

## Akan Traditional Games: An Indispensable Tool in Ghanaian Language Classroom in Respect to Classroom Interaction

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### ABSTRACT

This investigation examined the potential of incorporating Akan traditional games as an effective tool for enhancing classroom interaction in Ghanaian language classrooms. The study recognizes the importance of creating an engaging and interactive learning environment to facilitate language acquisition and cultural appreciation. Drawing upon previous research on the benefits of game-based learning, the paper investigates the specific role of Akan traditional games in promoting communication, collaboration, and cultural understanding among students. The investigation employs a single-methods research design, qualitative data collection techniques. A sample of (100) participants from Berekum Municipal, Mampong Municipal and Sekondi – Takoradi Municipal were selected, to represent a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds and language abilities as population sampling. Observation and interviews were conducted to gather qualitative data, allowing deeper understanding of the factors supporting the investigation.

The investigation revealed that, traditional games facilitate communication skills, preservation of Cultural Heritage, teamwork, enhanced classroom interaction. The study identified the benefits of incorporating traditional games in terms of learner motivation, engagement, language proficiency and ability to promote participation and excellent engagement. The theory that buttressed the investigation was Vygotsky (1930) sociocultural theory. This theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in children's cognitive development.

**Keywords-** Active learning, Akan traditional games, classroom interaction, cultural heritage language learning, educational tools, Ghanaian language classroom.

### I. PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

As a diverse and multicultural society, Ghana takes pride in its rich cultural heritage and linguistic diversity. In the Ghanaian educational system, language learning plays a vital role in preserving and promoting local languages, such as Akan. However, the traditional approach to language instruction often relies heavily on textbooks and formal classroom settings, which may

hinder effective engagement and interaction among students. This phenomenon has brought misconception on traditional games and devalued their educational importance and benefits as even scholars term it as a means of entertainment whenever executed in the classroom. This investigation aims at highlighting the significance of Akan traditional games as an indispensable tool in the Ghanaian language classroom. Integrating these traditional games into language

instruction, enhances classroom interaction, foster cultural appreciation, and facilitate more effective language learning outcomes.

## II. INTRODUCTION

Traditional games have always played a significant role in various cultures worldwide, not only as a means of entertainment but also as a tool for education and social interaction. In the context of Ghanaian language classrooms, the incorporation of Akan traditional games has proven to be an invaluable resource for enhancing classroom interaction. Akan traditional games, deeply rooted in Ghana's cultural heritage, provide a dynamic and engaging platform for language learners to develop linguistic skills, cultural understanding, and promote social interaction within the classroom setting. This study explored the importance of Akan traditional games as a tool in the Ghanaian language classroom and its impact on classroom interaction. Ghana is a diverse country with more than 80 languages spoken throughout its regions. Language education plays a vital role in preserving cultural heritage and fostering national identity. In the Ghanaian language classroom, educators strive to create an interactive environment that not only focuses on language proficiency but also instills cultural appreciation among students.

Akan traditional games are an integral part of Ghana's cultural fabric, deeply rooted in the history and traditions of the Akan people. These games have been passed down through generations, serving as a means of socialization, entertainment, and skill-building. Integrating these games into the language classroom, can provide students with a tangible connection to Ghanaian culture, promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation of their linguistic and cultural heritage. Akan traditional games offer a unique opportunity for language learners to practice their language skills in a dynamic and interactive manner. Through participation in games such as "Oware/}ware" (a strategy-based board game) or "Antoakyire/Annhw[ekyir" (a smartness game), "Dua oo Dua" (a game of smartness), "{d] E Hanketse" ( a game of love), "Premprann" (a game of counting), "Kwaa-kwaa" (a smartness game) students are encouraged to communicate, negotiate, and strategize using the target language. This immersive experience not only improves vocabulary and grammar but also enhances oral proficiency, pronunciation, and comprehension.

Classroom interaction plays a pivotal role in language learning, as it provides opportunities for students to engage with their peers and develop communication skills. Akan traditional games create an inclusive and collaborative environment, fostering social interaction among students. Working together, students learn to cooperate, negotiate, and express themselves, thereby building confidence and developing

interpersonal skills. Integrating Akan traditional games into the language classroom promotes cultural sensitivity and appreciation among students. By immersing themselves in Ghanaian cultural practices, learners gain insight into the values, beliefs, and traditions of the Akan people.

This cultural awareness support students to develop cross-cultural competence, empathy, and respect for diversity, preparing them to be global citizens. Akan traditional games offer a bridge between the classroom and the wider community. Language learners can apply their knowledge and skills by participating in cultural events, community gatherings, or even during visits to local markets. This real-life application of language and cultural understanding enhances the learning experience and reinforces the relevance of language skills beyond the confines of the classroom.

Akan traditional games therefore, provide an indispensable tool in the Ghanaian language classroom, enabling educators to create an engaging and interactive environment for language learners. Incorporating these games, students not only improve their language proficiency but also develop a deeper appreciation for Ghanaian culture, enhance social interaction, and build essential communication skills. The integration of Akan traditional games as a teaching resource promotes cultural preservation, fosters a sense of national identity, and prepares students to become culturally competent global citizens.

One of the key benefits of using Akan traditional games in the language classroom is their ability to promote active participation and engagement among students. Unlike traditional teaching methods that often encourage passive learning, these games provide a dynamic and interactive platform for students to practice their language skills. Through playing games, students can communicate, collaborate, and negotiate meaning in real-life contexts, which strengthens their language proficiency and fluency.

Akan traditional games offer a unique opportunity to deepen cultural understanding and appreciation. These games are deeply rooted in Ghanaian heritage and reflect the values, customs, and traditions of the Akan people. Engaging in these games, students can develop a sense of cultural pride and identity, fostering a greater connection to their linguistic roots. This cultural immersion not only enhances language learning but also promotes intercultural competence and respect among students. Incorporating Akan traditional games into language instruction also promotes a positive and inclusive learning environment. Games inherently encourage teamwork, cooperation, and friendly competition, allowing students to build strong relationships and bonds. By participating in these games, students develop social and communication skills, boost their confidence, and strengthen their sense of belonging within the classroom community.

This, in turn, creates a supportive and collaborative atmosphere that enhances overall learning outcomes. Integrating Akan traditional games aligns with the principles of student-centered learning and active pedagogical approaches. By moving away from traditional rote memorization and monotonous instructional methods, teachers can create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that caters to diverse learning styles. Akan traditional games provide a multisensory experience, incorporating auditory, visual, and kinesthetic elements, which can benefit students with different learning preferences and abilities.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Vygotsky (1930) Sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in children's cognitive development. According to this theory, learning occurs through a process called "zone of proximal development" (ZPD), which refers to the difference between what a child can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance and support from more knowledgeable individuals. This theory suggests that play provides a platform for children to engage in social interactions and construct meaning through their interactions with peers and adults.

Stewart (1907) seeks to understand the cultural significance of these games, their rules and variations, equipment used, and their role in tribal society. He highlighted the vast diversity of games among different Native American tribes. It covers games played by tribes from various regions, including the Plains, Southwest, Northeast, Northwest Coast, and California. Each region had its own unique set of games, reflecting the distinct cultures and environments of the tribes. Culin categorizes the games into different types based on their characteristics. This includes games of skill, chance, guessing, and strategy. Examples of these types of games include dice games, ball games, ring and pin games, and guessing games. He provides detailed descriptions of specific games, including their rules, variations, and the cultural context in which they were played. For each game, He explores the objectives, equipment used, methods of play, and the roles played by participants.

In related study, Bell (1960) dedicated his life to study and documenting traditional games from around the world. His passion for games led him to collect a vast array of game-related artifacts, which formed the basis of his research. He covers a wide range of traditional games, including board games, dice games, race games, and other table games, originating from different cultures and time periods. Bell's research spans civilizations such as ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, China, India, Japan, and many others. It sheds light on the historical development, cultural significance, and social aspects of traditional games. By

examining games across various cultures, he provides valuable insights into the human inclination for play and the universality of game-related activities. He focuses on the cultural context of each game. Bell discusses how games were influenced by the societies in which they originated and the social functions they served. He explores the religious, military, strategic, and recreational aspects of different games and how they reflected the values and customs of their respective civilizations.

Bell (1979) discusses various forms of Mancala, a family of games played with small stones or seeds and rows of holes or pits on a board. He delves into the history, rules, and strategies of different Mancala variants found in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. He explores the origins of chess, its historical development, and the evolution of its pieces and rules across different cultures. Bell explores the game's origins, its popularity throughout history, and the intricacies of gameplay, including the movement of pieces and strategies employed by players. He discusses the historical significance of Senet, its rules and gameplay mechanics, and its role in ancient Egyptian society and religious beliefs. He examines the game's history, its various regional variations, and the strategic considerations players must make during gameplay.

Similarly, Parlett (1999). Covers a wide range of traditional board games from different parts of the world. This includes games from ancient civilizations like Egypt, Mesopotamia, and China, as well as games from medieval Europe, Africa, the Americas, and other regions. He explores various types of traditional games, such as race games, strategy games, dice games, and war games. Each type of game typically has its own rules, objectives, and gameplay mechanics. Parlett delves into how board games have evolved over time, tracing their development and the influence they have had on other games. It may highlight the connections and similarities between different games and explore how they have influenced each other. He discusses the rules, mechanics, and strategies employed in traditional games. This could include information on how pieces move, how players interact, and the strategic decision-making involved in gameplay. Parlett (1979) recognized for his expertise in researching and documenting the history and rules of traditional games. Parlett breaks down the gameplay, card rankings, scoring systems, and any special rules or variations that may apply.

Bell & Whitcomb (1973) discussed the origins traditional game and development over time. The explore how board games have evolved across different cultures and regions. The authors delved into the cultural and social significance of traditional board games. They explore how these games were played in different societies, their role in education, entertainment, and social interactions, and any rituals or customs associated with them. Murray (1952) explores games from ancient civilizations such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece,

Rome, China, India, and many others. Murray presents board games within their cultural, social, and historical contexts. Murray examines how these games reflected the values, beliefs, and daily life of the civilizations that played them. He explores the origins and evolution of board games, tracing their lineage through ancient texts, archaeological evidence, and historical accounts. He highlights the interconnections and influences between different games across cultures.

Murray (1913) provides a comprehensive overview of the origins and development of chess throughout various civilizations and historical periods. Murray's research covers the evolution of chess from its ancient predecessors to its modern form. He explores the social, political, and intellectual factors that influenced the development and spread of chess across different regions and time periods. Murray meticulously examines historical documents, manuscripts, and literary references to reconstruct the progression of chess. He combines historical analysis with linguistic studies to trace the etymology of chess-related terms and to uncover the game's historical roots.

In ascertained the positive impact of language games, Akpabli (2012) creates awareness and promoting positive attitudes towards Ghanaian languages through language promotion campaigns, cultural events, and community involvement it creates a supportive environment for language learning. Encouraging the use of Ghanaian languages in various contexts, such as formal and informal settings, can also contribute to language proficiency. Boadi (1992) The teaching and learning of Ghanaian languages in schools is an important aspect of language education in Ghana. The Ga language is one of the major languages spoken in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, and it is taught in some schools to promote the preservation and development of indigenous languages. Boadi explores various aspects of language education, including curriculum development, pedagogical methods, and challenges faced in the classroom.

Crayner, et al (2005) attest to the fact that when children learn a concept that is familiar with them, they put in their maximum effort so that they enjoy it. Crayner (ibid) confirm that traditional games calm children down and stimulates them to perform better at school and at home. Not only this, they say the rhythm in children's game help them to pronounce word well when reading. This confirms what Dakubu (2002) opines that in traditional games, children explore their grammar, syntax and sociolinguistic acquisition of language.

Anyidoho (2005) stated that using students' mother tongues or local languages as a medium of instruction can facilitate better understanding, comprehension, and overall learning outcomes. It helps learners grasp concepts more easily, especially at the early stages of education. It preserves and promote the cultural heritage of various ethnic groups in the country. It allows students to connect with their cultural identity

and fosters a sense of pride and belonging. Dakubu (2002) explored various aspects of Ghanaian languages, including their grammar, syntax, phonetics, sociolinguistics, and language acquisition.

Similarly, Kari (2014) attested that students tend to have a better understanding of concepts when they are taught in their native language. It helps them grasp new ideas more easily and enhances their overall learning experience. Cultural preservation, promoting vernacular languages in the classroom contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage. It allows students to maintain a connection with their cultural roots and fosters a sense of identity. It enhances communication skills in general. When students have a strong foundation in their native language, they can transfer those language skills to other languages more effectively. It provides a solid foundation in language skills, which can facilitate the transition to other languages of instruction. Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the importance of social interaction and collaboration in the process of learning and cognitive development. He introduced the concept of the "zone of proximal development," which refers to the gap between a learner's actual developmental level and their potential development with the assistance of a more knowledgeable other. Piaget (1955) explores how children construct their understanding of the world through interaction and experiences. He identified four stages of cognitive development and highlighted the importance of active learning, hands-on experiences, and peer interaction for children's intellectual growth.

Bruner (1960) focuses on the role of interaction, discovery, and problem-solving in education. He advocates for a learner-centered approach that encourages active engagement, scaffolding, and the use of narrative and storytelling to enhance understanding and retention of information. Freire (1970) addresses the dynamics of power and oppression in education. He emphasizes the importance of dialogue, critical thinking, and problem-posing methods to empower learners and transform oppressive educational systems into liberating ones. Freire's ideas have had a significant impact on critical pedagogy and participatory approaches to education. Hattie (2009) provides an extensive meta-analysis of educational research to identify the factors that have the most significant impact on student achievement. He emphasizes the importance of feedback, effective teacher-student interactions, and strategies that promote student engagement and active learning to enhance classroom outcomes.

#### **IV. METHODOLOGY**

This investigation adapted qualitative approach. This design was allowed a comprehensive understanding of the Akan traditional games An Indispensable tool in Ghanaian Language Classroom in respect to classroom interaction in considering both subjective experiences and measurable trends. Unstructured interviews and



observation were conducted with individuals who have firsthand experience in Akan traditional games in respect to classroom interaction. The instruments provided valuable insights into personal experiences, cultural practices, and societal changes. Participants were purposively selected based on their knowledge, expertise, and experience with Akan games and the classroom interaction. This included individuals from various age groups, parents’ teachers and pupils, in almost all the one hundred (100) participants were observed and interviewed in their natural setting for the investigation. Twenty - five (25) participants were parents, the other twenty – five (25) participants were students and the teachers form the majority fifty (50) participants all from Berekum, Mampong and Sekondi – Takoradi Municipalities. Participants were provided with clear information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights. Written consent was obtained before conducting interviews or observation. All personal information and data collected were treated with strict confidentiality. Participants identities was anonymized to ensure privacy and protect their personal information. The sites were suitable for the investigation because this towns were Akan settlement. Close attention was paid to all respondents during the interview and the observation to monitor the effect of Akan traditional games: An Indispensable tool in Ghanaian Language Classroom in respect to classroom interaction.

**Table 1: Sample Size**

Gender	Number
Male	75
Female	25
Total	100

**Table 2: Distribution of sample by schools and age bracket**

Social Status	Number of respondents	Age bracket
Parents	25 (23)	35- 70yrs
Teacher	50 (49)	24 - 51yrs
Pupils	25 (24)	15- 28yrs
Total	100 (96)	-

**V. DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS**

Akan traditional games that need attention in Ghanaian Language Classroom during teaching and learning processes. In the Ghanaian language classroom, fostering active participation and meaningful interaction among students is crucial for effective language learning. Akan traditional games, deeply rooted in Ghanaian culture, can serve as invaluable tools to

promote classroom interaction while facilitating language acquisition. //}ware//, //Mpempenaa//, //Alata Mpuwa//, //Kwaa-kwaa//, //}d] E Hanketse//, //Premprann//, //Dua oo Dua//, //Hwehw[mu k]yi wo mpena//, //Atoakyire//, //As]ba//, //Ampe//, //Piilolo//, These games offer an immersive and engaging environment that enhances students' linguistic abilities, cultural understanding, and social interaction. This discussion explores the significance of Akan traditional games as indispensable tools in the Ghanaian language classroom, particularly in the context of promoting classroom interaction. Akan traditional games provide a unique opportunity to integrate Ghanaian culture into the language learning process. //Amuamuni//, //Nt[sie//, //Piipii y[nsuro obiara//, //Luduto//, //Dameto//. Engaging in these games, students gain firsthand experience of the cultural practices, values, and traditions of the Akan people. This immersion facilitates a deeper appreciation of the language, as students understand its cultural context and significance. Through interactive gameplay, students actively participate in cultural exchanges, fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie.

Language acquisition thrives in an interactive environment. Akan traditional games offer an ideal platform for students to practice their language skills in a contextually relevant setting. These games often require verbal communication, encouraging students to utilize their language knowledge and skills to convey ideas, give instructions, and express themselves. Through gameplay, students naturally develop vocabulary, improve pronunciation, and enhance their fluency, all while engaging with peers in authentic conversations. Akan traditional games require critical thinking, problem-solving, and strategic planning, promoting cognitive skills development among students. These games often involve decision-making, pattern recognition, and memory recall, stimulating mental agility and analytical abilities. The collaborative nature of these games cultivates teamwork and cooperation, fostering a positive classroom environment that encourages active participation, communication, and negotiation.

Incorporating Akan traditional games in the classroom nurtures emotional and social development. These games evoke excitement, joy, and a sense of achievement, creating a positive emotional atmosphere that enhances students' motivation and engagement. The interactive nature of the games encourages students to interact with one another, fostering social bonds, empathy, and respect. Students learn to follow rules, take turns, and handle both victory and defeat graciously, promoting emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills. Akan traditional games often involve physical movement, hand-eye coordination, and sensory engagement. This multi-sensory learning approach helps students internalize language concepts more effectively. By combining physical activity with language practice,

students experience a holistic learning process that connects language learning with kinesthetic and sensory experiences. This integration boosts memory retention and deepens understanding, making language learning more engaging and memorable.

Akan traditional games have a rich cultural heritage and offer numerous benefits in terms of language acquisition, social interaction, and overall engagement. This analysis explores the significance of Akan traditional games as an indispensable tool in the Ghanaian language classroom, specifically focusing on how they facilitate classroom interaction. Akan traditional games hold immense cultural significance in Ghana. Integrating these games into the language classroom, students can develop a deeper understanding of Akan culture, traditions, and values. This cultural relevance not only fosters a sense of pride and belonging but also stimulates students' interest and motivation to actively participate in classroom activities. Language acquisition is a fundamental objective of any language classroom. Akan traditional games offer an immersive and interactive environment for students to practice their language skills. Through gameplay, students engage in verbal communication, express themselves, and acquire new vocabulary and expressions in a meaningful context. The interactive nature of these games promotes listening, speaking, and comprehension skills, facilitating a more natural language learning process.

Akan traditional games encourage students to communicate effectively with their peers. These games often involve teamwork, negotiation, and strategizing, requiring students to articulate their thoughts, share ideas, and collaborate with others. Participating in these activities, students develop crucial communication skills such as active listening, turn-taking, and expressing opinions. The competitive nature of some games also motivates students to express themselves more confidently, fostering a dynamic and engaging learning environment. Promoting social interaction among students is vital in language classrooms. Akan traditional games provide a platform for students to interact with their peers, fostering friendships and a sense of community. These games encourage cooperation, sportsmanship, and empathy, as students learn to respect and understand their classmates' perspectives. Through social interaction, students become more comfortable using the target language, leading to improved fluency and communication skills.

Akan traditional games often involve physical movement, gestures, and sensory experiences, making the learning process more multisensory and engaging. Incorporating kinesthetic elements into language learning enhances memory retention and cognitive development. Students actively participate, experience cultural traditions firsthand, and associate language skills with physical actions, creating stronger neural connections and reinforcing language acquisition. Traditional games offer a break from conventional

teaching methods and bring an element of fun and excitement to the language classroom. The interactive and playful nature of these activities increases student engagement and motivation. Students are more likely to be enthusiastic about attending classes, actively participating, and taking ownership of their learning process. The incorporation of Akan traditional games into the curriculum adds variety and novelty, preventing monotony and boredom, thereby fostering a positive learning environment.

Incorporating Akan traditional games into the Ghanaian language classroom is a valuable approach to enhance classroom interaction. These games provide a culturally rich and immersive learning experience, promoting language acquisition, communication skills, social interaction, and overall engagement. By leveraging the inherent qualities of Akan traditional games, educators can create a dynamic and interactive language learning environment that fosters students' linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural development.

## VI. FINDINGS

*//Enhanced Classroom Interaction//*. Akan traditional games encourage students to communicate with each other in the target language. The competitive nature of these games motivates students to actively participate, leading to increased classroom interaction and peer-to-peer communication. *//Language Proficiency//*. Akan traditional games require students to use the target language in various contexts. Through playing these games, students practice speaking, listening, and understanding Akan, leading to improved language proficiency and fluency. *//Cultural Understanding//*. Akan traditional games are deeply rooted in Ghanaian culture. By engaging in these games, students gain a deeper understanding of the customs, traditions, and values of the Akan people, thereby fostering cultural sensitivity and appreciation. *//Increased Engagement//*. Traditional games have an inherent appeal that captivates students' interest and promotes active engagement. By incorporating these games into the language classroom, teachers can create a fun and enjoyable learning environment, leading to increased student motivation and participation. *//Teamwork and Collaboration//*. Many Akan traditional games involve teamwork and collaboration, encouraging students to work together towards a common goal. This promotes cooperation, communication, and problem-solving skills, critical thinking among students, fostering a sense of community within the classroom. *//Preservation of Cultural Heritage//*. Akan traditional games are an integral part of Ghana's cultural heritage. Incorporating these games in the language classroom helps preserve and pass on this cultural knowledge to future generations, promoting a sense of identity and pride among students.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Akan traditional games are an indispensable tool in the Ghanaian language classroom, particularly when it comes to enhancing classroom interaction. These games offer a unique and effective way to engage students in the learning process, promoting active participation, cultural understanding, and language acquisition. Akan traditional games provide an interactive and dynamic learning experience that captures students' attention and encourages their involvement. Unlike traditional teaching methods that rely heavily on textbooks and lectures, incorporating games into the language classroom fosters a lively and engaging atmosphere. Students become actively involved in the learning process as they participate in these games, making the language learning experience more enjoyable and memorable. Akan traditional games serve as a bridge between language and culture. Playing these games, students gain a deeper understanding of Ghanaian culture, traditions, and values. They become more immersed in the cultural context, enabling them to appreciate and internalize the language more effectively. This cultural immersion facilitates language acquisition by providing a meaningful and authentic context for language use. Akan traditional games promote meaningful interaction among students. As students engage in these games, they naturally communicate with one another, practice the target language, and develop their language skills. Whether it is through verbal communication, negotiation, or problem-solving, students are actively using the language in a communicative and purposeful manner. This interactive aspect of the games enhances students' language proficiency and builds their confidence in using the language in real-life situations.

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