

# Literal and Metaphorical Usages of 'Eat' and 'Drink' in Akan

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## ABSTRACT

This paper discusses two consumption verbs in Akan (Niger-Congo, Kwa), **dí** 'to eat' and **nóm** 'to drink'. The study argues that in addition to their basic meanings, the verbs serve as rich sources of metaphorical extensions. Starting from this premise, the paper provides evidence in the form of expressions wherein the consumption verbs are employed metaphorically for expressing everyday concepts and cognitive processes. First, it presents an analysis of the verbs by briefly discussing the components that comprise the central meanings of the verbs. Second, following Newman (2009), the verbs and their metaphorical extensions are discussed under two broad themes: Agent-Oriented Extensions and Patient-Oriented Extensions. Under Agent-Oriented Extensions, we discuss figurative usages that are based on the internalization of food and drinks as well as extensions based on the sensation of the agent undergoing the event. Extensions derived from the destruction of food during the process of consumption is discussed under the Patient-Oriented.

We agree to a large extent with Newman and Aberra (2007:253–254) that not all the figurative usages of these verbs are 'relatable to the literal sense' of the EAT and DRINK verbs in Akan. For this reason we restrict our discussion to those extensions that are semantically related to the central meanings of these verbs.

**Keywords:** *consumption verbs, agent-oriented extension, patient-oriented extensions metaphorical extensions.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

The acts of eating and drinking serve as basic necessities for the daily growth, sustenance and development of human and animal life. Within human communities, there are verbs used to capture the activities of eating and drinking. These are classified under a group of verbs known as consumption verbs (henceforth referred to as CVs). CVs are defined as verbs that are used to generally describe the process of taking food and drinks into the body through the mouth. These activities, though universal, are not performed the same way across all human communities. (Næss 2011). The universality lies only in the biological aspects of eating and drinking, i.e. the concept of taking food or drink from outside the body and into the body using the mouth as a passage.

Ye (2010:375) suggests that, “recent cross-linguistic investigation has pointed to both the regularities and variations in the way humans conceptualize the activities of eating and drinking.” Languages vary in how CVs are distinguished. Languages like English make the distinction based on how the consumption takes place: while others, such as Navajo, do so based on the characteristics of the object being consumed (Rice 2009). In a language like Akan, however, the distinguishing factor is both in relation to the object that is consumed and the manner in which it is consumed.

Cross-linguistically, the acts of consuming foods and drinks provide a rich source for a variety of metaphorical extensions across languages due to the experiential reality associated with them (Williams 1991; Newman 2009; Jaggar and Buba 2009; Song 2009; Næss 2009, Ye 2010; Næss 2011). The present study focuses on how these bodily experiences serve as possible source domains for other kinds of abstract conceptualization or metaphors. Again, the study agrees with Lakoff (1987), Song (2009), and Newman (2009) that these bodily activities are not just any unstructured mushes; rather they have internal structures, which are relatively easily recognized to participate actively in metaphorical extensions; and which Newman (1997, 2009) identifies as internalization of food/drinks and destruction of food.

The goal of the paper is to explore the semantics and pragmatics of Akan CVs and to show the connection between their literal and figurative uses. We will also

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on a thesis written by the first author and supervised by the second and third authors.

The abbreviations used in this paper are: 1 – First person, 2 – Second person, 3 – Third person, [´] – High Tone, [˘] – Low Tone, Ak. – Akuapem, As- Asante, Fa. – Fante, DEF – Definite, DEM – Demonstrative, FUT – Future, COMP – Completive, PL – Plural PERF Perfect, PROG – Progressive, LOC – Locative, SG – Singular, POSS – Possessive, PP- Post Position, IE- Invented Example, REDUP – Reduplication.

examine the connection between the metaphors these verbs generate and the interpretations associated with their central meanings.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides information on the data sources and methods used. Section 3 discusses the Akan CVs in general as well as the specific characteristics of the verbs **dí** ‘to eat’ and **nóm** ‘to drink’. Section 4 discusses the various metaphorical extensions of **dí** ‘to eat’ and **nóm** ‘to drink’ as well as their specific contexts of usages. Finally, section 5 concludes the paper.

## 2. THE DATA<sup>2</sup>

The data for this research is derived from four sources: an Akan dictionary, two Akan novels, interviews and consultation sessions with four language consultants. There are also invented examples based on the authors’ native speaker competencies.

We consulted Christaller’s (1933) Akan dictionary. Our main goal was to identify the CVs present in Akan as well as their usages in various contexts. From this source, we elicited both individual CVs and tokens of sentences, which contained these verbs within specific contexts. We also collected various forms of figurative extensions that were listed under each of the verbs. The sentences taken from this source were first of all written down into a notebook and later typed out into a mini corpus. The sentences that contained the CVs in their basic usage were separated from those that represented figurative usage in order to make it easier to select specific examples during the analysis. This dictionary, despite its age serves as a good and reliable source of data and indeed as native speakers, we observed that this dictionary is so far the most comprehensive on the Akan language. Again, the CVs and their various occurrences gleaned from this source do not differ from the contemporary usage of Akan as the language consultants we worked with verified the sentences extracted from this source.

Various sentences in which CVs occurred in were also gathered from two novels: *Wosum borɔdeɛ a sum kwadu bi*, written by J. Gyekye-Aboagye and Owuo Agyaa by Agnes Effah Donkoh. Both novels were written in the Asante Twi dialect of Akan. Examples from these novels were also initially handwritten and later typed out. The examples were typed under the title and author of the book from which they were elicited. These novels were very useful in the sense that they provided contexts in which the sentences were used, thus helping in the analysis of the verbs. These two books were chosen because they were very simple to read and comprehend. The books also had interesting storylines, which made the reading less stressful.

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<sup>2</sup> Sentences from the novels have been fully referenced in the text. Invented examples are abbreviated as IE and all other sentences without references represent those gathered from the interviews.

There were also some data collected through unstructured interviews and consultation sessions with four native speakers who have lived in the Ashanti and Eastern Regions of Ghana almost all their lives<sup>3</sup>. These consultants were asked to explain some of the usages of the CVs that had been collected from the written sources. They were also interviewed on the acceptability of some of the sentences. Data was also gathered from stories shared by these consultants. These interview sessions were audio-recorded and later downloaded onto a computer. The recordings were placed into individually labeled folders on the computer, for easy identification whenever they were required. The recordings were later transcribed and the examples used were assigned their various inter-linear glosses and translated.

There were also notes taken during the interview sessions. The notes included the metadata of the language consultants, name and information on the location, date etc.

In addition to the above-mentioned sources, we have also relied on our competencies as native speakers to come up with some of the invented examples, which were verified by our language consultants.

The major Akan dialect used in this study is Asante Twi; however, there are some examples from Akuapem (this is indicated as Ak. in brackets next to the specific examples). All translations from Akan into English were done by the authors who are native speakers of Akan and speak English as second language. The examples provided have been numbered in cardinal format. Examples taken from the novels have been fully referenced in the text. Invented examples based on native speaker's competence are abbreviated as IE and all other sentences without references represent those gathered from the interviews. Also, we adopt the Leipzig glossing format for the inter-linear glosses in our examples.

### 3. AKAN CVS

As defined in Section 1, CVs are verbs which generally describe the process of taking food and drinks into the body through the mouth. Akan, like all other languages, has verbs classified under this group. Examples include **dí** 'to eat', **nóm** 'to drink', **núm/twé** <sup>4</sup>'to suck body part', **wé/wèsà** 'to chew', **ká** 'to bite', **bòbóm** 'to crack', **tàfèrè** 'to lick', **méné** 'to swallow', **hwé** 'to scoop and drink', **féfé** 'to lick' (Adusei 2012). All these verbs code different forms of eating and drinking.

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<sup>3</sup> These speakers spoke Akan as their first language. Though they knew and spoke other languages to some extent, Akan was the dominant language of their daily activities.

<sup>4</sup> Although **núm** <sup>4</sup>'to suck body part' and **twé** 'to suck' all refer to the act of sucking, the former is used specifically when the sucking refers to some part of the body such as the mouth, finger, breast etc. whereas the latter is used for both body parts and objects.

### 3.1 BASIC MEANINGS OF DÍ ‘TO EAT’ AND NÓM ‘TO DRINK’

The consumption verbs **dí** ‘to eat’ and **nóm** ‘to drink’ are used to describe the process whereby living things take in food and drinks through the mouth. Newman (1997:213) describes the eating and drinking activities in English as ones that involve the movement of some food item into the mouth, where one experiences the taste and texture of the food item that has been consumed. He acknowledges the fact that in English, eating and drinking involve quite different processes within the mouth. He describes the case of eating as involving a situation where the food item is usually crushed and chewed with the teeth, tongue and the hard palate. The teeth play the major role of crushing the food into smaller bits so as to facilitate swallowing. According to Newman and Abera (2009:255) “one or more of these facets can be relevant when it comes to motivating linguistic behaviors of the ‘eat’ verbs”, implying that ‘eat’ verbs do not necessarily have to satisfy all the conditions mentioned above. For example, the consumption of some Ghanaian staple foods such as **fùfúó**, **bànkú** and **kònkònté**<sup>5</sup> do not involve any chewing and as such do not exhibit all the characteristics of ‘eat’ verbs identified by Newman and Abera (2009) even though these nouns collocate with the verb **dí** ‘to eat’.

- 1) **Wó-ré-hyé bí dwó ná wò-rè-nòá bí dí.**  
3PL-PROG-burn some roast CONJ 3PL-PROG-cook some eat  
‘... while they roasted some, they boiled others to eat’ (Gyekye Aboagye 1967:21)

In example (1), the author makes reference to yams that have been roasted or boiled and are being consumed by a group of people. In this example, the process of eating must of necessity involve chewing followed by swallowing. The chewing is required because when yams are boiled or roasted, they are in a solid state.

The process of drinking involves the movement of liquid through the mouth and down the throat facilitated by the tongue and the palate.

- 2) **Mansah á-nòm ñkwán nó**  
Mansah PERF-drink soup DEF  
‘Mansah has drunk the soup’ (Adusei 2012:82)

The activity of drinking can further be semantically extended to depict the act of sucking either by a human being or an insect, as exemplified in (3) below.

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<sup>5</sup> These are popular Ghanaian staples made from cassava and corn or sometimes both as in the case of *banku*. They are best served with sauces and soups. It is a general norm to swallow these foods rather than chew them, thus one is able to easily tell if someone is eating these staples for the first time just by the manner in which the individual consumes them.

- 3) **Ntóntóm** **nó** **á-nòm** **àbòfrá** **nó** **mógyá**  
 mosquito DEF PERF-drink child DEF blood  
 ‘The mosquito has sucked the child’s blood’ (Adusei 2012:82)

According to Newman and Aberra (2009:256) this meaning can be understood to be an extension from the meaning of a person consuming something. They posit that stinging and biting by insects are as concrete as humans biting food and thus this meaning is not figurative. It just involves some form of polysemy of the human agent eating and the insect biting or stinging.

These two consumption verbs evoke some form of “positive sensory experiences on the part of the consumer”, as noted by Newman and Aberra (2009:255)

The full range of uses of these two Akan CVs is extensive and cannot possibly be discussed within the scope of this paper. For example, Christaller (1933) outlines 26 major semantic categories and 110 sub-categories of the verb **dí** ‘to eat’. In Table 1 we present some of the various uses as discussed in Christaller (1933:77–82). Table 1 below shows the range of uses for the verbs **dí** ‘to eat’ and **nóm** ‘to drink. This list does not represent the full range of the uses as discussed in Christaller 1933:77–82. For the purpose of this discussion, we restrict the range to a selected few from the 26 major semantic categories.

**Table 1:** *Range of uses of dí ‘to eat’ and nóm ‘to drink’ (Christaller 1933:77–82).*

<b>dí</b> ‘to eat’	<b>nóm</b> ‘to drink’
A. To take and use, to receive, obtain, suffer (to eat food, to take food and taste, to feed, lie upon, to spend, use up, to use in traffic, to use naturally, to have sexual intercourse, to receive, to inherit.	A. To drink (any fluid)
B. To be meet or fit to receive, to be worth, becoming right.	B. To smoke (tobacco)
C. To have, possess, contain	C. To inhale air
D. To have or occupy a place, rank	D. To confederate
E. To exist in a certain number	
F. To spend or live or last	
G. To be in some state, condition or situation	
H. To be in simple or reciprocal motion	
I. To be active inwardly	
J. To be active in some office or capacity	
K. To be active in some occupation	
L. To transact or negotiate some affair	

One may wonder why we claim the basic meaning of **dí** as ‘to eat’ when Christaller (one of our main data source) assigns the meaning ‘to take and use, to receive, to obtain’. We maintain that there exists no controversy amongst Akan natives as to whether the basic meaning is what Christaller assigns or ‘to eat’. This is because the meaning ‘to eat’ is what is primed when a native speaker uses or

hears the verb. For this reason, the numerous extensions associated with this verb are semantically related to the ‘eat’ meaning to some extent. This fact was long observed by Welmers (1973:477) who opines that ‘just about any speaker of Akan will tell you **dí** means ‘to eat’.

#### 4. METAPHORICAL EXTENSIONS OF **DÍ** ‘TO EAT’ AND **NÓM** ‘TO DRINK’

Eating and drinking verbs are rich sources for semantic extensions and figurative expressions cross-linguistically (Jaggar and Buba 2009; Newman 2009; Ye 2010; Song 2009; Williams 1991, Hook and Pardeshi 2009, Adjei and Atintono 2009).

We proceed by recognizing three broad classes of extensions, as described by Newman (1997, 2009): internalization: affected agent and destruction: affected patient. The following sub-sections adopt Newman’s (1997, 2009) classification of the various extensions based on eating to help us classify some of the metaphorical extensions of **dí** ‘to eat’ and **nóm** ‘to drink’.

##### 4.1 EXTENSIONS BASED ON INTERNALIZATION: AGENT-ORIENTED

The metaphorical extensions in this group involve situations where an agent internalizes the theme; for example, the agent takes in the food item into the body. Again, this type of extension can also be described as affected agent in the sense that whatever is internalized by the agent achieves a certain effect (good/bad or pleasant/unpleasant) on the agent. These metaphors focus on the role played by the agent during the process.

The internalization process involves the intake of food and drinks from outside the body, directly into the mouth. This stage involves the transition of something that is visible (outside the body) to something that is usually invisible (inside the mouth). The next stage involves the swallowing aspect (completely invisible). This transfers the food and drink from the mouth into the stomach. These two stages serve as the basis for conceptualizing the verbs **dí** ‘to eat’ and **nóm** ‘to drink’ as events involving internalization. Additionally, the internalization of food items provides the agent with certain sensory experiences such taste, satisfaction, pleasure or displeasure etc. (Newman 2007)

In order to properly capture majority of the Akan metaphorical extensions related to these two verbs, the broad group (internalization) is divided into four categories based on the nature of the object that is internalized (Newman 1997):

- Gaining of Possession
- Absorption
- Inhaling
- Emotional and Sensual Internalization

#### 4.1.1 Gaining of Possession

This involves instances where an individual receives something from another person. The items could be in the form of gifts, inheritance, bribes etc. The metaphors in this category are derived from the positive sensory experience that is linked to the internalization of food items being mapped on to the pleasant feeling that an individual undergoes as a result of receiving something beneficial. The activities of receiving inheritance and taking bribe in examples (4) and (5), respectively, evoke positive beneficiary sensory experience in the receiver.

4) **Kòfí á-dí né pàpá ádé**  
Kofi PERF-eat POSS father thing  
'Kofi inherited his father's fortune'(IE)

5) **Pàpá nó dì-ì àdànmúde**  
man DEF eat-COMPL bribe  
'The man took a bribe'(IE)

#### 4.1.2 Absorption

Absorption involves one substance permeating another; as it is the case when a fluid dissolves a solid. Newman and Aberra (2009:262) describe the internalization as involving an inanimate subject referent benefitting from the absorption of some form of liquid. The extensions involve an entity that benefits from taking in another entity. The mapping is from the positive benefit that is derived from drinking to the effect that the liquids that are absorbed have on the objects.

Contrary to Newman and Aberra's argument, we argue that such extensions have more to do with the internalization of liquid that was once outside the body of an entity, than the issue of one entity benefitting from another entity. This argument is against the background that not all absorption/internalization of liquids are beneficial to the consumer. Indeed some liquids may provide the consumer with the desired positive sensory feeling, but may not be beneficial. Note, however, that we do not completely rule out the idea of 'entity benefit,' rather, we argue that what is paramount in such extensions is 'internalization' rather than 'entity benefit'.

- 6) **Ntòmá** **nó** **á- nònóm** **súúdée** **nó**  
 cloth DEF PERF-REDUP.drink dye DEF  
 ‘The cloth has absorbed the dye’ (Adusei 2012: 82)
- 7) **Asààsé** **yí** **nò-nóm** **̀nsúó** **pápá**  
 land DEM REDUP-drink.HAB water well  
 ‘This land really absorbs water’ (Adusei 2012: 82)
- 8) **Bófórót** **nó** **á-nò-nóm** **̀angwá** **nó**  
 doughnut DEF PERF-REDUP.drink. oil DEF  
 ‘The doughnut has absorbed a lot of oil’ (Adusei 2012: 82)

Examples (6, 7 and 8) depict instances of the objects **ntòmá** ‘cloth’, **asààsé** ‘earth’ and **bófórót** ‘doughnut’ internalizing dye, water and oil respectively. During the process of cloth dyeing, there is the necessary soaking/absorption of the cloth in a liquid/dye. Similarly, in order for plants to grow well they need to absorb water to an extent. The same applies to the cooking of doughnut; which requires the dough to be deep-fried in oil. In all three examples, excessive absorption affects the final product negatively. For example, if the cloth absorbs too much dye, it messes up the pattern. Again, if the earth soaks in too much water, it becomes waterlogged and will not support proper plant growth. Similarly, doughnut absorbing too much oil makes it unhealthy for consumption.

Due to such instances we stress that focus should be placed largely on the internalization of the liquid rather than the positive benefits that entities derive by absorbing other entities. Again, from examples (6,7 and 8) we observe that the process of absorption is most often undergone by an inanimate subject referent. It seems to be the case that in Akan the concept of absorption is brought about only when the verb **nóm** ‘to drink’ is reduplicated to **nònóm**. The reduplicated form of **nóm** ‘to drink’ to **nònóm** shows the intensity and degree of the internalization of the liquid by the entity. When **nóm** ‘to drink’ is used in its basic form, the meaning of absorption is not evoked. It is therefore the reduplication of the verb that evokes the absorption concept.

#### 4.1.3 Inhaling or Smoking

The extensions associated with the inhaling interpretation involve the smooth, continuous, unimpeded intake of air. When **nóm** ‘to drink’ is used with the NP collocants that are gaseous in nature, it could either mean to inhale or to smoke.

- 9) **̀Agýá Kóó** **ré-nóm** **ébuá** (Ak.)  
 Agya Koo PROG-drink pipe  
 ‘Agya Koo is smoking a pipe’ (IE)

- 10) **Boafo** **nòm-m̀** **mfrámá** **kò-ò** **nè** **mú**  
 Boafo drink-COMPL air go-COMPL 3POSS LOC  
 'Boafo inhaled air into his body' (Adusei 2012:84)

Example (9) depicts the 'to smoke' meaning of the verb **nóm** since the content of the pipe is gaseous in nature. Example (10) describes the inhalation of air by the subject referent **Boafo**.

#### 4.1.4 Emotional and Sensual Internalization

Song (2009:209) discusses the possibility of conceptualizing the state of joy, peace, love, hatred, pain etc. as the internalization of food. These emotions, whether pleasant or unpleasant, can be internalized. According to Newman (1997:215), "we eat food which produces pleasant, agreeable taste and normally avoid food which is not pleasant to taste." Song (2009:209) argues that similarly "we also eat food that can cause problems for our bodies (e.g. unhealthy food, unhygienically prepared food etc.). The outcome of the internalization of such bad foods may be unpleasant or even painful, but the internalization stage remains the same as in the case of the good foods." Metaphorical extensions under this subgroup express an individual's state of emotion: pleasant and unpleasant. It must, however, be mentioned that pleasant vs. unpleasant interpretation depends, to a certain extent, on the object that **dí** 'to eat' co-occurs with, for example **yáw** 'pain' **awèrèhòó** 'sorrow' vs. **àhùrùsí** 'jubilation'.

Below are some illustrative examples.

##### **Pleasant Experiences**

- 11) **M-mòfrá** **nó** **rè-dí** **àgóró**  
 PLU-childDEF PROG-eat game  
 'The children are playing' (IE)
- 12) **òmànfóó** **dì-ì** **hó** **dé**  
 citizens eat-COMPL skin joy  
 'The citizens rejoiced over it' (Donkoh 1993:34)

Examples (11 and 12) depict the internalization of pleasurable experiences such as joy/happiness and the satisfaction derived from playing. The actors of the events captured in these examples would usually manifest physical evidence of what has been internalized through bodily gestures such as jumping, screaming and clapping, possibly accompanied by other facial expressions of satisfaction/joy/happiness such as smiles, laughter and giggles. We can talk of the expression of joy while playing a game as in example (11). Example (12) was used in a context where citizens rejoiced over the building of a new hospital in the

village. Their joy was over the fact that the presence of the hospital will provide quick access to healthcare, and reduce the many deaths, especially amongst children, which the village had faced over a long period of time.

### **Unpleasant Experiences**

- 13) **Ohíá** **ńtí** **dáá** **Akyáá** **dí** **yáw/àwèrèhòó**  
poverty so everyday Akyaa eat pain/sorrow  
'Due to poverty, Akyaa is always in pain' (Adusei 2012:87)

Example (13) illustrates the internalization of sorrow and pain; feelings that are unpleasant to the soul and body of an individual.

Closely related to the emotional satisfaction extension is the extension to the sexual domain. The entire sexual activity involves both physical and psychological internalization. In the Akan socio-cultural conceptualization of sex, the prototypical sexual encounter involves the movement of the male sexual organ into that of the female's. The psychological part involves the emotions that both partners internalize during this activity. This is illustrated by the examples from Agyekum (2010: 171)

### **Sexual Intercourse**

- 14) a. **Kwàó** **dì-ì** **Ámá**  
Kwao eat-COMPL Ama  
'Kwao had sex with Ama' (Agyekum 2010:171)
- b. ? **Ámá** **dì-ì** **Kwàó**  
Ama eat-COMPL Kwao  
'Ama had sex with Kwao' (Agyekum 2010:171)

The examples in (14a-b) indicate that sexual intercourse is an activity between two entities; **Kwàó** and **Ámá** in this case. This relationship is, however, not equal. In some sense, **Kwàó**, the male partner, is seen as the controller of the activity and not **Ámá**, the female partner. This reflects the traditional Akan notion that sex is primarily for the pleasure of the male partner and that men are usually supposed to be in control. This explains why even though 14(b) is grammatically well-formed, it is socio-culturally incongruous. Even though 14(b) is pragmatically unacceptable, it is possible to utter that in a situation where the female partner in the sexual encounter is completely in control of the process.

## 4.2 EXTENSIONS BASED ON DESTRUCTION: PATIENT-ORIENTED

Newman (2009) discusses the extensions under this category as being motivated by the effect of the activity of eating and drinking on the food or drink that is consumed, i.e. the thematic patient involved in the activity. Song (2009) also adds that these extensions can either be in the form of the destruction or transformation of the thematic patient. He argues that the metaphorical extensions under this subcategory involve a mapping from the domain of masticating, biting, and chewing food to various domains where some entity (corresponding to the consumer) exerts an adverse effect on some other entity (corresponding to the thing that is eaten). The role of the consumer, therefore, is to take food items into his/her mouth and the effect on the food is the rather violent processing and transformation of food into digestible particles, as noted by Newman (2009). This kind of destruction could either be physical or psychological.

Apart from the physical/psychological destruction that the extensions under this category depict, waste can also be metaphorically derived from the concept of destruction. Time waste and material waste are some examples of such instances. The following examples illustrate the concept of destruction; physical, psychological and waste, respectively.

Physical Destruction: The very common extensions under this group involve injuring, overpowering/conquering/defeating.

- 15) **Mayweather á-nòm Pacquiao**  
Mayweather PERF-drink Pacquiao  
'Mayweather has beaten Pacquiao mercilessly' (IE)

According to Newman and Abera (2009:266), although the 'destruction' extension is more closely associated with verbs of eating rather than drinking verbs, the latter could also be used figuratively to mean 'punch'. Physical destruction in this example is caused by the agent (Mayweather); who literally acts as the 'drinker' who takes advantage of the object referent (Pacquiao), by subjecting him to some physical pain.

- 16) **Àbèrèwá nó á-dì dém**  
old woman DEF PERF-eat injury  
'The old woman is maimed' (Adusei 2012:92)

Example (16) indicates physical destruction on some part of the old woman's body. This physical destruction to the old woman's body has the tendency of causing both physical pain (as a result of the injury) and psychological pain (as a result of probably undergoing some sort of societal ridicule).

- 17) **Àkúrónó á-dì-dí á-kò né hónám mú**  
sore DEF PERF-REDUP.eat PERF-go 3POSS skin PP  
'The sore has eaten into his skin' (Adusei 2012:92)

In example (17), the physical destruction is caused by the sore, which has literally destroyed the individual's skin. In Akan, it is usually the case that the verb **kò** 'to go' and the locative **mú** 'inside', is used to convey the idea of the extent of the damage that has been caused as in the case in (17). The extent of the damage is heightened by the reduplication of the verb **dí** 'to eat' to **dìdì** 'eat.REDUP'. The reduplication is intended to mark the intensity of the damage. Newman (2009) describes the English locative 'into' as having a central meaning which depicts the idea of a path from outside some delimited area (in this case, the skin) through to the inside of the area. In (17), it is this image of a path into something that helps to create the meaning of a gradual, incrementally destructive effect of the sore acting upon the skin.

#### 4.2.1 Psychological Destruction

Psychological destruction is usually not seen; instead it involves the direct object referent, usually an animate entity, undergoing some form of pain (caused by the agent). This pain has the tendency to cause the patient some form of mental and emotional torture. It is possible for the cause of this psychological pain to be physical.

- 18) **Kòfi à-dì Nyarko m-má nó áwú**  
Kofi PERF-eat Nyarko PL-child DEF death  
'Kofi has been very wicked to Nyarko's children' (IE)

The kind of treatment meted out to the children is not stated in this sentence, but it is obvious that whatever it was had the tendency of negatively affecting the children, both physically and psychologically. The presence of **áwú** 'wickedness' makes a huge contribution in this regard, in the sense that the NP naturally connotes death, pain, suffering etc., which contribute to the physical or psychological effect that the action has on the recipients of the action. The impact of this derives not only from the metaphorical extension of **dì** but also from the presence of **áwú**; a derivative from the verb 'to die'. The presence of the NP **áwú** 'wickedness' highlights the extent of the damage caused by the action carried out by Kofi.

Similarly, in example (19) the victim of the rape activity can be described as going through something that feels like death, bearing in mind that this activity involves physical struggles, forceful sexual intercourse, physical harm etc.

- 19) **Nèà ò-tò-ò àbòfrá yí mònáá nò**  
the one 3SG-throw-COMPL child DEM rape DEF  
**á-dí nò àwù**  
PERF-eat DEF death  
'The individual who raped this child has really harmed her/destroyed her life'(IE)

#### 4.2.2 Waste

In addition to physical and psychological destruction, we could also talk about waste as a form of destruction. This concerns the waste of resources, be it food items, fabrics, time, money etc. These things are destroyed when they are either used in excess or used without any purpose. When things are made to go waste, they are seen as having been destroyed. It is prudent to note that the idea of waste is relative to some extent. This means that waste can be defined in diverse ways based on individual points of view. For example, waste can occur when an item is not used for the purpose it was meant for. The idea of waste is accentuated by the presence of the adverb **dòdò** 'too much' in (20) and **yíyé** 'very well' in (21)

- 20) **Àbèrànté nó dí sàkà Dòdò**  
young man DEF eat money too much  
'The young man is a spendthrift'
- 21) **Style nó dí ntómá yíyé**  
style DEF eat fabric very well  
'The design takes up a lot of fabric'

Example (21) also depicts waste in the act of excessively using a fabric for a particular design. Probably the amount of fabric going to be used for this particular style could have been used to sew two or more clothes. The fact that the tailor uses a large piece of cloth for a single dress is what highlights the sense of waste and, consequently, the sense of destruction.

- 22) **Lòrè yí tùmí nóm pétró pápá**  
car DEF can drink petrol very well  
'This vehicle is a fuel guzzler'

In (22) the destruction is seen in the fact that the vehicle uses extraordinary quantities of fuel.

The point here is that the words, **dòdò** 'too much' **yíyé** 'very well', **pápá** 'very well' in examples (20), (21) and (22), respectively, work in tandem with the verb **dí** 'to eat' in arriving at the meaning of waste explained above; they are, therefore, key to the interpretation of these examples.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The verbs **dí** ‘to eat’ and **nóm** ‘to drink’ are the two basic consumption verbs in Akan. These verbs express activities that are seen as universal, i.e. everyone eats and drinks, yet conceptualized differently by different people, as reflected in different languages. Cross-linguistically, it has been shown that consumption verbs primarily express the taking of food and liquids from outside the body into the body via the mouth. Though universal, the manner in which they are performed varies across cultures. These verbs occur in various metaphorical extensions and when they do, they could imply internalization or destruction. The verb **dí** ‘to eat’ which has been described as a verb of manifold meanings occurs in a wide range of extensions; some of these include meanings such as to consume, to take in, to conquer etc. There exist common cross-linguistic metaphorical extensions of the ‘eat’ verb, for example the ‘eat something’ sense which is extended to mean ‘kill something/ someone’, as observed by Newman and Aberra (2009:253), can be found in Akan (Adusei 2012), Hausa (Jaggar and Buba 2009), Ewe and Dagaare (Adjei and Atintono 2009), and Amharic (Newman and Aberra 2009). Another extension that seems to be shared cross-linguistically relates to ‘eating something’ being extended to emotional feelings. Almost all the languages mentioned above express the internalization of emotions by the use of the ‘eat’ verb.

The verb **nóm** ‘to drink’ conveys ideas such as to inhale, smoke and absorb. Its metaphorical usages are, however, not comparable to that of **dí** ‘to eat’. Apart from these meanings, both Akan and Amharic (Newman and Aberra 2009) use the ‘drink’ verb to describe the process of an insect biting a person.

We conclude in agreement with Adjei and Atintono (2009:192) that “there will be variations in the extent to which people from different cultural settings profile the interpretations of the metaphorical expressions. There is a strong relationship between a people’s conceptual, environmental and cultural experiences and their linguistic systems which is shared across cultures”.

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