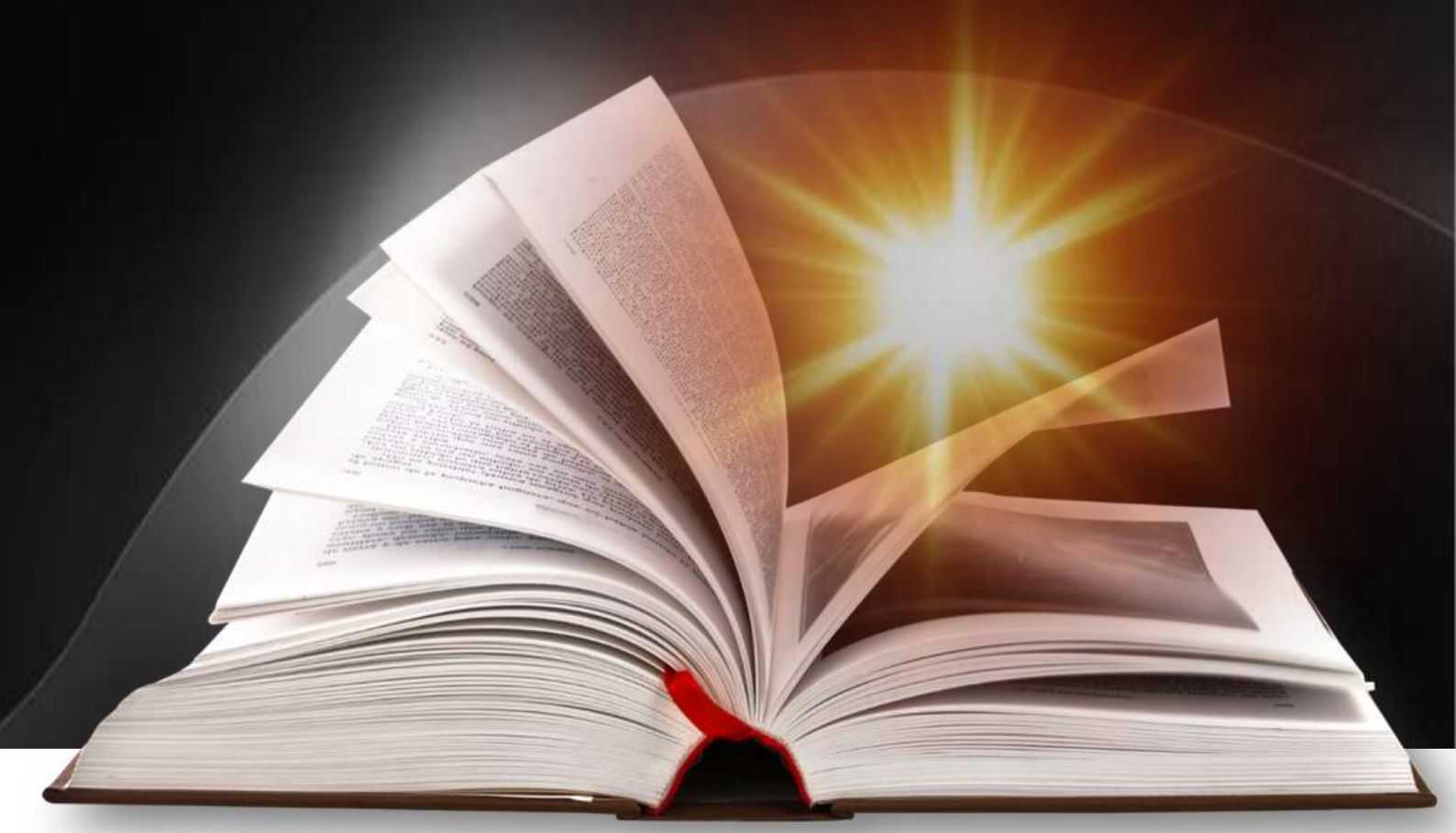
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A semantic study of apology expressions in Gengbé

[Etude sémantique des expressions d'excuse en Gengbé]

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Editorial

Chères lectrices, chers lecteurs,

C'est avec un immense enthousiasme et une profonde conviction que nous vous invitons à explorer cet espace de réflexion, où la richesse de l'ingéniosité africaine se marie harmonieusement avec l'excellence académique, donnant naissance à une véritable symphonie de savoirs et d'innovations. Alors que le monde fait face à des défis multiples et complexes, la Revue Panafricaine de la Jeunesse (RPJ) se distingue comme un phare, éclairant les horizons inexplorés de la pensée africaine et universelle.

Nous vous convions à un voyage intellectuel unique, un périple au cœur de la créativité, de la réflexion et de l'engagement, où chaque page s'ouvre sur un monde en constante transformation. Dans cet espace de partage, les idées naissent souvent dans des contextes de résilience, de diversité et d'espoir, et elles y sont célébrées. Ces idées ne se contentent pas d'être le reflet des réalités africaines ; elles sont également le pont qui relie les cultures, reliant le local au global, le particulier à l'universel.

Dans ce numéro, les contributeurs mettent en lumière non seulement la science et l'innovation, mais aussi l'esprit de collaboration et de partage qui caractérise notre communauté de penseurs et de chercheurs venus de tous horizons. Ici, la rigueur scientifique se marie avec la passion, créant un espace vibrant où les voix des scientifiques résonnent, portées par l'engagement de ceux et celles qui œuvrent pour la transformation des sociétés. Les travaux présentés sont autant de témoignages d'un monde en perpétuelle évolution, où les perspectives croisées favorisent une compréhension plus profonde et plus nuancée des enjeux actuels.

À travers les pages de cette revue, le continent africain se dévoile dans toute sa complexité et sa diversité. Trop souvent perçu sous des prismes réducteurs, l'Afrique révèle ici ses multiples facettes, offrant ainsi un regard neuf et éclairant sur ses réalités. Chaque article,

chaque étude est une invitation à repenser ce que nous savons de l'Afrique et à redéfinir sa place dans le monde globalisé, tout en soulignant l'importance de ses contributions à la pensée mondiale.

Notre équipe éditoriale, soutenue par notre comité scientifique, s'engage à offrir une plateforme de qualité, où chaque publication est le fruit d'une collaboration enrichissante entre auteurs et évaluateurs. Ce processus de travail collectif assure non seulement la rigueur et la pertinence des contenus, mais aussi leur potentiel de transformation pour les sociétés africaines et au-delà.

Au fil de votre lecture, nous espérons que vous serez inspiré(e)s non seulement par la profondeur des réflexions et des analyses proposées, mais aussi par la mission qui guide notre revue : celle de positionner l'Afrique au cœur du discours mondial sur l'innovation et la recherche. Ensemble, construisons un avenir où la science africaine éclaire et inspire, non seulement les peuples africains, mais l'ensemble de l'humanité.

Rejoignez-nous dans cette aventure intellectuelle, et laissez-vous saisir par les innombrables possibilités offertes par un continent en effervescence créative et en quête d'un renouveau global.

Bonne lecture et bienvenue dans un monde de découvertes !

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A semantic study of apology expressions in Gengbé

[Etude sémantique des expressions d'excuse en Gengbé]

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Abstract

The current paper investigates semantically the various expressions used by the Gen natives when it comes to apologize to someone or a group of people offended purposedly or not. It has explored these expressions under the scope of the Cognitive Semantics as developed by (L. Talmy, 2000, p.100). The choice of this theory has been motivated by the urge of providing the appropriate meanings hidden in these expressions recorded among the Gen native speakers. The study has found that the Gen natives select apology expressions on the basis of the nature of the offence and the degree of the drawbacks it may have caused to the offended person(s) or victim(s). It eventually emphasizes the necessity of dominating one's pride when need be so as to present or accept apologies, which enable restoration of relationships and reestablishment of confidence for a harmonious and peaceful communal life.

Keywords : semantic, study, apology, expressions, Gengbé.

Résumé

Cet article se propose d'étudier les expressions que les locuteurs natifs Gen utilisent lorsqu'il s'agit de présenter des excuses à une personne ou un groupe de personnes offensée(s) volontairement ou par inadvertance. La théorie adoptée pour cette étude est la Sémantique Cognitive de L. Talmy, 2000, p. 100). Le choix de cette théorie a été motivée par le fait qu'elle permet l'usage des éléments des croyances ou les valeurs culturelles d'une communauté linguistique en vue de pourvoir des explications aux phénomènes d'ordre linguistique de la langue de cette communauté. Nous avons trouvé à l'issue de cette étude que les locuteurs natifs Gen choisissent les expressions de présentation d'excuses selon la nature de l'offense et/ou du degré des inconvénients causés aux victimes. Nous avons conclu en mettant l'emphase sur la nécessité de dépasser son égo s'il le faut afin de présenter ou accepter des excuses, gages d'un nouveau départ pour une vie communautaire paisible et harmonieuse.

Mots-clés : sémantique, étude, excuse, expressions, Gengbé

0. Introduction

Research and experience have shown that conversational breakdown causes conflict and brings about misunderstanding in families, work places and in the wider society, (C.P. Dozie & E. J. Otagburuagu, 2019, p. 2). The same scholars have added in the same vein that the lack of the use of politeness strategies appears to be the epicenter of conversational breakdown(ibid). According to Y. Fang, 2019, p. 311), "apology has become such a strong and widely used remedy for interpersonal and public relations." The foregoing assertions entrail that living together demands some sacrifices that are worth doing so as to allow harmony and peace to settle among people. Some of these sacrifices are simplicity and humility that are very often noticeable through language use in a given speech community. In Togo, particularly in the southern parts' localities where several ethnic groups are obliged to live together because of job and high schools' opportunities, it urges to arm people with the most important tool that will help them face the various linguistic challenges which hamper the living together of many people from different cultures using a same lingua franca. Frankly, the national language that unifies the Togolese today is undeniably and uncontestably the Gen language (Gengbé) no matter what the variety is. It is the most spoken language in the capital city, in the markets, on radios and televisions for broadcasting and advertisement purposes, in the churches to name but these. This article explores semantically the expressions that are commonly used by the Gen native speakers when it comes to present apologies to people offended willingly or not. This is to help first the other ethnic groups using Gengbé and also the Gen natives who ignore the appropriate significations borne by such expressions, which face the danger of disappearing or evading. This paper answers two main questions that are as follows:

- What are the expressions used by the Gen natives while apologizing?
- From which sources are their meanings derived?

In order to provide the appropriate answers to the above questions, I have done a field work which has mainly consisted in collecting data from old persons of the two sexes.

1. The Methodology

The methodology adopted is the qualitative one. I have visited many times areas such as Glidji, Aného and Anfoin to meet informants whose age is beyond sixty to collect the data. My informants were mainly the Gen village chiefs and some of their councils' members. These data have consisted in recording the genuine apology expressions and their explanations. The theories used are the Cognitive Semantics and Fictivity as developed by (L. Talmy, 2000, p. 100).

As a teacher teaching in the areas where Gengbé is natively spoken, I have thought it useful and interesting to study the rampant apology expressions used by the parents of my students when they are summoned by the school administration to know about their children's bad behaviors and misconducts in the school. Also, thanks to the familiarity between the Chief of the village (where I am teaching now) and me has allowed me to often pay him visits on Saturdays and play the role of secretary when his own secretary is absent or busy. The apology expressions used by the accused or the complainants are worth studying. The third motivation is the disordered and careless ways these apology expressions are unconsciously used, when need be, by the non-native speakers of Gengbé. In short, the absence of a semantic book on the authentic meaning of the Gen apology expressions has pushed me to undertake this research.

2. What is apology ?

One of the speech acts in human language which has attracted the attention of scholars dealing with social and cultural patterns in language is apologies (M. Jacobsson, 2004, p. 187). For (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983), as quoted in M. Jacobsson -ibid), apologizing is a culture-sensitive speech act of semantic formulae or strategies. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosohy (1995) consulted on 29th October 2022 defines an apology as the act of declaring one's regret, remorse, or sorrow for having insulted, failed, injured, harmed, or wronged another. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Seventh Edition, p.57), apology is a word or statement saying sorry for something that has been done wrong or that causes a problem. In addition, several scholars have defined and provided linguistically what apology is. To Austin (1962, as quoted in Etsuko Oishi, 2013, p. 9), what makes an utterance as an apology is essentially reacting to one's past conduct, and assuming or expressing the attitude of regret for it, while committing oneself to avoiding the conduct in the future. As for (G. Leech,1983, pp. 124-125):

> Apologies express regret for some offense committed by *S* against *H*. Nevertheless, an apology implies a transaction in that it is a bid to change the balance-sheet of the relationship between *S* and *H*. If the apology is successful, it will result in *H* pardoning or excusing the offense.

Still, G. Leech (1983, as quoted in C.P. Dozie & E. J. Otagburuagu, 2019, p. 5) has provided another definition that reads as follows:

> "An apology is a conscious effort to right an established wrong between interlocutors, brought about in the course of interaction upon realizing that the speaker/offender/apologizer has bruised the ego of the hearer/offended."

Accoding to (K. Aijmer,1996, p. 84), apologies are sets of relatively fixed expressions, consisting of verbs (eg *apologize* , *excuse*, *pardon*), adjectives, (eg *sorry, afraid*) and nouns (eg *pardon*). As for (M. Jacobsson, 2004, p.

188), an apology expression is an IFID (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device) used as a strategy to express regret, to offer an apology or to request forgiveness. For Holmes (1995, as quoted in O. D. Yalçinkaya, 2021, p. 285), an apology is a polite speech act in which the apologizer heals the offence assuming responsibility and, as a consequence, aims to restore social relationship between interlocutors. To (R.T. Lakoff, 2001, p. 101), apologies are hard to identify, define or categorize, a difficulty that arises directly out of the functions they perform. Accoding to (Olshtain, 1989, p. 156)

> An apology is basically a speech act intended to provide support for the *H* (hearer) who was actually or potentially negatively affected by a violation *X*. In deciding to carry out the verbal apology, the *S* (speaker) is willing to humiliate himself or herself to some extent and to admit fault and responsibility for *X*.

With regards to the above definitions from renowned linguists and researchers, it is fairly clear and beyond doubt that apology as a "speech act" is crucial for peace making and social harmony establishment among people. The definitions depict the offender or the apologizer as the wrong doer, that is, the causer or the responsible for the damage or problem(s) undergone or being undergone by the victim(s). Again, apologies are perceived as temper and hot emotion-cooling expressions used by a mentally mature person so as to avoid conflicts and misunderstanding brought about in families, work places and in the wider society by conversational breakdown. Apologies in this case are equated with politeness strategies, the lack of which, apears to be the epicenter of conversational breakdown, as it is stated in (P. Dozie & E. J. Otagburuagu, 2019, p. 2)

1.1 Examples of Apology Expressions in the English Language

The apology expressions commonly used by offenders or apologizers in the English language are *sorry* or *I'm sorry, I apologize for.., excuse me, pardon me, forgive me*. (E. Olshtain and A. Cohen, 1983, p. 22) refer to these expressions as Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs). These researchers note that *I'm sorry, I apologize*, and *excuse me, pardon me,* and *forgive me* are used to express 'regret', to offer an apology, and to request for forgiveness. This point of view is shared by (M. Suszczyñska, 1999, p. 1056), who states that in terms of strategy, *sorry* is an expression of regret whereas *pardon* is a request for forgiveness along with *excuse me* and *forgive me*. As for (K. Aijmer, 1996, pp. 84 and 115), *sorry* is used mainly for communicative problems while *pardon* is used for similar 'talk offences', but much less frequently. Other formulas such as *No offense, Forgive me, I beg your pardon,* which form lots of expressions some of which are: *I owe you an apology*, *please accept my apologies, I do apologize for…, do not be angry with me…, I regret my bad / my mistake…, that was totally on me…* are given by E. R. Bikmullina and R.R. Zamaletdinov : 2020, cited in G.K. Ismagilova et al., 2020, p.49) for the implementation of communicative

actions. G. K. Ismagilova et al. (idem) note that the apology depends on the communicative and pragmatic attitudes of the speaker : the one who wants to restore relations will rather apologize. For example, (Fitzgerald, 2009, p. 210): *"I'm very sorry, but you remember I was angry with you before Mr. Torpenhow went away ?"*

1.2 The Gen Apology Expressions and their Meanings

According to my informants, the commonest apology expression used to present excuses to an offended person or a group of people offended in Gengbé is *Bàbàɖé* or *Bàbà* for short. Both the children, the youth and the adult people use it when the offence is negligible, that is, when the offended person hasn't undergone a severe drawback from the offence. The expression *Bàbàɖé or Bàbà* is used as the equivalent of *sorry* or *I am sorry*. It is used to present apologies or strengthen psychologically someone going through a comfortless or sorrowful situation the causer of which is not necessarily the speaker. However, when the offence reaches or extrapolates a certain degree, the offender needs proper and wisely selected expressions to apologize for their misdeed(s) or mistake(s). Some of those selected expressions display belief or religious traits while others do not. Also, some proverbs are frequently used to present excuses when need be. The current paper considers first the belief-free apology expressions, then the belief-based ones and last, the proverbs.

1.3 Belief-free Apology Expressions in Gengbé

By belief-free apology expressions, I mean those expressions that show no belief or religious traits related to the Gen belief-systems or religion. This category concerns mainly metaphoric expressions bearing henceforth denotative and connotative meanings. The connotative meanings will only be dealt with in the discussion.

1. Mù ɖè kùkú
   1SG remove hat
   'I take off my hat.'

2. Sɔ kè-mí.
   Take open-1PL.
   'Forgive us.'

3. Mù lè klò jí.
   1SG be knee on.
   'I am on my knees.'

4. Nù sì ɖó nyã wã jí
   Drink water on word DEM on
   'Cool that matter down.'

5. Mí lé afɔ ná-wó
1SG hold PREP-2SG.
'We hold your foot.'

6. Mù blìbɔ
1SG roll onself
'I roll myself in the dust.'

7. Nya-nyè mù jɔ
word-POSS NEG straight NEG
'I am not right.'

8. E- gblè lè asi nyè.
3SG-spoil AUX 2PL-hand
'I am the faulty one.'

9.a. Mùgbà bí jì o
Don't bend heart NEG.
'Don't be angry.'
b. Mùgbà ɖù jè nè akɔ nè vé wò o
Don't eat salt be chest be bitter 2SG NEG.
'Don't be angry.'
c. Jì wò nè jè mè
heart 2SG be hit in.
'May your heart cool down.'
d. Jì wò nè fá
heart 2SG be wet
'May your heart cool down'.

In data (1) presented above, the apology is expressed as removing one's hat. According to my informants, it does not mean that the offender has effectively performed the action (removing their hat) as the expression denotatively exposes it. It is rather a metaphoric expression. This unreal action expressed as effectively performed by the speaker is referred to by (L. Talmy, 2000, p. 99) as a fictive action. Its meaning resides in the Gen cultural norms, which equate such an action in front of someone or a group of people to humility, politeness and submissiveness. By saying this, the offender wants to tell the offended person(s) that they have all these qualities required to be forgiven a mistake.

In (2), the offenders are many and this is shown by the use of *mí* the first personal pronoun plural 'we'. This personal pronoun (direct object) is replaced by *-m* when the offence is expressed in the first person singular 'I'. The meaning of the verb *asɔkè* goes beyond forgiving simply the offence one has been done. It asks indirectly the offended person or the victim to not take a revenge or to retaliate no matter what the offence has been. The noun *sɔsɔkè* (forgiveness) stands for a total abandon of any form of revenge

the offended person may be preparing themselves to take. It therefore calls for peace-making and harmony for a better communal life.

The apology is expressed in (3) as being on one's knees. Here again, the knees are fictive in this expression because in fact, the offender does not need to adopt such a position before using this expression to apologize for a misconduct or fault. The particularity of this apology expression in Gengbé is that it creates a worshipper-and-god relationship in the mind of the offended since beeing on one's knees is frequently adopted when devotees are in need of a favor from a god or goddess. Saying that one is on their knees epitomizes their searching for a favor from the offended, and in the current case, the favour looked for is the forgiveness.

The offender asks the victim in (4) to drink 'water' over the matter (the one that caused their separation). In this expression, water symbolizes freshness and more precisely peace. Again, not only does the speaker await from the hearer forgiveness but also peace-making since water is very often used in the Gen culture when it comes to peace-making or reconciliation between enemies. (V. Sakyiama-Antiri, 2009, p. 55) notes that in the Akan culture which is near the Gen's in practices, water is offered to a visitor to quench his thirst and wash the dust from his face and feet thus cooling him down. It(water) is pure because it comes from nature which is pure. It(water) is also used during libation prayers performances as a coolant. (ibid).

As for (5), the offender expresses metaphorically their apology as holding the foot of the offended. The foot in this expression symbolizes motion: walking or running, that is, anything that foot can lead the offended person to do in revenging. Simply put, the offender is indirectly but seriously begging their victim to stop any avengeful action that their 'foot' could lead them to undertake. In a nutshell, it is not the foot that is actually held. The thing held is the revenge or the desire to retaliate.

In (6), the excuse is expressed as rolling oneself in the dust. The dust in the expression represents the unclean state into which the misconduct of the offender has led them. As it has already been said above, the dust is not the real one. The offender communicates through its image their belittlement and recognition of their faults or mistakes. The acceptance of this type of apology represents the water and soap that will cleanse the offender.

In Gengbé, being right is generally expressed as having one's word straight while being wrong or faulty is expressed as having one's word bent or distorted. This is the case in (7) where the apologizer says to the victim that their word is not right. The word *nya* 'word /case' in the expression replaces anything wrongly done to hurt someone willingly or unwillingly. Confessing one's sins to the victim is also a way to ask for forgiveness in the Gen community.

In (8), the offender is asking for forgiveness through recognizing their being guilty. Recognizing one's fault or mistake is called 'explicit self-blame' by Olshtain and Cohen (1983, as quoted in Mattias Jacobsson, 2004 , p. 195). In Gengbé, it is not only a self-blame but also another way of saying : 'I am sorry, forgive me.'

The final examples lay emphasis on the word *ji*'heart'. In (9a) and (9b), the victim is being asked to not bend or eat salt whilst in (9c) and (9d), the apology is being presented as pieces of advice in which the offended person is being invited to cool their heart down or to let their heart relax. In the first two, although the actions of bending and eating are unarguably fictive (Talmy, 2000, p. 99), the hidden sense is that the hearer is being asked to stop excruciating their heart. In the last two, the idea of cooling the heart down indicates that it(heart) was in a depleasant state. The word 'heart' is also used by the Igbo (in Eastern Nigeria) when apologizing for a mistake. This is seen in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* when Nwashike Ogene asks the last son of Nnona who is very upset to calm down in these terms: " Don't worry ; don't take it to heart", (F. Nwapa,1966, p. 181). Last but not least, the thing appealed for in such expressions is the normalization of the victim's emotion so as to restart a new life, a new beginning with the apologizer, seeker of forgiveness, harmony and peace.

1.4 Belief-based Apology Expressions in Gengbé

The expressions which follow display belief traits, that is, the apologizer refers to spiritual entities in presenting his apologies to the victims.

10. Mù sɔ Mawu lé afɔ nà wò.
    1SG take God hold foot PREP 2SG
    'I hold your foot with God.'

11. Mù sɔ tɔgbéwo kú mamãwo lé afɔ nà wò.
    1SG take grandfathers CONJ grandmothers hold foot PREP 2SG.
    'I hold your foot with our ancestors.'

12. Kpɔ Yésu lè atisògá ŋti násɔ kèm.
    See Jesus on the cross
    'Look at Jesus on the Cross and forgive me.'

13. Sɔkè Mawu.
    Forgive God
    'Just leave it to God'

14. Mù sɔ miabe voduwo lé afɔ ná wò.
    1SG take POSS god.PL hold foot PREP 2SG.
    'I hold your foot with our (gods) divinities.'

In (10), the offender has expressed their excuses as holding the victim's foot with the Almighty God. Such an apology is quickly and easily accepted by offended people who are god-fearing persons or authentic christians.

Through this, the offender is inviting their victim to forgive them thanks to God, believed to forgive sins no matter how serious they are thanks to His limitless and conditionless mercy. The same idea is evoked in (11) and (14) but a bit differently. The ancestors have taken the place of God, the Almighty. These expressions are used by the traditionalists who believe in tutelar divinities and in the presence of the dead among the living. The victim will accept the forgiveness because of the respect and consideration they still owe the *living* dead. Their unshakeable conviction that spirits still interfere in their relations lead them to accept the apology from the offender. In (13), the victim is kindly asked to leave the matter to God. In other terms, the victim is asked to let God take the revenge on their behalf. Again, the faith in the christian God leads those who know a bit of the biblical story about Jesus Christ to recall what the latter has said to God on the cross after He had been crucified.[1]

In the light of the foregoing, it is needless to recall afresh that the understanding or any semantic interpretation of such apology expressions demands a mastery of the belief-systems of the Gen natives.

1.5 Proverbs as Apologizing Tools in Gengbé

According to The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs (2004: ix),

proverbs are simple and concrete sayings popularly known and repeated, which express a truth, based on common sense or the practical experience of humanity. They are traditional sayings which offer advice or present a moral in a short and pithy manner.

The famous Hungarian paremiologist[2], (Paczolay, 1995, p. 1) defines a proverb as:

a short standard statement having an evident or implied general meaning, related to a certain field of general human conditions, attitude or actions, where it is valid with implied limitations. It is known and often quoted in a period of time in a certain language community,sometimes in a short form (the rest being implied).

From the above definitions of the term, one can easily notice that proverbs occupy a remarkable place in the everyday life of people belonging to a particular speech community. In the Gen speech community, proverbs

[1] Jesus Christ has asked God, His heavenly Father, to forgive His executioners although He was at death's door. The biblical passage reads as follows: ''Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.'' Cf Luke 23 :34.

[2] A paremiologist is the person who is interested in the study of proverbs. The study and collection of proverbs is called paremiology (from the Greek word paroíma maening proverb). Cf. (Ahmed M. Hoshan, 2020, p.1).

abound. Though their use is unpredictable, apologizers happen to select the proper ones, which can help alleviate the sorrow or pain that a victim undergoes or is undergoing. The most rampant ones are as follows:

15. Etré.vè nɔ si ŋkɔa mú gbé.na nɔnɔɛ lɔ.lɔ o.
calabash.two stay water upon NEG. refuse.FOC each other hit.RED NEG.
'Two calabashes upon a water finally hit each other.'

16. Eví mú nyè nà mí kɔ ata. jí nà amè yé wó sɔ.ná
child NEG defecate.HAB excrement pour thigh.on HAB person that take.HAB
ewui kpanɛ o.
knife peel NEG.
'One does not use a knife to clean child's fecaes off one's thigh.'

17. Améké bé yéabiɔ tɔ.fɛa màmã.fɛ bé gbɔ.na ku.
He who say 3SG.ask father.debt grandmother.debt 3SG arrive.HAB with.
'He who who used to claim for his father's debt always comes back endebted.'

18a. Avű mú nyè.na.mí gbedekagbe ye wó ƒò.na kpé.é o.
dog NEG defecate.HAB.fecaes one day that 3PL beat.HAB stone.3SG NEG.
'Don't stone a dog for having defecated for the first time.'

b. Esɔkűmè lè né avű.
yesterday.food be for dog.
'There is still yesterday's food for the dog.'

19. Amè mú nyɔna vɔna o.
person NEG good end NEG.
'Nobody is perfect.'

20. Sɔsɔké xɔ asì wú siká.
Forgiveness receive market than gold.
'Forgiveness is priceless.'

21. Elã ké lè klò jì.a bè tà mú cí.nà zogbè o
animal that be knee on.FOC POSS head NEG rest.HAB desert NEG.
'An animal that is on its knees does not lose its head / does not get killed.'

Again, the above-listed proverbs (though the list is not exhaustive) purport to edulcorate and lessen the pain or the suffering caused to the victim. The first one (15) is frequently used in couples' reconciliation. The two calabashes in the proverbs represent the husband and the wife and the water upon which they are said to be epitomizes the house or their marital life. It is to remind them first of the necessity of forgiving each other since misunderstanding will still arise between them as long as they are (live) together under the same roof. The second (16) invites the offended person to forgive the offender because they are older and wiser than him /her. In

other words, the offender is considered an innocent and naive being just like a child, whom their parents should forgive and accept no matter how he/she has offended them. This proverb is used to settle matters between parents and children or an old and young person. The advice given to the victim in (17) lays an emphasis on the danger or the bad side of retaliation. In this proverb, the victim's attention is being drawn on the necessity of forgiving their offender whose ancestors could have been once offended by theirs. In short, the main message being conveyed is that one needs to forgive because taking a revenge leads to more complicated probems and worries. In (18a) and (b), the victim is being asked to postpone any revenge they would like to take. By postponing, they will forgive the offender for the time being. The offender may perhaps become conscious through introspection and then ask for forgiveness. The next proverb, that is (19), is used when the accusation from the victim seems to be exaggerated. Thanks to this proverb, the offended will see the evidence that no human being is perfect and then forsake any decision of revenging. The comparison made between gold and forgiveness in (20) underlines the importance and necessity of forgiving one's victimizer no matter how gloomy their deeds have been. Eventually, in (21), the metaphor *'élã́ ké lè klò jì'* reminds the victim of the humility of the apologizer (who has been humble enough to decide to ask for forgiveness). Again, being on one's knees (though fictive) automatically calls for the victim's clemency that will allow them to pity their offender.

3. Findings in this article

In this article, I have found that :

i. The Gen native speakers use various expressions when it comes to apologize for a mistake or wrong deed against someone;

ii. These apology expressions are selected according to the seriousness of the offence

iii. These apology expressions can be classified into two categories: the belief-based expressions versus the belief-free ones;

iv. The Gen native speakers make a great use of metaphor while presenting apologies to their victim;

v. The understanding and interpretation of these metaphorical expressions depends on a good mastery of the Gen culture;

vi. Proverbs are also useful when presenting apologies in the Gen language (Gengbé).

4. Conclusion

This paper has thoroughly and successfully proven that in the Gen native speech communities, the expressions that are often used when apologizing deserve a proper semantic study from a Gengbé native speaker having a metalinguistic awareness. Meaning must be authentically gotten from expressions so as to avoid unnecessary clashes, which hamper and jeopardize harmony, and consequently choke peace in the society. Since we are bound to live together (because unity is strength), it is more than vital to sacrifice sometimes our exceeding pride that pushes us to bear grudge against one another. In the Gen language that has been the target language in this article, peace can therefore be verbally made among enemies thanks to the apology expressions studied here. In addition, it is not less than capital to conclude this article by reminding both the Gen native speakers and the non-native ones of the necessity of selecting the apology expressions according to the type of the offence. Otherwise, an apology presented carelessly may create more problems than it is expected to solve.

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