



Examining the Metaphorical Extensions of *hyɛ* (a dress verb) in the Akan Language

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ABSTRACT

In Akan culture, the act of getting dressed is typically expressed through the use of the verb *hyɛ*, meaning ‘wear’. This study thus examined the various literal and metaphorical interpretations of this verb in Akan communication. Through its ability to combine with different words, *hyɛ* can take on a wide range of meanings. The study drew data from the Legon-Zurich-Trondheim Akan Dictionary as well as interviews with four L1 speakers of Akan in the Offinso North District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The study was based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory developed by Lakoff & Johnson. The verb *hyɛ* was used to derive some nominals through affixation and compounding. The evidence suggested that in addition to its basic meaning of dressing, the verb has taken on other metaphorical meanings such as being in a place, ordering/forcing someone, storing/preserving food, making something, covering, and bribing someone. These extended meanings of the verb, however, depend on the context in which the verb is used. This research has demonstrated that the dress verb is polysemous. It further concluded that when new words are derived from a verb, its basic meaning is either maintained or changes metaphorically. The study has implications for language learning since understanding the basic or metaphorical meaning of a word in a language impacts the understanding of the language in general.

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Publication History

Received 25th March, 2023

Accepted 22nd August, 2023

Published online: 15th September, 2023

Keywords: *Metaphorical extensions, dress verb, Akan language, Conceptual Metaphor Theory*

INTRODUCTION

Akan is one of the Niger-Congo (Kwa) groups of languages. It is predominantly spoken in Ghana and partially spoken in some parts of the Ivory Coast. Its mutually intelligible dialects include; Asante, Akuapem, Fante, Akwamu, Akyem, Agona, Assin, Denkyira, Twifo, Wassa, Kwawu, and Bono. Out of these the three major dialects which have received literacy status and are used in schools are Asante, Akuapem and Fante. The first two major dialects constitute the Twi group.¹ Akan is widely spoken in nine of the sixteen administrative regions of Ghana; Ahafo, Ashanti, Bono, Bono East, Central, Western, Western North, Eastern and Oti Regions. Over 50% of Ghana's 30.8 million population can either speak or understand the Akan Language. Akan is widely used in Ghana's education, commerce (including advertisements), politics, religion, sports, entertainment, and in the media.

The concept of dressing is under the umbrella of *ethnology*, which is concerned with the study of different human cultures. Various items or ornaments are used for dressing: clothes, hats, rings, shoes, etc. The type of cloth or ornament applied to the body varies from one culture to the other. Among the Akans dressing in the traditional sense is something that cannot be glossed over. One who

¹ Kofi Agyekum, “The Sociolinguistic of Akan Personal Names,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 15, no. 2 (2006).

dresses appropriately for all traditional occasions is deemed cultured. Even at the gathering of chiefs a sub-chief must not appear more presentable than the paramount chief or the king (among the Asantes) or put on the same cloth intended to be worn by the king for the occasion. The major verb used to denote dressing in Akan is *hyɛ*, 'to wear'. Like most lexical items, the Akan dress verb is productive. Linguistic studies show that lexical items are productive and have the potential to serve as the basis for a range of contextual derivations.² The productive nature of a language in this sense is whereby a language increases its stock of words. It is good for the words of a language to have multiple meanings so that we do not waste time looking for new words to describe new things or concepts that emerge in the language.³ This implies that language grows when its lexical items have multiple meanings and they can be used to talk about or describe many things.

Interestingly, when new words are produced or derived from a verb, the sense of the basic meaning can still be traced. This implies meaning is pivotal in every language. The basis of meanings of these lexical items as well as their metaphorical counterparts is evident in everyday discourse. Lexical items may have their basic and metaphorical meanings. Metaphor is grounded on the similarity of human association which occurs between two conceptual domains. As noted earlier, the verb 'dress' is frequently used in Akans' daily speeches, giving rise to many words whose meanings depend on the verb *hyɛ*. This makes it essential to study this verb because it can have a variety of meanings depending on the context in which it is used without necessarily changing the underlying meaning.

Given the importance of verbs in the everyday activities of the Akans, studies on the Akan verbal system have received scholarly attention in the areas of morphology and semantics. Agyekum has looked at the metaphorical extensions of the verb of perception *hunu* 'see'; Adomako, verbal nominalization in Akan; Sekyi-Baidoo, aspect of the semantics of the Akan phrasal verb; Appah, Akan verb-noun compounds; Agyepong, cutting and breaking verbs in Akan.⁴ These studies demonstrate that verbs in Akan possess certain traits that allow them to interact with other lexical items to elucidate a variety of literal and figurative interpretations. Given the pivotal roles verbs play in the word formation processes in Akan, understanding different shades of meaning of verbs is paramount to understanding the Akan Language and also constructing grammatically accepted sentences. Moreover, the dress verb *hyɛ* is inseparable in everyday conversation. Thus, there is a need to pay attention to it. However, not much has been done on the dress verb as has been done on the other categories of verbs in the Akan literature. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature on Akan by examining the meaning extensions of the dress verb. The investigation sought to demonstrate that the fundamental meaning of the verb changes metaphorically when new words are derived from it. The study which takes a qualitative approach will explore the various meanings derived from *hyɛ*. Literature on dress verbs will be reviewed; after which the data which was qualitatively and presented collected will be systematically explained and analysed. The results will then be discussed to draw a conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dress Verb

Studies on verbs of dress have received scholarly attention across languages of the world. Backhouse looked at verbs of dress in Japanese and posited that the verbs of dress are being described from the

² Kofi Agyekum, "The Pragmatics of 'Mouth' Metaphors in Akan," *Ghana Journal of Linguistics* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1–17; Samuel Awinkene Atintono, "The Semantic Properties of Separation Verbs in Gurene.," *Journal of West African Languages* 46, no. 1 (2019); Dorothy Pokua Agyepong, "My Heart Tears' and 'my Eyes Open': Exploring the Verb Te'to Tear' and Its Range of Interpretations in Asante-Twi.," *Sociolinguistic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2021).

³ Bonny Norton Peirce, "Language Learning, Social Identity, and Immigrant Women.," 1994.

⁴ Agyekum, "The Sociolinguistic of Akan Personal Names"; Kwasi Adomako, "Verbal Nominalization as a Derivational Process: The Case of Akan," *Ghana Journal of Linguistics* 1, no. 2 (2012): 43–64; Yaw Sekyi-Baidoo, "Aspects of the Semantics of the Akan Phrasal Verb," 2008, <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:18191491>; Clement Kwamina Insaadoo Appah, "Nominal Derivation in Akan: A Descriptive Analysis," *Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology Thesis*, 2003; Dorothy Pokua Agyepong, "'Cutting' and 'breaking' events in Akan," 2017.

viewpoints of contrastive analysis and intralingual sense relations.⁵ The two analyses have provided the basis for separating them into two: *kiru/kaburu/haku* vs. the rest. In terms of applicability, the groups are referred to as clothing verbs vs. non-clothing verbs, whose use is determined by different criteria. Intralingually, the two groups form part of different lexical systems, with different directional opposites. It is observed that *kiru/kaburu/haku* have been found to constitute a closely-knit group: extralingually, their applicability is characterizable in terms of semantic marking; intralingually, they fall together with *nugu* in a closed system, the integrity of which is reflected in special restrictions on the use of the non-causative. Backhouse concluded that the Japanese verbs demarcate body space.

Schaefer also examined Tswana and Yoruba verbs of the dress by making a cross-linguistic comparison.⁶ She stated that verbs of dress demarcate body space, as in the case of Japanese verbs of dress, following a top-down principle with the torso being the most salient body space marked, followed by the head, the upper limbs, and then the lower limbs. However, Cindy, et al argue that English does not demarcate body space with its primary verb of dress.⁷ For instance, the verb ‘put on’ is used for all articles of clothing and accessories without recourse to which body space is being covered. For example ‘He puts on a hat’, He puts on a shirt, He puts on socks. The present study departs from those above in that the researchers are interested in the different shades of meanings that the dress verb of Akan *hyɛ* generates when its contexts of use are stretched.

Nominal Derivation in Akan

Bodomo defines nominalization as a process which involves the formation of nouns from verbs and adjectives.⁸ Appah broadens the definition given by Bodomo on nominalization by stating that it is “the process or result of forming a noun from words (verbs, adjectives, and other nouns), phrases or clauses” factoring in how the process is realised in Akan.⁹ The two definitions indicate an obvious restriction of the triggers of the nominalization process only to segments or morphemes such as affixes, while they remain silent on the role that suprasegmental such as tone can play in changing the category of a lexical item, as it is evident in tone languages such as Akan.¹⁰ Adomako gives these examples to clarify the argument; in Akan, a verb like *firi* ‘to buy on credit’ is nominalized by changing the tonal pattern, as in *firi* ‘credit buying.’ In view of this, he widens the domain within which nominals can be derived in Akan by defining nominalization as “the process by which nominals are formed from lexical items such as verbs, adjectives and other nouns usually by way of affixation or by tonal marking (a phonological feature). Characteristic of lexical categories, the Akan noun is made up of a stem(s) and in some cases, affixes.¹¹ Based on the number of the stem(s) there is/are in a word, Appah identified two main types of stems in the language.¹² Thus, simple (one) and compound (more than one) stem. Examples of simple stems are; *nnua* ‘trees’, *sika* ‘money’, *papa* ‘father’. The following examples can also be given for Akan compound stems; *gyedie* ‘belief’, *kobɔ* ‘wandering’, *yiedie* ‘prosperity’, and *ketɛasehyɛ* ‘bribery’.

Adomako also postulates that there are two ways through which the verbal nominalization process can be realized in the Asante-Twi dialect of Akan. These are direct verb stem/base nominalization and nominalization after reduplication. The main distinction between the two processes is identified to be that while in the former process, the nominal prefixes adjoin the verb stem directly to derive nominals, in the latter process, the same prefixation process also applies but after the reduplication process.

⁵ Anthony Edgar Backhouse, “Japanese Verbs of Dress,” *Journal of Linguistics* 17, no. 1 (March 28, 1981): 17–29, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022226700006745>.

⁶ Ronald P Schaefer, “Toward Universal Semantic Categories for Human Body Space,” 1985.

⁷ Cindy L Buis and Hsiu-Mei Lin, “Taiwanese Verbs of Dress” (Mid-America Linguistics Conference, 1999).

⁸ Adams B Bodomo, *The Structure of Dagaare* (Center for the Study of Language and Inf., 1997).

⁹ Appah, “Nominal Derivation in Akan: A Descriptive Analysis.”

¹⁰ Adomako, “Verbal Nominalization as a Derivational Process: The Case of Akan.”

¹¹ Florence A. Dolphyne, *The Akan (Twi-Fante) Language: Its Sound Systems and Tonal Structure* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1988).

¹² Appah, “Nominal Derivation in Akan: A Descriptive Analysis.”

Agyekum examined the nominals derived from the Akan verb of perception *hunu*, ‘see’ and puts forward that the derivations are done through some morphological processes.¹³ The first process is just by nominal affixation. Some of the nominals are derived from a combination of *hunu* and other verbal phrases. Others are also made up of *hunu* and a postposition. In the case of compounding, some phonological phenomena such as vowel elision and vowel insertion also take place. *Hunu* nominals are derived by simply adding nominalizing affixes to the verb. It could be either a prefix or a prefix and a suffix but not only a suffix. It was also established that metaphorical and semantic expressions are derived from the verb *hunu*. In these extensions, there is a movement of *hunu* as a physical verb into some mental and psychological notions. Some derived nominals from the verb of perception are in example (1) below;

- (1a) *osuahunu* ‘experience’
- (1b) *anisoadehunu* ‘vision’
- (1c) *amanehunu* ‘adversity/suffering’
- (1d) *ahuntahunu* ‘the one who can see from a hiding place’

In the present study, nominals are derived from the dress verb *hyɛ* through two morphological processes; affixation and compounding. In some of the derived nominals, only compounding is used. Thus, through the combination of the verb *hyɛ* and other nouns/verbs/adjectives, while in some nominals, there is the combination of compounding and affixation processes (prefixation/suffixation).

Metaphor

The word ‘metaphor’ is derived from the Greek words ‘meta’ meaning ‘over’ and “pherein” meaning “to carry”. Metaphor involves transferring the meaning of one thing to another without using “like” or “as”, based on the similarity between two distinct things.¹⁴

As posited, metaphor is one means through which novelty can enter the language of reference: metaphors extend the semantic range of words, by temporarily or permanently changing the frontiers of our lexical categories. Thus, metaphorical meaning is often a slight extension of the literal meaning and should be understood in the context of its use. All metaphors are considered wrong when used out of context. Only the context of the situation that this research seeks to characterize metaphorically can determine the appropriateness of a certain metaphor.

Metaphor is categorised into two: dead and living. A living metaphor is one whose traits and comparisons can be easily identified. In living metaphors, the original meaning of the word or expression could be traced from its new form, whereas in the case of dead metaphors, the original meaning of the word or expression can deviate from its new form. Modern users of such an expression see it as normal and they sometimes do not associate any link to its original meaning.¹⁵ However, dead metaphors are so conventionalised in everyday speech that users do not even realise they are metaphors.¹⁶

In a study conducted by Yakub on the metaphoric extensions of the uprooting verb *tu* in Nzema, he postulates that apart from the verb’s basic meaning, it has acquired other senses in the Nzema discourse such as;

- (2a) *tu ahonle* ‘to become afraid’
- (2b) *tu ayene* ‘to drive a demon out of someone’
- (2c) *tu belemgbunli* ‘to distool a chief’
- (2d) *tu edweke sie* ‘to adjourn a case’¹⁷

¹³ Kofi Agyekum, “Hunu Nominals in Akan,” *The Journal of Ghanaian Languages* 1 (2001): 30–34.

¹⁴ Kokuvi Azasu and Peter Geraldo, *Mastering Literary Criticism* (Accra: Yamens Printing Press Ltd, 2005).

¹⁵ Kofi Agyekum, “Lexical Polysemy and Metaphorical Extensions of Te’hear’perception Verb in Akan,” *Legon Journal of the Humanities* 13 (2002): 99–113.

¹⁶ Kristin Denham and Anne Lobeck, *Linguistics for Everyone: An Introduction* (Cengage Learning, 2012).

¹⁷ Mohammed Yakub, “The Semantic Extensions of Tu’to Uproot’/’to Pull out’ in Nzema Discourse: A Conceptual Metaphoric Perspective.,” *Sociolinguistic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2021).

As seen from the Nzema examples above, the verb combines with different elements to derive a wide range of interpretations. To get the proper analysis of metaphorical meanings, there should be a conscious effort to understand its pragmatics, sociolinguistics and the overall culture of the speakers of the language in question.¹⁸

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) developed by Lakoff and Johnson, which views metaphor as the understanding and experiencing of one thing in terms of another.¹⁹ The conceptual metaphor theory underpins the relationship between the literal and the non-literal uses of lexical categories.

Many conceptual metaphors (both the similarity-based ones and the primary metaphors) are based on ‘image schemas.’²⁰ These are abstract, preconceptual structures that emerge from recurrent experiences of the world.²¹ For example, THE STATES ARE CONTAINERS primary metaphor derives from the CONTAINER image schema, THE LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor from the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, and so on. In cognitive linguistics, image schema is understood as a recurring, dynamic pattern of perceptual interactions and motor programs that give coherence and structure to human experience. The image schemas allow the use of the structure of sensory and motor operations to comprehend abstract concepts and make inferences about them. Many conceptual metaphors used in conversation and reasoning are underpinned by the container image schema. The schema entails three structural elements; an exterior, an interior, and a boundary. Johnson postulates that one of the structural elements (e.g., an interior) of the container image schema can not exist without the other (exterior and boundary). In the same vein, an exterior cannot exist without an interior and the boundary, and the boundary cannot exist without an interior and exterior. Thus, this schema is a gestalt structure where parts are understood within the framework of a larger whole.²²

The Akan dress verb ‘hye’ expressions are based on semantic changes and meaning extensions. Semantic change is whereby a word or expression acquires another meaning in addition to its basic meaning over the passage of time. In the view of Agyekum, human perception and understanding of the world is the basis for the structure of human language. The perception and understanding of the world refers to the experience of the cultural, social, political, religious and physical environments, etc. Time and change of context account for the meaning extensions of words. In some cases, the original meaning may be extended to cover other notions and objects. Levinson contends that “metaphor and other tropes are in part responsible for the significant semantic shift that can take place in the meaning of words over time.”²³ Meaning more frequently shifts from the concrete physical to the mental realm. This shift is seen in the metaphoric extensions of the perception verb *hunu* ‘see’ in Akan, into a nominal.²⁴ In this study, the dress verb expressions in Akan acquire other senses when they are used in different contexts. Studies on the non-literal use of lexical items appeal to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory approach to explore the relationship between the literal and the non-literal uses of lexical

¹⁸ Agyekum, Kofi, ‘Ani’ “Eye Metaphorical Expressions in Akan,” *Journal of West African Languages* 42 no. 1 (2015): 1-29.

¹⁹ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, “The Metaphorical Structure of the Human Conceptual System,” *Cognitive Science* 4, no. 2 (1980): 195–208.

²⁰ Zoltan Kovecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²¹ Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*, 1987; George Lakoff, “Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 22 (1987).

²² Mark Johnson, “The Philosophical Significance of Image Schemas,” *From Perception to Meaning: Image Schemas in Cognitive Linguistics*, 2005, 15–33.

²³ Stephen C Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge university press, 1983).

²⁴ Agyekum, “Hunu Nominals in Akan.”

categories.²⁵ Conceptual metaphor is a linguistic phenomenon and also a mode of conceptual representation.²⁶ Lakoff and Johnson submit that:

Many aspects of our experience cannot be clearly delineated in terms of the naturally emergent dimensions of our experience. This is typically the case for human emotions, abstract concepts, and mental activity..... Though most of these can be experienced directly, none of them can be fully comprehended on their own terms. Instead, we must understand them in terms of other entities and experiences, typically other kinds of entities and experiences.²⁷

For instance, the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor sees the journey as the source domain and life as the target domain. In this expression, people project to travellers, actions to forward movement, choices to crossroads, problems to impediments to travel, and purposes to destinations. This is given credence by Lakoff as he argues that;

...in our culture, life is assumed to be purposeful, that is, we are expected to have goals in life. Purposes are destinations and purposeful action is self-propelled motion toward a destination. A purposeful life is a longterm, purposeful activity, and hence a journey. Goals in life are destinations on the journey. The actions one takes in life are self-propelled movements, and the totality of actions forms a path one moves along. Choosing a means to achieve a goal is choosing a path to a destination. Difficulties in life are impediments to motion. External events are large moving objects that can impede motion toward one's life goals. One's expectation to progress through life is charted in terms of a life schedule, which is conceptualized as a virtual traveler that one is expected to keep up with.²⁸

Certain expressions in the Akan Language allude to the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. Afreh states that life is not only seen as an entity but as an agent that causes another entity to move from one place to another.²⁹ She uses the Akan expression below to support this position:

(3) *Obra de me aduru akyiri*
life take ISG PERF-reach far
*'Life has taken me far.'*³⁰

It can be inferred from the above example that the person was living in a certain place, but s/he has moved to another place in order to achieve his/her purpose in life. People who are not comfortable in their place of abode embark on journeys with the hope of succeeding where they are going. They may relocate to other places within their home country or travel abroad with the hope of making life. The Akan metaphor *OBRA YE OKO* 'LIFE IS WAR' has war as the source domain and life as the target domain. In this expression, people project life impediments/change (s) such as; strifes, injuries, failures, victories, etc. to that of war. The LIFE IS WAR expression is also interpreted as; in life, one has to make adequate preparations, planning and use of strategies to succeed. These preparations, planning and strategies are equally needed when one is going to war in order to be victorious. In life, the failure to set targets often leads to failure, and it is an open secret that the consequences of a failed life are dire and detrimental. As Agyekum argues, "A proper analysis and understanding of metaphors and their meanings involve a closer look at their semantics, pragmatics, and cognitive concepts, and an overall knowledge of the language, culture, society, and contexts under which the utterance was made." In this vein, the researchers present a way of interpreting the contexts in which the Akan dress

²⁵ Lakoff and Johnson, "The Metaphorical Structure of the Human Conceptual System"; Agyekum, "Hunu Nominals in Akan"; Agyekum, "The Pragmatics of 'Mouth' Metaphors in Akan"; Agyepong, "My Heart Tears' and 'my Eyes Open': Exploring the Verb Te'to Tear'and Its Range of Interpretations in Asante-Twi."

²⁶ Agyekum, "The Pragmatics of 'Mouth' Metaphors in Akan."

²⁷ Lakoff and Johnson, "The Metaphorical Structure of the Human Conceptual System," 177.

²⁸ George Lakoff, "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor," 1993.

²⁹ Esther Serwaah Afreh, "Metaphors Otumfoɔ Lives by: A Cognitive Linguistic Study of Metaphors in Some Addresses by Otumfoɔ Osei Tutu Ii, Asantehene," *Cognitive Semantics* 4, no. 1 (2018): 76–103, 93.

³⁰ Afreh, "Metaphors Otumfoɔ Lives by: A Cognitive Linguistic Study of Metaphors in Some Addresses by Otumfoɔ Osei Tutu Ii, Asantehene."

verb behaves literally and non-literally. The goal of this study is to elicit a range of interpretations of the dress verb in Akan communication.

METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in nature. The approach was selected because the researchers wanted to explore the various meaning extensions of the dress verb. The study collected data from two sources: primary and secondary. For the primary source, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 4 respondents, comprising males and females who were purposefully sampled in equal numbers to ensure gender balance. The data collection period started on November 29, 2021, and ended on December 21, 2021. The research sites were selected in the Offinso North District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana, specifically in the towns of Nkenkaasu, Afrancho, and Akomadan, which are predominantly occupied by the Akan ethnic group. The selection of these sites was influenced by the familiarity of the first author with the communities as he lived in the district at the time. Thus, convenience sampling was used to select the research locations. The respondents were older people from 60 to 70 years old, chosen on purpose for their rich knowledge of the phenomenon.³¹ Of the participants, two males and one female were retirees with first degrees, while the other female had no formal education. The interviews did not provide all the metaphorical extensions of the verb. For this reason, the researchers fell on the secondary data source from the Legon-Zurich-Trondheim Akan Dictionary to establish the various meanings of the verb from a range of contextualised uses of the verb under study. The researchers' intuitions as native speakers of Asante Twi were also relied upon to gather data for analysis.

Data Presentation

First, the various usages of *hyɛ* were written and grouped according to the themes they depict. The data involved an examination of the primary meaning(s) of the verb as seen in examples 4-6, followed by its metaphoric meanings and the contexts of use as presented in Figure 1.

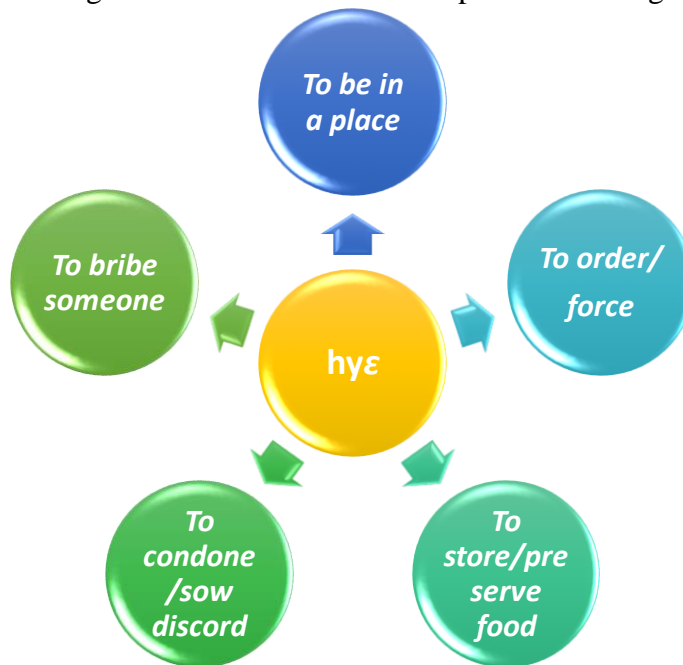


Figure 1 *Metaphorical extensions of Akan dress verb hyɛ*

Finally, Akan words that are derived from *hyɛ* were listed from both the primary and the secondary sources. The nominals that were derived from the verb and their various meanings are presented in Table 1 below:

³¹ Esra Bakkalbasioglu, “How to Access Elites When Textbook Methods Fail: Challenges of Purposive Sampling and Advantages of Using Interviewees as ‘Fixers.,” *The Qualitative Report* 25, no. 3 (2020): 688–99.

Table 1: *Hyɛ* Nominals and their English Glosses

No.	Akan Nominal	English Gloss
1	<i>Ahyɛaseɛ</i>	Beginning
2	<i>Mmarahyɛbadwa</i>	Parliament
3	<i>Awerɛhyɛmu</i>	Hope
4	<i>Animuonyamhyɛ</i>	Glorification
5	<i>Nkuranhyɛ</i>	Motivation
6	<i>Nkɔmhyɛ</i>	Prophecy
7	<i>Hyɛberɛ</i>	Destiny
8	<i>Bɔhyɛ</i>	Pledge/Promise
9	<i>Abahyɛbɔne</i>	Improper Child Nurturing
10	<i>Kɛtɛasehyɛ</i>	Bribery
11	<i>Nhyɛsɔɔ</i>	Command/Force/Order
12	<i>Nhyehyɛɛɛ</i>	Arrangement

Analysis and Discussion

As noted, the data analysis is grounded on CMT to elicit the various senses of the dress verb. A word may have multiple meanings over the passage of time. The most important thing to consider to elicit each of these multiple senses is the context of use and the words that collocate with the word in question. What makes an expression acquire many senses is how elaborate it is used for the purposes of communication. The Akan dress verb *hyɛ* is polysemous and its various senses would be elicited in this sub-section of the study.

The Basic Meaning of the Verb hyɛ ‘wear’

A word’s basic meaning is what comes to mind when someone hears it for the first time. This according to Cruse is referred to as the word’s ‘default meaning.’³² It can aptly be added that a word’s basic/default meaning is what comes first in its entry in the dictionary. In Akan discourse, the default meaning of *hyɛ* is ‘to wear a shoe, cloth, hat or ring.’ Thus, when a speaker utters the word *hyɛ*, the primary meaning that comes to the hearer’s mind is to put on either a shoe, cloth, hat or ring/earring for dressing. This is evident in Legon-Zurich-Trondheim Akan Dictionary.³³ Some literal usages of the verb are found in examples (4) and (5) below:

- (4) *Afryie* *hyɛ* *ɛkyɛ* *kɔkɔɔ*
 PSN wear.HAB hat red
 ‘Afryie wears a red hat.’
- (5) *Papa* *no* *de* *kawa* *hyɛ-ɛ* *ne* *yere*
 Man DET use.PAST ring wear.PAST POSS wife
 ‘The man put a ring on his wife’s finger.’

It has to be noted that to wear something, two things come into contact; thus, the part of the body that wears the item and the item being worn. As seen from example (4) above, the hat being worn in the Akan discourse means it has been put on the top part of the body (head). Also, example (5) implies the ring has been put on his wife’s finger. These two activities involve contact. The verb can equally denote ‘to fill’ or ‘to fit’.

Consider the examples below:

- (6) *ɔ-hyɛ* *atadeɛ anaase atadeɛ no* *na* *ɛ-hyɛ* *no?*
 3SG.wear.PROG cloth or cloth DET FOC 3SG.wear.HAB DET

³² Alan Cruse, “Meaning in Language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics,” 2004.

³³ Legon-Zurich-Trondheim, *Akan Dictionary* (Legon: University of Ghana, 2011).

‘He is wearing cloth or the cloth is wearing him?’

Here, it is observed that the speaker is questioning the ‘fitness’ of the clothes the person is wearing. In this scenario, *hyɛ* has the basic meaning of ‘to fit properly’ or ‘to fill well’ by contact.

Metaphorical usages of *hyɛ*

This sub-section presents the extended usages of the verb and its various senses. Where appropriate, the link between the verb’s default meaning and its metaphorical senses would be shown in the everyday discourse among the Akan people.

To be in a place

In Akan communication, the verb is used to describe something in a place. It is used to talk about the position or location of a person or an item in a place. In this context, the person or item being described gets in contact with the specific location. Examples are shown in the following expressions:

- (7) *Sika* *hyɛ* *sumiɛ* *no* *ase*
Money *under* *pillow* *DET* *POST*
 ‘There is money under the pillow.’
- (8) *Osuani* *no* *hyɛ* *dan* *mu*
Student *DET* *inside* *room* *POST*
 ‘The student is inside a room.’

It can be seen from examples (7) and (8) above that the semantic feature (+CONTACT) is employed in these contexts. It can be interpreted from example (7) that when there is something under a pillow, the pillow comes in contact with the item. It is also seen in example (8) that the room plays the role of a container-like object that contains the student. Therefore, there is a cover and a contact. In these two contexts, the dress verb is metaphorically used to denote the act of covering a person or an item. As posited by Johnson on metaphors motivated by the container schema, the pillow and the room are conceptualized to be the containers containing both the money and the students respectively.³⁴

To order/force

The acquired data are used in the Akan discourse to suggest the act of ordering an artisan to manufacture a product for a client or forcing/commanding someone to undertake an activity they are not willing to do. Any of these activities involves at least two people (+INVOLVEMENT). The semantic feature ‘involvement’ is in-line with ‘contact’, which is a core feature of the basic meaning of the verb under study. This is exemplified in expressions (9) and (10) below;

- (9) *Nii* *a-hyɛ* *duadwumfoɔ* *no* *akonnwa*
PSN *PERF.order* *carpenter* *DET* *chair*
 ‘Nii has ordered a chair from the carpenter.’
- (10) *Polisini* *no* *hyɛ-ɛ* *abɔfra* *no* *maa* *ɔ-da-ɛɛ*
Police *DET* *COM.PAST* *child* *DET* *REF* *3SG.sleep.PAST*
 ‘The police forced the child to sleep.’

The intriguing point to note in examples (9) and (10) above is that there is power and expected compliance. Thus, the one who commands wields power and expects the other party to do what is expected. Also, before a person can order an artisan to manufacture a product for him, he should possess power. Power in this context is ‘money’ (purchasing power). As put forward by Johnson on body metaphors, the body is conceptualized as a container and emotion as a substance/fluid held in the container.³⁵ The metaphorical sense in the two expressions above is that the one who commands puts force on the other person to undertake an activity. In this sense, the force becomes the substance held in the container (body).

³⁴ Johnson, “The Philosophical Significance of Image Schemas.”

³⁵ Johnson, “The Philosophical Significance of Image Schemas,”39.

To store/preserve food

To store is to preserve something for safekeeping. The verb is metaphorically used to preserve food items. In the storage process, the food items are put in enclosed materials and containers like sacks, baskets and shallow pits to ensure their safekeeping. When food items are stored they come in contact with each other and some form of heat is produced to help preserve them. In the Akan culture, food items like bananas, plantain, maize, cassava, etc. are normally stored in large quantities for preservation for future use. When farmers have a bumper harvest, they store some of their produce to await future price increases in order to make a profit from their labour. This is clarified in examples (11) and (12) below:

- (11) *Okuani* *no* *a-hyε* *aburoo* *wɔ* *san* *so*
Farmer *DET* *PERF.store* *maize* *ART* *barn* *POST*
 ‘The farmer has stored maize in the barn’



Figure 2: Maize in a barn

- (12) *Ampadu* *hyε* *kwadu* *wɔ* *nwuram*
PSN *store.HAB* *banana* *ART* *bush*
 ‘Ampadu stores banana in the bush.’



Figure 3: Stored banana

When maize is stored in the barn for a longer period it becomes dry and that helps for better preservation of the food item since drying is one of the scientific methods of food preservation. Most traditional maize farmers store their produce in the barn as seen in Figure (1) to await possible future price hikes, in order for them to break even. Also, the verb *hyɛ* is used to speed up the ripening process of banana as seen in Figure (2). As stated earlier, when food items are stored, there is a contact and some form of heat is also generated to help foods like bananas and plantain ripen early. The dress verb is metaphorically used to denote the act of putting an item into a containerlike object. Here, the barn becomes the container while the maize and banana become the substances held in the barn (container).

To condone/sow discord

In the Akan communication when you aid someone in committing a crime, we say *Woahyɛ no kutupa*, which literally means ‘You have abetted him or her.’ In this context, the dress verb is used to connote the connivance of a crime. The verb collocates with the noun *kutupa* ‘connivance’ to derive this metaphoric sense in the Akan discourse. ‘To condone’ is to conspire, accept/support a behaviour that is not considered morally upright. In the Akan and Ghanaian society as a whole, anyone who condones wrongdoing is considered an accomplice of that particular offence/wrongdoing. When someone condones, he gives the wrongdoer advice and support like money, ammunition, etc. in order to aid the criminal strength and courage to perpetuate the crime. In the metaphorical sense, to condone someone is to empower him to commit a crime. In this context, the one who condones puts power (substance) into the person’s body (container) as argued by Johnson.³⁶ On the other hand, the verb is also used to sow discord between people. In this context, the discord sower tells falsehoods about people in a relationship and tries to convince each one of them in secrecy to plant hatred in them in order to collapse their relationship. The discord sower normally does this when he envies the people’s relationship, so he does this to breach the peace and harmony between the lovers. Metaphorically, a person who sows discord puts hatred (substance) into another person’s body (container). The Akan people abhor any person who sows discord. The following examples of connivance and discord sowing clarify these arguments;

- | | | | | | | |
|------|---------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------|--------------------|---------------|
| (13) | <i>Maame</i> | <i>no</i> | <i>hyɛ</i> | <i>ne</i> | <i>ba</i> | <i>kutupa</i> |
| | Woman | DET | condone.HAB. | POSS | child | connivance |
| | ‘The woman conspires with her child.’ | | | | | |
| (14) | <i>Abi</i> | <i>re-hyɛ</i> | <i>a-ware-foɔ</i> | <i>no</i> | <i>takrawɔgyam</i> | |
| | PSN | PROG.sow | PL.couple.PL | DET | discord | |

³⁶ Johnson, “The Philosophical Significance of Image Schemas.”

‘Abi is sowing discord among the couples.’

In the contexts of the expressions in examples (13) and (14) above, the dress verb is used to describe a bad action/activity in the Akan communication. It is metaphorically seen in example (13) above that there is a collaboration (+INVOLVEMENT) between the woman and her child to perpetuate a crime. It is also seen in example (14) above that when a feather is in fire, there is a contact/relationship between the feather and the fire but the feather burns in no time. Metaphorically, the verb is used to put something bad into people in order for them to do what is not right. When someone sows discord among lovers, it is projected to be like a feather in the fire, very soon their relationship will break.

To bribe someone

One basic meaning of the dress verb ‘to fill’ is explored in this context. In the Akan discourse when a person wants to bribe someone, it is metaphorically expressed as *hyɛ n’afono mu*, which literally means ‘to fill someone’s mouth with an inducing item like money, or any unlawful gift.’ It is seen that edible and sweet things are normally eaten. So, when an edible thing is put into someone’s mouth, he could enjoy it to possibly entice/induce him to pervert justice. It is perceived that people who receive bribes are those in authority or with power like; judges, politicians, police, and other law enforcement officers. This is exemplified below;

(15) **Ato a-hyɛ polisini no afono mu nti ɔ-bɛ-di bem**
PSN PERF.fill police DET chin POST CONJ 3SG.FUT.emerge victorious
 ‘Ato has bribed the police so he will emerge victorious in the case.’

It is seen that anything that fills a space is satisfying and comforting to the beneficiary. When an edible item is put into someone’s mouth he could enjoy the taste of it. It is alleged that law-enforcement officers who accept bribes normally pervert justice to favour the bribe giver. The expression in example (15) above means the bribe giver is rest assured that he will emerge victorious in a case pending before a law-enforcing officer because he has enticed the officer with an inducing item. The *hyɛ n’afono mu* expression explores the literal meaning of the dress verb, thus filling a body part (the chin). In this context, the chin becomes the container and the illegal gift becomes the substance contained in the container.

Nominals derived from hyɛ

The nominals are derived through the morphological processes of affixation and compounding. These nominals are complex words because they consist of two or more morphemes.

Nominal expressions and their meanings

This sub-section presents the various components that make up the nominals derived from the dress verb. The nominals are all compounds and are either made up of the verb *hyɛ*, prefix, noun, verb, adjective, or a postposition. The nominals are interpreted and the metaphorical extensions of the verb are also looked at, depending on the contexts of occurrences as illustrated below;

(16) N + hyɛ + N + N = **Nominal**
mmara + *hyɛ* + (ɔ) *ba* + *dwa* = ***mmarahyɛbadwa***
 law makes person people **‘parliament’**

Laws are made to regulate the activities of mankind. In example (16) above, it could be interpreted that the dress verb is being used to denote ‘the making of law’. A group of persons that makes law is referred to as parliament as found in democratic countries. In the Akan tradition and for that matter the world at large, it is believed that the absence of law-making to regulate the activities of humanity has the potency to bring anarchy in society. Laws are made to put some form of fear into people for them to eschew wrongdoing. As noted in expressions (9) and (10) above, the dress verb is metaphorically extended to mean to put force/fear into people to do what is expected.

(17)	PREF	+	N	+	hyɛ	+	POST = Nominal
	<i>a</i>	+	<i>wɛɛ</i>	+	<i>hyɛ</i>	+	<i>mu</i> = <i>awɛɛhyɛmu</i>
	Nom		heart		at somewhere		inside = ‘ trust ’

In example (17) above, the verb is contextually used to express the act of putting something in a place. The nominal *awɛɛhyɛmu* literally means ‘to put your heart into something’, thus ‘to fill something’ but in its metaphoric sense, it is to have trust in something. In this context, the heart becomes the substance held in the body of a person or entity (container). People normally put their trust in reliable entities. Before people will trust in something, that thing should have distinguished itself over the past to be reliable or of high reputation. In the Akan setting, people typically put their trust in their fellow human beings, the Supreme Being, gods, etc.

(18)	V	+	<i>hyɛ</i>	= Nominal
	<i>bɔ</i>	+	<i>hyɛ</i>	= <i>bɔhyɛ</i>
	claim		make	= ‘ promise/pledge ’

To proclaim is to disclose or declare one’s intention about something. The verb *hyɛ* is metaphorically used to denote the act of making something. The nominal *bɔhyɛ* ‘promise’ as used in example (18) is a transaction between two persons whereby the first person undertakes in the future to render some service or gift to the second person. Promise plays an inducement role to entice the promisee to render a service to the promiser because the promiser puts hope into the promisee. When someone makes a promise, the promisee entrusts his heart into the hands of the promiser because of the inducement nature in promise making. Among the Akan people, a person who breaks his promise is abhorred and not taken seriously. When people are seeking leadership roles (like a chief, president, chairperson, etc.) they promise their subjects or citizens to give them their mandate and they will help address the problems confronting them.³⁷

(19)	N	+	POST	+	V	+	<i>hyɛ</i>	= Nominal
	<i>ani</i>	+	<i>mu (o)</i>	+	<i>nyam</i>	+	<i>hyɛ</i>	= <i>animuonyamhyɛ</i>
	eye		inside		wave		cover	= ‘ glorification ’

In the Akan discourse when someone is glorified he is literally seen as being covered with the glory; thus glory has been put into the person’s body. The glorified person’s face is literally seen to wave or bright. This makes the person famous and always recognized by others wherever he finds himself. So, the dress verb is metaphorically used to denote cover in the context of the datum in example (19) above. It is seen that when there is a covering, there is a contact between the covering item and the item being covered. Therefore, there is a contact in the expression in the example above. When someone is glorified, he is metaphorically seen to be uplifted from his status to a higher level and that makes the person unique among his peers. For one to be glorified he has to distinguish himself/herself in a task given to him/her. Items of motivation used to reward someone to show glorification are; money, trophies, medals, certificates, promotions, etc.

(20a)	N	+	POST	+	<i>hyɛ</i>	= Nominal
	<i>kɛtɛ</i>	+	<i>ase</i>	+	<i>hyɛ</i>	= <i>kɛtɛasehyɛ</i>
	mat		under		in a place	= ‘ bribery ’

As noted earlier, when an item is put under a mat the mat is seen to cover the item and there is an automatic contact between the two items, so the item becomes hidden from the public. Actions/activities described to be bribery are done in a covert manner; thus, at the blind side of the public. The dress verb is metaphorically used to denote the act of being hidden in a place. Therefore, the nominal *kɛtɛasehyɛ* ‘bribery’ is described in the Akan communication as the act of engaging in corrupt practices. It is obvious that activities that constitute bribery and corruption are done in secrecy. The negative effect of bribery and corruption is seen in the expression in example (20b) below:

³⁷ Kwame Gyekye, “African Cultural Values: An Introduction,” 1996.

(20b) *Keteasehye ne porɔɛ bɔ ɔman*
'Bribery and corruption destroy a nation'

Corrupt practices are abhorred because when people engage in them the resources that are meant for an institution or country's development are diverted into the pockets of corrupt individuals, thereby denying the institution or country proper development.

SUMMARY

In a nutshell, through the context of use and nominalization processes the meaning of the Akan verb of dress *hye* is extended. As exemplified in data 7-15, it can be observed that the basic meaning of the dress verb in examples 4-6 is projected to acquire different meanings based on the contexts of use. Thus, the verb *hye* is used in a metaphorical sense which widens its meaning. Finally, examples 16 to 20 demonstrated that new words can be generated from the dress verb *hye* through the process of nominalization. Like the former examples, the default meaning of *hye* is traceable from the new words formed through nominalization and their metaphorical senses, these extended meanings are living metaphors. In living metaphors, the original meaning of the word or expression could be traced from its new form. This study shows that the Akan dress verb is polysemous in nature.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to look at the various meanings of the Akan dress verb *hye*. The study shows that the verb has multiple meanings and each of the meanings could be realized depending on the verb's context of use. Morphological processes such as affixation and compounding were used to derive nominals from the verb. This study confirms Appah's position that compounding can be used to derive nominals from verbs. It also came to light that when new words are derived from the verb, its basic meaning is either maintained or changes metaphorically. It is worth stating that the metaphoric extensions of the verb are not solely dependent on the verb itself but in most cases on the combination of the verb and the other lexical items. It can aptly be stated that the dress verb, just like many Akan verbs has the creative ability to add more words to the Akan lexicon morphologically and semantically. In spite of the contributions of this study, the researchers implore that future studies pay attention to the underlying meanings of *hye* as used in the following Akan words; *hyeberɛ* 'destiny' and *nkɔmhye* 'prophecy'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors are indebted to their respondents for the various roles they played during the data collection process.

Abbreviations

PSN	personal name
HAB	habitual marker
DET	determiner
PAST	past tense marker
POSS	possessive marker
POST	postposition
PERF	perfect marker
3SG	3 rd person singular
SUFF	suffix
ART	article
N	noun
NOM	nominalizer
V	verb
FUT	future
CONJ	conjunction

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