



LITERARY ETYMOLOGIES OF THE EWE NAMES OF SOME FRUITS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study seeks to employ the theory of literary etymology to investigate the Ewe names of ten fruits.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A purposive sample of ten descriptive Ewe fruit names was adopted for the study because literary etymology favours descriptive names and ten is large enough for phenomenological studies such as this one. The names were analysed against the nine analytical criteria of literary etymology.

Findings: Findings reveal novel, informative and interesting nuances behind each name and show that conscious reflection rather than random arbitrariness informs the giving of these names.

Research Limitation/ Implication: The theoretical framework of literary etymology employed in investigating the names in this study can only be used to analyse descriptive names, like the ones chosen for this study.

Practical Implications: The importance of this study is that it allows one to acquire relevant information such as the history behind the names, evidence-based reflection, creativity, and comprehension of the deep meanings behind these common everyday fruit names that could be taken as ordinary names with nothing worth discovering. Finally, the study demonstrates that literary etymology can be used to examine common nouns such as fruit names.

Social Implications: Findings of this study have shown that even everyday words are loaded with meaning and understanding these deeper meanings will improve our social and communicative skills.

Originality/Value/Novelty: This study is but one of the very few that has employed the theory of literary etymology to investigate common names and proves its versatility as a framework to analyse all types of names.

Keywords: *Etymology. ewe names. fruits. literary. onomastics*

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Ewe presents itself as one of the most descriptive and meaning-loaded naming languages among the world's languages. Except for a few, most proper names as well as common names in Ewe are descriptive and meaningful. For example, some popular Ewe personal names are *Amenorvi*

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‘humanity’s sibling’, *Mawuli* ‘God exists’, *Delali* ‘there is a saviour’, *Sika* ‘gold’, *Dzidedi* ‘heart at rest’, *Dzifa* ‘calm heart’ and *Lemdi* ‘hold me firm’. The same trend of descriptiveness is found in the names of some colours in Ewe. For example, the colour yellow is *vidzĩmi* ‘baby’s faeces’ or *añuti diqi* ‘ripe orange’ while green is *gbemu* ‘fresh vegetation’. Some animal names are also descriptive. For example, elephant is *atiglinyi* ‘lit. cow that brings down trees’, rhinoceros is *dzotsinyi* ‘lit. cow that quenches fire’, hippopotamus is *tõmenyi* ‘lit. cow that lives in water’ and giraffe is *sõvedaã* ‘horse with long neck’.

A number of studies such as Abdul (2014), Aziaku (2016), Yevudey (2018) and Kuagbedzi (2019) have explored Ewe naming systems from various angles with interesting findings about the depth of description that some Ewe names, proper or common, possess. These studies have analysed some Ewe names from linguistic and sociocultural points of view. However, none of these studies have explored Ewe names from a literary point of view nor had they investigated Ewe names using the theoretical framework of literary etymology, but three – Amenorvi & Kubi (2021, 2022) and Amenorvi (2022) – which are reviewed ahead. This is the main gap the present study seeks to fill. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to study the Ewe names of some fruits using the theoretical framework of literary etymology, in anticipation that findings will reveal pertinent information unique to the names chosen for this study as it had been for the previous studies. This paper seeks to achieve the following objectives: to unearth literary etymologies of the Ewe names of ten fruits and to determine the significance of these literary etymologies.

Theoretical framework

Amenorvi and Kubi (2022, 2021) and Amenorvi (2022) have employed an old theory called literary etymology found in Levin’s (2001) book *The Ancient Quarrel Between Philosophy and Poetry Revisited: Plato and The Greek Literary Tradition* to investigate ordinary names of things and found that the theory is still relevant and can be used to analyse non-literary names even though it originally was employed to analyse names of characters in literary works. Literary etymology is a type of etymology distinct from mainstream etymology. While the latter embraces the history behind an expression or a saying, the former concerns the literariness or the descriptiveness by which a name projects its meaning. Referring to an example in Levin’s (2001) work, Amenorvi and Kubi (2022, 2021) and Amenorvi (2022) point to names such as Appollo and Hector which literary writers trace the former to appollumi, which means to destroy and the latter to echo, which means to protect, as being the core personalities of the bearers of these names in literary works. As a result, these names demonstrate the connection between aspects of language and reality.

While primarily a theory to explore proper names or nouns in literary works, literary etymology can also be employed as a tool to investigate common names or nouns as long as they are descriptive. Amenorvi and Kubi (2022, 2021) and Amenorvi (2022) observed that literary etymology has a wide range of criteria on which onomata or a name can be assigned to a person



or thing. They specifically identify nine criteria for this purpose. It follows that at least one of the criteria is applied before a name is coined for or given to a person or thing. For one name, for example, only one or two of the criteria may be possible; for another, three, four or five or all nine are possible. There is no universality as to which criteria to employ to name something. Each case is unique, depending on the particular name in question.

The fundamental criterion for literary etymology is that names can be traced back to anything significant in the birth and early life of their referents. Second, names correlate with features or aspects of their referents. Third, some assignments of names are tied to actions. Forth, a name might be linked to significant effects that their referents have on people or things. Fifth, etymologies of names are based on objects with which their bearers are associated. Sixth, a feature of where one originates can affect one's name. Seventh, an inanimate thing can receive its name based on an important person with whom it is connected, as it in the case of eponymous names. Eighth, social and familial contexts and functions can determine a name of a person or thing. Finally, a name can be traced to the special powers of the divine. These are the nine criteria within the framework of literary etymology. The focus of this paper is descriptive Ewe names of ten fruits. These names are common nouns, chosen to explore Levin's argument that literary etymology can be applied to common nouns such as the ones sampled for this study.

Ewe names, proper and common, have been studied from both linguistic and literary angles. However, to the best knowledge of the researchers, no study has employed the theory of literary etymology as a framework but three. This section discusses some of these studies, the goal of which is to acknowledge their contributions to this study. Before we proceed, let us have an overview of what etymology encompasses. Mainstream etymology concerns the study of the history behind lexical items and in some cases longer grammatical structures like sayings; it is a diachronic study of an original attestation of a word to its current attestation, considering such things as the word's first use, changes in meaning and pronunciation over time, if any, and the like. A number of studies have shown the importance of etymology. One such is Pendleton (2022) who investigated the semantics, etymology and orientations of the word 'midwife' with gender as its focus. Pendleton (2022:560) argues that "despite artefacts proving the existence of midwives over 8000 years ago, no word existed in any language to signify a male midwife as it was widely understood as an occupation exclusively performed by women for women...until the 16th century". Pendleton's (2022) argument shows that the idea broadening of the meaning of the word 'midwife' to include males has not always been the case. That trend began to take effect in the 16th century. Pendleton (2022) points out that the gendered debate about midwifery can be traced to the seemingly rigid makeup of the word 'midwife'. Of course, there is no such thing as 'midhusband' to depict a man who is in the midwifery profession. Pendleton's (2022) conclusion is that the term 'midwife' should be accepted and broadened to include anyone regardless of gender. His argument



rests on the “recent focus on gender-neutral and additive language to accommodate men” into this historical term thought to be exclusively referring to females (Pendleton. 2022:560).

It is interesting and thought-provoking how the etymology of a single word could reveal so much about how the meaning of a word could change and exhibit dynamics over the years. Besides, even the historical fact of midwives being exclusively a female profession is preserved in the very makeup of the word ‘midwife’. Pendleton (2022) has shown that the modern meaning of the word ‘midwife’ should not be limited to the common assumption that midwifery is a female’s job. In light of that, anyone who practices the profession of midwifery regardless of one’s gender or orientation is a ‘midwife’.

Another very recent study which focuses on etymology is Poulin et al., (2022) who analysed taxonomic and gender biases in the etymology of newly discovered species. Poulin et al., (2022) investigated the naming trends of about twenty-nine thousand (29,000) parasitic helminths that were described in the last twenty years. Their findings reveal three categories of names given to the new species. The first type of name was that the new names were derived from the host or origins of the species. Second, they found a consistent gender bias among species named after prominent scientists, with males dominating the names. Third, they discovered that species are likely to be named after close friends or family members. Poulin et al (2022) have shown by etymology that naming species in the last twenty years has gone beyond the scientific to embrace trends that fall outside science. Such naming processes that consider the host, morphology or origin of the species are likely descriptive names. However, the gender bias in other names as well as names motivated by friendship and family ties could end up misleading people as there would be nothing descriptive in the names linked to the species in question. All these notwithstanding, we have noted that scientific terms and names of things, in general, are not given arbitrarily but by conscious reflection. As we discussed earlier, the Ewe names of the ten fruits sampled for this study as descriptive and it is easy to connect a name to an aspect of the fruit under analysis.

Another type of name studied by way of etymology is place names Qianqian (2013) has done an analysis of the etymology of place names in Jiexiang. Qianqian (2013) concludes that place names are not chosen at random. They have particular sources. Every name has a unique origin, but only a few factors—natural geographic, historical, social, and ethnic—can be easily identified. Qianqian’s (2013) study is unequivocal that some names do not come by arbitrarily; they involve conscious reflection as there is an obvious link between a name of an item and reality. Qianqian (2013) has shown that sources such as geography, history, society and ethnic factors are behind some names given to things. A name could be a result of just one of these sources or a combination of them. Using this criterion, it is possible to etymologically decode a deeper understanding of a place name or just any name.



Qianqian's (2013) suggested sources by which to trace the meaning of place names somewhat overlap with the criteria outlined for folk etymological investigation. While Qianqian (2013) states about four criteria for etymologically investigating a name, Levin (2001) outlines nine criteria for literary etymology, as discussed in the theoretical framework section above. For example, Qianqian's (2013) criterion of geography as a way of the etymology of a name dovetail into Levin's (2001) fifth criterion of literary etymology which states that a person or thing's name can be based on an object with which the bearer is associated. It follows that significant geographical phenomena like mountains and rivers can influence a name of a given person or place. For example, some Dutch surnames have the prefix *van* 'from/of' which often refers to a place or area where one's ancestors had to choose their last names. Qianqian's (2013) historical criterion finds a connection with Levin's (2001) sixth criterion for literary etymology, which is that one's origin can influence one's name. Qianqian's (2013)'s social criterion also links with Levin's (2001) eighth criterion for literary etymology which is that social and familial contexts and functions can determine a name of a person or thing. Finally, Qianqian's (2013) ethnic factor criterion in determining the etymology of a name connects with Levin's (2001) first criterion for literary etymology that names can be traced to something or someone important in the community from which one or a thing originates. In all, it comes out clear that while literary etymology is not a very popular etymological procedure in studying names, its criteria have existed in other ways of investigating the history behind names such as Qianqian's (2013).

Now let us turn our attention to three studies that have tested Levin's literary etymology on non-literary names or nouns – Amenorvi and Kubi (2021, 2022) and Amenorvi (2022). Amenorvi and Kubi (2021) investigated deeper meanings embedded in the expressions for appreciation and plea in Ewe and Ga using the theoretical framework of literary etymology. Essentially, they sought to unearth the deeper meanings behind Ewe and Ga equivalents of 'I am sorry' and 'thank you'. Findings show that "the expression for appreciation is deep, giving the one being thanked an elevated position over the one expressing the thank" in both languages. The same goes for the expression of plea in both languages in that "the one pleading for mercy is in a contextual asymmetrical relationship with the one to whom he pleads where the former is considered inferior and the latter superior" (Amenorvi & Kubi, 2021:85). In all, this study reveals that literal meanings of names of persons or things could be taken for granted when considered *prima facie*. However, if these everyday names are scrutinised, they contain deeper meanings that may be left unearthed if not studied more critically.

In establishing the veracity of Levin's (2001) argument that literary etymology can be employed to investigate common nouns other than onomata in literary works, Amenorvi and Kubi (2022) have extended their experiment by studying the Ewe names of some punctuation marks, using literary etymology as a framework. They realised that the Ewe names of punctuation marks are largely descriptive and have pertinent information other than just being any ordinary names. For example,



the Ewe names for fullstop ‘tɔtɔ dzesi’, comma ‘gbɔvie dzesi’ and semicolon ‘tɔsɛɛ dzesi’ have behind them a figurative journey one undertakes. One comes to a complete halt by reaching his or her destination in a fullstop. On the journey when one gets tired, one could take a breather in a comma; and a long rest in a semicolon depending on one’s level of tiredness. Such metaphoricity will enhance the pedagogy of punctuation marks in the Ewe classroom where students can connect an abstract phenomenon to a real-life experience, providing a deeper and more concrete comprehension of the topic of punctuation in the Ewe classroom. Amenorvi and Kubi (2022) is another confirmation that literary etymology applies to common nouns as a theoretical framework the way it does to names in literary works.

Extending further the boundaries of the framework of literary etymology, Amenorvi (2022) has explored the Ewe names of ten animals, namely *atiglinyi* ‘elephant’, *tɔmenyi* ‘hippopotamus’, *dzotsinyi* ‘rhinoceros’, *sɔvedã* ‘giraff’, *fedekadzodɛke* ‘stag’, *amekese* ‘gorilla’, *gbeha* ‘bushpig’, *avugbe* ‘fox’, *kposɔ* ‘camel’ and *tɔkoklo* ‘swan’. As in the case of Amenorvi and Kubi (2021, 2022), these animal names are all descriptive. Findings reveal novel and informative nuances behind each animal name and show undoubtedly that conscious reflection rather than random arbitrariness goes into the naming of these animals. Some of the names even reveal Ewe’s traditional classification of these animals according to their ‘scientific’ families. For example, the name *atiglinyi* ‘elephant’ means a cow that brings down trees, revealing that among the Ewe, traditionally the elephant and the cattle belong to the same family of animals. In the name *tɔkoklo* ‘swan’ is the literal meaning of ‘water chicken’ – the swan is therefore classified as belonging to the same family of chicken. *Amekese* ‘gorilla’ literally means ‘human monkey’ – the gorilla is therefore classified as belonging to both the family of humans and monkeys. Further, these nuances reveal the dynamism of the theoretical framework of literary etymology as a tool to explore any types of names, namely proper, common, abstract and literary onomata. The present study, following the precedent set by Amenorvi and Kubi (2021, 2022), and Amenorvi (2022) seeks to employ Levin’s (2001) literary etymology to unearth pertinent gems about the Ewe names of some common fruits.

METHODOLOGY

This study is wholly qualitative as findings are descriptive rather than reduced to numerical bases. The study employs the theoretical framework of literary etymology which favours descriptive names. Consequently, all Ewe fruit names that are descriptive form part of the population for the study. Adopting a sample of ten which is large enough a number for phenomenological studies (Ellis, 2016), the study has analysed these names against the nine criteria for analysing names in the framework of literary etymology. The limitation of this study is that it has not investigated all names of the Ewe language. It has focused on only ten descriptive names of fruits. However, findings can be generalised to include other descriptive names of the language as being products



of observation and conscious reflection as shown by earlier studies such as Amenorvi and Kubi (2021), Amenorvi and Kubi (2022) and Amenorvi (2022).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings have revealed that each Ewe name of the ten fruits under investigation has interesting and pertinent information that could not otherwise be fully decoded without detailed investigation. The names have shown that they are a product of conscious and deep reflection rather than random arbitrariness. This section presents the discussion of findings according to the research objectives. The first seeks to unearth the literary etymologies behind the Ewe names of the sampled fruits while the second explores the significance of these etymologies. Discussed below, one at a time, are the specific findings about the Ewe names of the ten sampled fruits.

***Atɔtɔ* ‘pineapple’**

The fruit name *atɔtɔ* literally means ‘you will be confused’ in Ewe. What has informed this descriptive name that is actually a one-word sentence in Ewe? Out of the nine criteria for literary etymology, a couple can be applied to the name *atɔtɔ* to see the “link between elements of language and reality” (Levin, 2001:13). One literary etymology criterion is that names correlate with aspects of their referent. A question from this criterion is how does the name *atɔtɔ* correlate with aspects of its referent *pineapple*? A physical examination of a pineapple shows that its eyes are arranged spirally in a Fibonacci sequence in such a way that it is difficult for one to be able to count them as one will be confused about one’s starting point. There it comes to the fore explicitly that the part of the name *atɔtɔ* that correlates to a part of its referent is the fact that one could get confused trying to count the eyes of the pineapple. It, therefore, brings to life that the name *atɔtɔ* to the fruit pineapple is not an arbitrary one but one coined via conscious reflection. Even using this literary etymological criterion for the English name *pineapple* points to the pines, revealing that pineapple is a type of apple with pines, drawing a link between ‘pineapple’, ‘pine’ and ‘apple’.

The same criterion of a name having a correlation with part of its referent can find another explanation in *atɔtɔ*, in that one could easily get confused as to whether this fruit is edible if one gets pricked by any of its eyes which are thorny in nature. A second criterion that throws light on the name *atɔtɔ* is that instances are tied to actions. As clearly spelt above, the instant tied with the *action* of getting confused is that one cannot accurately count the eyes of *atɔtɔ* as one could be pricked or confused as regards the thorny as well as the spiral arrangement of the eyes of the pineapple. These two criteria of literary etymology have shown that the Ewe name *atɔtɔ* for pineapple is more than what meets the eye, as one would be *confused* to count its eyes or be pricked, revealing the descriptive and literary nature of the name.



***Adiba* ‘pawpaw’**

The Ewe name *adiba* for pawpaw literally means *you must be ripe*. There is a common etiological story for the name *adiba* among the Ewe. It goes thus: two hungry men wandering in a forest saw a pawpaw tree, they did not know what fruit it was and whether it was good for food, but they rushed towards it, brought down the only ripe pawpaw and ate it hurriedly, exclaiming *adiba!* ‘you must be ripe!’, hence the name *adiba* in Ewe. This etiological story itself sets the tone for *adiba*’s literary etymology. The literary etymological criterion that connects with *adiba* is that a name is given according to the character traits of its referent. The main character trait in *adiba* ‘pawpaw’ is it’s being eaten when ripe. Perhaps except for medicinal purposes, pawpaw is only eaten when it is ripe. This maybe one trait behind the etiological story above.

***Akɔɔdu* ‘banana’**

The third fruit under the radar of literary etymology is *akɔɔdu* ‘banana’. *Akɔɔdu* is another descriptive name which means something like ‘you will pick and eat’. What is behind this descriptive name? Four criteria of literary etymology could be applied to this name. The first is that the name of an item could be traced to something that existed before the item. While this criterion is a little remote, it obviously has some relevance – the act of picking something and eating it without cooking it exists before the name *akɔɔdu* is given to banana, and it is likely that knowledge has influenced this descriptive name.

A second literary etymological criterion that applies to this name is that a name could correspond to the character traits and capacities of its referent. The character traits in the name *akɔɔdu* are obviously the same act of picking and eating raw without cooking. A third criterion finds the same link as the second. A third criterion says that some names are tied to actions. Of course, the action of eating goes with all fruits. How come it is only *akɔɔdu* that bears a descriptive name that involves the action of eating as though it were the only fruit that is eaten? The answer lies in the fact that the name *akɔɔdu* might have been given with the characteristics of plantain in mind. It is common knowledge that plantain is not normally eaten raw like a banana. The Ewe name for plantain is *abladzɔ*, which is not descriptive and seems an arbitrary term. Since *abladzɔ* is not eaten raw, but its counterpart banana is, the name *akɔɔdu* ‘lit. you will pick and eat’ is created to take care of the difference between banana and plantain. A fourth criterion that connects to the name *akɔɔdu* is that a name might be linked to an effect its referent has on people. The effect *akɔɔdu* has on people is it’s being eaten raw, unlike plantain which must be cooked.

***Atɔɔɔɔuti* ‘sweet orange’**

The Ewe name for sweet orange is *atɔɔɔɔuti*, another interesting descriptive name which literally means ‘pineapple orange’. *Atɔɔɔɔuti* is a compound noun that combines the name *atɔɔɔɔ* ‘pineapple’ and *ɔɔuti* ‘orange’. Four literary etymological criteria can apply to this name. The first is that a name can be traced to something which existed earlier than the referent. The two names forming



atɔtɔŋuti are already names of fruits that already exist. The reason for this combination of *atɔtɔ* ‘pineapple’ and *aŋuti* ‘orange’ for sweet orange is that the Ewe regard *atɔtɔ* as a very sweet fruit and orange to be slightly sour. For an orange to be through and through sweet, it must be *atɔtɔŋuti* ‘pineapple orange’ not just *aŋuti* ‘orange’ alone.

The second literary etymological criterion that fits the name *atɔtɔŋuti* is that a name could correspond to the character traits or capacities of the referent. The character trait in reference here is obviously the sweetness of *atɔtɔ* ‘pineapple’ as captured in the name *atɔtɔŋuti*. It could be that the variety of oranges common in Eweland were the very sour ones to warrant the name *atɔtɔŋuti* for sweet orange. Literary etymology has, therefore, revealed a possibility in history without which we might never have even guessed what might warrant the name *atɔtɔŋuti* for sweet orange among the Ewe.

A third literary etymological criterion that connects well with the name *atɔtɔŋuti* is that a name might be linked to a significant effect the referent has on people. The significant effect of *atɔtɔŋuti* on people is its sweetness as though it were a pineapple while it actually is an orange. A fourth criterion that dovetails into the third that connects with *atɔtɔŋuti* is that writers connect names based on objects that are associated with those names. Obviously, *atɔtɔŋuti* connects with *atɔtɔ* ‘pineapple’ and *aŋuti* ‘orange’, in taste hence the name *atɔtɔŋuti*.

***Yevutɔ* ‘apple’**

Another fruit with a descriptive name in Ewe is the apple, called *yevutɔ* ‘lit. white person’s wild apple’. Like ‘*atɔtɔŋuti*’, ‘*yevutɔ*’ is also a compound consisting of *yevu* ‘white person’ and *atɔ* ‘wild apple’. A number of literary etymological criteria can apply to the name *yevutɔ*. The first is that a name can be traced to something which existed earlier. Consequently, the names *yevu* ‘white person’ and *atɔ* ‘wild apple’ already exist in the Ewe language with distinct referents. Brought together, their distinct meanings get fused in the new name *yevutɔ* ‘apple’. What has warranted the name *yevutɔ*? There are several names in Ewe that have *yevu-* ‘white person’ as part of them. Examples are *yevune* ‘coconut’, *yevugboma* ‘waterlily’, *yevutsã* ‘cashew’, *yevute* ‘Chinese yam’ and *yevuzi* ‘bread fruit’. Analysis of these names reveals that the *yevu-* part is not necessarily a reference to a white person but any item that seems foreign to the Ewe as regards a type or kind of something. To illustrate, the type of tall coconut trees that bear green coconut is called *ene* among the Ewe. This species of coconut happens to be the commonest type of coconut in Eweland. The short variety of coconut trees that bears yellow fruit is called *yevune* ‘lit. white person’s coconut’. The *yevu-* in these names, therefore, stands for what is foreign or exotic to the Ewe.

A second literary etymological criterion that applies to *yevutɔ* is that a name could correspond to the character traits of its referent. As we have seen, the character trait of *yevutɔ* is the foreignness in it as represented by the *yevu-* part of its name. Another criterion is that a feature of the place one



hails from can influence one's name. In addition, a criterion also implies that an inanimate thing could receive its name from an important person to whom it is connected. For the former, the name *yevuto* is connected to the foreignness of an item to the Ewe. Such foreignness is connected to the white person. The many names in Ewe that connect to *yevu* 'white person' by itself is also a source of historical fact that the Ewe nation has had contact with Europeans. This contact has its evidence in some Ewe vocabulary and names of items such as *yevuto* 'apple'. *Yevuto* literally means 'white person's wild apple'; wild apple is a common fruit in Eweland. It is, therefore, easy to connect the known wild apple which is known in Ewe as *ato* to the exotic one *yevuto* 'white person's apple' – the common apple.

***Evo* 'soursop'**

Another descriptive name for fruit in Ewe is *evo* 'lit. scrotum'. Let us analyse this name via some criteria of literary etymology. One that applies to *evo* is that a name could be traced to something important which existed earlier. What is that in the case of *evo* 'soursop'? In Ewe, the scrotum is known as *evo* or *voku*. The connection is clear that a physical observation of the fruit known in English as soursop shows that it has some resemblance to the human scrotum, hence this transfer of the name to the fruit soursop. A second literary etymological criterion is that a name can be derived from a reference's character traits – the character traits for *evo* being obviously its striking resemblance to the human scrotum. Literary etymology is, therefore, responsible for extending the semantic field of the word 'evo' to mean both 'scrotum' and 'soursop' in Ewe. This seems the case for even English words in the manner of the word 'bank', being a place where money is deposited to a riverbank or sandbank etc.

***Dzamatre* 'watermelon'**

This name is also a compound consisting of *dzama* 'Germany' and *tre* 'calabash'. Four criteria of literary etymology can be applied to the name *dzamatre* 'watermelon'. The first is that a name can be traced to an item that already exists. Another already-existing name in *dzamatre* is *dzama* 'Germany', an Ewe term for Germany, likely from the English word *German*. Another already-existing name is *tre* 'calabash'. The calabash is a popular cup in the Ewe traditional home. It is made from the gourd plant. Why is watermelon called *dzamatre* 'lit. German calabash'? It is possible that the Germans introduced this fruit to the Ewes. The contact of Germany with the Ewe is well documented. It is a matter of history that Germans have been in contact with the Ewe for a long time and have contributed to the scholarship of the Ewe language; notable among German contact with the Ewe were Diedrich Hermann Westermann and P. Wiegrabe whose works have shaped the scholarship of the Ewe language. Traces of German vocabulary can be found even today in Ewe. For example, the Ewe term for window 'fesre' originates from the German word *fenster*.



Another criterion that explains *dzamatre* is that a name can be tied to a significant effect the referent has on people. We have already seen the significance of the history of the contact between Germans and Ewe people. For example, parts of the Volta Region of Ghana which is an Ewe dominant region was once part of Togo under German domination. The name *dzamatre* could have been born during this period.

A final criterion that dovetails into the name *dzamatre* is that a place one hails from influences the name of the referent. Maybe the Germans introduced watermelon to Eweland, or just as we saw in the names of Ewe items that have *yevu-* in it to mean the item is foreign to Eweland or that they come from Europe, the term *dzama* in *dzamatre* could be a placeholder to depict foreignness. Were that the case; why not *yevutre* but *dzamatre*? The latter is the case likely because it is specifically the Germans that have introduced the watermelon to the Ewe.

***Dɔ̃ɔ̃uti* ‘lime’**

Dɔ̃ɔ̃uti is the name for lime in Ewe. It is also a descriptive fusion comprising *dɔ̃* ‘sickness’ and *ɔ̃ɔ̃uti* ‘orange’, forming *dɔ̃ɔ̃uti*. *Dɔ̃ɔ̃uti* literally means *sickness orange*. Via some literary etymological criteria, we would unveil the story behind this name. The first criterion that applies to *dɔ̃ɔ̃uti* is that names could be traced to something that already exists. In the case of *dɔ̃ɔ̃uti*, *dɔ̃* ‘sickness’ and *ɔ̃ɔ̃uti* ‘orange’ already exist. The name *dɔ̃ɔ̃uti* obviously pays allegiance to these already-existing names. A second criterion is that a name corresponds to character traits. The character trait in the name *dɔ̃ɔ̃uti* ‘lime’ is its close resemblance to *ɔ̃ɔ̃uti* ‘orange’. Another criterion points to a significant effect a referent has on people. That swiftly connects to why lime is called *dɔ̃ɔ̃uti* in Ewe. Among the Ewe, *dɔ̃ɔ̃uti* ‘lime’ is used significantly in traditional medicine, which explains its literal meaning of ‘orange for sickness’. It follows that *dɔ̃ɔ̃uti* is a special type of *ɔ̃ɔ̃uti* ‘orange’ used to cure *dɔ̃* ‘sickness’ among the Ewe.

***Akukɔ̃* ‘hog plum’**

The Ewe name for hog plum is *akukɔ̃* ‘lit. you will gnaw at it’. Two literary etymological criteria can apply to *akukɔ̃*. One is that a name could correspond to a character of the referent. The main character trait of the hog plum is that it is a seed fruit and the seed makes up almost 90 percent of its body. Its thin skin is the edible part of the fruit. On that character trait comes the second etymological criterion that a name might be linked to a significant effect that the referent has on people. Because of the thin skin which is the only edible part of the hog plum, people usually *kukɔ̃* ‘gnaw’ at it, hence the name *akukɔ̃* ‘lit. you will gnaw it’.

***Aguwa* ‘guava’**

The final item is *aguwa* ‘guava’. The Ewe name *aguwa* for *guava* is not a descriptive term as in the case of the other fruits discussed in this study. *Aguwa* seems to be a phonological corruption of the English name *guava* for the fruit in Ewe. Why is this the case? One key literary etymology



criterion applies to this name *aguwa*. That is that a name can be influenced by the origin of its referent. The fact that *guava* does not have an Ewe descriptive name but a phonological manipulation of the English *guava* reveals that the *guava* might have been introduced to the Ewe by the English. The contact between the Ewe and the English is common knowledge as is supported by the historical fact of Britain colonizing Ghana, one of the West African countries in which Ewe is spoken. On this backdrop, it is reasonable to conclude that *aguwa* is simply a phonological adaptation of the English *guava* into Ewe.

Significance

The second research question seeks to unveil the significance of the literary etymologies of Ewe names of the sampled fruits for this study. This section addresses this question. The first significance of this study is the unearthing of pertinent information about a name that could have been left undiscovered. Had we just presented the Ewe and the English equivalents of these ten fruit names discussed, we could not have gone beyond a paragraph. That is not the case because the information revealed through the lenses of literary etymology is deep. One category of pertinent information revealed is the likely history behind the names. These histories go to confirm circular history that indeed there has been contact between the Ewe and Europeans, hence the names of certain fruits deemed foreign or exotic by the Ewe. Another significance is evidence-based speculations and reflections. For example, we discussed the evidence that once *yevu* is attached to a fruit name, it must likely be from a source foreign to the Ewe. Literary etymologies of this kind enhance critical thinking, analysis, creativity and imagination. As we have discussed, it takes a high level of critical reflection to be able to put two and two together in fathoming the literary etymology of a name. Besides, these etymologies promote deep comprehension of the roots of words as regards their form and meaning.

A second significance of this study is that it is another empirical evidence in support of Levin's (2001) argument that literary etymology can be applied to common nouns or names much as it is in the case of proper nouns or names in literary works. Literary etymology is originally a literary theory used to analyse onomata or names in literary works. In this study, it is employed to analyse linguistic phenomena – names of fruits, showing the versatility of literary etymology as a theory. It also shows that some literary theories can be used to analyse linguistic phenomena. Moreover, the literary etymology of the names of fruits can be used for pedagogical purposes. Findings of literary etymologies are interest arousing stories that can promote effective teaching and learning of names of fruits or any items in Ewe or other African languages that have the descriptive vocabulary. Moreover, literary etymology can be applied to a variety of names in Ewe and other African languages, such as animal names, place names, tree names etc. In addition, literary etymology can combine with mainstream etymology to bring out all there is about a name, be it proper or common.



Finally, literary etymology as a theoretical framework perfectly fits in the intersection between linguistics and literature regarding its dynamism as a tool for investigating both linguistic and literary phenomena. As is established at the outset of this study, the theory is originally employed to explore literary names as found in literary works, the present study and the three previous ones have proved the versatility of literary etymology as a tool to investigate both linguistic and language phenomena.

CONCLUSION

This study has investigated literary etymologies of the Ewe names of ten fruits, namely, *atɔtɔ* ‘pineapple’, *adiba* ‘pawpaw’, *akɔdu* ‘banana’, *atɔtɔɲuti* ‘sweet orange’, *yevutɔ* ‘apple’, *evo* ‘soursop’, *dzamatre* ‘watermelon’, *dɔɲuti* ‘lime’, *akukɔ* ‘hog plum’ and *aguwa* ‘guava’. Interesting and pertinent information is discovered in each case as the literary etymologies behind the names of the fruits. Information such as history, evidence-based reflection, creativity, and deep comprehension were found to be significant in the study. Besides, the study further confirms that literary etymology can be applied to common nouns much as it is to proper nouns in literary works. The study has shown that literary etymology is an effective tool for pedagogical purposes as it brings out pertinent and detailed information regarding everyday words that may be taken for granted. The study has also revealed the versatility of literary etymology as a theory that can be employed to study both linguistic and literary phenomena. The implication of this study is that there is still more to learn and discover about languages in general and African languages in particular, especially African languages yet to be reduced to writing and taught in schools. Even though Ewe is one of the most extensively studied African languages, there are still a lot to be explored in it as is evidenced by this study. It is so much more the case with minority languages that have received little or no scholarly attention. It is recommended that literary etymology be employed to study proper and common names in other languages to ascertain whether findings in this study are unique to Ewe or also apply to other languages.

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