

## A syntactic analysis of the Book of Proverbs in Ga

Yvonne Ollennu, Patience Obeng & Matilda Tetteh Donkor  
University of Education, Winneba

[yaaollennu@uew.edu.gh](mailto:yaaollennu@uew.edu.gh)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60787/jolan.vol27no1&2.393>

### Abstract

Proverbs are wise sayings that normally occur in speech and writings of language users to show the richness of the language. Proverbs that normally advise readers or hearers may have allegorical truth behind their literary appearances. This article employs the principles and parameters framework and parallelism to focus on the linguistic analysis of the Book of Proverbs. The aim is to examine the patterns of parallelism in the Book of Proverbs in Ga and to find out the grammatical structures and sentence types used in the Book of Proverbs in the Ga Bible. The data elicited were in Ga, a Kwa language of the Niger-Congo phylum, from the Book of Proverbs in the Ga Bible. The patterns of the proverbs were further analysed into seven structures such as descriptive, single statement, statement with explanation, comparison, opposite parallel among others. In terms of pattern, the if... then statements were more dominant in the data corpus. The article reveals that compound sentences were dominant in the Book of Proverbs and from the function point declarative sentences were in the majority.

**Keywords:** The Book of Proverbs; Ga; Parallelism; Grammatical structures; Bible; Principle and Parameter

### Abstract in Ga

Abei ni ji nilee wiemoi ni jeo kpo ye wowiemo ke woninmaa amli jieo wielo loo nmalɔ le hesale kpo. Abei jieo anokwale kpo titri ni ebɔɔ nikanelɔi ke toibolɔi fee akokɔ. Shigbelemo nee ko naagbe ni ji *Principles* ke *Parameters* kefata no ji *parallelism* he ketao abei nee amli. Oti ni hie shigbelemo ji ake agbele shi ketao *parallelism* henci ni yoo Abei Awolo le mli. No see hu akwe sanemuji henci ni jeo kpo ye Abei Awolo le mli. Saji ni ji deta ni aketsu nii ji Abei Awolo ni yoo Ga Bibla mli. Ga wiemo ni ji Ga ni agbele shi ye he ji wiemo ni fata Kwa gbene wiemoi ahe ni je Niger Congo wiemoi le he. Ni adamo *parallelism* kpawo ni aketsu nii le no le ana sanemuu ganee kome, sanemuu ni gbalaa nii amli, sanemuu ni susuo nii etsɔɔ, sanemuu ni miishi konj ke ekrokromei ni fata he. Eje kpo fanj ake sane ni

tsɔɔ nɔ ni baa yɛ nɔkɔfeɛmɔ sɛɛ ni ji *if*.....*then* hɛnɔ fa fɛ fɛɛ yɛ wolo lɛ mli. Shigbɛlɛmɔ hu ha ana akɛ sanemuu nta hɛnɔ hu fa waa yɛ Abɛi Awolo lɛ mli. Sane kɛɛmɔ ji nɔ titri jie ehe kpo yɛ sanemuu nitsumɔ gbɛfaŋ hu lɛ,

## Introduction

Proverbs are wise sayings that often occur in speech or writing. These sayings indicate the level of communicative competence in the language of an individual speaker or writer. They can be used by both the youth and elderly people though they occur mostly in adult speech. Employing proverbs in colouring one's speech or writing indicates the language maturity level of a speaker in the Ghanaian context and beyond, as it is seen that it is sometimes appropriate not to speak directly on certain issues to people. This is just what Jesus did by speaking in parables to the audience when he was preaching the gospel. Proverbs are also used sometimes to save the face of the hearer and therefore serve as indirection in speech. Proverbs have been studied from different perspectives such as their type/classification (Umo, 2007), literary dimension, (Kogri, 2016; Zolkovskiji, 1978; gender portrayal in cultures (Asiyanbola, 2007), syntax and semantics analyses (Akanbi, 2015; Connigh, 2015; Homstedt 2005; Rassi et al. 2014; Reis & Baptista, 2015; Singh 2015) and pragmatic value (Akin, 2013) among others. Several definitions have been given for proverbs by scholars. For instance, according to Mollanazar (2001, p. 53) proverb is "a unit of meaning in a specific context through which the speaker and the hearer arrive at the same meaning." Agyekum (2013:254) also defines proverb as "a time tested, brief and witty saying, usually symbolic that expressed a truth or recognised observation about practical lives which is based on traditional experiences and have been transmitted from generations to generations and withstood the test of time". Nsoh et al. (2010) sees a proverb as a saying which is short and usually unknown of ancient origin that expresses some useful complete thought, indicating fact or moral lesson and is usually stated in simple homely language. "A short well known saying, an epigram, a short pithy utterance more or less fixed in expression whose features include the allegorical" is how Awedoba (2000, p. 31) views a proverb. Similarly, Mensah (2009, p.26) also avers that proverb is 'a short well known statement that gives practical advice about human life'. Concluding from the definitions above, a proverb is a short simple saying that expresses truth about life.

Generally, there are sayings that describe statements of truth such as 'kind words are like honey' (Proverbs 16, 24). Uhumwangho & Oghiator (2022, p. 33) claim that 'biblical proverbs are religious but they focus on concrete divine revelation' as they investigate chapter nine of the Book of Proverbs and note the monosyllabic, disyllabic, trisyllabic and one polysyllabic word that were used. According to the American Bible Society (2017), it is believed by the Hebrew scholars that the style of writing the book of Proverbs is a form of poetry. Hebrew scholars believe that the poetry form that is used in the Book of Proverbs

is referred to as parallelism, a term that was used first by Lowth in the study of biblical Hebrew poetry. Parallelism in Hebrew poetry was entangled in the poetry of Whitman since 1933 and seminal essay of Allen ‘Biblical Analogies’ (Dobbs-Allsopp, 2024). Dobbs-Allsopp (2024, p. 231) explains it is mainly concerned with correspondence, “the quality or character of being.....analogous” This parallelism is a statement that has two parts and most often the following part agrees either with the initial part or gives its reverse. Based on the use of parallel pattern by the Hebrew scholars, seven types of patterns were identified.

Ga, a language spoken in the Greater Accra Region in Ghana. It is a Kwa language that belongs to the Niger-Congo family. Ga can also be found along the coastal ridge of the Eastern region as some Ga villages are located there. There are twenty-six letters of the alphabet. Ga is mainly a two tone language either a high or a low tone is generally found on the syllable. The syllable structure includes consonant and vowel (CV), vowel (V), consonant and lateral (CL) and nasal (N) as codas are non-existent. There are twelve vowels in the language consisting of seven oral vowels and five nasal vowels which are all phonemic. Morphologically, infixes are hardly seen in the language but suffixes, prefixes and circumfixes exist. From the syntactic point of view, two sentence types mainly can be found, namely verb-in and verb-less. For example, ‘Akwele *ne*’ is a verb-less sentence consisting of a noun and a particle, meaning ‘This is Akwele.’ The verb-less sentence types are mainly made up of noun and particles or noun and noun. The verb-in sentence structure is mainly is a Subject Verb Object (SVO).

In this article, the proverbs found in the Ga Bible in the Book of Proverbs are examined to find the patterns and structure of proverb that have been used as stated by the Hebrew scholars. The study is to confirm or otherwise dispute the notion that poetry is written with these structures are not affected from the source language to the target language and inform scholars that these patterns are upheld in poetry especially when translation of the Ga Bible was from the Hebrew bible. Syntactically, the article avers that the structures employed in writing the poetic form of the Book of proverbs are very consistent with the Ga language syntax and affirms that principles that were proposed in the principles and parameters framework are also applicable even though the Book of Proverbs is a language of religion. The paper therefore seeks to investigate the pattern of proverbs in such a style to find out the types of parallelism that may be exhibited in the Book of Proverbs that have been translated into Ga.

## **Literature review**

Proverbs have been investigated from different perspectives as found in the extant literature. Scholars such as Asiyanbola (2007) analyses Yoruba proverbs from a gender

perspective. In the study, she examines 18 Yoruba proverbs of which 14 were gender biased and 4 were gender neutral. She deconstructs the biased ones and gives examples and contexts in which they can be used. Ashipu & Amende (2013) in the research on proverbs as circumstantial speech acts assert that it is vital to consider the study of proverbs in pragmatics, semantics and discourse analysis of African folk languages as this will enhance understanding of use of language in societies. In contemporary times proverbs have been coined by the younger generation as noted by Possa (2014). In addition, coined proverbs were seen to be having both literal and figurative meaning as noted in the Sesotho proverbs. A similar study of Nigerian Pidgin proverbs by Mensah (2013) postulates also that due to dynamism of Nigerian Pidgin English, proverbs expressed are more creative than those existing in the Nigerian indigenous languages. In addition, Mensah (2013) says proverbs can also be expressed on cloths such as by Akan in Ghana, dance movements by Ibibio in Southeastern Nigeria or in Art and craft among the Ewe people in Ghana.

Employing theory of pragmatics acts, Odeunmi (2008) investigates proverbs used during crisis from a pragmatic perspective in Ola Rotimi's *The gods are not to Blame* and avers that two types of crisis related proverbs exist namely social and political which have features by practices such as cautioning, challenging, encouraging, threatening among others. Odeunmi (2008) concludes from the research that examining proverbs that are related to crisis situations in literary works may add insights to language teaching. Studies of proverbs from syntactic perspective include Chilikuri (2014) who examines intonation in English and Telegu proverbs and brought to light all the sentence types that were found in Telegu proverbs. Akanbi (2015) examines the syntactic forms of proverbs and asserts that proverbs are rule-governed and follow the syntactic pattern of the Yoruba syntax and are therefore not strung haphazardly in the language. She notes, for instance, that the ones that are of interrogative types do not employ 'da' an interrogative marker used in Yoruba syntax. Rassi et al. (2014) did a syntactic cataloguing of Brazilian Portuguese proverbs and posit the following classification in the languages: interrogatives, direct transitive verb constructions, comparative among others. In contrast Reis et al. (2015) realise that the types of Portuguese proverbs are impersonal, direct transitive, comparative, coordinate subordinate and three clause type. An example of a three clause type of proverb for example is 'cold hands, warm heart, burning love.'

Connigh (2015) investigates the structural aspect of proverbs and posited that the sentence types for most proverbs can be categorised into simple, compound, compound-complex and nominal. Basil (2016) analyses grammatical structures of proverbs and advocates the teaching of proverbs in schools as it seems learners cannot identify proverbs and their structures. From the literature gathered, we realised that not much syntactic analysis has been done on proverbs and more especially from a biblical context in the Ga language, except one that we came across by Uhumwangho & Oghiator (2022) investigation of Proverbs chapter nine employing the systemic grammar approach and find use of repetition

pattern and archaic words such as *getteh*, *thy*, *thou* to indicate religious language in old English and therefore decided to investigate its grammatical structure to contribute to the study of proverbs in language analysis. In addition, scholars mentioned above examine proverbs that are gathered from ceremonies and in context but did not examine the Book of Proverbs which are wise sayings and translated from Hebrew into Ga. There is therefore the need to fill this gap to identify the syntactic structure in the wise sayings in the Book of Proverb to otherwise confirm their styles and sentence structure in the Ga language which are not written in poetic forms.

### **The book of proverbs**

The Book of Proverbs which are wise sayings in the Bible is found in the Old Testament. There are three main sections in the Book of Proverbs which comprise wise sayings. The first nine chapters are praises, the second section from chapters 10 to 29 are proverbs by Solomon and then the last section consists of sayings by Agur is found in chapter 30 and other sayings are found in chapter 31. The paper focuses on Solomon proverbs that are in chapters 10 to 29. Data for this article was gathered from the Book of Proverbs in the Ga Bible, all the chapters were read by the researchers, and then the proverbs in them were all selected and analysed qualitatively and supported with Tables showing the frequency. The Tables are explained in descriptive terms for clarification of the figures which are calculated in simple percentage.

### **Theoretical framework**

The Book of Proverbs follows the type of poetry that exhibits parallelism according to scholars of Hebrew poetry (American Bible Society 2007, 2023). Parallelism which is a pattern or form a proverb may exhibit, are of seven types as they are statements that show the second part either agreeing with first or providing the opposite (americanbibles .org). Adopting the Hebrew poetry form of parallelism as framework in this paper, the seven forms or patterns of parallelism that are exhibited in proverbs are examined in this work to determine whether truly this is exhibited in the Ga Bible in Proverbs, one of the books in the Old Testament. This is being investigated as the Book of Proverbs which has been translated from Hebrew into Ga. The authors want to affirm or otherwise the claim of parallelism patterns of proverbs is adhered to in translating into another language and also to investigate the parallelism patterns that dominate in this Book if found. The seven forms or patterns of proverb are explained below as postulated by American Bible Society:

- Opposite parallel is an expression or an instruction that is written two times but in reverse ways.

- Similar parallel is where the similar declaration is given twice in identical way or the same knowledge is reiterated in dissimilar expression. The following expression may make the opinion stronger.
- Single statement is sole statement re-counting the fact which are often brief, bold expressions or simple counsels.
- Statement with elucidation shows the initial line is a real image which is clarified by the subsequent line.
- Comparison: some proverbs are comparison that use outstanding imageries that relate one object or person to another. These are termed metaphors.
- Descriptive list shows usually three or four responses that follow an account founded on an unspoken interrogation.
- If .... then statement and or else instruction: the second part explicates the consequences of an act or not doing something. Then or else is generally indirect but not specified. Adapted source <https://bibleresources.americanbible.org/resource/kinds-of-proverbs>

The principles and parameters framework is employed in this study to examine the syntactic structure of the proverbs. The dominant idea of principles and parameters is that an individual's syntactic information can be exhibited with two formal mechanisms: A finite set of fundamental principles that are shared by all languages; e.g., that a sentence should have a subject, even if it is not openly pronounced. A finite set of parameters that determines syntactic variability between languages; e.g., a binary parameter that controls whether or not the subject of a sentence should be clearly pronounced. In simple terms, principle and parameters outlines basic structure of sentences in languages universally and explains the forms that sentences take such as subject or object among others and how they are expressed in languages. It further explains that the positions of the sentence components differ from language to language and may be expressed explicitly or not. This helps in finding out the grammatical structures employed in the Book of Proverbs and the type that dominates in the write up.

### **Data collection procedure**

The Book of Proverbs was read in the Ga Bible thrice by the researchers specifically the section on Solomon's proverbs. There were 513 verses from chapter 10 to 29. Chapters 22 and 24 and part of 23 were left out of the analysis as they were not sampled and not analysed in this study. The reason is that chapters 22 and 24 as well as part of 23 were not written in poetic form and were not proverbs as well. The total number of verses analysed were 468 verses. The choice was made so as to analyse one group of proverbs from one person and this is what was found in chapter 10-29 which were Solomon's proverbs. The other two

sections were not from Solomon so the researchers thought it wise to examine proverbs from one source and see the patterns and sentence types that were employed. The 468 verses were then categorised into seven patterns of parallelism and tabulated to show the frequency. The grammatical structures were also tabulated and the frequency shown and explained. The grammatical structures totalled 465 as some sentences had their continuation in the following verse. The English translation used in this paper is from New King James Version (NKJV).

### Data discussion

Below is a Table 1 showing the patterns that were found in these proverbs.

Table 1: Parallelism patterns in Book of Proverbs in the Ga Bible

Type	Frequency	Percentage	Example of Verses
Similar parallel	85	18.3	Prov. 13:3
Opposite parallel	55	11.2	Prov. 10:12
Statement	90	19.4	Prov 11:7
Statement with explanation	57	12.3	Prov. 16:12
Comparison	77	16.6	Prov. 11:22
Descriptive	8	1.7	Prov. 30:18-19
If... then statement	93	20	Prov. 11:10
<b>Total</b>	465	100	

From the Table 1, the pattern of proverbs that was occurring more was the if... then type or pattern which is 93 consisting 20% of the 465 total proverbs in the data, though the margin between that and the statement type made up of 93 out of 465 forming 19.4% was so close. The least pattern found was the descriptive type which was only 8 forming 1.7% of the 465 chosen proverbs. One could say that the consequences of actions are made known to people through the use of proverbs and therefore the if ... then statement pattern tends to be employed often to advise people. This may be a reason for its dominance whereas the descriptive which forms 1.7% may be difficult to comprehend by people. Below are examples of the patterns.

## Opposite Parallel

(1a). Ga:

‘Nyɛɛ tɛɔ bei shi; shi suɔmɔ haa tɔmɔi fɛɛ anɔ’.

Prov. 10:12

‘Hatred stirs up strife,

But love covers all sins.’

(1b).

‘Henowomɔ tsɔɔ hɛkpatamɔ hiɛ; shi heshibaa tsɔɔ hiɛnyam hiɛ’.

Prov. 18:12

‘Pride goes before destruction,

And a haughty spirit before a fall’.

In example (1a), an opposite parallel is shown between the employment of the morphemes *nyɛɛ* ‘hatred and *suɔmɔ* ‘love’. The two morphemes which occurred in the two statements made are antonyms of each other in giving the same instruction in opposite ways. Syntactically, it is made up of two sentences joined by a coordinator *shi* ‘but’ to form a compound sentence. The subject in the first part is *nyɛɛ* ‘hatred and the complement of the verb *tɛɔ shi* ‘stirs up’ is *bei* ‘strife’. On the other hand, the subject is *suɔmɔ* ‘love’, the verb which is an inherent complement verb *haa nɔ* ‘covers top’ has in its complement position the noun phrase *tɔmɔi fɛɛ* ‘all sins’. In (1b) the contrasting morphemes are *Henowomɔ* ‘pride’ and *heshibaa* ‘humility’ which are deployed to give the same instruction to the reader or hearer of the verse. The sentence which is compound in nature has in its first part the subject *henowomɔ* ‘pride’ and the second part has *heshibaa* ‘humility’ as its subject. Both parts of the sentence employ the same verb *tsɔɔ hiɛ* ‘go forth’

## Single Statement

(2a). Ga

‘Kɛ mɔ fɔŋ gbo lɛ ehienɔkamɔ laajeɔ;

ni mɔ ni lee Nyɔŋmɔ hiɛnɔkamɔ lɛ efɛɔ yaka’.

Prov. 11:7

‘When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish,  
And the hope of strong men perishes’.

(2b).

‘Mɔ ni kɛ efɔŋ toɔ ekrakpa najiaŋ lɛ, efɔŋ kraŋ yɛ ewe’.

Prov. 17:13

‘Whoever rewards evil for good, evil will never depart from his house’.

In example (2a), two declarative clauses made up the verse to show the statement pattern of parallelism. In the patterns proposed by the American Bible Society in relation to Hebrew poetry, a type that describes truth in short or give simple warnings is found in this category. Reading the Proverbs 11:7, one can see that it is a warning that is given using a bold statement. In the Ga language, unlike English the relative clause is employed in the second part of the statement in (2b) which make the structure a little longer as compared to the English. This expresses the notion that concepts are expressed in languages in different ways using different word classes. In (2b) a bold statement is also made the one who rewards good with evil will have evil in his home all the time.

The sentence structure in (2a) is made up of a conditional clause at the beginning *kɛ mɔ fɔŋ gbo lɛ* ‘when a wicked man dies’ and there is the use of relative clause begins the second part of the statement *ni mɔ ni lee Nyɔŋmɔ* literally means ‘the one who does not know God.’ The subject position like the (2a) also has a relative clause *Mɔ ni kɛ efɔŋ toɔ ekrakpa najiaŋ lɛ*

## Comparison

(3a). Ga:

‘Yoo ni he yɔɔ fɛɔ ni ebɛ jɛŋba kpakpa  
lɛ etamɔ kplotoo ni awo egugɔ mli shika ga’.

Prov. 11:22

‘As a ring of gold in a swine's snout

So is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion’.

(3b).

‘Ohiafo anɔkwafo lɛ ehi fe kwashia kutumpɔfo’.

Prov. 19: 1

‘Better is the poor who walks in his integrity  
Than one who is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.’

In example (3a) there is a comparison of a beautiful or an attractive woman to a swine/pig with a gold ring in its nose. This according to the Hebrew scholars are also known as metaphors. In the English version the pig/swine with the gold ring in its nose is found in the initial statement used to compare with an attractive woman or lady who lacks discretion, the Ga is vice versa. A beautiful woman with no discretion occurs in the initial part of the verse followed by the pig with the gold ring in its nose. The morpheme for comparison is employed in this proverb *tamɔ* ‘like’ and it serves as the main verb in the sentence. In subject position of the Ga sentence in (3a) comprise a relative clause with the relativiser marker *ni* ‘*Yoo ni he yɔɔ feo ni ebe jɛɲba kpakpa* literally ‘a woman who is beautiful and has no morals’ and also in its object position *kplotoo ni awo egugɔ mli shika ga* ‘a pig which has been placed in its nose a gold ring’ is a relative clause. It is a simple sentence that has been employed in the verse. In (3b) a comparative construction is employed using the verb *hi* ‘to be good’ and the exceed verb *fe* ‘to surpass’. An honest poor is compared with a person who is a liar and a fool. In the subject position the noun phrase comprises *ohiafo anɔkwafo lɛ* ‘the truthful poor person’ and in the object or complement position is *kwashia kutumpɔfo* ‘a liar fool’.

### Statement with explanation

(4). Ga:

‘Eji nihinii akɛ maɲtɛ aaafee efɔɲ;

ejaakɛ jalɛ ni haa maɲtɛ sei maa shi shiɲɲ’.

Prov. 16:12

‘It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts,

For a throne is established on righteousness’.

In example (4) an explanation is made in the second part of the verse about the acts of kings. This means a statement with explanation is made employing a concrete image in the first line and the second line explains it further. This sentence structurally is a complex type with the coordinating conjunction *ejaake* ‘because’.

### **If... then statement**

(5a). Ga

‘Keji nɔ fɛɛ nɔ tee nɔ jogbaŋŋ ha jalɔ lɛ maŋ fɛɛ nyaa; ni keji mei fɔɔji ahie kpata lɛ, maŋ fɛɛ bɔɔ oshe kɛ miishɛɛ’.

Prov. 11:10

‘When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices,

And when the wicked perish, there is joyful shouting’.

(5b)

‘Kɛ agbala hefɛoyelɔ toi lɛ, mɔ ni jwɛŋmɔ esako kaseɔ nii kejeɔ mli; ni kɛ atsɔɔ nilelɔ nii lɛ eleɔ           nii’.

Prov.21:11

‘When the scoffer is punished, the simple is made wise;  
But when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge’.

In (5a) the consequences of righteousness and punishment of wickedness are found in the verse to show the if...then statement and or else pattern which is a conditional sentence. The sentence begins with the conditional morpheme *keji* ‘if’ in the Ga verse that there is joy in a city if all goes with the righteous person. In the second part which often explains the consequence of an action is clearly evident in the second part as well. As it states if the wicked perish there is joy. The then or else as noted by the Hebrew poetry scholars is normally not stated but implied in the verse. In (5b) there is a positive consequence of an if ...then statement. The verse in both examples is made of two clauses and both sentences in (5a) and (5b) is compound complex.

### **Similar parallel**

(6a). Ga:

‘Mɔ ni mɔɔ enaabu mli eebaa ewala yi; shi mɔ ni mɔɔ enaabu mli lɛ, eekpata lɛ dieŋtɛ ehe hiɛ’.

Prov. 13:3

‘The one who guards his mouth preserves his life;  
The one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin’.

(6b).

‘Mɔ ni edɛŋ kpɔɔ lɛ enaa nii, ni mɔ ni haa mɛi tɔrɔɔ lɛ hu etɔɔ’.

Prov. 11:25

‘The generous soul will be made rich,  
And he who waters will also be watered himself’.

In (6a) above though, there is contrast, opposite noun lexical items are not employed in the sentence but the same noun, *naabu* ‘lips’ are used in the construction. The contrast is evident in using the positive and negative forms of the verb *mɔɔ* ‘holds’ and *mɔɔɔ* does not hold’. The verb *mɔ* ‘to catch/hold’ has been prefixed with the habitual marker {-ɔ} and put in the negative form by adding the vowel in the root twice {-ɔɔ}. Further, opposite verbs *baa yi* ‘to preserve’ in the first part and *kpata* ‘to destroy in the second part respectively are found in the verse in (6a) to show the similar parallel pattern. The lips are performing different actions to show this similar parallel pattern. The same concept is put across twice by stating in different forms and the second part reiterates the point and makes it stronger. Examining the structure in the English there is no conjunction to join the two statements made however in Ga, the coordinating conjunction *shi* ‘but’ is employed to join the two statements together. There similarity between the Ga and English is that both made use of the relative clauses in the subject positions. In (6b) the conjunction *ni* ‘and’ is used to join two clauses that have in their subject positions, relative clauses *Mɔ ni edɛŋ kpɔɔ lɛ* literally meaning ‘the one whose hands plucks off’ and *mɔ ni haa mɛi tɔrɔɔ lɛ* with literal meaning ‘the one who made people get satisfied’ respectively.

### **Descriptive statement**

(7). Ga:

‘Tɛ tsii, ni shia hu, jatsɔ kɛ tsiimɔ ni; shi buulu mlifu tsii fɛ nibii enyɔ nɛɛ fɛɛ’.

Prov. 27:3

‘A stone is heavy and sand is weighty, but a fool’s wrath is heavier than both of them’.

In example (7) the compound sentence is employed to illustrate the descriptive pattern of parallelism. *Tɛ* ‘stone’ is described to be heavy as well as sand and it further compares a fool wrath being heavier than both sand and stone. There is the use of the conjunction *shi* ‘but’ which is used to join the two sentences. The verb *tsii* ‘to be heavy’ is used in both sentences.

The Table 2 below shows the grammatical structures that were seen in the Book of Proverbs and their frequencies. The sentence functions are what was studied and that is what is illustrated in the Table 2.

Table 2: Grammatical structures

Grammatical structure	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Declarative</b>	442	94.4
<b>Imperative</b>	20	4.3
<b>Interrogative</b>	6	1.3
<b>Total</b>	468	100

In Table 2 in examining the structures of the proverbs from the function perspective, the data indicate that less interrogative type of proverbs was employed in the Ga bible as they formed 1.3% which numbered 6 out of 468. These interrogatives made use of the interrogative morphemes use in Ga syntax unlike proverbs that were of interrogative did not employ the *da* particle in Yoruba syntax as postulated by Akanbi (2015). The majority of the proverbs were in the declarative form as 442 out of 468 which forms 94.4% of the grammatical structures. The imperative structure follows the Ga syntax. Below is an example in (8a) showing a verse made up of two declarative sentences. In the same way (8b) has a declarative sentence consisting of only one in the verse. In the subject position is the noun phrase consisting of a relative clause *maɲtɛ ni taɔ kojomɔ sei nɔ lɛ* ‘the king who sits on the throne of judgement’ and it is a statement saying the bold truth.

(8a). Ga:

‘Kɛ mɔ fɔŋ gbo lɛ ehienɔkamɔ laajeɔ;  
ni mɔ ni lee Nyɔŋmɔ hienɔkamɔ lɛ efeɔ yaka’.

Prov. 11:7

‘When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish,  
And the hope of strong men perishes’.

(8b)

‘Maṅtse ni taa kojomɔ sei nɔ ɛ, enaa efɔŋ fɛɛ efɔŋ’.

Prov. 20:8

‘A king who sits on the throne of judgement scatters all evil with his eyes’.

Below in (9a) shows an example of an imperative type. The first part is in the imperative and the second part also is in the imperative. Both are imperatives made up of a complex sentence. There is the advice that you should not love sleep in order not to be poor and furthermore commanded to open your eyes so you can be full.

(9a). Ga:

‘Wɔ akaŋɔ onaa, kejeɛ nakai ɛ obaaye ohia.....

Gbelemɔ ohinmei ni oona nii oye otɔ.’

Prov. 20:13

‘Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty;

Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread.’

(9b).

‘Bo ŋaawoo toi, ni okpeɛ tsɔsemɔ koni wɔsɛɛ ɛ, ole nii’.

Prov. 19:20

‘Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days’.

In (9a) the first part in the verse employs the verb *ŋɔɔ* ‘to be sweet’ which is prefixed with the negative imperative *ka-* ‘not and also the {a-} prefix which shows the imperative and the subjunctive mood which is equivalent to the English where you are commanded not to love sleep or face the consequences. In the second part in the Ga example, the verb *gbele* ‘to open’ has been suffix with *-mɔ* which is an imperative affix in Ga. The second admonish you to take a particular action which is to open your eyes and see the results for yourself. The result being

that you will be satisfied. In (9b) the verb *bo* ‘listen’ is read with high tone to indicate the imperative form. You are requested to listen to advice and receive instruction in order to be wise in the latter days of life.

The Table 3 below shows the sentence types and the frequencies of the sentence types that were found in the data. As the Principles and Parameters theory is used to find out the sentence structures that were employed. It came to light that the subjects were expressed overtly. A total of 452 sentences were realised in the data as some sentences consist of two verses.

Table 3: Sentence Types

Type	Frequency	Percentage	Sample verse
Simple	82	18.2	Prov. 17:13
Compound	322	71.2	Prov. 29 :27
Complex	44	9.7	Prov. 21:25
Compound Complex	4	0.9	Prov. 11:7
Total	452	100	

In the Table 3 above the majority of sentence types were compound types as 322 out of 452 consisting of 71.2% were found. 18.2% of the sentences consisting of 82 out of the 452 were found in the data. The less used sentence types namely compound complex was 4 which is less than 1% were noted in the data. Examples of the sentence types are illustrated below from 10-13.

### Simple

(10a). Ga:

‘Mə ni boə kamə krəŋŋ toi lɛ, ehio nileləi atɛŋ’

Prov. 15:31

‘The ear that hears the rebukes of life

Will abide among the wise’.

(10b).

‘Mo ni haa hetoo ni ja le, ohe suɔɔ ni’.

Prov. 24:26

‘He who gives a right answer kisses the lips.’

In the example in (10a) and (10b) simple sentences are employed. The subjects in (10a) and (10b) have relative clauses as part of them *mɔ ni boɔ kamɔ krɔŋŋ toi le* ‘the one who listens to true rebuke’ and *mɔ ni haa hetoo ni ja le* ‘the one who gives correct answer’ respectively just like the English structure. This was often seen in the data as most of the adjectives employed in the English may not have one free morpheme in Ga that can be used to express them.

### Compound

(11a). Ga:

‘Hewoo tsɔɔ hieɔpatamɔ hie; ni hetsɔɔmɔ mumɔ tsɔɔ shigbeemɔ hie’.

Prov. 16:18

‘Pride goes before destruction,

And a haughty spirit before a fall’.

(11b).

‘Kwashia jieɔ emlifu fɛɛ kpo shi; shi nileɔ miɔ ŋɔɔ’.

Prov. 29:11

‘A fool vent all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back’.

In example (11a) and (11b) above, compound sentences are employed with the conjunction *ni* ‘and’ to form the sentences made up of *Hewoo tsɔɔ hieɔpatamɔ hie* ‘pride comes before destruction’ and *hetsɔɔmɔ mumɔ tsɔɔ shigbeemɔ hie* ‘a haughty spirit is before a fall’ and; *shi* ‘but’ are used to join the two simple sentences *Kwashia jieɔ emlifu fɛɛ kpo shi* ‘the fool vent all his anger’ and *nileɔ miɔ ŋɔɔ* ‘a wise person holds back’ just like the structure of the English version.

## Complex

(12a). Ga:

‘Wɔ akawɔ onaa, kejeee nakai le obaaye ohia;

Gbelemɔ ohinmei ni oona nii oye otɔ’.

Prov. 20:13

‘Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty;

Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread’.

(12b).

‘Mɔ ko ye ni feɔ ehe niatse tsebele ebe no ko no ko; mɔ ko hu ye ni feɔ ehe ohiafo, tsebele eye nii babao’.

Prov. 13:7

‘There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; And one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches’.

In the complex sentence in (12a) above the reason clause *kejeee nakai le obaaye ohia* ‘lest you come to poverty’ indicates the consequence of too much sleep. In (12b) the coordinating conjunction *tsebele* ‘even though’ has been used.

## Compound complex

(13a). Ga

‘Ke akai jalɔ le, ajɔ le shi efɔnfeelɔ le atsiŋ egbei ta ajɔŋ le’.

Prov. 10:7

‘The memory of the righteous is blessed,

But the name of the wicked will rot’.

(13b).

‘Bo sane toi jogbanɔ dani oha hetoo, kejee nakai le, obaafee kwashia ke buulu’.

Prov. 18:13

‘He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him’.

The first part of the sentence in (13a) is a subordinate clause, ‘*kε akai jalɔ le*’, ‘when you remember a righteous person’ and this is followed by two main clauses *ajɔɔ le* ‘he or she is blessed’ and *efɔɔfeelɔ le atsiɔ egbɛi ta ajɔɔ le* ‘the sinner would not be mentioned and would not be blessed’ which is joined together by the coordinator, *shi*. ‘but’. In (13b) the conditional clause *kejɛe nakai le*, *obaafee kwashia kε buulu* occurs after the imperative sentence, *bo sane toi jogbanɔ dani oha hetoo* occurring with the conjunction *dani* ‘before’ in it.

## Conclusion

In summary, this article has analysed linguistically the structures employed in writing the Book of Proverbs in the Ga Bible. It came to light that the seven patterns of parallelism were all found and the dominant pattern realised was the if...then statement whereas the descriptive pattern was less in the data. In relation to the grammatical structures where the principles and parameters theory was employed by examining the features of declaratives, imperative and interrogatives, declarative structures were in the majority. The least on the scale was the interrogative type. It was also realised that the sentence types employed in the write up mostly was the compound types whereas the less employed sentence type was the compound complex. One may ask could this be the same when the English version is analysed? The researchers believe this could also be investigated so that the similarities and differences in both write up can be brought to light to see whether translation has changed the structures in another paper. To conclude, it can be posited that the parallelism patterns that the Hebrew scholars identified in writing such poetry was attested in the Book of Proverbs in the Ga Bible. The writings in the Book of Proverbs in the Ga Bible though is a translation were not just strung together but it followed the grammatical structures that are found in the Ga language. Finally, we argue that in the language of religious syntactic structures used in Ga was also employed and translation and poetry composed are not left to deviate from the syntax of the Ga language.

## References

- Agyekum, K. (2013). *Introduction to Literature*. Adwinsa Publications.
- Akanbi, T. A. (2015). The syntax of Yoruba proverbs. *Global Journal of Human Social Science and Linguistic Education*, 15(8), 2-32
- Akin, O. (2013). Pragmatic function of crisis-motivated proverbs in Ola Rotimi’s *The god’s are not to Blame*. *Linguistik Online*. <http://d.doi.org/10.1309/10.33.530>.
- American Bible Society. (2017). Resources

<https://bibleresources.americanbible.org/resource/kinds-of-proverbs>

American Bible Society. (2023). Resources

<https://bibleresources.americanbible.org/resource/kinds-of-proverbs>

Asiyanbola, A.A. (2007). A Syntactic and Semiotic Analysis of some Yoruba sexist Proverbs in English translation: need for Gender balance. *Nebula*, 43, 63-78.

Ashipu, K.B.C & Amende, C. (2013) Proverbs as Circumstantial Speech Acts. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(7), 10-15

Awedoba, A. K. (2000). *An Introduction to Kassena Society and Culture through their Proverbs*. University Press of America.

Basil, O. (2016). Exploring the prospects of using proverbs and mood structure analysis to communicate textual meanings in ESL classroom. A paper presented at the Maiden National Conference of Department of English Language and Literature. Awka 7-11 June 2016.

Chilikuri, B. (2014). The syntax of Telegu Proverbs 1. The sentence. Retrieved from <http://www.scribd.com/document/244386690/-F1-Chikuri-Bhuvanewar-THE-syntax-of-telegu-proverbs-1-the-sentence-06-07-14-pdf>.

Connigh, M. (2015). *Structural Aspects of proverbs*. In Hrisztova-Gotthardt, H. & M. A. Varga (Eds.), *Introduction to parameology: A comprehension guide to proverbs studies* (pp. 112-132). De Gruyter.

Dabaghi, A. (2010). Proverbs from the view point of Translation. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 1(6), 807-814.

Dobbs-Allsopp, F.W. (2024). *Parallelism: In the (Hebrew). Bible and in Whitman*. In *Divine Style: WALT Whitman and the King James Bible*. Cambridge UK: Open book Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.11647.10BP.0357>

Homstedt, R. (2005). Word order in the book of Proverbs study of biblical Hebrew Proverb. In Troxel, R. L., D.R. Magary & K.G.Friebel (Eds). *Seeking out the wisdom of the Ancient: essays offered to honour Michael V. Fox on the occasion of the sixty-fifth birthday* (135-154) Eisenbrauns.

Kogri, E.N. (2016). Thematic and aesthetic analyses of Dagaaba proverbs. MPhil Thesis University of Education, Winneba. <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/319>

Lasnik, H. & Lohnda, T. (2010). Government –binding /principles and parameters theory. Wiley Online Library. <http://doi.org/10.002/wcs.35>.

- Mensah, E. O. (2013). Proverbs in Nigerian Pidgin. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 69(1), 87-115.
- Mensah, C. A. (2009). *Basic Knowledge in Literature for JHS&SHS*. Yamens.
- Mollanazar, H. (2001). Principles and methodology of translation. SAMT.
- Nsoh, E. A., Fushieni, A. R., & Ababila, J. A. (2010). *Aspects of Oral Literature in Ghana*. Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Odebunmi, A. (2008). Pragmatic functions of crisis - Motivated proverbs in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. *Linguistik Online*, 33(1).  
<https://doi.org/10.13092/lo.33.530>
- Possa, M. (2014). The form of contemporary Sesotho proverbs. *South African Journal of African Languages*, 34(1), 61-69.
- Rassi, A.P., Baptista, J. & Vale, O. (2014). Automatic detection of Proverbs. In M. Pereira, J. Leal, J. and A. Simoes (Eds). *Proceedings of the symposium on languages Application and technologies (SLATE 14)* (pp. 235-245). Dagstuhl Publishing
- Reiss, S. & Baptista, J. (2015). Portuguese Proverbs: Types and variants. Conference on Computerised and Corpus-Based Approaches to Phraseology: Monolingual and Multilingual Perspectives, 208-217.
- Singh, S. L. (2015). Morphosemantic Attributes of Meetei Proverbs. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 6(3), 144-154
- The Ga Bible (2007). Bible Society of Ghana. Bible Society of Ghana.
- Uhunmwangho, A.V., & Oghiator, F.E. (2022). The Language of religion as discourse analysis of the syntactic structures in proverbs chapter nine. *International Journal of Culture and Religious studies*, 3(1), 31-47.
- Umo, S. (2007). *Ibibio Proverbs as a tool for language Pedagogy presented at valedictory Symposium in honour of Professor Okon Essien*. December 14.
- Zolkovskij, A.K. (1978). At the intersection of linguistics, paremiology and poetics: on the literary structures of proverbs. *Poetics. Elsevier*, 1(7), 309-332.