifice</p>	<p>Guinea worm sore in Yoruba setting is usually treated by the traditional healer. A stich in time, they say, saves nine. A healer must be contacted early enough to prevent the Guinea worm sore from becoming chronic ulcer. This is the theme of the second proverb. The Iroko tree, when grown into maturity is believed by the Yoruba to harbor evil spirits. In that instance, sacrifices are made to appease the spirits. It is the view of the Yoruba that the tree should be pruned down before it starts to demand for sacrifices at maturity. In the same vein a conflict or disagreement is better resolved early to prevent escalation. These proverbs are meant to sensitize the stakeholders to nip rancorous issues in the bud. This can be achieved by appeal, attenuating provocative statements, discouraging fake news, prevention of hate speech and pacifying aggrieved parties. With such intervention, it is possible that war and warring can be averted. Like other congruent proverbs, these proverbs can be used to substitute, complement or emphasize each other at peace-making ventures.</p>
2.3	<p><i>Ọrọ pẹlẹ ló ñ yọ obì l'ápò, ọrọ lile ló ñ yọ idà l'ápó</i></p> <p>Sweet words draw kolanut from the pocket while harsh words draw sword from the scabbard</p>	<p>The tongue (words of mouth) can make or mar a relationship. In its negative form, the tongue is perceived as the most dangerous organ in the body. It is seen as the deadliest and the most effective at hurting human soul. The Japanese has proverbially likened the tongue to a sharp knife that kills without drawing blood” In its positive form however, the tongue can bless,</p>

	<p><i>Pẹlẹ l'áko, ó l'ábo</i></p> <p>To say, "I'm sorry" has positive and negative inflections</p>	<p>praise, comfort and heal the soul. The Yoruba has noted these attributes and through proverbs attempts to teach the tongue (mind) to suppress its negative and promote its positive features. By reiterating the consequences of its negative and positive utterances, the proverbs teach the tongue (mind) to rid itself of negative and fill it with positive utterances. The proverbs are particularly valuable at resolving marital or interpersonal conflicts.</p>
2.4	<p><i>Òkun kii hó ruru, ká wàá ruru</i></p> <p>Turbulent ocean must not be sailed turbulently</p> <p><i>A kii fi búburú gbesan búburú</i></p> <p>You don't pay evil with evil</p>	<p>For those who believe in 'eye for eye', 'tooth for tooth', these proverbs have been developed by the Yoruba to pacify them. The proverbs are used to pacify the aggrieved parties to avoid retaliation in apparent or actual conflicts.</p>
2.5	<p><i>Af'oró ya 'ró kii jekí oró tán</i></p> <p>Paying evil with evil perpetuates evil in a vicious circle.</p> <p><i>Bí a kò bá gbàgbé ọọ ànà, a kii r'eni bá s'ọre</i></p> <p>No forgiveness, no friendship</p>	<p>These proverbs are similar to but deeper than the previous proverbs. Quite unlike the previous proverbs, these, in addition to pacifying, state the implications of 'eye for eye', 'tooth for tooth' or unforgiveness. The first proverb noted the vicious persistence of paying evil with evil while the second focused on the loss of friendship following un-forgiveness. Thus, they are used to reconcile conflicting parties so as to 'exterminate' evil and promote friendship.</p>
2.6	<p><i>Bí a bá n lé'ni tí a kò bá' ni, iwọn là n bá'ni s'otá mọ</i></p> <p>Failure to catch up with an enemy on the run should necessitate a retreat</p> <p><i>Mọ'jà mọ'sá là n m'akikanjú lógun, akikanjú tó mọ'jà, tí kò mọ'sá ló máa n b'ógun lọ</i></p> <p>He who fights and run away, lives to fight another day but whoever fails to run away ends up in battle</p>	<p>The implications of these proverbs is that there ought to be limit to enmity. The proverbs remind that nobody has monopoly of violence. Thus, people must seek caution. They must at all cost avoid 'fight to finish'. In particular, people must not embark on a suicide mission in the name of cold or hot war. A conflict as minor as keeping malice can lead to self-destruction either physically or mentally. For example, it is known that nursing a grudge can precipitate insomnia, hypertension and other psycho-somatic disorders. Thus, whoever fails to forgive must be ready to face the harmful consequences. The weight of these proverbs hinges on the 'self-harm' warning. With such caveat, aggrieved parties are bound to hands down in persuasion. The proverbs are particularly useful at resolving communal clashes</p>
2.7	<p><i>Sùúrù baba iwà àgbà tó ni sùúrù ohun gbogbo ló ní</i></p> <p>Patience is the father of all morals, a patient elder has everything</p>	<p>These proverbs are used to preach patience and tolerance among the people. The benefit of patience is noted by the first proverb. An elder who is patient has everything. Of course, it doesn't have to be material things. It could be respect, good health or peace of mind.</p>

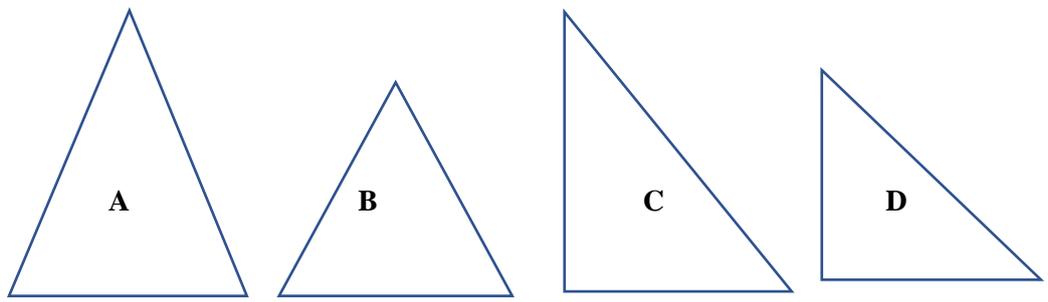
	<p><i>Agbè ní ñ jẹgbin omi, àgbà ní ñ jẹgbin ọrọ</i></p> <p>Water gourds bear the dirt; elders bear the twaddle</p>	<p>Also, the ‘Elder’ in this context does not imply old age rather, it implies someone with greater responsibilities. This could be leaders at home such as husband, in the community or in the office. The proverbs are usually directed to someone who is offended or cheated in conflicts or disagreements. No matter what, it is expected that someone in the position of authority must be patient, enduring, tolerant and able to control his or her temper without vengeance.</p>
2.8	<p><i>A kii mọ-ọn rìn kórí má jì</i></p> <p>In no way can we walk without the head moving</p> <p><i>A kii mọ-ọn gún mọ-ọn tẹ kí iyán ewùrà máà ní ọmọ (kókó)</i></p> <p>In no way can we pound water yam without lumps.</p>	<p>There is a common understanding that it is impossible for human being to live without conflicts. Truly, in no way can human being exist without differences. Therefore, when conflict strikes, there is the need to accept this fact and look for ways to end the conflict. People must stop pointing accusing fingers that may re-ignite the burning issues. This is the intent of these proverbs. The proverbs are meant to educate the offended that misunderstanding may arise but there is the need to resolve the differences amicably. As illustrated by another proverb; “<i>A rẹ má jà kan ò sí, a jà máà rẹ nìkan ni kò dára</i>”. There is no permanent friend but permanent enemy is bad.</p>
2.9	<p><i>Adiyẹ tí kò lára àdánù kii yé eyin rẹ sórí pepe</i></p> <p>An intolerant hen does not lay its egg on a shelf</p> <p><i>Má ta omi sí mi lára kii lọ s’etí odò</i></p> <p>Someone who abhors water does not go to the riverside</p>	<p>In a discord, an uncompromising individual may prove stubborn despite entreaties. Such individual needed to be bluntly educated. This is aptly captured by Fadipe (1970): “It is a norm that two fighting must be separated for the sake of peace and humanity. And after the combatants have been separated and efforts have been made to pacify them, either of them who remains aggressive and uncompromising will find himself /herself in a very awkward situation. And it is the stubbornness and spiteful temper of the social non-conformist which are specifically disapproved of even if other facts of the case are in his favour” The above proverbs concur with these remarks and are used to educate the uncompromising individuals to avoid getting entangled in conflicts since prevention is better than cure.</p>
2.10	<p><i>Eni tí a bá sùn tì là ñ jarunpá lù</i></p> <p>It is the bed partner that bears the brunt of purposeless movement during sleep</p>	<p>For peace to reign sometimes require knowledge of the realities of live. As earlier noted, in no way can man exist without conflict. It is a reality of live that friends, neighbours or business partners are the first to note and bear the brunt of others’ inadequacies. For instance, husband is the first to note and bear the brunt of the</p>

	<p><i>Eni bá wà létí odò ló ñ gbọ kíkùn eja</i> Whoever stands by the riverbank hears the fish rumbling</p>	<p>wife's shortcomings and vice-versa. However, many atimes, people fail to come to terms with these realities. Rather than tolerance, what we see is conflicts and confrontations. This is particularly so with marital disharmony. It is with this understanding that the Yoruba attempts to teach through proverbs, the need to tolerate the inevitable. Both proverbs are directed at the opposing parties to eschew violence and promote marital harmony and community peace building.</p>
2.11	<p><i>Bí eyin olóko se gàn-nàkù jù bẹẹ lọ, òun ni oga lébira</i> No matter how crooked the back of the farm owner is, he remains the master of the labourer <i>Ilá kíl ga ju olóko kí ó máa leè ka</i> An okra plant cannot be too tall for the farmer to harvest it</p>	<p>Sometimes, conflicts ensue because of resentment against constituted authority. These proverbs are meant to remind the subordinates of their relationship with the authority. They are to teach the moral lesson of obedience. As illustrated by the proverbs, no matter the situation, authority has control over the subjects. Thus, the subjects must avoid being confrontational in dealing with the authority because the authority has what it takes to deal with the non-conformists.</p>
2.12	<p><i>Jẹ kí n jẹ ló ñ mú ayò dùn</i> Winning in turns is what makes <i>ayo</i> game interesting <i>Ènikan kí jẹ kí ilẹ fẹ</i> No man feeds alone amidst the hungry and makes merry.</p>	<p>While sometimes, crisis erupts as a result of resentment against authority, there are times when the crisis is a result of leadership failure. As known, poverty, hunger and all other attributes of leadership failures pervades the continent of Africa. It is said that a hungry man is an angry man. In a situation where there are injustices and socio-economic inequalities in the land, there is bound to be restiveness and violence. Thus, for peace to reign; there is a need for checks and balances. While followers are expected to be obedient, leaders are also expected to rise up to their responsibilities. This is the purpose of these proverbs as expressed by the proverb of <i>ayo</i> game and reiterated by the second proverb. The <i>ayo</i> game is played in a carved wood containing twelve shallow holes in two rows of six on each side. The game like draught is played by two people. Sometimes the players particularly the better player allows the weak to win if only for once. With such magnanimity otherwise known as <i>tẹdí-òpè-mọlẹ</i> (keep the amateur on the seat), the game becomes more interesting and enduring not only for the players but also the spectators. This is what is expected of leaders for peace to reign in the society. People must pave the way for socio-economic equality. The proverbs are used to sensitize the leaders towards ensuring justice and socio-economic equality in the society.</p>

<p>2.13</p>	<p><i>Làì nìdìí obìnrin kii jẹ kúmólú</i> Without cause, a woman is not named 'Kumolu'</p> <p><i>Làì nìdìí eṣẹ kii dédé ṣẹ</i> Without cause, a fist does not fracture</p>	<p>These proverbs are used as inquiries into the cause(s) of conflicts. Culturally, 'Kumolu' is a name reserved exclusively for men by the Yoruba. Therefore, naming a woman 'Kumolu' in Yoruba tradition must be with a condition. Similarly, a fist may not fracture spontaneously unless something is responsible. This is the contention of the Yoruba as expressed by these proverbs. In no way can a conflict erupt without a cause. Thus, these proverbs are meant to unravel the root cause (s) of conflicts so as to mediate appropriately and prevent future occurrence.</p>
<p>2.14</p>	<p><i>Mọ'wà f'óniwà ló ñ jẹ oṣẹ j'ore</i> To promote friendship is to understand the nature of others</p> <p><i>Tí ajá bá sá-ń-bà ẹkùn, ẹkùn náà á sá-ń-bà ajá</i> There ought to be mutual respect between a lion and a dog</p>	<p>The best way to manage conflicts and inter personal issues is to avoid them. This can be achieved through mutual understanding. Ideally, friendship must be reciprocal. People must know what others likes and dislikes. They must understand each other's do's and don'ts. With such cordial relationship, friction and conflicts will be averted</p>
<p>2.15</p>	<p><i>Olófofó ò gba egbewá, ibi oṣẹ ló ñ mọ</i> The rumour-monger receives no penny; the best reward is 'thanks'</p> <p><i>Kii ṣe gbogbo ohun tí ojú bá rí ni ẹnu ñ sọ</i> It isn't every piece of information that one is privy to that should be divulged</p>	<p>Rumour like a wild fire, is highly destructive. Peddling rumour is like igniting a gun powder. It can trigger off unprecedented consequences. This is a fact that has been noted by the Yoruba and needed to be eliminated thereby necessitating the congruent proverbs. It is interesting to note that culprits can be embarrassed if caught in their acts. Thus, the Yoruba had adopted the proverbs to chide rumour-mongers so as to desist from the ignoble act. This will serve as deterrent for others.</p>

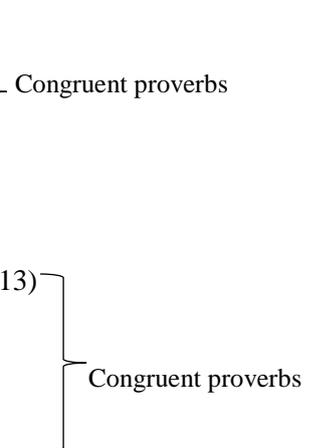
Discussion

The origin of congruent proverbs is traceable to the practice of Yoruba at saying one thing in different ways. As the saying goes, '*Onà kan ò wọ'jà*' (Olajuyin 2008), meaning there are alternative routes to a market square or conceptually translated, there are many ways to skin a cat. It is a common practice among the Yoruba to express an idea by a proverb at one time and then express the same idea at another time by another proverb. Gradually, as the practice recurs, two or more proverbs become congruent. As earlier noted, congruent proverbs are similar in concepts but not necessarily in contents. The proverbs are similar in connotations but may differ in compositions. This can be illustrated by the mathematical theory of congruent triangles. The **congruent triangles** are similar in shape and angles (Macrae et al. 2008) but not necessarily in sizes. This can be graphically represented as follows:



Triangles ‘A’ and ‘B’ are similar in shape and angles but different in sizes. Similarly, triangles ‘C’ and ‘D’ are similar in shape and angles but different in sizes. Both triangles ‘A’ and ‘B’ are congruent just as are triangles ‘C’ and ‘D’ because each pair has similar shape or angles though differ in sizes. Conversely, neither triangle ‘A’ nor ‘B’ is congruent with ‘C’ or ‘D’ because they differ in shapes and angles even though ‘A’ and ‘C’ or ‘B’ and ‘D’ are of the same sizes. The following proverbs (Olajuyin 2018, pg. 66) further elucidate this concept.

- i. *A kùí ti oḡo oḡà kọ eyìn epo oḡà* (words = 9)
(You don’t harvest the palm fruits for oil sale on the market day)
- ii. *Òwúro kùtù la ti ñ sán imọ tó gbẹ* (words= 9)
(Dry palm fronds are better knotted early in the morning)
- iii. *Bí irọ bá lọ l’ógún ọdún, oḡo kan ọṣo ni òtító yóò báa* (words= 13)
(Falsehood may travel far, truth will catch up with it one day)
- iv. *Àṣe pamọ ló wà, àṣegbé kan ò sí láyé* (words = 9)
(Evil deed may be hidden, but would never be hidden forever)



The first two proverbs (i & ii) above are congruent because both warn against delay and procrastination. They both imply that a stich in time saves nine. Also, proverbs iii & iv are congruent because they have the same connotations. They both convey the same message that deceit is ephemeral. However, neither ‘i’ nor ‘ii’ is congruent with ‘iii’ or ‘iv’ because they differ in connotations even though ‘i’ and ‘iv’ for instance are structurally similar (same word count of ‘9’). This concept of congruence is noted as a common denominator among the fifteen pairs of proverbs discussed above. As found, the paired proverbs are semantically congruent.

They are conceptually and contextually similar and can be used to substitute each other. That is, a known proverb can be used to substitute another when the intended proverb is lost from memory. Such substitution often resolves a linguistic ‘hiccough’ in everyday discourse. This can be illustrated with the mathematical theory of simultaneous equations. Let’s consider the following equation:

$$3b + 8a - 1 = 0 \text{ and } 12 - a + 2b = 0$$

First rearrange the equations with letters in alphabetical order to the left and the free numbers to the right side of the equal (=) sign. Thus, we have:

$$8a + 3b = 1 \text{ (Equation A)}$$

$$a - 2b = 12 \text{ (Equation B)}$$

Multiply all the factors in equation ‘B’ by 8 so as to have the same factor in one of the unknown. Thus, we have:

$$8a + 3b = 1$$

$$8a - 16b = 96$$

Then, subtract the smaller equation from the larger equation (i.e. subtract equation ‘A’ from equation ‘B’). We have

$$8a - 16b = 96$$

$$\underline{8a + 3b = 1}$$

$$-19b = 95 \text{ [i.e. } -16b - (+3b) = -19b \text{ and } 96 - 1 = 95]$$

Now, if $(-19b) = 95$

Then, $b = 95 \div (-19)$ and

$$b = (-5).$$

Now, substitute ‘b’ in the simultaneous equations with -5 to see that all the equations are solved. In the same way, substituting unknown congruent proverb with the known would solve a linguistic ‘hiccough’ with ease. This and other attributes of congruent proverbs are noted in this study. As observed, the characteristic features of the fifteen (15) paired proverbs are:

1. They are semantically similar
2. They are mostly structurally dis-similar
3. They complement each other
4. They reinforce each other
5. Each of the paired proverbs can substitute one another
6. They, when used together prevent repetition hence monotony of speech
7. They, in their synergistic action improve the potency of speech

With these attributes, congruent proverbs would not only prevent linguistic drowning but also would promote smooth and steady sail through a linguistic voyage in everyday discourse. As such, they are of inestimable value in the course of conflict resolution discourse.

Conclusion

This paper drew attention to the existence and values of congruent proverbs in conflict resolutions. The paper reaffirmed the fact that two or more proverbs may be semantically congruent. It shows that Yorùbá has been using the phenomenon of congruent proverbs over the years for character modulations, warnings, advice, encouragement and where necessary to chide so as to achieve the desired goal of peaceful coexistence in the study locale. It further argued that congruent proverbs could facilitate a recall of proverbial expressions, allows flexibility of use, enable complementary usage, provide a substitution, prevent monotony, allow smooth expression of thoughts, improve potency of speech and reinforce ideas in a conflict resolution discourse. It is therefore paramount for stakeholders to explore ways to improve their knowledge of congruent proverbs so as to facilitate their uses in conflict resolution and peace-building missions in African setting. It must however be stated here that scholarly works on the phenomenon of congruent proverbs is practically non-existence. It is therefore suggested that workers should beam research lights on this construct with the goal to facilitate understanding and use of congruent proverbs in conflict resolution and other aspects of human endeavors.

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