



Listes de contenus disponibles sur: [Scholar](#)

## A Pragmatic Analysis Of Yaka Proverbs

Journal homepage: [ijssass.com/index.php/ijssass](http://ijssass.com/index.php/ijssass)

# A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF YAKA PROVERBS<sup>☆</sup>

Jackson LUALA MAKOY<sup>a,\*</sup>

*a.Senior lecturer, English Department, Institut Supérieur de Commerce de Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo*

Received 1 July 2022; Accepted 11 July 2022

Available online 15 July 2022

## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

Proverb

Pragmatics

Semantics

Yaka language and culture

Speech acts.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the ten Yaka proverbs randomly selected by the researcher who is a native speaker by following the pragmatic approach, precisely the theory of speech acts initiated by Austin and then by John Searle. Speech act theory can be said to be a systematic study of the relationship between signs and their interpreters. It is a question of knowing what the interpreter-users do, what acts they accomplish by the use of certain signs (proverbs). A proverb is a simple and concrete saying, popularly known and repeated, which expresses a truth based on common sense or experience. Proverbs are often metaphorical. Since proverbs are simple and catchy phrases that have a moral, social or cultural significance, in this study, we set ourselves the goal of promoting Yaka culture, analyzing its ten selected proverbs in order to shed light clear to users of these proverbs who sometimes ignore the true meaning of these proverbs despite their use by them, and even to readers and future researchers who will be interested in the YAKA language.

The analysis will cover three levels: pragmatic, semantic, and structural level to get a full account of this type of meaning.

## 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The term “proverb” is certainly one of the most difficult concepts to be defined (Taylor, 1965). One obvious reason for this difficulty is separating statements that are proverbial from those that are not. Apparently, it is because of this contention that Taylor says that “the definition of a proverb is too difficult to repay the undertaking. This sentiment is echoed in Trench (2003) that nothing is harder to define than the concept (proverb). The broad nature of the concept and the fact that different things preoccupy the mind of each

scholar confirms Taylor’s stand. Taylor (1931) says that “an incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that the other is not (Taylor, 1931). He goes on in about two hundred pages to discuss the nature of proverbs, touching on meanings and functions of the term.

Ojoade (2004) employs the word “proverb” to mean idiomatic expressions, familiar quotations, and similar expressions that are still in the caterpillar stage to the realm of proverbs as well as all types of stereotyped saying of public approval. For examples, maxims, adages, precepts,

aphorisms, apothegms, gnomes, and epigrams all have much in common with proverb. All these genres have become proverbial through their extensive usage.

Ruth Finnegan(1970) defines proverbs as “a saying in more or less fixed form marked by „shortness, sense and salt“ and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it”.

According to her, a proverb may be defined as „a short saying“ “in more or less fixed form” which expresses a general truth in a delightful and figurative way. In line with the above, a proverb is short a witty saying that is usually memorisable and loaded with didactic import. The length and the meaning potentials are often used as a basis for determining what constitutes a proverb. Factors of cultural relevance and shortness (in terms of the length) are also highlighted in proverbs. Due to the fact that proverbs are expressions that have been handed down from generations to generations, they have become fixed in structure and are often memorisable. Proverbs are highly dynamic in nature and this is true in the sense of their production as well as interpretation in line with discourse contextual relevance.

Proverbs are viewed as vehicles of culture in the sense that they express “well known truths, social norms, or moral concerns” (Gibbs and Beitel, 1995). Like other previous definitions of proverb that stress cultural importance, this definition is hinged on cultural value and societal norms. It is in line with Mieder’s (1986) view of proverb particularly on the concept of expressing “truth”. However, recent researches on proverbs have shown that proverbs sometimes do not express any realistic truth, though; this may not necessarily affect the didactic import that a proverb is meant to perform. Some proverbs are basically used as cultural aesthetics and do not in any way reflect any known general truth.

Proverbs constitute a significant part of verbal language. Like other types of folk-saying such as fables, riddles and parables; proverbs are considered genres of verbal

communication which can be found in all languages regardless of their cultural background, rural or civilized, advanced or primitive. In other words, no language in the world is without proverbs for the reason is that: they convey a great deal of meaning, associated with people's thoughts, habits, beliefs, experiences, traditions and patterns of life.

The term proverb has been defined by so many linguists and scholars corresponding to their interests and purposes, yet no comprehensive and accurate definition has been labeled to convey all the essential features of this term (Taylor: 1931 quoted in Moon, 1997:2). The reason for that is "the field of research of proverb is bounded, on the one hand, by the vocabulary and phraseology of language and, on the other, by the many forms of folklore" (Kuusi's :1998:1). However, there is a general agreement as to the main characteristics of proverbial sayings such as didacticity popularity, currency, traditionalty, wisdom, and the rigid form.

Nashashibi (1960: 11) defines proverbs as "short sentences drawn from long experience". Mieder (1999:7) shares the view with him and defines a proverb as "wisdom expressed in a sentence". Those preverbal sentences are complete with fixed forms often concise. They are metaphoric and alliterative which can be made memorable and easily passed by word of mouth from generation to generation until they became familiar. e.g., "It Never Rains But it Pours" or "Bad News Travels Fast "Nevertheless; proverbs 'come and go" their first use is hard to ascertain and their existence can not be traced back to a certain period of time (ibid.).

Norrick (1985:31) describes proverbs as "self —contained, pithy, traditional expressions with didactic content and fixed, poetic form “. *By self—contained* is meant that their grammatical units can’t be replaced by other units e.g., the sentence "curiosity killed the cat " can not be replaced by another phrase. The word *pithy* means that though *They* have fixed poetic forms, they are full of meaning or as Norrick (ibid.36) puts it "pregnant in meaning". They are also traditional because they are part of folklore and contain

wisdom, truth, morals and traditional perspectives related to our everyday thoughts, feelings and needs. Finally by didactic, Norrick meant that proverbs are designed to teach people something, moral lessons, perspective rules advice, warning, encouragement and some truth about experience e.g., "you're Never too Old to Learn" or "Money does not Grow on Trees". In other words, they cover a wide range of human life and experience. In addition, language would be more effective and colourful with the use of proverbs, since they embellish our speech, and they are usually manipulated to give advice and warning, to give moral and instructional lessons, and to express certain social attitudes. A good warning is "Building castles in the air", whereas "A lie has short legs" gives us a moral lesson. A good piece of advice is offered by "Sweep before your own door" (Taylor, 1985).

Didacticity is expressed either explicitly or implicitly (Norrick, 1985: 41ff). Explicit didactic proverbs are often expressed in the form of imperative or warning, like Look before you leap. As for implicit didactic proverbs, they are those that are shown in the form of observation or experience, such as *No pain, No Gain*.

Taylor argues that "a proverb is wise, it belongs to many people; it is ingenious in form and idea" (1996b: 12). Wisdom in proverbs may offer different types of advice: moral, practical and general advices. Moral advice based on personal experience can be seen in the following examples: Charity begins at home. Practical advice gained from social observations of everyday life is in the following examples: don't put all the eggs in one basket. It seems that the role of proverbs of wisdom in our daily life cannot be ignored; otherwise, people would get lost. Fair (2003: 1) A proverb is a polysemantic unit in the sense that it may have two different types of meaning: Literal and Figurative. The literal meaning is the one that can be interpreted easily. The proverb "Like father, like son" for example, is said to have a literal reading since "father and son are alike". Whereas, the proverb "Blood is thicker than water" has a figurative

meaning which can be interpreted differently from its literal meanings depending on the social context. The figurative meaning of this proverb is that members of the same family share stronger ties with each other than they do with others. The meaning of the whole proverb is completely different from the meaning of its constitutive parts (ie, idiomatic).

## YAKA PEOPLE AND LANGUAGE

### *The Yaka people*

The Yaka are an African ethnic group found in southwestern Democratic Republic of the Congo, with Angola border to their west. They number about 1000,000 and are related to the Suku people. They live in the forest and savanna region between the Kwango River and the Wamba River. They speak the Yaka language. (Yaka people, Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Their oral tradition states that Lunda arrived in Kwango in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and found people who were part of the kingdom of Kongo. (Marc Kapende:2012). Yaka was a title of honor given to the warriors of the kingdom of Kongo and this word can be found in the following Kongo sentence from the descendants of M'panzu : " « Beto, mayaka mbata; mayaka mpunza, mayaka mbele. »"(Translation: « We, we catch the blows, arrows and swords. » (that the enemies throw at them)).

The colonial Portuguese called them *Jagas*, and their name may be derived from the Kikongo verb *Kuyaka* which means "to grab, to take, to hold" referring to the warriors of the kingdom of Kongo and later referring to the invaders.(Anthony A., Louis G.(2010).

### History

*Exodus to Kwango Region and establishment of the Yaka kingdom*

King Kasongo led the exodus of the Lunda westward around the 17th century, the most organized expedition towards the conquest of the Kwango region in the kingdom of Kongo. Some Lunda had already preceded this. These Lunda conquerors were endowed with three major qualities: diplomacy, sociability and the organization, which enabled them to found the Yaka kingdom in the seventeenth century, harmoniously integrating the pre-established Kongo nations. The Lunda used this "soft power", more than fighting, to favour the union of the two peoples, Lunda and Kongo, under the kingdom Yaka. Ethnologists and sociologists unanimously agree that, throughout Belgian colonial history, this kingdom was one of the best organized and Especially the most resistant to Western penetration.(Roland O. et al.(2001).

The name Yaka is a title that the Kongo gave to their warriors. Upon the arrival of Lunda, the kingdom of Kongo was already weakened by Portuguese incursions. Thus, the resistance that the Lunda find in the Kwango region is that of the isolated local tribes Kongo, including the Mbala, Tsamba, Hungana, Pindi, Ngongo, rather than that of a United Kongo kingdom. The Lunda, these "biluwa", or foreigners, which Nothing resisted on their passage, capable of catching bullets and arrows, were also called "Iluwa" (foreigners) or Bayaka (Catchers of the balls and the arrows). Both the Lunda that arrived and the kongo warriors had similar traits, hence the exact titles being given to them.(ibid 2001).

The Lunda, who had an interest in integrating into their political organization the local tribes who had not fled the invasion or who did not want to fight, had in turn adopted the identity "Yaka" which, in addition to conferring on them a title of nobility of the "invincible", integrated them better In their new country.

They had also gradually adopted the Kongo language (hence the Kiyaka language being spoken amongst them, an

offshoot of Kikongo). Much more, Lunda chiefs married Kongo women. The offspring identified themselves as Yaka rather than Lunda. Thus, the Yaka appellation had established itself as a generic identity Of the Lunda and Kongo inhabiting territories area under the authority of the Kiamvu Kasongo-Lunda, namely the territories of Kasongo-Lunda, Kenge and Popokabaka.

The Lunda of Nzofu later came in the territory of Kahemba retain the Lunda identity and language. As for the territory of Feshi, they emigrated there in the middle of the 18th century from the Basuku, a group of Kongo, who disassociated themselves from the power of Kiamvu Kasongo-Lunda and whose leader "Meni Kongo" refused to submit to the authority of the latter. Some other Kongo groups: the Mbala, Tsamba, Hungana, Pindi and Ngongo, etc. Had already emigrated to the Kwilu, leaving behind them, brothers and sisters who, together with the Lunda, composed the Yaka kingdom.

The five territories that make up Kwango are therefore a binational space, Kongo and Lunda.

The reconciliation is thus the end of the wars of conquest between Kongo ethnic groups and the Lunda in Kwango was sealed by a ceremony and a particular ceremony in which the chief Meni Kongo representing of the original Tsamba clans of Feshi and the Lunda chiefs were to share the parrot, dog and cat raw meat. At the end of this ceremony, the representatives of two nations buried their war weapons and promised peaceful coexistence forever. The Kongo and the Lunda of Kwango have lived in perfect harmony since the beginning of the 19th century.

#### *Contact with the Europeans powers*

When the administration of Leopold II arrived in Kwango after their establishment in Bas-Congo, Kwango was an organized kingdom; The power of Kiamvu Kasongo-Lunda was legitimized and respected by all the peoples, Kongo and

Lunda. It was also well represented on the whole kingdom that stretched from Kasongo-Lunda to Popokabaka through the present territory of Kenge. Peace between the Bayaka (Kongo and Lunda under the power of the Kiamvu Kasongo-Lunda), their brothers, the Basuku of Meni Kongo in the Feshi and the Lunda of Nzofu in Kahemba.

It was therefore not by default of hospitality that the agents of the Belgian administration came up against a refusal in Kwango. They represented a power that could not coexist easily with the existing political power.

According to Crawford Young, the Lunda empires in Kwango and Katanga had understood that colonial occupation was an aggression to repel and fight. The other groups, apart from a few scattered revolts including that of Bapendé, had behaved as if the exploration and occupation of their spaces by strangers were normal. (C. Young, 1965: 295-6).

#### The socio-political organization and Religion

The Yaka people are a matrilineal society that includes patrilineal lineage as family name. (Michael Lamberk; Andrew Strathern 1998).

Their villages have chiefs, who are recognized by the Congo government as a political office. (University of Iowa Museum of Art 2012).

Their Traditional Religion has the concept of *Ndzambyaphuungu*, or a Creator God who resides in the sky, but this creator is not a part of their celebrations or rituals. The religious practices and ceremonies are instead directed towards the *Bambuta* or the spirits of the ancestors, and these are also part of healing dances during illnesses. (Michael Lamberk; Andrew Strathern ibidem).



A carved Yaka Tambour (drum).

The Yaka farm cassava, sweet potatoes, and corn as staple source of food, and supplement this with fish and game meat. They have traditionally hunted with the help of hunting dogs. In contemporary times, they are also migrant workers in urban areas.

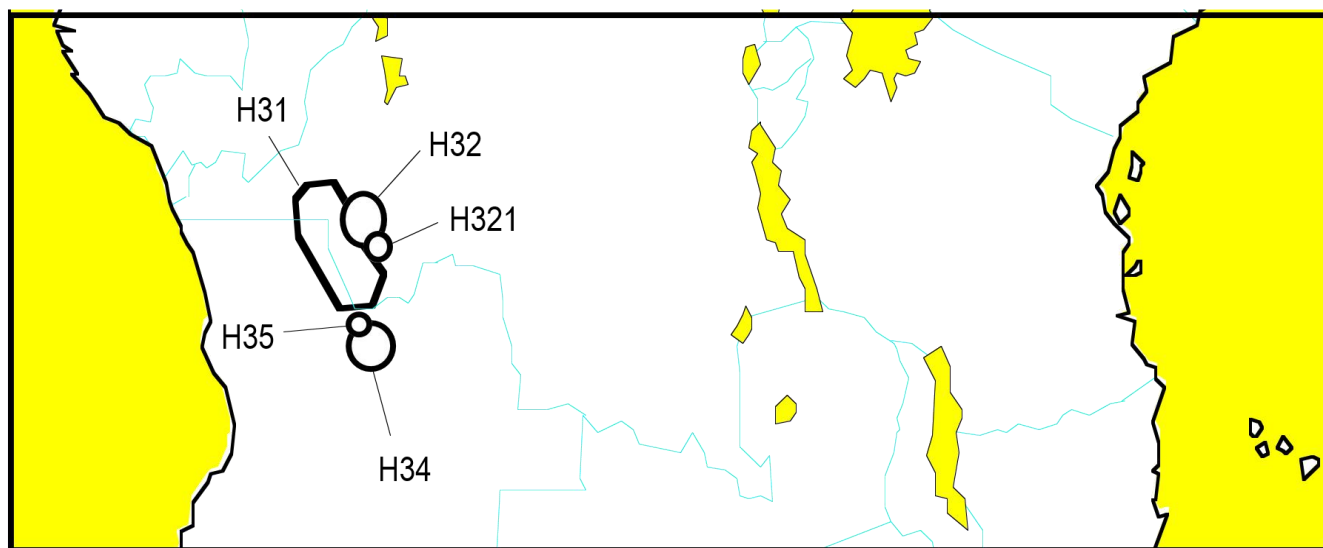
The Yaka are notable for their arts and handicrafts. They make statues, portraits, baskets, carved objects, masks, tools for cooking, building, hunting, fishing or entertaining with additions of instruments such as drums. Their masks are bulky, distinctive with upturned noses and eyes shaped in the form of globules. These masks were frequently used in various Traditional Religion ceremonies. Their sculptures called *Mbwoolo* and their carved slit drum called *Mukoku* are regionally famous and used in ritual dances.

#### Yaka Language (H30)

The third edition of the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary says that language is a system of communication consisting of sounds, words and grammar, or the system of communication used by the people of a particular country or profession. Since language is defined like this, this research attempts to explain some aspects of Yaka language as it relates to the topic.

Yaka, also spelled *Iaca* and *Iyaka*, is a Bantu language spoken in the Democratic Republic of Congo, mainly in former Bandundu province (Kwango) and Angola. There are four dialects, Yaka proper, which comprises 99% of speakers, and Ngoongo (distinct from West Ngongo language), Pelende, and Lonzo. (NUGL(or New Updated

## H30 : Yaka Group



H31 ..... Yaka <sup>yaf</sup>, Kiyaka, incl. Ngoongo <sup>noq</sup>, Pelende <sup>ppp</sup>, Lonzo <sup>lnz</sup>

H32 ..... Suku <sup>sub</sup>

Yaka is a conventionally classified as belonging to the H30 linguistic Zone among the 16 zones proposed by New Updated Guthrie List) (2009).

*The sixteen Guthrie Bantu zones*

## 2. MATERIALS METHOD

In this paper, 10 Yaka proverbs were studied from pragmatic point of view. They were collected on different occasions, including weddings and memorial gatherings.

### 2.1 The procedure of Analysis

The analysis will be made according to the following three steps:

1. A syntactic structure of each proverb has been done to show up the type of sentence and its pattern, the type of speech act whether implicit or explicit , the type of verb whether active or passive;
2. The meaning interpretation will be described in terms of denotation and *connotation of each proverb*.
3. Then pragmatic analysis and interpretation will applied to each connotational meaning.

Proverb (1) “MBUTA NZAMBI ”

### 1. Syntactic structure

The proverb is structured as follows:

Mbuta (noun 1) : the elder + verb ( elliptical : Kena (is) + Nzambi ( Noun 2) : God

### 2. Meaning

#### 2.1. denotational meaning (Literal meaning):

Yaka	French	English
Mbuta (kena) Nzambi	L' aîné (est) Dieu	The elder , the God : the elder is the God

#### 2.2. connotational meaning (literary meaning)

Yaka	French	English
<u>Muana yakala ka keyaku</u>	L'Aîné mérite du respect	The elder deserves respect because he has experience than young man.

### 3. Pragmatic analysis

#### 3.1. Interpretation

*“Experience makes man wise”*

#### 3.2. Extension

I hereby *advise* you, to be patient once you are looking for a woman to marry.

The speech act of this proverb is a directive (*advise*).

❖ Proverb (2 ) “ SUEKA TSINGU, N’SANGA MU NZILA KENA “

### 1. Syntactic structure

The proverb is structured as follows:

Sueka (verb: to keep) tsingu( noun 1): the neck + n’sangá(noun 2): the chain +  
Mu nzila ( noun 3): on the way + kena (verb: to be/is)

### 2. Meaning

#### 2.1. The denotational meaning (Literal meaning):

Yaka	French	English
<u>Sueka tsingu, n’sangá munzila kena</u>	Sueka : conserve/garde <u>tsingu</u> : cou, <u>n’sangá</u> : la chaînette munzila : en route <i>conserve ton cou car la chaînette est en route(arrivera)</i>	Keep your neck well because the chain is coming soon

#### 2.2. The connotational meaning (literary meaning)

Yaka	French	English
<u>Sueka tsingu , n’sangá munzila kena</u>	La jeune fille doit être patiente pour trouver un	The young girl is invited to be patient with regard to marriage, that is to say that the young girl must be

	bon mari	patient in order to be able to choose a good husband.
--	----------	---

### 3. Pragmatic analysis and interpretation

#### 3.1. Interpretation

“If you are patient, you will have what you desire”

#### 3.2. Extension

I hereby *advise* you, to be patient.

The speech act of this proverb is a directive (*advise*).

Proverb (3) “KIA NKUNGI, KIFUA N’TEBU KO”

#### 1. Syntactic structure

Kia (preposition): that + nkungi (people) + ki fua n’tebu ko (verb): never die

#### 2. Meaning

##### 2.1. The denotational meaning (Literal meaning):

Yaka	French	English
Kia nkungi, ki fua n’tebu ko	Kia nkungi : travail d’ensemble ntebu ko : ne s’abime pas du tout <i>Le travail fait par beaucoup des gens, réussi assez souvent</i>	The work done by many people already succeed

##### 2.2 The connotational meaning (literary meaning)

Yaka	French	English
<u>Sueka tsingu</u> , n’sangá munzila kena	L’union fait la force	<i>‘There is power in unity and if we want to stand the tides of time, unity is essential.’</i>

### 3. Pragmatic analysis and interpretation

#### 3.1. Interpretation

“There is power in unity and if we want to stand the tides of time, unity is essential.”

#### 3.2. Extension

I hereby *advise* you, to be united.

The speech act of this proverb is a directive (*advise*).

Proverb (4) “MALEMBI MBUTA MWENDU”

#### 1. Syntactic structure

Malembi( adverb ): slowly +verb(elliptical: kena(is) + mbuta (noun1): the elder + mwendu (noun 2): steps

#### 2. Meaning

##### 2. 1. The denotational meaning (Literal meaning):

Yaka	French	English
<u>Malembi</u> (kena) <u>mbuta</u> <u>mwendu</u>	malembi : la lenteur mbuta : aîné mwendu : démarche  <i>La lenteur est l’ainé de la démarche (Celui qui marche lentement est sûr d’arriver).</i>	He who walks slowly is sure to arrive



## 2.2. The connotational meaning (literary meaning)

Yaka	French	English
<u>Malembi</u> (kena) <u>mbuta</u> <u>mwendu</u>	Rien ne sert à courir dans la vie	<i>There is no point in running</i>

## 3. Pragmatic analysis and interpretation

### 3.1. Interpretation

‘*When you try to do things too quickly you work less efficiently and ultimately take longer*’.

### 3.2. Extension

I hereby *advise* you, to wait until your turn be ready.

The speech act of this proverb is a directive (*advise*).

Proverb (5) “NTALU YA NKELA, NTALU YA MVUMBI”

### 1. Syntactic structure

The proverb is structured as follows:

Ntalu ya nkela, (yina) ntalu ya mvumbi  
N1 + v (elliptical : is) + N2

### 2. Meaning

#### 2.1. The denotational meaning (Literal meaning):

Yaka	French	English
Ntalu ya nkela, (yina) ntalu ya mvumbi	Ntalu ya nkela : le prix du cercueil (yina) : est (vaut) Ntalu ya mvumbi : le prix du cadavre Le prix du cercueil, c’est le prix du cadavre ( <i>On met le cadavre que dans le cercueil qui lui convient</i> ).	The price of the coffin is the price of the corpse.

## 2.2. The connotational meaning (literary meaning)

Yaka	French	English
Ntalu ya nkela, (yina) ntalu ya mvumbi	(L’homme vit à la limite de ses moyens)	Man, lives at the limit of his pocket

## 3. Pragmatic analysis and interpretation

### 3.1. Interpretation

‘*Cut your coat according to your cloth*’

### 3.2. Extension

I hereby *warn* you, to *cut your coat according to your cloth*’.

The speech act of this proverb is a directive (*warning*).

Proverb (6) “MBEDI KENDIEKO, KATIAMUNA MAMBAKO”

### 1. Syntactic structure

The proverb is structured as follows:

Mbedi ( demonstrative pr): this/that )+ Kendieko( verb1: to leave) +Katiamuna( verb2: to throw) + Mambako ( noun: water)

## 2. Meaning

### 2.1. The denotational meaning (Literal meaning):

Yaka	French	English
Mbedi Kendieko, Katiamuna Mamba ko	Mbedi kendieko : celui qui ne pas encore parti Katiamuna mamba ko : ne jette pas l'eau qu'il détient <i>Celui qui ne pas encore parti, ne jette pas l'eau qu'il détient).</i>	The one who has not yet left does not throw out the water he holds

### 2.2. The connotational meaning (literary meaning)

Yaka	French	English
Mbedi Kendieko, Katiamuna Mamba ko	Ne néglige pas ce que tu possèdes au profit de ce tu n'as pas encore obtenu	Don't neglect what you have before you get what you want

## 3. Pragmatic analysis and interpretation

### 3.1. Interpretation

*'None knows what is in store for him in the days to come.'*

The speech act of this proverb is a directive (*an advice*).

### 3.2. Extension

I hereby *advise* you, to *never slack your work until you travel*.

Proverb (7) " U DIE, HEKA PANDA NIMA NZO"

### 1. Syntactic structure

The proverb is structured as follows:

U die, heka panda nima nzo

N1 + v1 + V2 + N2 c

## 2. Meaning

### 2.2 The denotational meaning (Literal meaning):

Yaka	French	English
U die, heka panda nima nzo	U die : si tu manges Heka panda nima nzo: donne(penses) à l'arbre qui se trouve derrière la maison.	if you are eating think of the neighbour

### 2.2. The connotational meaning (literary meaning)

Yaka	French	English
U die, heka panda nima nzo	Pendant que tu as l'occasion de partager, ne soit pas égoïste	while you have the opportunity to share, don't be selfish.

## 3. Pragmatic analysis and interpretation

### 3.1. Interpretation

*'Be kind. Show mercy to the weak and the poor. They may help you in times of need.'*

The speech act of this proverb is a directive (*an advice*).

### 3.2. Extension

I hereby *advise* you to be kind. "

Proverb (8) « MWANA NKETO MBATI YA MU ZUMBU ».

### 1. Syntactic structure

The proverb is structured as follows:

Mwana nketo (v) mbati ya mu zumbu  
N1 + elliptic v1 + N2 + Adj

### 2. Meaning

#### 2.1. The denotational meaning (Literal meaning):

Yaka	French	English
Mwana nketo (kena) mbati ya mu zumbu	Mwana nketo (kena) : la jeune fille est Mbati ya mu zumbu:  <i>La jeune fille est un ananas qui se situe(pousse) dans un ancien cimetière.</i>	the girl is a pineapple which is located in an old cemetery.

#### 2.2. The connotational meaning (literary meaning)

Yaka	French	English
Mwana nketo (kena) mbati ya mu zumbu	La femme est épousée par celui qui est brave ou qui remplit les conditions exigées par ses parents.	The girl is an a pineapple that has grown in a cemetery, that is to say the one who is strong or the one who meets the conditions will benefit from it as a bride. In Yaka tradition a pineapple in a cemetery is a metonymy for a single lady. So ‘to pick up her’ is an euphemism for a sexual relationship which is metonymy for marriage.

### 3. Pragmatic analysis and interpretation

#### 3.1. Interpretation

‘‘A lady is a pineapple, the man who picks it up, belongs to him.’’

The speech act of this proverb is a directive (an advice).

#### 3.2. Extension

I hereby *advise* you to pick up this pineapple. ’’

Proverb (9) « YA LUADILA MU N’NUA, MENGA MA NKOTA YEMBEMBI »

### 1. Syntactic structure

The proverb is structured as follows:

Ya luadila mu n'nua, menga ma nkota yembembi  
 N1 + v1 + adv + N2 +v1 Adj

## 2. Meaning

### 2.1. The denotational meaning (Literal meaning):

Yaka	French	English
Ya luadila mu n'nua, menga ma nkota yembembi	Je suis blessé aux lèvres, je connais la saveur du sang.	I'm injured on the lips; I know the flavor of blood.

### 2.2. The connotational meaning (literary meaning)

Yaka	French	English
Ya luadila mu n'nua, menga ma nkota yembembi	Ayant déjà vécu une pareille chose dans ma vie, j'évite de vivre la même expérience.	One unfortunate experience can make you doubly wary of suffering

## 3. Pragmatic analysis and interpretation

### 3.1. Interpretation

*“One unfortunate experience can make you doubly wary of suffering.”*

The speech act of this proverb is a directive (*warning*).

### 3.2. Extension

I hereby warn you *that the Yaka do not get married several times.*

Proverb (10) “NZO N'KWA PAKA, MU MUINI I HIANGA”

### 1. Syntactic structure

The proverb is structured as follows:

Nzo n'kwa paka, mu muini i hianga  
 N1 N2 + adv + v1

## 2. Meaning

### 2.1. The denotational meaning (Literal meaning):

Yaka	French	English
Nzo n'kwa paka, mu muini i hianga	La maison de celui qui n'écoute pas les autres, brule pendant la journée.	the house of the one who does not listen to others burns during the day.

### 2.2. The connotational meaning (literary meaning)

Yaka	French	English
Nzo n'kwa paka, mu muini i hianga	Il faut savoir écouter les autres dans la vie	you have to listen to others people in life.

## 3. Pragmatic analysis and interpretation

### 3.1. Interpretation

*“You will fall into a trap if you do not have good advice or refuse to take one.”*

The speech act of this proverb is a directive (*advice*).

### 3.2. Extension

I hereby advise you how to listen and take an advice from other people.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Pragmatics as the study of the contextual meaning is no doubt a reliable means of determining meaning. Clearly, there is a wide gap of differences between what the person might said and what the person might meant. It is on the basis that Mey (2001) describes pragmatics as the study of how to say one means and how to mean what one says. An expression such as, was the door opened when you enter? This question may not require either a yes or no answer. Rather, it may be directing a person to either open or close the door. In view of this, to understand a proverb (either oral or written) there is no need for the contextual exploitation of the expression and to understand context; the cultural background of the language users should be considered relevant.

We are at the end of our paper entitled “A pragmatic analysis of Yaka Proverbs” which consisted in analyzing ten Yaka proverbs by adopting the theory of speech acts proposed by Austin and J.Searle.

First, we had to define the proverb concept according to the precursors and then we had to define pragmatics, we presented and located Yaka people in time and space and then we went to analyze the proverbs themselves. And we drawn a conclusion that:

The definition of proverb is too difficult to repay the undertaking; but in our paper we adopt the same view as Mieder( 1993), “Proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a methaphorical, fixed and memorizable form and which is handed down from generation to generation.”

Proverbs are speech act since they can be used in everyday communication to confirm ideas, warn people, give advice, etc. Nevertheless; the attribution of a proverb to a certain speech act is not clear-cut; the meaning of a proverb is not fixed and it can be modified and even reversed to fit a

certain situation. So different context of situations can lead to different speech acts.

This analysis proved us that proverbs are produced and understood within a shared context of situation that includes personal, cultural, historical, and physical setting in which the proverbs are spoken or heard. And the meanings of words and sentences are dependent on and a part of the culture of the speech community.

Proverbs are the cream of a language and the crystal of national wisdom and experience. As they carry great cultural information, they appropriately reflect the relation between culture and language. They provide interesting clues to a nation, geography, history, social conventions, religion, literature, etc. So proverbs can be a great help in learning a language and a nation’s culture.

The paper has proved the applicability of speech act theory to the Yaka advice proverbs, and verifies the hypothesis:

“The speech act theory can be applied to the Yaka proverbs, since they consist of conversational patterns in which various act of advice are used in different context of situations”.

- ❖ Proverbs used by Yaka people is a speech event in its own context of situation and the analysis of its meaning should be done through the analysis of its components, namely, participants, Ends and norms.
- ❖ the research has revealed a most significant fact, which is that the speech acts used in 10 Yaka proverbs has the property of advising, warning, reminding and suggestion.

#### 6.REFERENCES

- Akmajian, A., Demers, R., Farmer, A., and Harnish, R. (2001). *Linguistics: An Introduction to Language and Communication*. England: the MIT Press.
- Alla, K (1986) *Linguistic Meaning*: Vol. 2. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Inc.

Fair, S (2003) *Lecture Notes, Week, Eleven English 44*,  
Forms of Folklore, The Verbal Arts.  
Finch, G (2000) *Linguistic Terms and Concepts*. London;  
Macmillan Press, Ltd.  
Finnegan, R. (1970) "Proverbs." In *Oral Literature in Africa*,  
by R.

Finnegan, 389-425. Oxford:

Clarendon.

Fischer, L (1954) *Gandhi: his life and message for the  
world*. New York: Mentor, New American Library

Gibbs, Raymond W., and Dinara Beitel(1995). "What  
Proverb Understanding Reveals about How People  
Think" *Psychological Bulletin* 118: 133-154; also in  
Mieder 2003: 109-162.

LUBNA RIYADH A.(2008) A linguistic analysis of the  
speech act of advice in *American English proverbs in J. Of  
College Education for Women*, Vol. 19

Mieder, W. (1986), *Encyclopaedia of world proverbs*,  
Englewood cliffs, N.J.:  
prentice-hall.

Mey, L (1993) *Pragmatics: An Introduction*. Oxford:  
Blackwell Publishers.

----- (2001). *Pragmatics: An Introduction*. Australia:  
Blackwell  
publishing.

Moon, P. (1997), *Traditional Maori Proverbs: Some  
General themes*. Auckland: Auckland Institute of  
Technology.

Nashashibi, S. (1960), *Selection of English Proverbs 1001*,  
beirute: dar A Maaref

Norrick, N. (1985) *How Proverbs mean: Semantic Studies  
in English Proverbs*. Berlin: Mouton Publishers.

Ojoade, J.O. (2004). *Internationalism rooted in proverbs:  
proverbs, roots of internationalism* Jos-Nigeria:  
Unijos Inaugural lecture, series 13.

Thomas, J. (1995) *Meaning in interaction: an introduction  
to pragmatics*. London: Longman

Taylor, A. (1985). *The Proverbs*. Cambridge, Mass.:

Havard University Press.

Winick, Stephen D.(2003) *The proverbs process:  
intertextuality and proverbial innovation in popular  
culture*. Diss. University of Pennsylvania

---

★ A Pragmatic Analysis Of Yaka Proverbs

\* Corresponding author at: Jackson LUALA MAKOY, *Senior lecturer, English Department, Institut Supérieur de Commerce de Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo*  
E-mail addresses: [lualamakoy3@gmail.com](mailto:lualamakoy3@gmail.com)

Received 1 July 2022; Accepted 11 July 2022

Available online 15 June 2022