



The beauty of insult amongst the Ewe People



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Emmanuel Dogbey ¹, Esther K. Mbithi ², Pascal Kpodo ³ & Oscar Macharia Maina ⁴

^{1,3} College of Languages, University of Education, Ghana

^{2,4} Department of Literature, Linguistics and Foreign Languages, Kenyatta University

Correspondence: edogbey78@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2155-2106>

Abstract

Among the Ewes, insult is a mark of linguistic competence and culture consciousness. People receive praise for knowing how to insult. There are context appropriate insults and there are context inappropriate insults. The consideration of a particular utterance as an insult is dependent on the communicative situation. The medium through which insult as a verbal art is performed is varied and diverse among the Ewes and every native speaker is groomed right from childhood to appropriately engage in the performance of insult. This study conducts an aesthetic analysis of insults among the Ewes. The study draws data from four native speakers each from the Anlo, Tongu and Uedome dialect groups of Ewe. Data was collected through interviews, observations and native speaker intuitions. The study establishes that insult is not only a verbal art but also a verbal game that is played by the speakers, and that how well one can play this game marks the linguistic competence and cultural literacy of the speaker. The study also finds that literary devices such as simile, metaphor, exaggeration, synecdoche among others are employed in insult performances. Verbal and nonverbal acts including varied kinesics, silence, songs are media for the performance of insult amongst the Ewe people.

Keywords: beauty, cultural consciousness, insults, invective, linguistic competence, education

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Public Interest Statement

Insults and invectives forms core aspects of training and education among the Ewe people. Though generally frowned upon and perceived as disparaging, they are a mark of linguistic competence, cultural consciousness and the controller of law and order in society among Ewes. They are part and parcel of everyday life without which orderliness and conscientiousness will have been out of existence. A study of insults will contribute to language forms and their usage and how literature counts on language usage as core to understanding society, culture, behaviour and other aspects of life involving human thinking, personality and coexistence.

Introduction

This study conducts an ethnographic analysis of insults among the Ewe people in Ghana. An insult is an expression or a statement which is disrespectful or scornful. Insult may be intentional or accidental. An insult may be factual but at the same time pejorative. An insult is the act of disparaging or putting down someone in order to make them look and feel small and ridiculous either deliberately or unintentionally communicated through verbal and nonverbal means. The concept insult has been discussed extensively. Arif (2001) holds the position that there is nothing like offences, insults, or derogatory speech but a description of a behaviour which one must evaluate and correct or clarify to others. In explaining further, Arif claims that people lack the patience to evaluate themselves honestly within the context of their actions or that of others before commenting or reacting. He says, if the offended could take a little time in reflecting upon and pairing the cause, effect and responses that are coded on their acts, they will never feel provoked, angered or insulted. The lack of such patience in an honest evaluation of self makes one feel insulted or demeaned. We need to deconstruct our minds in order to decipher truth from lies. To accept other people's views, we must castrate our minds off invectives and this will bring us to a level of understanding and tolerance with them. Insult consciousness is beautiful in nurturing the human mind and behaviour and in preserving cultural heritages. Being aware of invectives is a mark of knowing one's right and accepting the rights of others. This grounds on cultural consciousness and linguistic competence since major parts of culture are expressive and performed through language (verbal or non-verbal).

People usually feel offended or insulted when they perceive their "right" is being infringed upon or they are not given the attention they deserve. Roosefield (2004) intimates that, socially, people are bossy, proud and consider themselves superior to others such that they always want to receive face-saving comments even when they are behaving badly against others or themselves. In the words of Guvestl (1984),

It seems man is driven by some supremacy of an inner ego, which deceives him to always feel important without listening to his or her conscience and to mental accusations and alternatives that arouses in him ... man feels offended when the mirror of himself has been shown to him by others. Man easily feels belittled if his pride or supreme ego is

thwarted or queried for correction; ... he feels threatened.

As human beings, we are continuously searching for who we truly are. Unfortunately, anytime we discover that the self in us does not match the image we project of ourselves to others, we try to hide it from others. It creates the impression that man is full of pride, an ego which invectives always challenge. The expression of guilt that one's true self is being exposed creates a dramatized and conflict scene in which anger enclaved in a verbal stupor, physical attacks and emotional effects are being displayed. As Charles (1991) puts it, the act of revealing the concealed truth about somebody is regarded by the person as an insult; a ranted invective to disparage and to demean his social image. Caliver (2004) says everyone lives a pretentious life in order to conceal the truth or gain/maintain social praise. In order to protect the full glare of such truth about them, they learn to be defiant, get annoyed and feel insulted over certain acts and comments. They feel wounded, exposed, shamed hence instead of accepting true form and weakness, they rather try to defend it, leading to the creation and dramatization of other pretentious forms to cover up.

Insults are culturally motivated acts that prevail within a social milieu (Martin, 2004). Insults as verbal art beautifully communicate reality. Art is beautiful when it speaks facts and presents concepts as if factual (Sika, 2014). Art is the effort to project existence in terms that are more explicit to the imagination than to linear logic. The ability to engage in the performance of insult does not come naturally but through communal and cultural education. To Geraldo and Azasoo (2005), anything which is factual is ugly and hard to believe by many. They explain that the role of art as an aesthetic genre is to clothe the ugly sides of the truth in art so as to make it more palatable for human consumption since humans seem to accept and appear comfortable before the 'hedged truth' than its presence in the 'naked form'. This accounts for the use of hedgings, euphemisms and other politeness cues in speech events. Insults here appear as ugly expressions that enclothe a person to appear in a form which is unacceptable in the society. Insults package people with features that society frowns upon. The data in this study shows people most often respond to insults which correctly speak the truth about them. The use of euphemisms and other hedging words in social speeches epitomize the assumptions that people hate to be told the plain truth or be spoken to in plain language.

Insults are used to measure linguistic competence, socio-cultural consciousness and literacy and people are commended on how to craft insults and use them constructively. The ability to engage in insult goes beyond a mere utterance of disparaging comments or aptly describing the reality. Staging and sustaining insult performances demand fast and critical thinking, logical reasoning and responses with much eloquence in speech within stipulated time intervals. There are context-appropriate and context of inappropriate insults. One can be severely punished for using insults inappropriately. For instance, when one is trading insults around the target's physical appearance and the target responded to affect family or clan of the former, it is presumed one has stepped beyond the context of trading the insult and must be put to order.

The consideration of a particular utterance as an insult is dependent on the communicative situation. The factors relevant to the proper interpretation of insults are not different from the factors put forward by Haynes (1974). He said cultural competence and situational relevance are critical factors. The nature of participants and the topic or statement of conflict also helps in determining the terrain of the insult. A special musical genre known as "Halo" and its mild form known as "Ahamaha" are exclusively performed to insult and cast insinuations at people mostly by the Anlos of Southern Ewe. Besides, names of appellation also make rooms for invectives and entertain insults. Despite the enjoyments, the aesthetics and musical renditions in appellations, praises and some songs texts, they carry 'hurt and hate speech' which makes them attractive or unattractive depending on the context. A major importance of art is to hurt (Geraldo & Azasoo, 2005) and the hurt elements teach the victim and entertain the audience. This makes insults very important devices for teaching morals, controlling unacceptable conduct and for punishments or for appeasing on offences. Insults consciousness guides one from indulging in certain kinds of behaviours hence refrain one from carrying out certain activities and thoughts. This is because given insults can be described as contagious and are transferable, hence affect families, communities and even generations.

Methodology

The study draws data from native speakers from Akatsi, Klikor and Afiadenyigba representing the Anlo dialect community, Sogakofe and Mafi Kumasi representing the Tongu dialect and Ho and Kpando representing the Uedome dialect community. The respondents were all purposively selected for the study. In each town, two male adult native speakers and two female adult native speakers who are all above the age of 40 years and have lived in the respective towns continuously were selected for the study. All the respondents are married with children and are living in the respective communities for at least 25 years. These people have been selected because of their rich experience in the ways of the Ewes. Data was collected through interviews and observations. Additionally, samples of Ewe insults were taken from traditional songs. These songs have been used in the Halo (verbal abuse/words of war) contests in the past when trading insults used to be the most efficient way of addressing social injustice.

Presentation and discussion

Even though all the respondents are quick to reject the idea that society teaches their young ones how to insult, they agreed on the fact that adults in society are responsible for teaching the younger generation how to engage in the performance of insult. All the respondents confirm that insult is often one of the very first verbal forms acquired by children in their linguistic development. Even though adults try to dissuade children from the use of insulting language, they do it half-heartedly. Children are coached as to how to navigate the intricacies of societal norms while engaging in the performance of insult. Adults instruct children not to trade insults with the elderly by telling them that a child does not insult the elderly - *ɔevi medzua amegãxoxo o*. This makes insults appear as a peer performance among the Ewes. As soon as

one trades an insult beyond the class of one's peer, it is regarded as a taboo. However, when the insult is traded below one's peer, it is regarded as a piece of advice, rebuke or a correction over an act. This is what Forson et. al. (2017) referred to as upward schematics in routing insults. As these researchers explained, the flow of insults from young people to the elderly is more embarrassing than from the old to the young since the elderly are seen as the face of society. It is common to hear an adult encouraging a young person to insult another young person (a peer); If he/she insults you, insult him/her back - *Ne edzu wò ko, wò hã dzui*. Other instructions are issued on how to properly narrow the target of the insult in order to hit only the intended target but not any other person. For example, an adult is more likely to tell a younger person not to bypass the target and insult the target's parents. Very early in life, children are educated about basic verbal taboos, especially those bordering on insults. Ewes seriously frown upon insults involving the private parts of both men and women, deformities, sickness, disasters, certain kinds of deaths and abominations. This is where the higher class of insults are referred to as taboos.

Insult as a verbal art is a complete genre performed in some parts of Ewe land. Some rituals performed for people who die accidental deaths, elderly people who did not give birth before dying and people who die young or at the prime of their ages are rich in insults. They are intended to rebuke the dead not to reincarnate in that form again. It shows how they abhor such deaths and behaviours. Additionally, death preventing names and gossip names exhibit a rich array of invectives. One of the consultants from Akatsi (an Anlo and Avenor dialect zone) submits that there used to be a day for insulting a chief or a king. He said when a new king or chief is enthroned (enstooled), a day is set for the community to insult him from dawn to midday. This is because it is a taboo for anyone to insult a chief or king hence before the chief's official outdooing and investiture and formal recognition on the throne, that insult show is staged.

In insult wars known as "dzuuafrafo" where two individuals, communities or groups of people face off to engage in the insult banter. The performance of this verbal war reveals many historical facts which were long hidden from the public domain. In this particular mode of insult, the place where the two people or groups meet (market squares, riverside, compound houses) becomes the stage for the performance, and the two people or groups of people become the players. There is always an audience (ranging from one person to several people) available. Often, besides being spectators, the audiences also have roles to play in the performance. While the verbal combatants construct the insults trying to outdo each other not only in who inflicts the most emotional and social harm but also in who is the more creative and competent in this type of performance. The audience from time to time injects remarks on the appropriateness or otherwise of the insults as well as the creativity of the actors and sometimes caution the combatants not to stray off target.

Example:

Combatant 1: *Kpɔ ɲɔtido me wòɔoe voo abe keteke fe dzudzɔti me ene ɔa.*

Look at his nose, so big like the exhaust pipe of a train

Audience: *Oo! Wodzu wò loo! ɲɔtidoawo nya lolo nyatefe.*

Oh! You have been insulted indeed! Your noses are big indeed.

Combatant 2: *Kpɔ dzimakpla sia nam ɔa.*

Look at this untrained child for me.

Audience: *Hehehe! Ame aɔeke megadzu nɔvia dzila o. Ame si dzu amea, eyae wodzuna. Dzui be kplamase boɲ.*

Hehehe! Nobody should insult the parents of the other. You insult the person who insults you. Rather insult her/him as an "untrainable child"

Remarking on the appropriateness of an insult is known as "**dzumamla**". The mere presence of the audience intensifies the severity of the performance. The remarks from the audience add flavor and color to the performance, making the impact of the insult more effective. There is a proverb in Ewe that says: *Kese be ame si dzu yea tɔ mevea ye abe ame si mlae tɔ ene o* - The monkey says, the one who insults does not hurt like the one who remarks on the insult. The performance of "**dzuɔafofo**" is a miniature form of the halo performance in which an arena is prepared for the spectators and the performers and a platform is raised in front of the spectators for the target(s) of the insults to mount and perform. Every Ewe child is educated to react appropriately in the course of the performance. Society expects the targets of the insults to rebut the insults with another insult immediately in the case of "**dzuɔafofo**" but in the case of 'halo', the target is expected to answer with another performance on a later date to be decided by the target of the initial performance. Any form of physical attack on an opponent during the performance of 'dzuɔa' or 'halo' contest is a sign of ultimate admission of defeat.

The consultants' submissions couple with native speaker intuitions reveals an in-depth description of the term insult in Ewe. Among the Ewe people, the term invective or insult 'dzu' bears the metaphorical concept of dressing; thus 'to dress someone down' or 'to dress someone up'. To dress, or dressing gives a different appearance to a person than what s/he looks like when in clothes or out of clothes. In this regard, dressing somebody with words will clothe the person.

Additionally, when we are out of our clothes or remove our clothes, we expose our true nakedness and form which is usually hidden from society. Using insults on a person despairingly clothes the individual in a given form to attract condemnation. When we wear clothes, wigs, makeups and jewelry, we exhibit an appearance. Likewise, when invectives are used on a person, they clothe a person to appear in a certain way. In this regard, this observation seems to fall in line with the assertion of Irvine (2018) that insults expose 'the true shape' or create 'a false shape' to clown a person; an appearance that gives a new interpretation of the person before society. In Ewe, any expression considered as an insult is believed to be teaching some

wisdom, or a call to critically observe, understand, and analyse given situations. It gives a new feature to a thing; through exposure or covering, necessitating an inquiry or probe into the authenticity of the new form. In this regard, given insults (light insults) attract no punishments but some insults (heavy insults) attract heavy fines, incarcerations, and even banishments. The reflections on invective make one conscious and competent in the socio-cultural norms and activities. The individual becomes aware of commendable and condemnable situations in the social milieu. In modern-day, insults are found in written genres, movies and in acts of comedy among others. In regard to written literature in Ewe, Bidi Setsoafia's literary works ('Fia Tsatsala' and 'Togbui Kpeglo II' = *The Wandering King and King Kpeglo II*) stands out to be described as an invective genres dues to their rich invective content, backgrounds and characterisations. Some data for this study is picked from these literary genres. Also, popular comedians and movie stars such as Chilly and Fusheini are competent users of invectives in their roles.

Performance model of insults amongst the Ewe people

Insult performances are captured under four models in this paper. Each model considers the path and process of invective practices. The path examines how the target reacts to the insult. Example, the target did not utter a word, walk away, respond with an insult or series of insults, apologise etc. The process on the other hand considers whether the response from the target is within the context or out of the context of the insult she or he has received. The performance model takes a look at the participants, the manner they trade the insults, the context and the contents of the insults. The insult trading or performances as sanctioned in Ewe include:

The unilateral form

This form permits only one person to insult without the other person or the target responding. It is a one-way verbal ranting without any counter-response from the victim or the target. This is commonly found among parents and their children or adults and the young ones, ordinate and subordinate relations. Under the unilateral performance, the target who is usually a subordinate or a child of a parent absorbs all the verbal disparage without any counter utterance. It is conceived as a piece of advice, a rebuke or a form of correction. This supports a saying amongst the Ewe people that 'the elders are always right and a child does not challenge an adult'. Additionally, this form also appears when the target is afraid of the perpetrator or the perpetrator is more powerful, stronger and has more supports than the victim. When the perpetrator is armed with some harmful instrument such as a gun, knife or any tool before provoking the target, the target does not respond. This could be described as a preventive unilateral model of trading insults where the target prefers to save life or prevent excessive harm. It also occurs when one accepts a fault or when one is guilty of an offence. In most of such circumstances, you may see the target pleading for mercy or begging the opponent, appear sober, weak and never takes any revenge or retaliatory action as the opponent continues to pour many insults on him score a much more damaging and emotional effects.

Punishment on unilateral or this kind of single-headed insults are instant. When the

perpetrated finish with the insults, she or he feels satisfied and believes that justice is served and achieved. For example, a mother rebuked her child for breaking her glass plate and as the child regretted her actions and become remorseful or cries, the mother uses these invectives *kpɔ mo wòdɔ dɛ afi ma ame mie wonye dɛ mɔ to le zãme ɲu ke dɛ edzi ene da'* - see how she arranged her face as faces left at the roadside overnight till daybreak. The child could not insult the mother back she is insulted her for breaking the glass. She accepted the fault and the offence of breaking the glass hence only sobs or pleads for mercy or receive the insults in good faith and much regrets. The mother also feels satisfied after using the insults, feels compensated and feels appeased over the breakage through the insults. Here the insult consoles the mother from the pain of the broken glass and corrects the child to be cautious in handling glasses.

Reversible insults

This model showcases attack and response hence is retaliatory or revengeful in nature. Under this performance, all degrees of verbal exchanges are accepted except those of high degrees or high order insults. Insults in Ewe are presumed in this paper to have been marked into the low class of insults; covering body parts such as shape, posture, appearance and other physiological and behavioural expressions. Punishments for such kinds of insults include similar verbal exchanges, beating and other forms of physical and verbal abuses. High-class insults cover an individual's background and spirituality. Most often, high degree or high-class insults affect one's parents, family, culture, religion and even ancestors. To insult someone as a vagabond, witch, an alien in his clan, child of a murderer, witch, madman, thief, prostitute, insulting the sex organs of a person, insults that invoke some historical taboos are among the high and the forbidden class of insults.

In addition, insults on natural disability and disasters that befall people and their families, insulting chiefs and deities are also found under first degree or high degree insults. The punishment for such kind of insults includes high fines, imprisonments, banishments or ostracisation and even death penalties. Usually, high degree insults are settled only at traditional courts of law. In modern days, judicial courts of law in the nations are also settling them. Insults to the dead, about birth, gods and community leaders as well as a false accusation that might have damaging effects on the sociocultural status of a person are also part of the high degree insults. We often read about newspaper publications being dragged to court for defamation and even authors and literature scholars being dragged to court for writing defamatory articles and all these falls under high degree insults among the Ewe people.

The silence and nonverbal insult performance

The third model of insult is the silence insult and non-verbal insults. Under this insult performance, the text corpora of the insinuation is not in complete language but in kinesics and other non-verbal expression interpreted in the culture as an insult. All forms of non-verbal communication structures such as oculesics, haptics, proxemics, chronemics, tone and vocalics and kinesics such as facial expressions, movements, eye signals which could be interpreted as

an insinuation fall into this group. Additionally, silence, clothing forms or forms of dressing, dancing styles, objects, drawings, drum language or instruments language, symbols and other non-verbal expressions which can be interpreted in a context as insinuating fall into this class. For instance, to greet or shake hands with someone using the left hand, bypassing a very known person without greeting or responding to greetings, being at deaf-ear to a person's speech, pouring water, food, sand etc on someone, sweeping on a person, spitting on a person and ululating at a person are all forms of non-verbal insults. The punishments for these insults vary according to the context and the cultural interpretations on the scene. Some of the punishments even involve ritual pacifications alongside financial fines.

Insults of amusement

This performance is for entertainment purposes. It is also found among people who are learning new languages. According to Howard (2010), children acquiring a language and foreigners or non-native speakers learning or using a new language are usually caught in that insult blander. Another group of insults found under the insults of amusement or fun is the personal name appellations. Appellations are a litany of praises offered to a person; however, these appellations often contain invectives and gossip. The invectives in those names are often used for fun though, render disparaging effects on a given opponent. It is captured under the social context of peer expressions. Many of these kinds of performances abound in comedies, panegyrics and peer chats amongst the Ewe people. The name appellation *Tome goglo bodzegbe vī; èsia yetoto gake mesia akple dzodzo o* – Prominent on the dance floor, the farmland and the crops remain in the bush; you fear the hot sun but you don't fear hot food. This insult satires those who are lazy in farming but good in only dancing.

Some principles of insults in Ewe

Insult performances draw a kind of typological domain within which a kind of insult is orchestrated to function. This guides the individual to perform the insults for an absolute positive impact on the target. These principles also measure the level of an individual's competency in the language and social norms.

The principle of self-insult

Before an individual launches a gamut of invectives on an opponent, she or he first gives a vivid insinuation account about himself or herself. The external and internal physio-morphological features, which she or he thought everybody should be aware of and could be rendered as insults on him or her are first of all poured out. This vituperation attracts much audience and supporters. The strategy also helps to defeat the verbal stupor that the target may come up with. Insults are bound to be secrets or open secretes that people hate to be revealed, overemphasised or hyped. If one already makes them known, then there is no need for an opponent to repeat them, it won't score any damaging effect hence self-insults weaken a target and deprive him or her from insults to use and barred him or her from grounds to fetch insults

from and use on the opponent for an effect. This kind of insult does not cur among close relatives and siblings. But among distant relations and people who have no relation with each other. Since insults are hereditary and contagious, offering some kinds of insults to a close relative is the same as insulting oneself hence self-insult performances are not common among close relatives.

The principle of invective locus

This form involves only the target and the issue which generates the insult. The performer must rant the invectives on the target and only him without involving his or her family and relations. The theme and subject matter that gauge the invectives remain the focal point to which the invectives are directed. This principle also thrives on context-appropriate insults and content appropriate responses to insults.

The principle of centripetal and centrifugalism

This typology of the insult performance attacks and affects the individual and anything in relation to him or her. It is multifaceted and addresses the target, his or her relations, generation and ancestry, job, appearance and others. The holistic form and relations of the individual are drawn into the invective uproar. It often results in tribal, religious and community verbal wars. It occurs when one does not observe the context of the insult but enters into insulting the other person's family, clan, relatives and others. This expands the scope of the insult performance and draws many people into it.

Principle of attack

This principle sanctions that no form of physical or spiritual attack should be sanctioned, used or employed by any of the verbal combatants on the other. The medium should be purely the verbal form. The principle sanctions that any form of physical attack on an opponent is a sign of defeat. It also shows that one has not the linguistic archives to construct and match the invective intelligence of the opponent. To physically attack an opponent who insults you instead of paying it off and neutralizing it with another insult, laughter or silence is usually not permitted during insult performances. The onset of fights and other forms of physical attacks are signs informing that the end of the insult show is approaching. The winner will soon emerge.

Additionally, the use of spiritual powers is also ruled out under this principle. Invoking and casting magic spells and other spiritual powers on an opponent is not accepted in the verbal uproar. Just like rendering physical attacks on an opponent, the use of spiritual powers is rated as a sign of defeat, incompetence and lack of linguistic vocabulary to defend oneself in the verbal game.

The study establishes that an insult is not only a verbal art but also a verbal game that is played by the speakers and that how well one can play this game marks the linguistic competence and cultural literacy of the speaker. Insult is creative with aesthetic attractions that teach, entertain and evaluates behaviour and conduct. The study also finds that literary devices

such as simile, metaphor, exaggeration, synecdoche among others are employed in insult performances. It further espouses that when one offers an insult to a target and it records no or less damaging effect on the target, the perpetrator feels the hurt of the insult much more. Thus, the insult reverses to attack and affect the perpetrator much more. Also, one must rant a series of insults so as to kill or effectively neutralize the effects of an opponent's insult. Additionally, an insult from a higher-order class can neutralize an insult from a low class or a low degree insult. Deviating or streaming from a low degree insult to higher degree corpora of insults is an invective performance infringement during the verbal game; the defaulter is severely punished according to the socio-cultural norms.

Conclusion

This paper interrogates insult as a special genre through which the linguistic competence and cultural literacy of an individual are accessed and assessed. Insult has beauty and other aesthetic features. It teaches, entertains and evaluates one's behaviours and provides immediate feedback. The efficacy of all kinds of rules, regulations and taboos are found to be tested first with insults. To describe an act as that of indiscipline or discipline is as a result of the number of invective features packaged in it. The paper finds insult as a daily verbal occurrence and therefore a necessary part of the lives of the people. As a verbal art, every native speaker is naturally groomed on insult performance models in Ewe. The aesthetics and compositions on the efficacy of insults can be found in personal name appellations and some forms of prayer texts and songs among the Ewe people. The study upheld insult as a specialized genre appreciated in every society and culture. It is what defines and preserves one's rights within a certain culture. This genre preserves the sociocultural values of people. It is that which tames and controls behaviours in society. The diverse economic importance of insults motivates people to be patriotic and disciplined.

Despite the assumption that every society frowns on insult, the paper clarifies that society rather frowns on the inappropriate performance of insult. This is because proper uses of insult indicate communicative competence and consciousness of the individual. It informs one to be law-abiding and guides one to be always reflective of his or her behaviours and actions. It is through insults that we intrinsically and extrinsically commend or condemn our collective individual and social actions. In this regard, as much as society promotes politeness, society as well teaches its young ones how to engage in the performance of insult and this enables insulting language forms to offer opportunities to speakers of a language to demonstrate their personality, sociocultural consciousness and other aesthetic values. Literature and its fecundity is found to be embellished with invective senses hence invectives occupy important parts of major literary genres. In this regard, literature and invectives have unequivocal relation. The paper expatiates that the way and manner one embellishes an expression to portray an exact score on a target's physical, behavioural, religious and cultural form presents a kind of monumental construction, that commands an emotional response. Such emotional responses could be a burst of laughter, joy or anger. In every discourse setting,

participants are only sensitive to and conscious of the invectives and other expressions that might sound insinuating. This hypothesis that humans live or interact and communicate is based on invective consciousness and its effects. Additionally, effective communication is also a mark of invective competence and its appropriate usages across contexts.

The study concludes that the presence of literary devices such as simile, metaphor, exaggeration, proverbs synecdoche among others found in insult performances makes their comprehension very difficult for most participants. A mastery over literary devices and their roles in communicative settings grants access to effective textual analysis and interpretation of speech. The paper suggests a study of insults in name appellations, literary character constructions and literary character roles, rituals as well as how insults are embedded in praises.

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Author Biographies

Emmanuel Dogbey: Emmanuel Dogbey is a Lecturer in the Department of Ewe Education at the University of Education Winneba. His core areas of discipline are Literature, Literary Studies, Literary Criticism, Cultural Studies, Oral literature, Literary Theory. He has passion in teaching and research interests in general linguistics, language documentation, and counselling.

Pascal Kpodo: Pascal Kpodo is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Ewe Education in the University of Education Winneba with interest in Phonetics, Phonology, Oral Literature, Creative writing, Translation and Sociolinguistics. He is the current head of the Department of Ewe Language Education and the youngest in the history of the Department.

Esther K. Mbithi: Writer, Editor, Translator (English, French, German, Kiswahili, Kikamba). She is the University Editor and Senior Lecturer in Literature Department of Literature, Linguistics, and Foreign Languages, Kenyatta University. Esther Katheu Mbithi is a widely travelled polyglot who speaks, reads and writes five languages. Areas of research interest include language use and stylistics in Kenyan, African, European and American Literature. She also has an interest in creative writing, and is the university editor. The creative pieces are captured on her blog www.creativewritingekm.com.

Oscar Maina Macharia: A lecturer in the Department of Literature, Linguistics and Foreign Languages in the Kenyatta University with interests in Literary criticism, African Literature and Literary theory.

Authorship and Level of Contribution

Emmanuel Dogbey and Pascal Kpodo masterminds the data collection, translation, analysis and interpretation as well as in the entire write up. They have native speaker intuition on the language from which the data was drawn across communities. Esther K. Mbithi and Oscar Maina Macharia contribute to the data interpretation, triangulation, proof reading and reorganisation of the write up.

Glossary of Terms

dzuɔafofo : a verbal war, where two or more parties publicly engage in hot exchange of insults and verbal stupor.

dzu: to insult or disparage a person or thing

halo: an oschera of verbal abuse. The victim is physically presented or a portrait of the victim is staged and disparaged (verbally abused at times with his or her relations).

Dzumamla: an asthetic way of eulogising the invective expressions and the participating by the audience. Audience emphasise, satarise and add more interpretations to the insult and the perpetrator or the target to enhance the insult orchestra.

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