

SOCIOLINGUISTIC FACTORS INFLUENCING TRANSLATION SHIFTS IN SELECTED YORUBA PROVERBS

By

Prof. Emmanuel Adedayo Adedun

&

Tolulope Grace Ojo

Mountain Top University, Prayer City, Ogun State.

gtojo@mtu.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper explores the sociolinguistic factors that precipitate the translation shifts in Yoruba proverbs. The theoretical framework for the analysis of this study is Eugene Nida's (1964) Translation theory. It adopts descriptive qualitative analysis. It purposively examines ten Yoruba proverbs. This study identifies that proverbs in Yoruba culture are not just linguistic ornaments but vital tools for cultural transmission, social regulation, and indirect communication. It demonstrates that a literal, formally correspondent translation is often inadequate because it results in opacity for a cross-cultural audience. The analysis reveals that systematic shifts to dynamic, contextual translations are compelled by profound sociolinguistic factors which include deep-seated cultural values, social hierarchies (e.g., age and authority roles), communicative norms (e.g., politeness and indirectness), and unshared cultural schemas. The study concludes that translation shifts are not a failure of accuracy but a prerequisite for effective cultural mediation. It positions the translator as a cultural interpreter who must bridge sociolinguistic gaps to preserve the pragmatic force and wisdom of African indigenous proverbs thereby affirming that to translate a proverb is to translate its underlying culture.

Keywords: *Yoruba proverbs, translation shifts, sociolinguistics, cross-cultural communication*

Introduction

Proverbs serve as linguistic expressions, cultural manuscripts, instruments for social rule, and repositories of indigenous knowledge in African societies. In Yoruba culture, proverbs (*òwe*) are referred to as the “horses of speech” (*òwe lèṣin ḥò*). This enables speakers to communicate with one another some

complex meanings in socially appropriate and indirect ways. The translation of these proverbs into English results into some practical and sociolinguistic challenges because the Yoruba linguistic choices are profound, and deeply embedded in cultural, situational, and pragmatic contexts.

Proverb translation is not just the substitution of the lexical items, it involves the interpretation of cultural metaphors, decoding of communal assumptions, and the navigation of sociolinguistics expectations. For example, many Yoruba proverbs depend on culturally significant symbols (like masquerades (egúngún), kola nut, or palm oil) that have no similar equivalents in English culture. Some proverbs involve the implied social meanings that are connected to ranking, regards, kinship, power, and societal values. Proverbs are globally recognized as concise expressions of a culture's collective wisdom. They convey cultural values and also function as significant linguistic tools for social regulation, conflict resolution, pedagogy, and persuasion within African communities. Specifically, Yoruba proverbs encapsulate the worldview, ethical systems, and communicative standards of the Yoruba people. The translation of Yoruba proverbs which are deeply embedded in cultural expressions into a linguistically and culturally foreign language like English, poses considerable challenges because the variations unavoidably results into shifts in meaning, pragmatic force, and metaphorical texture.

Translation shift is defined as the departure from formal correspondence in the process of moving from a source to a target language. They are often necessitated by systemic linguistic and cultural constraints (Catford, 1965). A sociolinguistic perspective provides a framework for understanding how social context, cultural norms, and communicative expectations shape translation decisions (Gumperz, 1982; Hymes, 1974). African proverbs demand considerable sociolinguistics competence and not only structural equivalence because they are functionally dynamic.

This paper aims to investigate the sociolinguistic factors that influence translation shifts in Yoruba proverbs. This is to illustrate how the cultural embeddedness of these proverbs compels translators to modify or adapt expressions to negotiate meaning across cultural boundaries. The objectives are to identify and categorize the types of translation shifts that occur in the translation of the selected Yoruba proverbs into English; investigate how sociolinguistic factors (such as cultural assumptions, politeness norms, and

contextual usage) result into translation shifts; and evaluate the effectiveness of translation strategies (particularly Nida's concept of Dynamic Equivalence) in preserving the metaphorical richness and pragmatic force of Yoruba proverbs for a cross-cultural audience.

Eugene Nida's Translation Theory (1986)

The Translation theory was developed by American linguist and translator, Eugene Nida. It is a translation theory that represents a pivotal shift from strictly form-based translation to meaning and function-based translation. It conveys a thought for thought rather than word for word translation of the original message of a text to the target audience. Nida's Translation Theory has been highly influential in the translation of the Bible. Nida used the example of "Lamb of God" (John 1:29). In cultures where lambs are not known or not associated with sacrifice, Nida argues that a formal correspondence translation would be meaningless. A dynamic equivalence approach might render it as "Seal of God" (for Inuit cultures) or "Pig of God" (in certain Melanesian cultures), animals that carry the cultural weight of a precious, sacrificial offering (Nida, 1986).

Nida later developed the theory of **Functional Equivalence** which became an overarching **governing principle** for all translation decisions. It subsumes and replaces the earlier duality. It focused on the degree to which a translation successfully functions for its intended audience. While "Dynamic Equivalence" emphasized the **receptor's psychological response** (the "same effect"), "Functional Equivalence" broadened the focus to the **communicative function** of the text within its social and cultural context. It asked: "What is this text designed to *do* in the lives of its readers?" (e.g., to exhort, to teach, to comfort, to narrate). The translation must perform that same function.

Nida's Translation theory is foundational for comprehending and justifying the types of "translation shifts" observed in the selected Yoruba proverbs in this study. Nida argues that the goal of translation is to reproduce a discourse in the target language to the closest dynamic equivalent of the source language message. He distinguished between two primary orientations:

- i. Formal Correspondence: This method prioritizes matching the form and structure of the source text as closely as possible:
 - a. Word-for-word or phrase-for-phrase accuracy.

- b. Preservation of grammatical structures.
- c. Maintaining the original's verbal consistency.

The result of this formal correspondence is a "literal" or "gloss" translation. Though it may be useful for scholarly analysis, it can sound unnatural and obscure the meaning for a target audience that are unfamiliar with the source culture.

- ii. Dynamic Equivalence: This method prioritizes the reproduction of the effect of the source text on its original audience:

- a. The naturalness of expression in the target language.
- b. The comprehension and response of the target reader.
- c. The message itself, over the formal structure.

The result of dynamic equivalence is a translation that seeks to be meaningful to the new audience as the original was to its own. This is the "contextual/functional translation." **Nida's contemporary development was the move from the 1964 dichotomy to the more sophisticated, flexible, and functionally-oriented principle of "Functional Equivalence," fully articulated in his 1986 work with Jan de Waard.** This became the definitive statement of his mature theory and the version that has had the most enduring impact on Bible translation societies and functionalist approaches worldwide.

Background to the Empirical Applications

This study employed a qualitative analysis design. A purposive sampling of ten Yoruba proverbs were selected for analysis based on their recognized cultural importance, metaphorical richness, and representation of various sociolinguistic factors. Each of the proverbs were analyzed in three stages: a literal translation to establish a formal baseline; a contextual translation to reflect how the proverb is used in typical Yoruba discourse; and a sociolinguistic analysis to identify and explain the factors that necessitate the shift between the literal and contextual translations. The theoretical framework for this study is Eugene Nida's (1964) Translation theory.

Adeyemi (2021) investigates a sociolinguistic study of Nigerian online forums. He discovered that Yoruba proverbs are frequently used in digital spaces to lend authority to arguments and to police social norms, demonstrating their continued relevance. The study also noted a trend towards semantic simplification and code-mixing in these contexts, indicating a shift in their traditional form. This correlates with the present study that explores the translation shifts in selected Yoruba proverbs.

Olanrewaju (2023) explores the use of proverbs in contemporary Yoruba Nollywood films. The research empirically demonstrated that proverbs are strategically employed to construct character identity to signify wisdom and seniority, and to resolve narrative conflict in order to mirror their real-world function in mediation. This aligns with the findings of Eze (2022) in an Igbo context, whose discourse analysis showed that proverbs in modern political speeches serve as potent face-saving instruments and tools for indirect criticism. It allows speakers to navigate complex power dynamics. These studies collectively confirm that the pragmatic and contextual functions of proverbs remain significant in accordance with the current research.

Li (2023) conducts a corpus-assisted study of Chinese proverb translations. identified a statistically significant move towards "explication" in 21st-century translations compared to earlier, more literal versions. This supports the methodological choice of this present study to analyze shifts from literal to contextual translations, and positioning it as a reflection of a broader, contemporary translation norm aimed at enhancing cross-cultural intelligibility.

Moyo (2024) published a seminal empirical study on African contexts. She translated Shona and Zulu proverbs related to *ubuntu* (humanness) philosophy. Moyo's findings are directly relevant to the current paper on Yoruba proverb on beauty (ìwà). She argues that such philosophical concepts require a "componential analysis" in translation, where a single word is unpacked into a phrase or gloss to convey its holistic meaning. She critiques domesticating strategies that reduce *ubuntu* to "kindness" as a form of epistemic violence, echoing Venuti's concerns but from a postcolonial perspective.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Below is a selection of the proverbs analyzed:

TABLE 1

YORUBA PROVERBS	LITERAL TRANSLATION	CONTEXTUAL TRANSLATION	SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSLATION SHIFTS IN THE PROVERBS
1. Ìwà l'èwà	Character is beauty	True beauty is found in one's moral character and essence.	A formal translation fails in this analysis. The shift is driven by a cultural-value gap . The Yoruba concept of ìwà is a core sociolinguistics value that encompasses morality, essence, and being. To achieve Dynamic Equivalence, the translation must explicate this deep-seated cultural priority on inner virtue over aesthetics, thereby guiding the translator toward a more explanatory rendering.
2. Bí ọmọdé bá ṣubú, a wo iwájú; bí àgbà bá ṣubú, a wo ẹhin.	When a child falls, he looks forward; when an elder falls, he looks back.	The young look ahead to the future, while the elderly reflect on the past and the causes of events.	The shift here is necessitated by a sociolinguistics metaphor that is connected to age hierarchy. The literal translation is enigmatic because the link between gaze direction and cognitive process (future-oriented innocence and retrospective wisdom) is culturally coded. Dynamic equivalence requires explicating this metaphor to

			bridge the cultural gap in how age and reflection are conceptualized and valued.
3. Ajá tí yóò ṣonù kò ni gbó fèrè qlóde.	The dog that will be lost will not heed the hunter's whistle.	A person who is stubbornly set on a self-destructive path will refuse to listen to any advice or warning from those who are wiser and have their best interests at heart.	The shift moves from a culture-specific social hierarchy (hunter as authority and dog as subordinate) to a universal principle. The formal correspondence retains the form but loses the proverbial force. Dynamic equivalence prioritizes the main message of willful disobedience. This is a sociolinguistics act of defiance that ensures that the target audience understands the consequence of ignoring legitimate authority.
4. Bi ẹnu kò bá ní kí obìnrin kú, òwe a bá ni.	If the mouth does not wish a woman death, a proverb accompanies it.	Proverbs allow for indirect and polite criticism, preventing direct and offensive speech.	This proverb is <i>about</i> sociolinguistics behavior. The literal translation is cryptic. The shift is fundamental in that the translation must explain the communicative function of the proverb itself. Achieving equivalent effect means conveying how Yoruba culture uses proverbs to manage "face," maintain social harmony, and navigate gendered contexts, which is the major sociolinguistics meaning.
5. Okùn ìdè kan ò lè gbé'gi nlá.	A single brass chain cannot lift a heavy log.	A difficult task requires collective effort and teamwork; one person	The shift here is driven by a shift from a cultural artifact (brass chain) to a universal social principle (collectivism). The

		cannot do it alone.	literal image is concrete but may not resonate. Dynamic equivalence extracts the major value of community and shared labor. This is a fundamental sociolinguistics factor in African indigenous societies. It ensures that the lesson on cooperation is clearly understood.
6. Qmq tó ní "owó n'bé lèbùn" kì í gbó'já.	A child who says "money is in the giving of alms" does not understand poverty.	Someone who has never experienced hardship cannot give meaningful advice about it.	The shift involves a sociolinguistics unit shift and cultural generalization . The literal reference to "alms-giving" is a specific religious/cultural act. To achieve dynamic equivalence, the translator must generalize this to the universal concept of "inexperience" by removing the culturally specific element to communicate the real message about the authority derived from lived experience.
7. Eni a férẹ́ ló lè pa ejò, tó bá fé pa á ní Okè Mèkùn.	One can only kill a snake as long as it is. If you want to kill it like the Mèkùn hill, you will fail.	Deal with a problem according to its size and nature. Do not overcomplicate simple issues.	The shift is necessitated by an unshared cultural reference "Okè Mèkùn". Formal correspondence here creates confusion. Dynamic equivalence requires cultural substitution . The translator must replace the opaque geographical reference with the underlying pragmatic advice, a strategy essential for cross-cultural intelligibility when local knowledge is assumed in the source text.
8. Ilé là ní	It is the	You have to	The shift makes an

<p>wò kí a tó ṣomọ lórúkọ.</p>	<p>family/house we look to before naming a child.</p>	<p>understand a person's background and lineage before you judge or engage with them. A child is a product of its home.</p>	<p>implicit cultural schema explicit. The literal act of "looking to the house" is a metonymy for evaluating character based on lineage and upbringing, a sociolinguistics factor in identity construction. The equivalent translation must activate this same schema for the target audience by making the connection between family and individual character clear to convey the same cautious pragmatism.</p>
<p>9. Alágbède ò mọ ẹdùn ara rẹ, ó n kọrin pé "eni tó mọ ẹdùn, kó wá rù ú."</p>	<p>The blacksmith does not know the weight of his own hammer, he is singing "whoever knows the weight of the hammer, let him come and carry it."</p>	<p>People often fail to see the burdens in their own lives while being quick to advise others on theirs.</p>	<p>The proverb uses a culturally specific narrative (the blacksmith) to comment on a universal human trait (lack of self-awareness). The shift involves a semantic refinement from a literal tool ("hammer") to an abstract concept ("burden"). Dynamic equivalence is achieved by bridging this occupational schema to the psychological insight and ensuring the social commentary on hypocrisy is preserved.</p>
<p>10. Tí à bá ní sáré òkèèrè, tí a kò mọ ẹni tí ní pa bòtùn bòsì, òkèèrè á tán.</p>	<p>If we are running a long distance and do not know who is mending the torn clothes, the long journey will come to an end.</p>	<p>If you do not take care of small problems as they arise, they will eventually halt your overall progress. Or, a stitch in time saves nine.</p>	<p>This analysis presents a choice between domestication (using "A stitch in time saves nine") and foreignization (the provided translation). Domestication achieves dynamic equivalence but erases the unique Yoruba imagery. The chosen translation is a foreignizing</p>

			strategy that retains the cultural narrative while using explication to ensure the pragmatic meaning, a major piece of social advice on preventative action is clearly understood.
--	--	--	---

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that translation shifts in Yoruba proverbs are methodical, motivated, and affected by an interplay of sociolinguistic factors. The analysis of the ten proverbs guided by Eugene Nida's theory reveals that the journey from Formal Correspondence to Dynamic Equivalence is necessitated by deep-seated cultural and social factors embedded within the language. The discussion synthesizes these factors into sociolinguistics dimensions that dictate translation shifts as discussed below:

Proverb 1. *Iwà l'èwà*: presents the most direct challenge to Formal Equivalence. The literal translation, "Character is beauty," is structurally elegant and concise, it mirrors the original's aphoristic quality, and presents **false cognate** at the conceptual level. For the target audience, "character" suggests acquired personality traits or reputation, while the Yoruba concept of *iwà* encompasses one's essential being, innate moral nature, and existential essence. The Formal approach preserves the *form* but eviscerates the *philosophical content*. Consequently, the proverb loses its function as a vehicle for a core cultural value. The Dynamic translation, "True beauty is found in one's moral character and essence," bridges the identified *cultural-value gap* by explicitly redefining beauty as an internal, moral quality, thereby ensuring the translation communicates the Yoruba sociolinguistic priority of inner virtue over external aesthetics.

Proverb 2. *Bí ọmọdé bá ṣubú, a wo iwájú; bí àgbà bá ṣubú, a wo èhìn*: highlights the failure of Formal Equivalence to translate culturally coded metaphors. The literal version, "When a child falls, he looks forward; when an elder falls, he looks back," provides a vivid, parallel-image structure. However, without the shared cultural code, it reads as a bizarre observational statement, its proverbial wisdom entirely opaque. The link between the physical act (gaze direction) and the abstract concepts (future-oriented innocence and retrospective wisdom) is missing. The Formal approach gives us the *metaphorical vehicle* but withholds the *tenor*. The Dynamic translation, "The young look ahead to the future, while the elderly reflect on the past",

executes a **metaphor (decoding)**. It translates the physical description into the cognitive and social principles it symbolizes, making explicit the connection to *age hierarchy*, a fundamental sociolinguistic structure.

Proverb 3. Ajá tí yóò sònù, kò ni gbó fèrè ọlódè: demonstrates how Formal Equivalence can retain cultural form but lose rhetorical force. The literal translation, "The dog that will be lost will not heed the hunter's whistle," preserves the specific actors (hunter, dog) and the narrative. However, for an audience unfamiliar with the hunter-dog hierarchy as a paradigm for legitimate authority and subordinate duty, the proverb's application to human behavior may be missed or weakened. It risks being interpreted merely as a statement about animal stubbornness. The Dynamic translation, "A person who is stubbornly set on a self-destructive path will refuse to listen to any advice", performs a **cultural generalization**. It shifts from the culture-specific social schema to a universal human principle. This shift prioritizes the central message, the sociolinguistic *act of willful disobedience against rightful authority*, over the original imagery. By doing so, it ensures the proverb delivers its intended pragmatic warning about the consequences of ignoring wise counsel, achieving the equivalent *effect* on the target audience.

Proverb 4. Bi ẹnu kò bá ní kí obìnrin kú, òwe a bá ni: presents a unique challenge: it is a statement about the sociolinguistic use of proverbs themselves. The literal translation, "If the mouth does not wish a woman death, a proverb accompanies it," is, as noted, deeply cryptic. A Formal Equivalence approach here results in a riddle that obscures its own purpose. It retains the concrete actors ("mouth," "woman") and the ominous suggestion of death, but completely fails to convey the proverb's *communicative function*. For the Yoruba audience, this proverb is a key to understanding their own speech etiquette. It encodes a rule for social harmony. The Dynamic translation, Proverbs allow for indirect and polite criticism. It prevents direct and offensive speech, performs a radical but necessary **functional translation**. It shifts from describing a cryptic scenario to explicitly stating the rule of social behavior the proverb embodies. This shift bridges the gap by explaining *how* and *why* proverbs are used as tools for "face management," particularly within potentially sensitive contexts like gender relations. The equivalent effect is achieved by translating the **sociolinguistic instruction** itself.

Proverb 5. Okùn ìdè kan ò lè gbé'gi ńlá: illustrates the translation of a **cultural image into a universal social principle**. The literal version, "A single brass chain cannot lift a heavy log," offers a vivid, concrete image rooted in a specific material culture (the brass chain or *okùn ìdè*). A Formal

Equivalence approach preserves this concrete authenticity. However, its effectiveness depends on the target audience intuitively extracting the abstract lesson from the specific artifact, an unreliable assumption. The image may be seen as merely a statement about physics or a peculiar local tool. The Dynamic translation, "A difficult task requires collective effort and teamwork," executes a **principle extraction**. It shifts from the specific cultural artifact to the main value it symbolizes: communalism. This is not a loss but a transposition of meaning to a register immediately accessible to a global audience. The shift ensures the proverb's primary sociolinguistic function, to teach and reinforce the fundamental value of collective labor and mutual support, is clearly and effectively communicated, making the cultural lesson portable.

Proverb 6. Qmọ tó ní "owó n'bẹ lèbùn" kì í gbó'já: deals with the translation of **culturally specific experience into universal authority**. The literal translation, "A child who says 'money is in the giving of alms' does not understand poverty," faithfully retains the religious-cultural frame of reference (Islamic/Christian charity or traditional Yoruba *èbùn*). A Formal approach here maintains cultural thickness but creates a potential barrier. The link between alms-giving and a naive understanding of poverty is culturally learned. For an outsider, the logic might not be self-evident. The Dynamic translation, "Someone who has never experienced hardship cannot give meaningful advice about it," performs a **double generalization**. First, it generalizes the culturally specific act of "alms-giving" to the broad state of "inexperience." Second, it generalizes the specific figure of the naive "child" to "someone." This shift bridges the gap by focusing on the underlying sociolinguistic **principle of epistemic authority**, that legitimate counsel springs from lived experience, not abstract theory or privileged insulation. The translation communicates the *social consequence* of inexperience (the inability to give credible advice) rather than anchoring it in a single religious-cultural practice.

Proverb 7. Ení a férẹ́ ló lè pa ejò, tó bá fé pa á ní Okè Mèkùn: confronts the problem of the **culturally hermetic reference**. The literal translation, "If you want to kill it like the Mèkùn hill, you will fail," is a classic case of Formal Equivalence leading to bafflement. It faithfully reproduces the comparison but withholds the real symbolic meaning of "Okè Mèkùn." For the local audience, this hill likely embodies enormity, impossibility, or a specific legendary quality. For the outsider, it is pure opacity. The Dynamic translation, "Do not overcomplicate simple issues," performs a **pragmatic substitution**. It replaces the unshared cultural signifier with the underlying

piece of practical wisdom. This shift prioritizes the transfer of **functional advice, the primary** goal of proverbial speech, over topographical fidelity. The translator acts as a cultural interpreter, extracting the universal lesson on proportional response from its locally packaged form.

Proverb 8. Ilé là ní wò kí a tó sọmọ lórúkọ: requires the translation of an **implicit cultural schema**. The literal version, "It is the family or house we look to before naming a child," is a clear but incomplete statement for an outsider. It describes a practice without revealing its profound social logic. The Formal approach captures the action but misses its significance as a metonymic rule for social evaluation. The Dynamic translation, "You have to understand a person's background and lineage before you judge or engage with them," makes the **implicit explicit**. It decodes the act of "looking to the house" (*ilé*) as a synecdoche for assessing character, upbringing, and inherited social standing. This shift activates the same **sociolinguistic schema** for the target audience. The understanding that identity is collectively constructed and that the individual is a product and representative of their lineage. The translation preserves the proverb's function as a guide for cautious, informed social navigation.

Proverb 9. Alágbède ò mọ ẹdùn ara rè, ó ní kòrin pé "eni tó mọ ẹdùn, kó wá rù ú.": masterfully uses a **culturally specific narrative to illuminate a universal truth**. The literal translation, focuses on the blacksmith and his hammer. This is vivid and narrative-driven. A Formal Equivalence approach preserves this charming, occupational vignette. However, it risks being interpreted merely as a story about a forgetful craftsman, missing the psychological and social critique. The Dynamic translation, "People often fail to see the burdens in their own lives while being quick to advise others," executes a crucial **semantic refinement and conceptual bridging**. It shifts the "hammer" from a literal tool to the metaphorical "burden," and generalizes the "blacksmith" to "people." This shift builds a bridge from the specific occupational schema (where the tool-bearer is blind to his own tool's weight) to the universal human condition of hypocrisy and lack of self-awareness.

Proverb 10. Tí à bá ní sáré òkèrè, tí a kò mọ eni tí ní pa bòtùn bòsì, òkèrè á tán: presents the translator with a final, **strategic crossroads**: Domestication and Foreignization. This is where the analysis moves from prescribed shifts to a philosophical choice. The literal translation presents a unique Yoruba narrative image: a long journey halted by unattended torn clothes. A pure Formal approach might leave this unexplained. The analysis outlines two valid Dynamic paths:

Domestication ("A stitch in time saves nine"): This achieves perfect equivalent effect and immediate recognition by substituting the entire cultural frame with a pre-existing English proverb. It maximizes intelligibility but performs a complete **cultural erasure**, replacing the Yoruba journey with a British sewing metaphor.

Foreignization (The chosen contextual translation): This strategy, "If you do not take care of small problems...", opts for **cultural retention with explication**. It keeps the original imagery (the journey, the mending) but uses explanatory language to secure the pragmatic meaning. This respects the source culture's unique mode of expression while still ensuring the "major piece of social advice on preventative action" is understood.

Conclusion

The analysis of the ten proverbs in this paper provides evidence that the shifts in the analysis are systematic, principled, and dictated by the need to bridge profound cultural and social gaps. The journey from a literal, formally correspondent translation to a dynamic equivalent one is a journey into the heart of Yoruba culture, its values, social structures, communication etiquette, and its shared knowledge. The conclusion from this study are the following:

1. Yoruba proverbs are dense repositories of sociolinguistics information. They are not just linguistic ornaments but functional tools for teaching cultural values, enforcing social norms, and managing interpersonal relationships. A translator who fails to recognize this will produce a text that is semantically accurate but pragmatically void.
2. The application of Nida's theory confirms that to achieve Formal Correspondence is not only difficult but often undesirable, as it results in opacity and misunderstanding. Translation shifts, whether semantic, cultural, unit, or metaphor, are not a sign of translation failure but a prerequisite for successful cross-cultural communication. These shifts are the tangible manifestations of the translator's effort to resolve sociolinguistics dissonance.
3. This research firmly places the role of the translator in the realm of cultural mediation. It underscores that effective translation requires a dual analysis: first, a sociolinguistics analysis to decode the function and cultural embeddedness of the source text, and second, a linguistic analysis to find the most appropriate target language form to fulfill that function.

4. The translation of Yoruba proverbs is an act of cultural interpretation. The shifts required are a map of the distance between worlds. By systematically identifying the sociolinguistics factors that necessitate these shifts, this research contributes to a more nuanced, respectful, and effective practice of translation that honors the depth and wisdom embedded within African linguistic heritage. It affirms that to translate a proverb is to translate a culture.
5. A Comparative Cross-Linguistic Studies of the sociolinguistics framework to proverbs from other major African language groups (e.g., Igbo, Akan, Swahili) can be further studied in translation studies.
6. Research on the historical study of the translations of Yoruba proverbs would be a significant study for further research in cross-cultural studies.
7. An investigation of the translation of proverbs in Nollywood films, social media, and contemporary Nigerian music would profoundly contribute to scholarship in translation.

References

Abdul-Rahman, N. (2023). Politeness and face in cross-cultural proverb translation: An analysis of Arabic censure. *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, 18(2), 245–264.

Adegbija, E. (1994). Language attitudes in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Multilingual Matters*.

Adeyemi, O. (2021). "Òwe ni şékù": The pragmatics of Yoruba proverbs in Nigerian digital communication. *Journal of West African Languages*, 48(1), 15–34.

Awonuga, C. O. (2018). Proverbs as expressions of Yoruba cultural values. *African Studies Review*, 61(1), 34–52.

Banwo, A. (2012). Challenges of translating African proverbs into English. *Ibadan Journal of Linguistics*, 9 (1), 77–93.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.

Catford, J. C. (1965). *A linguistic theory of translation*. Oxford University Press.

Chen, L., & Wang, F. (2022). Lost in politeness: A pragmatic analysis of speech act translation in Sino-Anglo business discourse. *The Translator*, 28(3), 312–330.

Eze, C. (2022). The proverb as a sword and shield: Indirectness and face-work in contemporary Igbo political oratory. *Language & Communication*, 85, 144–156.

Finnegan, R. (2012). Oral literature in Africa. Open Book Publishers.

Gitau, W. (2020). Reader response to translated African proverbs: An experimental study on comprehension and appreciation. *Meta: Journal des traducteurs*, 65(2), 345– 367.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1073636ar>

Gumperz, J. J. (1982). Discourse strategies. Cambridge University Press.

Hymes, D. (1974). Foundations in sociolinguistics: An ethnographic approach. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Kofi, A. (2024). Selling with the ancestors: Sociolinguistic equivalence in the translation of proverbial advertising slogans in Ghana. *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies*, 36(1), 88–112.

Li, X. (2023). Diachronic shifts in proverb translation: A corpus-based study of English renderings of Chinese sayings. *Across Languages and Cultures*, 24(1), 1–20.

Mieder, W. (2004). Proverbs: A handbook. Greenwood Press.

Moyo, T. (2024). Translating Ubuntu: Epistemic justice and the challenge of African philosophical concepts in cross-linguistic transfer. *Translation Spaces*. Advance online publication.
<https://doi.org/10.1075/ts.23035.moy>

Nida, E. A. (1964). Toward a science of translating. Brill.

Olanrewaju, S. (2023). "The horse of speech on screen": A functional analysis of Yoruba proverbs in Nollywood film dialogue. *African Studies*, 82(2), 178–199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00020184.2023.2204673>

Olatunji, O. O. (1984). Features of Yoruba oral poetry. University Press Limited.

Oyelaran, O. (1992). Pragmatic functions of Yoruba proverbs in discourse.

African Linguistic Studies, 8, 101–118.

Venuti, L. (1995). The translator's invisibility: A history of translation.

Routledge.