

The Efficacy and Relevance of Tiv Proverbs in Conflict Resolution

Terver T. Udu, PhD

goldudu2013@gmail.com; 08064001562

and

Esther Iveren Shagba, PhD

Benue State University, Makurdi

shagbaesther@gmail.com, 07032823836

Abstract

Tiv proverbs (*Anzaakaa*) are a common feature of social discourse especially among the elderly. The linguistic and cultural relevance of Tiv proverbs, as this paper shows, can be noticed in so many ways. Communication rich in proverbs heightens poetic colouration and is a measure of linguistic functionality. It has been observed that people pay more attention to proverbial expressions than plain language. The wisdom implanted in Tiv proverbs makes them relevant and efficacious in tackling conflict situations. This paper contains a vivid description of a wide array of conflict situations that call for the use of proverbial expressions as an instrument of conflict resolution. As theoretical frameworks, the authors drew significant insights from the *just war theory* and *pacifism* to explain the basis for conflict situations. In doing a pragmatic analysis of Tiv proverbs, the speech act theory guided our discussion. Primary and secondary sources of data collection were explored. Primary sources were by means of oral interview and authors' intuitive knowledge of Tiv proverbs, while secondary sources were by means of reading of published proverbs. The paper concludes that, proverbs if used appropriately, can successfully achieve the intended effect of reconciliation of the parties in conflict. The paper finally recommends that proverbs should be studied carefully and used together with other means such as legislation and court injunctions to resolve conflicts.

Keywords: *Anzaakaa- proverbs, dialogue, ethno-religious conflicts, reconciliation*

Introduction

The media abound with news of violent clashes and all manner of conflicts across the globe. The same is true of the Tiv community of Benue State. The crises in the Middle East between the Palestinian-Arabs and their Israelis counterparts have been on for ages. The terrorist acts of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) are on the rise just as the spate of kidnappings of western journalists and aid workers. North Korea is being threatened by America due to the fact that the former went ahead and launched a deadly missile test against all cautionary measures from the latter.

Despite the numerous international peace talks and visits initiated by the United States of America President, Donald Trump recently to some Asian countries namely Japan and China, North Korea feels that Trump is only looking for avenues for war, and has described Trump as a warmonger. It is disturbing that some international and national conflict situations have political undertones, while others have economic and religious underpinnings.

The situation is not different back home in Nigeria. The war against Boko Haram in the North East of Nigeria is yet to come to an end. Political agitations for the structuring of the nation are ongoing. Recently, the Niger Delta Avengers who announced a ceasefire issued another threat to resume hostilities. Conflicts have devastating consequences both for the innocent and the side at fault. Conflicts have numerous life threatening consequences such as starvation, increase in poverty levels of citizens, economic recession or depression, epidemics, etc. The collapsed structures as a result of crises often require

millions of naira for reconstruction. Therefore, no efforts should be spared to achieve peace and reconciliation in conflict situations. This study advocates for the use of proverbs as an essential element of dialogue, which is a nonviolent means of conflict resolution.

The Tiv People

Tiv people are the speakers of the Tiv language. They are mostly found in the Benue Valley in Nigeria. In Benue State, the Tiv occupy fourteen Local Government Areas out of the twenty-three. Apart from Benue State, the Tiv are found in Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba and Cross River States. The Tiv people also exist in the southern part of the Republic of Cameroun. It is worthy of note that wherever Tiv people are found, they speak Tiv language. There are so many interesting facts about the Tiv nation but only two are discussed below.

The language which the Tiv people speak is very unique. This assertion is buttressed by Dzurgba (2011:64). According to him,

Tiv nation is a homogenous community whose language is also called Tiv. All Tiv people speak the homogenous Tiv language. Tiv is homogenous and coherent. Tiv themselves have the same cultural qualities because they have descended from the same ancestral father whose name is Tiv.

The language described above is the language which is discussed in this work. Another thing about the language is that, it performs so many social, economic and political functions in Tiv land. Any politician who comes seeking for votes in Tivland must address the potential electorates in Tiv language. Failure to express oneself in Tiv language marks the failure to secure votes from Tiv people.

Apart from the language, the Tiv are famous for producing large quantities and qualities of farm produce and fruits. The quality of yam, mango, oranges, cereal and vegetables produced in Tivland is better than every other place in Nigeria and Africa at large. In fact, Dzurgba (2011:65) emphasizes that it is because of this large scale production of food and cash crops by Tiv people that Benue State has earned the title of the Food Basket of the Nation. These are the people whose proverbs are generously used in this research as panacea for conflict resolution, and, rightly because “no Tiv person can really claim to have a good command of Tiv language and culture until *anzaakaa* have become part of his linguistic repertoire (Adeiyongo, 2017:1).

Statement of the Problem

Several conflict situations in Nigeria call for the need to use proactive and peaceful means to resolve them. And this cannot be done without the use of language. Language is a useful tool which can cause conflicts as well as resolve them. We find the orature of the Tiv people very handy in both preventing and resolving conflicts. The aspect of Tiv oral tradition that is found useful is the use of proverbs. Proverbs in themselves are so self-explanatory that whenever they are used, listeners can comprehend them. It is due to this fact that we found it appropriate to advocate for the use of proverbs in dialogue as peaceful means of conflict resolution.

Aim and Objectives

The main aim of this article is to explain how Tiv proverbs can be explored as means of conflict resolution. Specific objectives of this study were to:

- i. showcase the aesthetic value of Tiv proverbs.
- ii. demonstrate the correct use of proverbs in conflict resolution.
- iii. suggest some legislative and judicial means of resolving conflicts.

Research Questions

This study is set out to answer the following questions:

- i. What is the relevance of proverbs to conflicts resolution?
- ii. When is it appropriate to use proverbs in resolving conflicts?
- iii. Apart from proverbs, what other means can be used in resolving conflicts?
- iv. What are the causes of conflicts?
- v. What role can the government play in resolving conflicts?

Methodology

Data collected for this study were both through primary and secondary sources. Proverbs were sourced from published collection of Tiv proverbs especially the works of Adeiyongo (2004, 2017) and Sam (2017). Other relevant secondary sources were obtained from books and journals authored by renowned academics. The analysis of the proverbs were done through the aid of the writers' intuitive.

Theoretical Framework

Scholars sometimes use two extreme theories in providing interpretation, defending or justifying violent acts such as wars, quarrels and such other conflicts among peoples and nations. These two opposing theories are the *just war theory* and *pacifism* (Langan, 1984; Walzer, 2002). These two theories are popular in Christian theology, military history, ethics, and peace studies. However, in this article, the just war theory is considered antagonistic and therefore, only the theory of pacifism is used. The preferred theory is thus considered because, it encourages peace and discourages conflicts. It is in opposition to the just war theory.

The Theory of Pacifism

Pacifism is defined by Jackson (2017) as ethical positions relating to the rejection of war and organised forms of political violence, as well as a number of different types of theories of politics, and practical programmes for political action and social change. The British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC (2004) traced the history of the word 'pacifism' to the 10th International Peace Conference in 1902. Pacifists argue that there has never been and can never be a justifiable basis for war. As such, war of any kind is not acceptable and not worth the cost. Linked to non-violence or use of non-violent means for achieving peace, pacifists encourage the use of dialogue in achieving peace and building strong relations between people and nations. The works of pacifists such as Ben Salmon, Martin Luther King (Jnr), etc. have been recognised in the literature.

This theory is of much importance to this research as it emphasises on avoiding conflict. The authors intend to use it by applying it especially on the proverbs that are used in preventing conflict. Just as the theory implies there is no justifiable reason for conflicts

and in the same vein, this work is focused on opting for dialogue as an essential tool for conflict resolution. In a nut shell, the theory of pacifism is useful for both conflict prevention and resolution.

The Speech Act Theory

The Speech Act Theory was originally introduced by John Austin in 1962. This theory, according to Denham and Lobeck (2010), is concerned with the communicative intentions of the speakers and how they achieve the communicative goals (p.332). Austin proposed that communication is a series of communicative acts that are used systematically to accomplish particular purposes. He offered three basic kinds of communicative acts which are performed simultaneously with any utterance. The acts are: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts. The locutionary is the utterance, illocutionary is the act performed by the utterance while the perlocutionary is the effect the utterance has on the audience which may be intended or unintended.

Considering the above speech acts as regards the use of proverbs for conflict resolution, the locutionary acts are the proverbs as offered in their literal and implied meanings; the illocutionary acts are the intents of the speakers in offering the proverbs which are either for prevention, warning of the effects, or resolution of conflict; the perlocutionary acts involved are the effects these proverbs have on the hearers and their subsequent actions, inactions or reactions. All these three acts are applied to all the proverbs used in this study as using the speech acts and applying them on each of the proverbs makes the work unnecessarily bulky.

Literature Review: Conflict

Conflicts include all manner of disagreements, disputes or misunderstandings that arise between two parties. Conflicts could arise between friends, communities, religious or political groups and even neighbouring countries. Halverstadt (1991) considers conflicts as “power struggles over differences” (p.4). To him, all the struggles that bring about conflict are about power. That is, who gains control over whom? In other words, power tussle brings about conflict situations.

A major attribute of conflict is its inexorableness. Kale and McCollough (2003, p.5) corroborate that “conflict is a fact of life and it will never be completely eliminated.” They (Kale & McCollough) further elucidate on the gains of conflicts thus:

Conflict can provide an opportunity to grow and develop. It does not have to be equated with illness that weakens the body and must be eradicated. It can be an opportunity to learn about yourself and how you manage under tension. It can be an opportunity to practice, new behaviours and assess their relevance to other conflicts (Kale & McCollough, 2003, p.12).

To them, any conflict situation gives one an opportunity to learn lessons from.

Proverbs

Derived from Latin meaning a set of words put forth (Gray, 1992, p.235), the word proverb has been explained in different ways by scholars. In Hebrew, proverb is translated as *mashal* with various meanings such as ‘oracle,’ ‘parable,’ or ‘wise saying.’ In Tiv, the

word *injakwagh* represents the singular form ‘proverb,’ while *anzaakaa* represents the plural form of the word. A proverb is a short popular saying embodying a general truth, sometimes in metaphorical language (Gray, 1992). A similar opinion has been shared by Bulaun (2017) who states that proverbs are simple metaphorical sayings owned by a speech community and passed from one generation to another through oral traditions. Proverbs can be classified under folk literature much the same way as riddles, fables and songs. They contain commonly shared beliefs, ideas and worldview of the people. Proverbs contain literary elements such as similes and metaphors that are suitable for making comparisons and contrasts that leave lasting impressions in the minds of those who hear them. Proverbs have been recognized in both ancient and modern times as containing valuable teachings of wisdom as well as the philosophical ways of life. Proverbs contain an indirect meaning of what is expressed.

Ramirez (2015) asserts that proverbs are a form of the figurative language, which states something implicitly rather than explicitly supporting one’s arguments in popular wisdom. People use proverbs because they want to take advantage of the implicit communication when they are not completely sure about the mutual information that both speaker and hearer share (Ramirez, 2015, p.18). The use of proverbs makes us to communicate our ideas and thoughts without causing offense to the hearer (Ramirez, 2015). Adequate use of proverbs by those who have the linguistic facility can go a long way in resolving conflicts.

Adeiyongo (2017), notes that “proverbs are a way through which the mode of thought of a people are preserved both in private and public conversations” (p.1). This means that to orators, rhetoricians, preachers, oral artists, educationists, musicians, disciplinarians, philosophers, sociologists, psycholinguists and so on, proverbs have been found to be of immeasurable value. The value and essence of proverbs transcends disciplinary boundaries. They could be considered to be partly literary, partly linguistic and partly cultural. On this, Yina (2011, p.122) avers that “a genuine proverb acts as an index of what people regard as true and represents their ideals of life and conduct.” As for the essence of the aesthetic properties of proverbs, he goes ahead to opine that:

Proverbs invest language with the symbolic ritual qualities which apart from embellishing an individual’s speech, intricately situate the speech act into the fabric of the society’s speech behavior. Proverbs are metaphors of “truth” calibrated and coated with the candour of wisdom and experience (Yina, 2011, p.122).

Proverbs usage is not the exclusive resource of Africans alone. In civilized cultures such as English, French, Chinese, etc. proverbs have daily application. People of different cultures make use of proverbs in their oratory, religious ceremonies, ethical instruction and moral precepts even in monasteries. Among the Tiv people of the Benue valley, Hagher (2014) recognized Tiv proverbs to play five major functions namely (a) as a speech level for elders discussing serious cases that require their exclusive participation (b) as an opening glee during story telling performances (c) to elicit situational response (d) for dialectal arguments (e) for ritualistic performance. Adeiyongo (2004) and (2017) recognized the socio-cultural functions of Tiv *anzaakaa* as reflectors of Tiv norms, philosophy and worldview. Adeiyongo (2017) thus categorizes Tiv proverbs into (a) those proverbs that play didactic or instructional function (b) those that reflect social norms and

exercise social control (d) those that play judicial function (e) those that play advising function (f) those that give point and embellishment of speech (g) those that give praise and apportion blame, and (h) those that give justification for human action. The judicial role of proverbs has also been recognized by Tiav (2013) who attests that Tiv proverbs are a major tool for conflict resolution, teaching of morals, education of the young, and emphasizing a point and giving weight to an expression. Hagher (2014), talks of Bergsma, one of the earliest European anthropologists to have encounter with the Tiv people that he described proverbs as being the most consistently used verbal art forms of the Tiv people.

The Tiv people use proverbs to strengthen relationships and foster acts of love, peace and forgiveness. They also use proverbs to advise, correct, and adjudicate. It is a Godly act and the desire of the creator for man to live in peace with one another. A society whose members shun acts of hostilities in preference to acts of love and selflessness could be described as wise and progressive. Otherwise, such a society would be described as foolish and retrogressive. A society whose members live in peace and harmony is likely to subsist longer on the face of the earth than the one constantly in crisis.

A Brief Look at Conflict Situations in Nigeria

The high rising cases of injustice, the phenomenon of scarce resources and the struggle for power and control of scarce resources are among the many reasons why conflict situations exist among humans. It is not strange therefore, to witness conflicts of all kinds among family members, religious groups, members of the community, ethnic groups, and between nations. Conflicts could be of varying magnitudes and could last longer than imagined. A Tiv proverb states: *anyi gema nyima nombor shin er ve lu ken zwa môm nahan kpa* (translated in English: even the tongue and the teeth do fight sometimes even though they are both housed by the mouth). Below, we provide evidence of conflict situations in Nigeria at large and Benue State in particular.

Communal Conflicts

Communal clashes occur from time to time due to a number of reasons. Benue State is well known for its enviable arable land with an attractive vegetative cover for animal grazing. The agro-ecological production capacity of Benue State has earned it the status 'the Food Basket of Nigeria.' The fertility of the soil and the high agricultural yield have given rise to frequent land disputes of all kinds. Some other times it is between kindreds and clans. This is frequently occurring from all parts of the state. In Agatuland, since the Agatu people are known for fishing, sometimes they clash over the ownership of some fish ponds. This leads to killing of people and burning down of whole communities and rendering thousands of people homeless.

Some crises in Benue State communities however, have some political undertones. For example, in 2004, there were serious political crises in Kwande Local Government area that led to destruction of lives and property worth millions of Naira. This was as result of clash of interests between some political giants which led to wanton destruction of lives and property. Earlier in 2001, the Nigerian army invaded Zaki Biam, the headquarters of Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State over the purported killing of nineteen soldiers. A lot of mayhem was done and many who survived the military attack suffered other fatalities like undernourishment, rape and other forms of sexual harassment especially for young girls and women, etc. Houses and farmlands were vandalized by

criminal elements especially from rival neighbouring communities especially the Jukuns. Businesses activities and food production were stalled for a long time.

Ethno-Religious Conflicts

According to Turaki (2017: x), “ethno-religious conflicts describe a belligerent state of hostility or war between ethnic and religious groups (p.x). Crises and conflicts revolve around ethnic, land, religious and cultural matters. To him, other factors such as politics or economics may trigger crises or conflicts, but the motivating factors for the crises or conflicts are dominated by ethnic, land, religious or cultural matters. In Benue State, ethno-religious conflicts are less. But much of it has been witnessed in other parts of the country especially in the northern part of the country sometimes with some reprisal attacks from the south. Sometimes, when the root causes of these conflicts are dug; they still have some political undertone. Thus, the struggle of which group should control the economic and political strength of the country comes into play.

Farmer/Herdsman Crises

This seems to be a new trend in crisis situation in Nigeria. There have been serious crises between farmers and herdsman, not just in Benue State but also in other states of the federation, the commonest being Kaduna, Plateau, Taraba, Edo and Bayelsa States. In Edo State, in 2016, Fulani herdsman went to the point of taking their cattle to a school when the school was in session, thereby displacing the students and teachers. This happened in broad daylight and both the print and social media captured it with graphic pictures.

In Benue State, since 2014, the three senatorial districts have each had their fair share of the herdsman invasion. In zones A and B (Tivland), most villages were attacked without notice in the dead of the night resulting in the killing of many people, razing down of their homes, destruction of their farms and illegal occupation of their land by Fulani herdsman and their cattle. In Zone C (Idomaland), the place that was worst hit was Agatu Local Government Area. The herders unleashed a lot of mayhem on the villages and their occupants. They raped women openly sometimes in the presence of their husbands and also brutally slaughtered children apart from torching houses and destroying food crops. The ethnic tension that the scenario created attracted national and international attention and sympathy.

Quit Notices

Recent happenings in Nigeria especially in the year 2017 gave rise to a number of quit notices issued by some groups of Nigerians to fellow Nigerians to vacate other parts of the country. Prominent among them was the rise of a secessionist movement known as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) headed by Nnamdi Kanu. Earlier in the year, the group issued a notice to the Federal Government of Nigeria that on the 1st of October, 2017, they were going to declare Biafra an independent nation; that is, secede from Nigeria. In a swift reaction, another group, the Arewa Youth Congress issued a quit notice to all Igbo people living in Northern Nigeria. The Igbo people were told to vacate the North in three months before that 1st October deadline. Tempers rose and some Igbo traders actually started evacuating from the north to avoid the unforeseen. Sequel to the above notice, another group known as the Middle Belt Renaissance Forum, also arose and issued a quit notice to all Fulanis. By that quit notice, the Fulanis were told to vacate the Middle Belt without

delay. Benue State Government came out openly to distance/dissociate itself from that illegality.

Hate Speech

Hate speech is a premonition of conflict. Udu (2013) describes the associative tendencies of hate speech maintaining that:

Since we interact and socialize with language more frequently than any other medium, one notices that language use or its misuse causes conflict more than anything else. This manifests in form of insult and abuse of others, gossip, careless provocative and/or unguarded utterances, conscious or unconscious blackmail, false accusation, underserved praise and praise singing and so on (p.29).

Gbadegesin (2017, p.49) posits that hate speech is a “speech that demeans on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability or any other similar ground.” He goes ahead to analyse that hate speech is an expression of hate with a view to inciting a group or groups to violence. The venom of hate speech is so strong that it changes the brains of those hated for the worse, creating toxic stress, fear, distrust and intimidation. If not properly guarded against, hate speech could spark violence between individuals, groups, communities, and countries.

Some Non-Violent Means of Conflict Resolution

Some non-violent means of conflict resolution have been explored in recent times. A few include:

Acts of law: Conflict can be resolved through enactment of laws regarding some certain procedures. A good example is the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law of Benue State 2017 which came into effect on 1st November, 2017. In Benue State, this law has reasonably reduced farmers’/herders’ crises to the barest minimum.

Judicial procedures: Injunctions from appropriate courts of law disbanding some illegal activities will go a long way to quell some crises situations. Recently (in September 2017) a High Court sitting in Abuja proscribed the activities of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) which was taking a dangerous dimension of taking Nigerian back to the civil war era of 1967 to 1970. The tension was heightened by an exercise by the Nigerian military known as “Operation Python Dance”. The members of IPOB saw the military exercise as an affront on them and began to attack the military personnel. This led to the death of some persons in the South East especially in Abia State where the IPOB leader comes from. However, with the proscription of IPOB activities, first by the South East Governors and then by the Federal High Court in Abuja, the situation was brought under control and Nigerian 57th Independence on October 1st was celebrated peacefully.

Use of Dialogue: Proverbs as an Essential Element of Dialogue

All over the world, people have laid claim to the efficacy of dialogue as a sustainable means of conflict resolution and attainment of peaceful coexistence. Yankelovich (1991) defines dialogue as a particular kind of talk which requires particular competencies and

strategies. To Yankelovick, dialogue (s) ‘strengthen(s) relationships and trust, forge(s) alliances, find(s) truths that bind us together, and bring(s) people into alignment on goals and strategies. Dialogue has been recognized by UNDP (2009) to initiate an inclusive process, recognize one another’s humanity, and identifying the root causes of a crisis and not just the root causes on the surface. In African communities, dialogue is considered effective when it is embellished with proverbial expressions. Ashipu and Amende (2013:1) assert that African “proverbs are circumstantial speech acts frequently used in conversations, public speeches and oratory to embellish, conceal and adorn such speeches.” According to them, “speech that is intermingled with proverbs is heralded by the audience as having expressed a universal truth and the mind of the community”.

Proverbs as a Speech/Communicative Act

Speech acts or communicative act (Stern, 1990) have been described by Akmajian (2003) as acts performed in uttering expressions. According to Grundy (2008), a speech act refers to the performative, or action accomplishing aspect of language use, and particularly the (illocutionary) force associated with an utterance” (p.301). Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) proposed the speech acts theory to explain four types of acts namely utterance acts, illocutionary acts, perlocutionary acts, and propositional acts. Uttering acts embraces all acts of uttering sounds, syllables, words, phrases, and sentences from a language (Akamajian, 2003). An uttering act is required to be ‘communicative’ that is the use of the utterance as a means of communication. By illocutionary acts, Austin (1962) means an act performed in saying something. By perlocutionary act, Austin means acts performed by saying something. A propositional act is a speech act that a speaker performs when referring or predicating in an utterance. Proverbs fit into speech acts when we examine the communicative function they perform with reference to the pragmatic analysis shown below. We are interested both in what the proverbs state and the intended effects of such proverbs on those involved in conflict, for instance, acceptance of guilt, acceptance to reconcile and end dispute, etc.

The Conflict-Resolution Potentials of Tiv Proverbs

In this study, the instrumentality of proverbs is used in performing three to four functions. Thus, proverbs that can be used to prevent conflict, those that can be used at the peak or height of conflict as well as those that can be finally used in resolving the conflicts are coming to play. The choice of Tiv proverbs to be used in resolving conflict is informed by the richness and relevance of such proverbs to the conflict situations. Tiv proverbs have some unique features/qualities capable of dousing tension and calming the nerves of warring parties.

Condemnatory and Judgmental Role of Tiv Anzaakaa

A wide array of Tiv anzaakaa play condemnatory and judgmental roles. A few examples are as follows:

1. **Proverb:** *Alu u kur a ishima i ker ityev u lôhò angbian ruam ga.*

Alu	u	kur	a	ishima	i	ker
If	you	return	with	heart	of	from
Ityev,	u	loho	angbian ruam	ga		
Farm	you	invite	brother food	not		

Literal meaning: If you consider the stress on the farm, you will not invite a brother to eat your food
Application: No matter how much you have suffered in acquiring your wealth or achieving success, always remember the welfare of others. Do not let the suffering becloud your sense of reasoning.

2. **Proverb:** *Hiar ka a hiin i hiin a igbe.*

Hiar ka a hiin i hiin a igbe
 Whirlwind when it starts they start with igbe cult

Literal meaning: As soon as the whirlwind starts, one starts swearing by the *igbe* cult emblem.

Application: Whirlwind is believed to be destructive but once it starts and one swears by the *igbe*, it will not be very destructive again. Conflict should be nipped in the bud when signs are eminent and all efforts should not be spared in preventing conflicts from escalating to a level that they cannot be managed.

3. **Proverb:** *Indyer i tamenor ugen ka ia gba usu we di u mir i you.*

Indyer i tamenor ugen ka ia gba
 Beards of oldman another when it falls

 usu we di u mir i you
 fire you do you soak of yours

Literal meaning: When the beard of another old man catches fire, you soak your own with water.

Application: You take precaution on your own part when calamity befalls someone that is in a similar situation like yours to avoid being a victim yourself. Community members are advised not to fold their arms when others are fighting. The responsibility to bring peace and settle disputes is the responsibility of all.

4. **Proverb:** *Iyongo i hiin a ahan zwa*

Iyongo i hiin a ahan zwa
 Trouble does start with laughter mouth

Literal meaning: Trouble usually starts with laughter

Application: You should not underrate any insulting joke that somebody cracks with or about you. It may seem harmless at first but if ignored could lead to real trouble.

5. **Proverb:** *Ka a fa amar inyumun nga kera numun ga.*

Ka a fa amar inyumun nga
 If they know dance scatter it

 kera numun ga
 no more scatter not

Literal meaning: When a plan to disrupt a dance festival is uncovered, precaution should be taken to foil the plot of disruption.

Application: If you know the cause of an impending feud/war, it is better to handle it in such a way as to prevent it as it is often said that prevention is better than cure.

6. **Proverb:** *Ka a teen we u kpeen ishe*

Ka a teen we u kpeen ishe
 When they selling you you die bargain

Literal meaning: When you are being sold out, your mar or influence the bargain

Application: If they are planning anything against you and you come to know of it, you should quickly halt the process or stop it if we can.

7. **Proverb:** *Ka a zaan a za i zaan sha ijô angahar; a geman hiden i hiden a ivaa zwa.*

Ka	a	zaan	a	za	i	zaan	sha
When	they	going	with	go	they	going	with
Ijo-angahar;		a	geman	hiden		i	hiden
Tip toes;		they	turning	coming back		they	coming
a	ivaa		zwa				
with	shouting		mouth				

Literal meaning: People tiptoe while going on a deal but on their way back wailings are heard.

Application: When people are involved in a fishy deal with outsiders, they do so secretly but when the deal backfires, everybody becomes aware of it.

8. **Proverb:** *Ka hen ya u orcian-kwagh ka i zua a ikyônogh ki teman ôron ijir I ortavershima ye.*

Ka	ken	ya	u	or-cian-kwagh		ka
It is	in	house	of	man-weak		that
i	zua	a	ikyônogh	ki	teman	
they	get	with	chair	of	sitting	
ôron	ijir	i	ortavershima	ye		
judging	case	of	man-strong	thus		

Literal meaning: It is in a weak man's house that they find a chair to sit and judge a strong man's case.

Application: When you are too strong (willed), sometimes a mob sets your entire house ablaze and no single thing remains, not even a stool to sit and resolve the matter.

9. **Proverb:** *Ka wea eren belanda u mkee u kera aan ityô ga.*

Ka	wea	eren	belanda	u	
When	you	are	doing trade	of	
mkee	u	kera	aan	ityô	ga
pepper	you	no more	scratch	buttocks	not

Literal meaning: When you are trading in pepper, you do not scratch your buttocks again.

Application: One has to be cautious of what one is doing just as it is said that if you live in a glass house, do not throw stones.

The first nine proverbs are suitable for crisis prevention. Now, we take a quick look at other category of proverbs that depict the imminence of conflict.

Tiv Proverbs that Explain the Causative or imminent nature of Human conflicts

10. **Proverb:** *Anyi vea nombor je kpa mba zehe.*

Anyi	vea	nombor	je	kpa	mba	zehe
Teeth	with	tongue	close	but	they	quarrel

Literal meaning: Even the teeth and the tongue do quarrel sometimes.

Application: Fighting/conflict is imminent even among and between brothers.

11. **Proverb:** *Ivo i nyiman ga kpa ka wea zer a i gbem yô i nyima.*

Ivo	i	nyiman	ga	kpa	ka	wea
goat	it	bites	not	but	if	you

zer a i gbem yô i nyima
 continue with it continually then it bites

Literal meaning: A goat does not bite but when you maltreat it ceaselessly, it bites.

Application: Even a peace-loving person will fight in the face of deliberate and continuous provocation.

12. **Proverb:** *Mngeren ma gbe human tsô ga, saa kwagh ngu a kpe shimin.*

MngereM ma gbe human ga
 Water it does smell no

saa kwagh ngua kpe shimin
 unless something does die inside it

Literal meaning: Water does not just smell unless something dies inside of it.

Application: Nothing happens without a cause. Just as it is said there can be no smoke without fire.

Proverbs suitable for Initiating Peace Moves at the Peak of a conflict

13. **Proverb:** *Ka a kperan ikpa i ande.*

Ka a kperan ikpa i ande
 When they struggle bag it tears

Literal meaning: When two people struggle over a bag, it gets torn

Application: People should stop struggling over issues irrationally. They should resolve them amicably. It is also used by a third party in trying to separate a fight. For example, a piece of land could be confiscated by the government due to conflict.

14. **Proverb:** *Kpera keera me tema ka ingyohol ga.*

Kpera keera me yav ka ingyohol ga
 Shift there I sleep is receiving not

Literal meaning: Shift a bit let me also sit does not entail taking over one's seat.

Application: If one allows another person to share his property (especially land) it does not mean the owner has forfeited it to the visitor.

15. **Proverb:** *MngereM ma acivin ma hie ya ga.*

MngereM ma acivin ma hie ya ga
 Water of hot it burns house not

Literal meaning: Hot water does not burn a house.

Application: Insults alone should not shake you. No matter how much somebody provokes you through them, insults would neither inflict bodily harm nor leave any scar on your body.

Proverbs suitable for conflict Resolution

16. **Proverb:** *Ishima i waan i ne mkom.*

Ishima i waan i ne mkom
 Heart of patience it gives satisfaction

Literal meaning: Patience brings about satisfaction

Application: One has to be patient with others in order to be an overcomer or in order to be counted/considered worthy of a practical position.

17. **Proverb:** *Ka akor a ou ka a mee iyese i ta u ye.*

Ka akor a ou ka a mee
It is strong appetite of your that it makes

iyese i ta u ye
scorpion it stings you thus

Literal meaning: It is a person's strong appetite for meat that is the cause for his being stung by a scorpion.

Application: Your appetite or passion for a particular thing can lead you into trouble or even death.

18. **Proverb:** *Kwagh kur sha ayem ga.*

Kwagh kur sha ayem ga
Something ends with running not

Literal meaning: Running away cannot bring a matter to an end.

Application: We should not dodge/prevaricate the truth that will end conflict but rather face it squarely and tackle it headlong.

19. **Proverb:** *Kwagh tse a tsa, kwagh saan ga.*

Kwagh tse a tsa kwagh saan ga
Something sleep just sleep something lasts not

Literal meaning: Something may last long but shall surely be over some day.

Application: No matter how long an issue drags, it will definitely be over one day.

20. **Proverb:** *Mba cirin ayem ikyondo ga.*

Mba cirin ayem ikyondo ga
They covering running (n) cloth not

Literal meaning: One does not cover up running in a cloth or one does not hide to run.

Application: we should learn to let go all forms of malice, self-worth and ego to give peace a chance. Even if we are brave, ending a war does not necessary mean we have been defeated. He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day.

21. **Proverb:** *Mba wuan icigh ki sôron bem mba we mkem sha mi ga.*

Mba wuan icigh ki sôron
They grinding medicine of treating

bem mba we mkem sha mi ga
peace they put pepper on it not

Literal meaning: When they are grinding medicine for peace, they don't add pepper to it.

Application: When talks are held to resolve a conflict, hurtful words should not be used. The peacemaker should not exhume the bitter memories or scars of war. Neither should abusive language or blame-game be entertained while seeking a solution to a crisis situation.

22. **Proverb** *Mumu baver cii ve a vie ga.*

Mumu baver cii ve a vie ga
Popcorn pops all that it edible not

Literal meaning: It is not a must for all the corn to pop before the popcorn can be edible.

Application: It is not necessary that everybody that is involved must speak out or be around before an issue can be settled.

23. **Proverb:** *Aluer iyongo i angbianev uhar ngi kuren ga yô, orvanya ka nan ya ve idyako.*

Aluer	iyongo i	angbianev	uhar	ngi	kuren
If	problem of	brothers	two	is	ending
gayo,	orvanya ka	nan ya ve	idyako		
not,	a visitor he	will eat their	inheritance		

Literal meaning: When two brothers fight non-stop, a stranger snatches their inheritance.

Application: Conflicts should have a cessation period. People should learn to end conflicts and pursue the path of peace. Conflicts should not be transferred from generation to generation. Otherwise the consequences could be calamitous.

Conclusion

In this article, we presented a pragmatic analysis of Tiv proverbs as a means of conflict resolution. We considered proverbs as an essential element of the dialogue option in conflict resolution. It is crystal clear that proverbial language can be a useful tool in building relationships, fostering acts of love and peace. Proverbs can be used to foster acts and good virtues such as humility, forgiveness, love, and forbearance. Inappropriate use of language will bring about conflict as seen in the case of hate speeches. Though conflict situations are always with us, they should not be allowed to escalate.

Although this work is not the sole piece on Tiv proverbs, the novel idea of using the proverbs for conflict resolution is one of its kinds. Also, there has always been a call for dialogue in resolving conflicts and proverbs, as this article has shown, provide a good option.

Recommendations

Consolidating our position already taken in the paper to explore the potential efficacy of proverbs in conflict resolution, we recommend as follows:

- The rich oral tradition of the Tiv people can be preserved and transmitted from one generation to another if the use of proverbs and wise sayings is encouraged in folklore and other oral media like songs, public speaking. Even though proverbs are more common among the elders, there is no ban of their use among the young. The culture of passing proverbs from one generation to the next can only be possible if the young Tiv men and women learn and start making use of their proverbs in daily conversation.
- Proverbs can also be preserved for posterity through the written medium. Tiv scholars should make a compilation of Tiv *anzaakaa* and publish them in volumes for use in schools. Another means of preserving proverbs is through electronic recording such as burning them on compact discs to be listened to whenever one desires. Such a record would also provide useful information for research purposes when researchers are interested in studying their stylistic variation from generation to generation.
- Avenues should be provided for learning Tiv proverbs during adult and non-formal classes both as a way of preserving the art and also increasing intellectual development.

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