

Language and liberty

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Abstract

Linguists consider language, the most important tool of human existence, as first and foremost, a cognitive experience actualized through speech. Liberty, a principal concept, has since the beginning of the renaissance attracted the attention of philosophers, jurists, political scientists, ethicists, media scholars, among others, as an indispensable facet of human life in the areas of governance and the constitution of order, peoplehood, and societal value systems. Following the philosophical traditions of Sir Isaiah Berlin and drawing on African (Akan) axioms, the paper presents a theory relating to the entwining between language and liberty by elucidating how one indexes the other in a political process and practice, judicial process, in the foundation of people's social and moral value systems, as a healthcare construct, and in free speech. Also explicated is the fact that actors' effective use of language (linguistic and discourse-pragmatic tools) ensures success in the fight for liberty. Finally, the theory calls for liberty to be rooted in a nation's laws, politics, philosophical traditions, value systems, healthcare practice, and the construction and enactment of free speech in order to make the fight for it (liberty) a reality.

Keywords: *language, liberty, political process and practice, judicial process, social and moral value, healthcare, free speech.*

Introduction

Overview

In this brief paper, I present a theory on language and liberty seen through the eyes of an African (Ghanaian) linguist. I am aware of the danger of parsimony regarding calling this a theory; unless one views theory as a systematic and scientific account of knowledge forgetting about notions of provability. I neither define systematic, scientific nor knowledge. Indeed, as a linguist I am aware that words either have no meaning(s) at all or that they have too many meanings. The situation is made worse by the fact that since 1987 I have not and do not plan to use a dictionary given that dictionaries give synonyms and synonyms tend to be useless, if not dangerous. Giving definitions or meanings is therefore not part of my business in the current enterprise. All I attempt to do here is to explicate what I take language and liberty to be, and the role they play in the lives of people within different informal and institutional domains.

Having ‘said’ all the above, I am also aware of the confusing nature of identifying categories of say language and/or liberty given that once one identifies a category or categories then one, many a time, must come up with different sub-categories within the identified categories. An example will suffice! To the question, *Which is ‘birdier,’ a sparrow or a penguin?* What comes to mind right away is that *there are birds and there are birds*, a sparrow is birdier than a penguin. I will be tempted to put them in different categories—those that are ‘normal’ birds such as sparrows and robins and those that are ‘barely’ birds such as penguins and ostriches. Therefore, as I attempt to inspect what language and liberty are, and how they index each other in various social ecologies, I must pay attention to notions of language ideology, usage, understandability, and interpretation as details of analysis and synthesis proceed.

I have not reviewed the literature as much as I should and as I normally do, not because I do not consider such literature relevant at this time; I see them as relevant but just do not see

how helpful they are to my current enterprise. I am willing to accept any criticism in and from that front. I also neither describe the data I use nor the method of analysis; those writing to satisfy the desires, whims and caprices of some editors and reviewers should. I have no criticism whatsoever for those who review the literature on the subject or topic they write about. In fact I encourage researchers to do so since they will not get published if they take the course of action I have taken. I take it as axiomatic that I have a story to tell and I tell it. I remember the closing utterance of storytelling I so often enjoyed as a child, *M'anansesem a metoee yi, se eye de o, enye de o, ebi nkɔ na ebi mmra. Medesoa Kofi Adinkra*. 'Whether my story is good or not so good, take some with you and bring some here; I select Kofi Adinkra to tell his story.' To wit, inspect my paper (story), take what you consider useful and discard (or return to me) what you consider unusable and worthless.

The paper is organized as thus: the first section, the introduction, deals with what language and liberty are. The section that follows is about language and liberty in a political process and political practice and this is followed by a discussion on language and liberty in judicial process. The next two sections deal with language and liberty as a social and moral value, and language and liberty as a health construct. Following this is a section that focuses on language, liberty and free speech. The final section provides a summary.

Language

Language, whether spoken concretely, written or signed and shared by a community of speakers, is an important tool in the socio-cultural, political, juridical and medical lives of its users. Language is irrefutably an integral part of human life, existence and/or survival. Our lives are organized around and run through language. Indeed, every human undertaking is only possible because of language and neither a discussion and/or application of a society's value systems, law, literature, medicine and health, philosophy, politics, religion, and other human enterprises can be

possible without language. Undeniably, governance, democracy, the constitution of order, and various freedoms enjoyed, fought for, contested, won and/or lost were not or cannot be actualized without language. The scope, extent and style of language usage, the ideologies associated with language, whether language's usage is free, restricted, or tabooed, the costs and rewards associated with its appropriate and efficacious use all clash and blend in different human communities. Furthermore, the rules that govern who can use what type of language, the statuses that empower some to use a particular kind of language (such as the language of power or subserviency), and the punishment for communicative infraction resulting from inappropriate and inefficacious use of language are embedded and formulated in a web of constellation; an assemblage from where appropriate choice of utterances are made to perform various speech acts (such as requesting, apologizing, challenging, complimenting, insulting, praising, among others), in various speech events.

It is essential that, in working on any theory on language, researchers underscore the ideological underpinnings of language as a cognitive experience with concretization in social practice with political, and sometimes, ethnicity nuances and/or undercurrents. The sounds, prosodies, vocabulary, grammar (in its broad sense) and meaning of language as well as the variety of ways of using it (language) and its ability to change through time to suit existing and future discourse ecologies empowers language to index different socio-political constructs and be indexed by them.

On language use in different social and institutional domains, some of my earlier work examined its (language's) import in *ordinary conversations* (Obeng, 1994, 1997a, 1999, 2003), *politics* (Obeng, 1997b, 2002, 2003, 2012), *law* (Obeng, 1997c, 1999, 2002, 2010, 2011, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2023), *religion* (Obeng, 2010, 2016), and *health* (Obeng, 2008, 2013, 2022). Recently, I have expanded my work on the connection between language and liberty within African (Ghanaian) politics,

law and healthcare. Particularly, I have subjected to rigorous inspection, the interconnectedness between language and liberty in various socio-political ecologies and have argued that such interconnectedness must bring to the fore, the manner in which various linguistic artifacts and spaces impact and are impacted by historical, legal, political and other cultural mores in the context of appropriation or loss of liberty. Liberty for a people, I have submitted, is made a reality by the entire populace including both the dominant and dominated voices/actors (political actors, social commentators, journalists, etc.) notwithstanding their distinctive ideological and/or philosophical orientations, their unique histories and ways of using language as well as their social and cultural peculiarities. Actors contribute their unique capabilities and potentials to shape liberty for themselves and for other members of their societies. What is important is that in pursuing the above-mentioned concerns, language becomes the most important tool through which the acquired liberty is made reality and authentic. In a case where there is intrusion on some actors' liberty by a dominant political force, the dominated persons and institutions reject such an intrusion and consequently adopt linguistic and discursive strategies to fight against and thus challenge domination. As noted earlier, they fight for protection from the intrusions of the dominant actors (e.g., government and other institutions) into their fundamental freedoms and what Sir Isaiah Berlin (1960) refers to as a guarantee of the right to participate in the process of government and to share in the political power of their community or state.

On liberty

My view on liberty is based on that of Sir Isaiah Berlin (1960) elucidated in detail in his *Four Essays on Liberty* (see also Craiutu, 2021). Following Berlin (ibid.), I think of liberty from two perspectives *negative liberty* and *positive liberty*; two issues central to the ideological struggles in Europe in the days of Berlin. Berlin described negative liberty as *freedom from*; that is, the absence of restraints on the agent enforced by other actors

in a community or polity. He viewed positive liberty as *freedom to*; that is, the opportunity and, most importantly, the ability to seek and attain one's desired goals as well as the attainment of sovereignty or independence, as against reliance on others for the attainment of such goals. Berlin saw negative and positive liberty as centering on lawful and rational claims about genuine values that are essential and beneficial for individuals in a society.

I find Berlin's characterization of positive liberty as being more in consonance with Ghanaian (Akan) value systems and philosophical traditions on the individual because unlike Rousseau who equated freedom with self-rule, and self-rule with obedience to the 'general will,' a situation that places the *collective* over the *individual*, Akan philosophy views the individual as the bedrock of the collective as explicated below. Thus, Akan philosophy, like that espoused by Berlin, insists on the self as an empirical individual even though she remains a member of a larger community. The society is, because individuals are, and not the obverse. The Akan axiom, *Abusua te se kwaae, wowɔ akyire a ebɔ mu tuu (koro); wopin ho a na wohu se dua korɔ bi ara wɔ ne sibre* 'The lineage is like a forest; from afar it looks like a single unit but upon getting closer you see that each tree has its own space.' Thus, it is the individual(s) that make the collective hence the need to give due cognizance and diligence to the individual. There are several other Akan axioms and value systems that give prominence to the individual as the basis and/or source of the collective. Individuals see themselves as part of the collective yet their freedoms, desires and beliefs need not be renounced. The work(s) of Gyekye (2003), Wiredu (2006) and Appiah (1993) give elucidation on the African conception and construction of the individual and the collective.

Like Berlin, the Akan are afraid of the totalitarianism that could come with the collective. The Akan saying, *Nyansa nni ɔbaako ti mu* 'No one has monopoly of/over wisdom,' calls for individual participation in decision-making. The collective

wisdom, is a combination of the wisdom of individual members of the group and individuals must as such earn credit for their contribution and be viewed as the pillars upon which the collective stands.

Furthermore, liberty must be reconstructed and deconstructed by being viewed as a political, judicial, philosophical, health, social and moral value concepts and the fight for it must encompass various means, legitimate and constitutional, all couched in language that question intrusive voices that seek to subjugate the dominated. Such language could be used in legitimate political agitation, and in the case of democracies where people are allowed to organize and protest, encompass language use in newspapers and educational campaigns and constitutional application of strikes and boycotts if need be. Reflections on the thinking behind and indications of liberty and its entwining with language, must index language ideologies and discursive threads on the sociopolitical order in cultures and institutions of human community.

Additionally, working within the principle of language and liberty requires a close attention to the role of language in the enactment of liberty within different/various social and institutional domains and processes. Specifically, in investigating the entwining of language and liberty, it is imperative that the scientist examines the role of language in the political, social, juridical, medical/healthcare, and educational practice(s) processes. Important questions to consider include but are not limited to the kind of linguistic tools that actors seeking liberty utilize, particularly the syntactic units such as *sentence types* (e.g., commands, statements, questions, conditional sentences, factive formula (Kiparsky and Kiparsky (1979), active or passive voice), *identifiable content words* (such as nouns, adjectives, adverbs, main verbs), *grammatical words* (auxiliary verbs, conjunctions, determiners, modals, prepositions, pronouns, qualifiers, question words, etc.), *graphological types* (especially uppercase letters) and *discourse-pragmatic tools* (especially, inferencing,

speech act types, contrastive pairs, deferential modes of address and reference, glittering generalities, emotional valence, intertextuality, legitimization and delegitimization, politeness indicators, etc.) and *literary tools* such as irony. Indeed, Obeng (1997; 2016; 2018) discusses the use of situational and dramatic irony whereby a political actor, J.B. Danquah, describes his loss of and fight for liberty through satire, paradox and oblique allusions.

Language and liberty in political process and political practice

To understand how language indexes and is indexed by liberty within a political process and political practice, it is essential for individuals within a polity to be aware of the political structure and context, and the ideologies and value systems of their communities. On language, they must be aware of the language ideologies underlying one's choice and use of lexical, syntactic, sociolinguistic and discourse-pragmatic tools available to them and be familiar with the nature of explanations and/or interpretations given to their own texts and to those of others by other actors within the social practice of their political ecology. Variation in language ideologies and those of the polity have the potential and power to restrict and restructure the scope of speech acts used in denying, seeking or contesting liberty and the perlocutionary effect of those speech acts on target(ed) actors, and in actually helping to lose, or gain liberty. For example, an observation of the Ghanaian political ecology during the First Republic (from July 1, 1960, to February 24, 1966) points to the fact that President Nkrumah's voice, which was the governing or powerful voice, "made" ideological assumptions associated with it to become enfranchised and/or naturalized. It became the singular legitimate voice; the voice of the opposition became illegitimate, and hence, the losing voice.

Furthermore, it is commonplace for governments, especially in developing democracies, dictatorships, theocracies

and Kingdoms to use violence against journalists and press houses that question the policies and activities of political actors, social commentators and journalists they identify as not agreeing with their policies. Obeng (2019) notes how some politically powerful actors use coercion, property destruction, and name-calling such as referring to news media that hold divergent views on a governing party's policies as *fake news*. Such characterization not only creates personal danger for the individuals who are subjected to this horror, it intrudes their liberty to participate in the governance of their countries and communities by denying them the voice to seek liberty.

It is also quite common for political actors to pass despotic bills, use executive orders and decrees, and/or use parliamentary majorities to quell or repress the opinions of the minority or those who hold dissenting views and by that mute their voices and deny them language, the most important tool for seeking liberty. For example, in Ghana, besides the repressive *Preventive Detention Act* that led to the imprisonment of President Nkrumah's political opponents, we also saw the denial of liberty of those in opposition under the National Liberation Council (NLC), and the Progress Party. During those times the liberty of the Trade Union Congress, the *Evening News* and an important CPP political actor, Komla Gbedema, was intruded upon. Komla Gbedema was, for example, banned from participating in Ghana's political process and practice under the NLC.

Indeed, after the overthrow of Nkrumah, books written by him are alleged to have been burnt; an act that muted his voice and denied the people of Ghana the freedom to read and learn about his political philosophy irrespective of whether some of the books propagated views that some saw as repressive. There is no doubt that Nkrumah's repressive political activities and those of General Ankrah and Lieutenant General Afrifa's NLC and Professor Busia's Progress Party denied sections of Ghana's population their unalienable right to make decisions

based on non-biased impartial facts. Specifically, intruding the voice of people with divergent views and creating ideologically biased way of information production and information flow results in linguistic and communicative inequity leading to an impingement on the people's ability to be judicious in their thinking and in their taking of a political course of action; a violation of their negative and positive liberty.

From the forgoing discussion it may be argued that in any polity, in speaking of and about liberty, it is important to state that any use of monetary, pecuniary, commercial, or fiscal constraint to put powerless actors in jeopardy to prevent them from exercising their freedom to use language or any tool to seek, gain or protect their liberty must be treated as an injury to their person and an affront to/on justice. Thus, ordinary individuals, the media, social commentators and all who hold divergent views from dominant actors must not be denied their communicative right to inform and be informed by the citizenry. As an Akan axiom says, *Ananse Kokroko antɔn kasa, ɔde maa kwa* 'Big Spider (God) did not sell language, he gave it freely.' If the Akan God (*Ananse Kokroko*) indeed gave speech without a fee, then putting any financial or social pressures on free speech is tantamount to usurping the affected persons' God-given right. Thus, any action, imagined or real, that stands in the way of the exercise of a people's communicative liberty via the curbing and controlling of their most important resistive tool (language) is, without prejudice, willful and malicious, and must be curbed by putting in place conditions that prevent such intrusion. More is said about this in the section headed 'Language, liberty and free speech'.

What is significant from the above synthesis and analysis is that despite all the restrictions and/or denial of liberty, dominated actors' voices continue to resist the dominant voices from jail, workplace, and in the streets of Ghana. The ideological assumptions about language that continues to index liberty is anchored on and through *letters* written by some

members of the opposition (e.g., JB Danquah during the First Republic), and *protests* with such themes as *Ku me preko* ‘Damn the consequences’ (which occurred during Rawlings’ rule in 1995) and *FixTheNation* (that occurred during the Akufo-Addo’s presidency). Ordinary Ghanaian citizens are known to have used the lyrics of different musical genres during the Second and Fourth Republics and, more especially, during the dictatorships of Flight Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, General Ignatius Acheampong, Lieutenant General Frederick Akuffo, among others, to seek and defend liberty (see Agyekum et al. 2019; Amoakohene, 2019; Amoakohene & Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2019 and Ansu-Kyeremeh & Karikari, 1998).

Indeed, Ghana’s *Culture of silence* that resulted from the oppressive policies of the First Republic as well as those of the late 1970s, 1980s to the early 2000s was broken by academics (e.g. Professors Adu Boahene, Paul Ansah), distinguished journalists such as Elizabeth Ohene, Kwesi Pratt Jr., Abdul Malik, Kweku Baako, Kabral Blay-Amihere, and many others via the use of their resistive voices (language). Ansu-Kyeremeh and Karikari (1998) and Amoakohene (2019; 2012) meticulously expound, with exemplification, the encumbrance (hence, intrusion) suffered by news producers as well as political and social commentators at the hands of powerful actors within and outside of Ghana. Also, in Obeng (2019), I point out how language choice in certain political domains intruded the liberty of a political actor in Ghana’s parliament because of her less-than-perfect English communicative competence; an act that was a disgrace to the House for making a European language that none of us speaks so well, a tool of and for intrusion on the Member’s negative and positive liberty to participate freely in governance (Berlin, 1960) and consequently amply and efficaciously standing in for her constituency.

Language and liberty in judicial process

To understand the role of language and liberty in a judicial

process, it is imperative that one pays a close and systematic attention to notions of understandability of the law on liberty within a juridical domain and how one perceives the nature of such domains in the political and sociocultural process(es) within a polity. Most importantly, seeking liberty requires a recognition of one's rights and the need to challenge and/or oppose powerful actors' or powerful voices' unlawful actions given that such recognition helps to make the fight for liberty realistic, reasonable and worthwhile.

Another important point in dealing with language and liberty in a judicial process is a recommendation by Date-Bah (2008) for there to be in place, legal and material conditions in a country's constitution and in judicial precedent. These, Date-Bah (ibid) rightly argues, will ensure and consequently maintain individuals' liberty. I contend that the legal material conditions must be made available to the citizenry in a language(s) they can understand and competently function in (see Amoakohene & Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2019 and Obeng, 2002). Many a time we observe African governments communicating such messages in an European language known by the so-called elite minority leaving the mass of the population uninformed about such important tools needed in their fight for liberty. Ghana's political experience shows that failure to enshrine a Bill of Rights in a country's constitution creates governments and institutions of authority that believe that they are either above the law or cannot be subjected to law (Date-Bah, op cit.) Such a situation, Date-Bah succinctly explains with exemplification, led dominant actors in Ghana's First Republic to infringe on the negative and positive liberties of members of Ghanaian society, especially, people who held divergent views.

In Ghanaian (Akan) Native Courts, I have demonstrated that language, power, and ideology inform each other hence the need not to underestimate the importance of language in the construction, protection, and altering of social and/or communal relations of power in their juridical ecologies. Any

underestimation of importance of language makes vulnerable, our understanding of Akan judicial discourse. I agree with Fairclough's (1989) assertion that "access to and participation in the power forums of society is dependent on knowing the language of those forums and how using that language power enables personal and social gains to be achieved" (Fairclough, 1989, p. ix). I posit that speech strategies used by powerful dominant actors, the judicial personnel, including court criers, chief interveners, and the arbitrators, to mark power asymmetry and to intrude on disputants' liberty include performatives, use speech acts such as forgiving, reprimanding, and commanding, repair initiation, turn-competitive overlap, commands, yes/no questions, and addressing disputants by their full names (an act viewed in Akan society as pejorative). For their part, disputants use speech acts such as apologizing, requesting, expressing thanks, and implicit dissensions, as well as speech forms such as polite terminal addressives and deferential modes of address and reference, to mark their lack of power, but then also use those same strategies as resistive tools to challenge the validity claims of the dominant actors and by that seek liberty. There is no doubt that power relations are deeply rooted in a people's culture, philosophies, governance, and ideologies, so, actors' effective use of various language ideologies and linguistic tools must help to produce, reproduce and hone the instruments needed as well as the essential communicative channels required in support of the fight for liberty.

Language and liberty as a social and moral value

An important facet of liberty is it being seen as a social and moral value and how language is used to actualize these. The African (Ghanaian) sees liberty as an unalienable right, a right that protects his or her freedom from intrusion by dominant actors such as national and local governments, chiefs, or by others. This social and moral value is deeply rooted in Akan history. For example, in their fight for freedom from Dankyira

rule and domination which the Asante saw as oppressive because it repudiated the rights of persons within its political and socio-cultural ecology, an Asante King, taking part in the war and in nation building, was alleged to have told the Dankyira that for the Asante, *Tenenee ne fawohodie ne yen agyinahyɛdee; nea ɛbesi yeinom ho kwan deɛ yede dadeɛ ne yen nipadua beko atwitwa afti hɔ*, “Justice and freedom are the core of our being and we shall use cutlasses and our bodies to fight to remove anything that might deny us these.” Thus, for the Asante, justice and freedom were their greatest possession, their unalienable possession/right, for which they would fight to protect using their being/person and their then instrument of war, cutlasses.

In contemporary Africa (Ghana), liberty is viewed as a social value and a moral right for which the African would fight in order to gain independence and the power or right to act according to one’s choice as specified in their cultural mores. This social value and moral right were manifested and considered as foundational in their (African) fight for independence. As a moral construct, the African sees liberty as being at the root of mores and decency, a societal ethics and an honorable thing to pursue. The Akan axiom, *Yɛntena hɔ mma onipa biara mmfa ne nsa nhye yen hwene mu* ‘We will not sit by for any human being to deny us liberty’ gives credence to the social and moral value accorded liberty in an African’s personal, social, communal and national life. It is considered amoral and socially inappropriate to deny or be denied liberty. Denying someone liberty is equated with taking the one to be an animal and treating him as such. The Akan axiom, *Ɔhye ne so te se deɛ ɔye aboa* ‘He oppresses him as if he is an animal’ affirms the Akans’ detest for oppression given that such an act denies the individual his or her personhood. Thus, one may oppress an animal not a human being; so, denial of liberty is equated with one being treated like an animal. Indeed, in the days of the dictatorship of Flight Lieutenant Rawlings, Ghanaians protested using the theme, *Kume preko* literally translated as ‘You might as well kill me’ but implying

‘Damn the consequences.’ For Ghanaians denial of liberty was seen as denial, not only of their political right, but of their social and moral right. For them, death was preferable to oppression and intrusion on their liberty. As noted above, Africans fight for independence from European oppressive colonial rule was motivated first and foremost by their detest for the intrusion on their liberty and their desire to take care of their own affairs instead of being denied liberty by Europe and Europe’s arrogant thought and callousness in thinking they had the right to rule Africans.

Language and liberty as a health construct

On liberty as a health construct and how this is indexed by language, it is important to note that disease and ‘powerful’ actors intrude on powerless actors’ (diseased individuals principally and care-givers to some extent) negative liberty by encroaching on their fundamental freedoms regarding nature of care, the cost of care, where care must be given and who should be involved in the care. The powerless actors’ positive liberty is also intruded by the powerful actors who prevent them (the diseased persons) from participating in their family and communal lives. In the United States, for example, the insurance companies determine what they will pay for and how much they will pay for one’s care thereby resulting in a situation where countless diseased individuals, especially minorities and poor whites, are denied care and hence their inability to be well enough to participate in their communal activities. What is important, or rather troubling, is the language that such insurance coverage is couched in and the extent to which it impedes understandability leading to denial of care of individuals who may not understand and hence properly engage in a fight for their liberty to receive appropriate and adequate care. To make their fight for liberty a reality, there is the need to put in place rights that protect diseased persons’ freedoms and empower them to obtain the best care so that they can participate in their family and communal lives.

Noteworthy is the fact that despite the intrusion on the liberty of diseased persons via language and other socio-political roadblocks, these dominated or powerless actors still find ways to resist the dominant actors using unique linguistic tools and pragma-linguistic strategies to seek and protect their liberty even if success is minimal at times. In Ghanaian society, for example, Obeng (ibid.) identified such linguistic strategies as adjectives of quality, adverbs, factive formulae (for evidentiality and credence), hesitations, intensifiers, reduplication, verbs denoting physical sensation, and various forms of pausal phenomena, especially, silence, as tools for seeking liberty. He also identified various discourse-pragmatic strategies for delivering and for seeking liberty. These include such speech acts as assuring, blaming and complaining. Other discourse-pragmatic strategies identified include avoidance whereby dominated actors' either give up on words as a form of silent protest or speak but deliberately avoid mentioning the target powerful actors names directly. The language used in such situations is so opaque that everyone knows who it is that is intruding on the dominated actors' liberty.

Inferencing and polyvocality are also isolated as being employed to seek liberty by diseased persons. With inferencing because participants in the discourse ecology are familiar with the persons involved and the facts associated with the intrusion, they can easily form opinions and draw conclusions even when what is said is implicit or vague. On polyvocality, dominated actors seeking liberty cite other texts or text-types of either wide or limited accessibility to give credence to their demand for liberty. Such texts may be axioms, etiologies or songs whose lyrics those in the discourse domain are familiar with.

Language, liberty and free speech

Even though I have made several allusions to the bond between liberty and free speech, I take the issue again in view of its importance in the organization of society and its impact, especially, on dominated actors in every speech community. In

Obeng (2019) I point out the crucial importance of free speech in the connection between language and liberty and the harmful effect of censorship in strangulating and intruding the free flow of information in any polity. I discussed the extent to which Ghanaian critics, journalists and the news media, political actors, and social commentators have used language in the pursuit of liberty and how successful or ineffective they have been.

The United Nations General Assembly's (1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) calls for the recognition of the right of every individual for freedom of opinion and expression, what I referred to as both positive and negative communicative liberty. In its exposition about liberty and freedom of speech, the UDHR notes that every individual has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; a right that enjoins individuals the liberty to hold opinions without intrusion from others, what Berlin (op cit.) refers to as negative liberty, and to also pursue, obtain and participate in the communication of news and/or information and ideas via any path irrespective of borders or boundaries, what Berlin denotes as positive liberty. Thus, the UDHR's comprehensive human rights declaration instructs dominant actors (such as governments and social institutions) to assure persons their liberty to form and be part of associations, access to information and human development as well as unconstrained access to and participatory rights, to perform as rational and normal human beings. Thus, Berlin's (op cit.) positive liberty which involves, among other things, the right to freely participate in activities related to a person's personal and communal life is captured in this UDHR declaration.

Close and systematic observation of governance issues throughout the world, but more especially in developing democracies, suggests that dominant actors intrude the liberty of news producers, journalists and sometimes ordinary individuals who interrogate the validity claims and criminal behavior of the dominant actors. Such intrusion is done through the use of violence, bullying, property demolition, intimidation, and

negative other representation such as referring to the news products of such news organizations as fake news, something that the world saw during and even after Donald Trump's rule of the United States (a label now adopted by several despots and criminally-minded political opportunists) and during which time some journalists of CNN and other news media were insulted, prevented from attending news briefings in the White House and were subjected to communicative abuse and denied the liberty to function as journalists.

In other parts of the world, some journalists are barred from asking questions that the dominant actors believe will challenge their assertions and claims; an act that denies the journalists their basic freedom to function efficaciously in their political domain. As noted earlier in this paper, Ghana has had its fair share of government intrusion in the freedom of journalists and ordinary citizens whose views are considered dissenting or anti-government by the governments and their associated institutions. Such intrusions have come in the form of bullying, deception and distortion of news, banning newspapers, declaring opposition parties illegitimate, using economic constraints, decreeing that members of such parties are ineligible to run for office, among others.

If freedom of speech is to be enjoyed in Ghana or any country for that matter, then it is incumbent upon political actors, journalists, social and public commentators, scholars, and researchers to help establish and ensure the fact that liberty is rooted in a/the nation's law, politics, value systems, and its overall philosophical traditions.

Notions of understandability regarding the law on liberty and the recognition of the rights of individuals and, most importantly the right and need to object to dominant voices' unlawful behaviors and actions, help actualize the fight for free speech and the ultimate acquisition of liberty. Actors' effective use of language is the most important tool in the fight for liberty. In the case of Ghana, despite there being censorship and

denial of free speech at various times in its history, Ghanaians have throughout their history always developed effective communicative strategies to combat any intrusion by dominant actors and have achieved some form of liberty by successively resisting such dominant or powerful actors.

Summary

This paper has presented a theory on language and liberty and in doing so showed how they entwine each other. The paper began by demonstrating how human lives are organized around and run via language and how impossible it is for any discussion of a society's value systems, law, literature, medicine and health, philosophy, politics, religion, and other human enterprises to take place without language. Indeed, it was noted that language is the most important tool via which liberty is fought for and won as well as being made a reality and authentic. I also noted the consequences of communicative breach or violation stemming from unacceptable and inefficacious use of language and the need to underscore language's ideological underpinnings; one that first and foremost views language as a cognitive experience that is concretized in social practice. The need to look at language as possessing political, cultural, medical, philosophical, legal and ethnic nuances and undercurrents was also emphasized.

On liberty, I observed that Sir Isaiah Berlin's work (Berlin, 1960; Craiutu, 2021; Crowder, 2021) expounded in his *Four Essays on Liberty* influenced my view on liberty. Specifically, I found Berlin's characterization of liberty as, negative and positive, as being in sync with Ghanaian (Akan) value systems and philosophical traditions on the individual given that Akan philosophy views the individual as the bedrock of the collective. I cited Akan axioms in support of this view on positive liberty by noting that in Akan, the self is an empirical individual even though s/he continues to be a member of a larger community. I called for work done within the principle of language and liberty to pay a close and systematic attention to language's role in the

performance of or fight for liberty within different social and institutional processes and socio-political domains.

I discussed the role played by language and liberty in a society's political process and political practice, in a society's judicial process, in the construction of social and moral values, and in healthcare. Finally, I discussed the fight for liberty and free speech in the context of a chaotic world where dominant actors intrude on dominated actors' liberty with impunity and the tools the dominated actors have used to seek, gained or lost liberty. Some of the linguistic and discursive tools identified are: syntactic features such as factives, antithetic constructions, collocations and voice; the discourse-pragmatic features include inferencing, political pronouns, presupposition, in-group anthroponyms, politeness and metalanguage.

I argued further that it is essential for individuals within a polity to be knowledgeable about its political structure and social contexts, its philosophical and value systems and the language ideologies that underpin the choice and use of available linguistic and discursive tools in fighting for liberty. Knowledge of the above-mentioned elements makes members of a polity appreciate the way and manner in which language and liberty index each other. I also noted that the language behavior in any political domain is complexly synchronized with dominant and dominated actors' worldview and stance on liberty. Most importantly, I asserted that dominated actors continue to play a resistant role even when dominant actors' voices form ideological assumptions that make the dominant actors' voice(s) the sole discursive option available.

I drew attention to the fact that our knowledge of the way in which language relates to liberty is not a sheer catalog of relationships between particular linguistic and discursive means and liberty. Such relationship requires members of a society, especially political actors and social commentators, to acquire complete and profound understanding of the way and manner and extent to which specific linguistic and discourse-pragmatic

forms can be used to perform different pragmatic tasks as well

as the actors' ideological preferences and expectations about how the pragmatic tasks must be executed.

On language and liberty in a judicial process, I maintained that to understand the role of language and liberty in any judicial process and practice, there is the need to understand the law on liberty in the judicial domain. It was demonstrated that for the fight for liberty to be realistic, rational and meaningful, dominated actors ought to recognize their right(s) and come to terms with the need to challenge powerful actors' unlawful actions. Date-Bah's (2008) call for there to be in place, legal and material conditions in a country's constitution and in judicial precedent to ensure success in the fight for liberty was also explicated. Without putting legal and material conditions in a country's constitution and judicial precedent, a people risk a situation whereby dominant actors may not be subjected to law and as a consequence intrude people's liberties.

With respect to liberty as a social and moral value and how language is used to actualize it, I showed that Africans see liberty as the foundation of their mores, decency and societal ethics. They therefore view it as an honor to unapologetically pursue and appropriate it. I explicated the African perception of liberty as an unalienable right. Such a right, I noted, protects their freedom from intrusion by dominant actors be they national or local governments, chiefs, and other powerful entities. I cited axioms as well as Dankyira-Asante history to show repudiation of any attempt at intruding or taking away one's liberty. The African sees liberty as his or her greatest possession and an unalienable right and would thus fight to protect it through any means possible. Death, Africans contend, is preferable to oppression and intrusion on their liberty.

On liberty as a health construct and how this is indexed by language, attention was drawn to the fact that disease and 'powerful' actors intrude on diseased individuals' and care-

givers' negative liberty in the areas of type of care, cost of care, and place of care. Furthermore, diseased individuals' positive liberty is intruded by being prevented from participating in their family and communal lives. I cited the case of the United States where insurance companies determine the amount of money they can cover or are willing to pay in diseased person's care and how insufficient insurance support leads to denial of care and death of some individuals. An important point identified is the deliberate use of language that subscribers of insurance may not understand thereby leaving interpretation of such language to the insurance companies and their lawyers. I drew attention to the fact that despite being in a precarious situation, diseased individuals still find ways to resist the dominant actors using unique linguistic tools and pragma-linguistic strategies. In traditional Ghanaian society, some of my earlier research on healthcare point to the use of linguistic and discourse-pragmatic strategies already identified and elucidated.

On language, liberty and free speech, I pointed out the harmful effect of censorship regarding how it strangulates and intrudes the free flow of information in any polity and called for the need for free speech in ensuring liberty. I made reference to the United Nations General Assembly's (1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights' (UDHR) call for the recognition of the right of every individual for freedom of opinion and expression, what I referred to as positive and negative communicative liberty. I bemoaned how in developing democracies dominant actors intrude the liberty of news producers, journalists and sometimes ordinary individuals who question the validity claims and criminal behavior of the dominant actors. Such intrusion is done through the use of violence, bullying, property demolition, among others. In some cases, journalists are targeted and/or marked for execution, barred from asking questions considered as a challenge to dominant actors' assertions and claims.

Finally, I called for liberty to be rooted in a nation's law, politics, philosophical tradition and value systems to

make the fight for it (liberty) a reality. I explicated the fact that reflections on the thinking behind and indications of liberty and its interconnectedness with language, ought to index language ideologies and discursive threads on the social and political norms in cultures and institutions of various communities. It is essential to note that actor's effective use of language is the most important tool in ensuring success in the fight for liberty hence the need to guarantee that the language used in such a fight is understood by one and all.

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