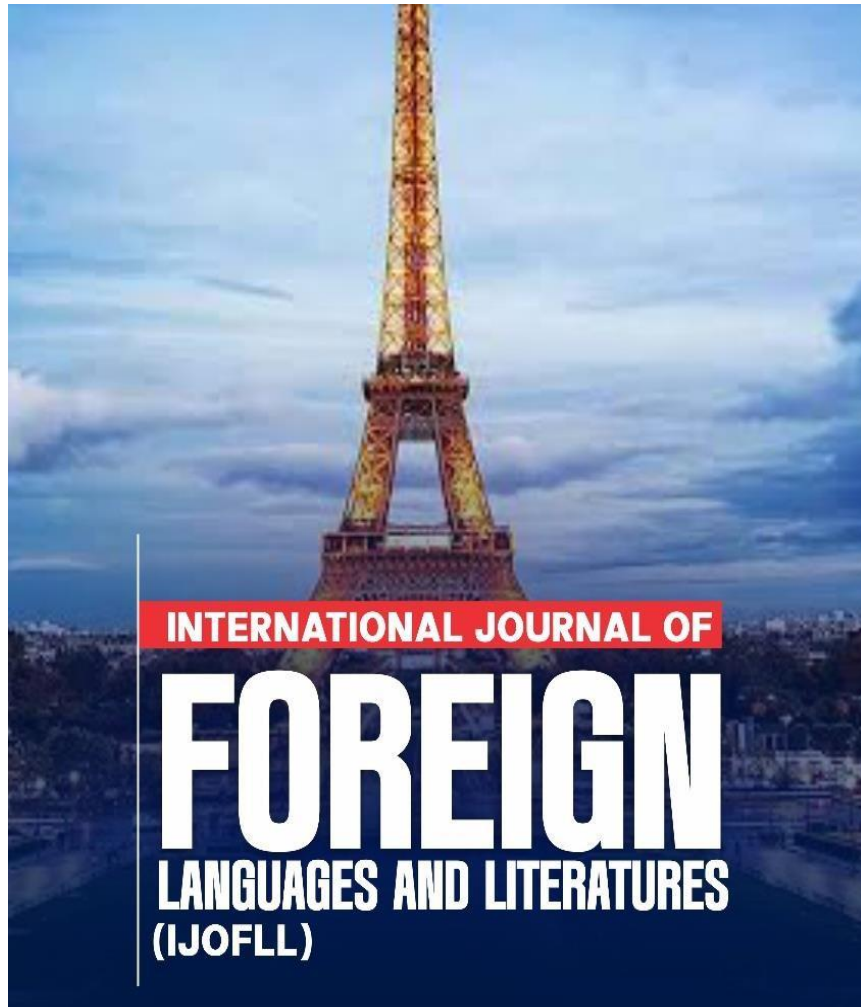




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ABOUT THE JOURNAL

IJOFL, also known as International Journal of Foreign Languages and Literatures, is a peer-review journal of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Port Harcourt. It is conceived to promote rigour and erudition in intellectual research in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Only well-researched articles and reviews in French, English and German especially which adhere strictly to rich intellectual culture and standard will be received and published after double-blind peer review and in so far as the researcher is a University-based scholar or comes from a recognized professional body or institute of very high repute.

Frequency of publication: The Journal is conceived to be published three times in a year that is in April, August and December.

This inaugural edition in September 2024 marked the beginning of a great journey into the world of scholarly inquiry with unbound hopes and aspirations. The papers that appear here are tailored either in MLA (9TH edition) or APA (7th edition) reference style.

We congratulate the contributors and remain optimistic that the volume will make great impact in the academic circle and so will be well-received by the reading public.

Dr. Michael N. Mombe

Editorial Secretary

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Erratum:

Les auteurs de l'article, "Politique et planification linguistiques dans l'Etat de Bayelsa au Nigéria" publié dans l'Edition inaugurale de IJOFFRES, soulignent qu'à la page 4 de l'article, ils ont présenté une carte géographique de l'Etat de Bayelsa (cf. Table 1), mais ils ont omis par inadvertance la source qui est l'article de journal en ligne, Bayelsa Businesswoman Nabbed for Trafficking in Girls, publié dans Leadership Newspaper.

DOI <https://leadership.ng/bayelsa-businesswoman-nabbed-for-trafficking-in-girls//>

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Autosegmental Analysis of Tonal Adaptation in Kanuri Loanwords in Margi

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Abstract

Comparative scholarly investigation into Kanuri and Margi at the segmental level has received some attention, particularly regarding loanword adaptation. At the suprasegmental level, however, virtually no research has compared the two languages. Although Greenberg classified Kanuri and Margi into distinct language phyla—assigning Kanuri to the Saharan branch of the Nilo-Saharan phylum and Margi to the Chadic branch of the Afro-Asiatic phylum—prolonged historical contact has resulted in significant lexical borrowing. This paper examines the tonal modifications that Kanuri loanwords undergo to comply with the phonotactic constraints of Margi. Kanuri data were extracted from Modu alongside generalisations derived from native-speaker intuitions, while Margi data were gathered via structured interviews with native speakers and supplemented by Hoffmann. A corpus of approximately 50 Kanuri loanwords and their Margi equivalents was analysed using Goldsmith's Autosegmental Phonology framework. The findings reveal a systematic tonal shift wherein a Kanuri Low tone is realised as a High tone in Margi, yielding a High-High tonal pattern in the recipient language. The analysis demonstrates tonal representation autonomy, systematic Low tone deletion, High tone spreading, and tonal neutralisation in loanword phonology. Furthermore, the Kanuri Low-High contrast is restructured in Margi through delinking and reassociation, yielding a uniform High tonal pattern. Ultimately, the study confirms that the adaptation pattern of Kanuri

loanwords is strictly governed by the phonological constraints of the recipient language.

Keywords: Autosegmental phonology, tonal adaptation, loanword phonology, Kanuri, Margi, phonotactic constraints.

1.0 Introduction

Borrowing is the process of importing linguistic items from one linguistic system into another as a result of sustained contact between speech communities. The language from which linguistic elements are taken is referred to as the donor or source language, whereas the language that adopts these elements is known as the recipient or target language (Ogah & Amos, 2009). The borrowing of lexical items across languages has long attracted scholarly attention. One reason for this interest is that the phonological nativisation of loanwords provides valuable evidence about the operation of the phonological system of the borrowing language, alongside other sources such as language games, poetics, speech rate, style, and linguistic variation (Crawford, 2009).

Loanword phonology has emerged as a productive area of theoretical and empirical research. Most studies have focused on segmental and phonotactic adaptation, while suprasegmental adaptation has received comparatively less attention. In recent years, however, there has been growing interest in the suprasegmental aspects of loanword adaptation, particularly the treatment of tone, stress, and pitch accent across languages. Against this background, the present study examines the suprasegmental features of Kanuri loanwords in Margi, with particular emphasis on the preservation or modification of pitch prominence, especially the distribution of high tone.

Kanuri is a Nilo-Saharan language spoken in Nigeria, Chad, and Niger (Bulakarima, 1997, 2001). Previous studies have established that Kanuri is a tonal language (Bulakarima, 2001; Bulakarima & Shettima, 2012; Cyffer, 1974; Hutchison, 1981; Jarrett, 1977; Koelle, 1854; Lukas, 1937). According to Bulakarima and Shettima

(2012), Kanuri has two underlying tones, high and low, although rising, falling, and, less frequently, mid tones also occur (p. 46). Falling contours may be analysed as a sequence of high (´) and low (̀) tones, whereas rising contours may be analysed as a sequence of low (̀) and high (´) tones on adjacent tone-bearing units. Consequently, Kanuri exhibits five phonetic realisations of tone: high (´), low (̀), rising (ˇ), falling (ˆ), and mid (v). Tone is marked on vowels and performs important lexical and grammatical functions. Specifically, it serves to distinguish meaning and to indicate grammatical relationships.

Margi is a Central Chadic language spoken in the northern parts of Adamawa State and the south-eastern parts of Borno State, with some speakers also found in neighbouring territories across the border (Dlibugunaya, 1999; Greenberg, 1963; Hoffmann, 1963). Like Kanuri, Margi is a tonal language. Hoffmann (1963) observed that each syllable in a Margi word or sentence possesses an inherent pitch that is as essential as its consonants and vowels (p. 33). He further noted that Margi has two basic tone levels, high and low. In addition to these level tones, the language exhibits a rising tone (ˇ), which is analysed as a combination of low and high tones, and a falling tone (ˆ), which is analysed as a combination of high and low tones.

Kanuri and Margi have been in contact for several centuries, dating back at least to the fourteenth century. According to Lohr (1998), linguistic evidence suggests a historical connection between Kanuri and Margi through the Malgwa (formerly known as Gamergu). The Malgwa are regarded as the original inhabitants of north-eastern Nigeria before the gradual migration of the Kanembu/Kanuri into the region during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries from the eastern side of Lake Chad. Over time, the Kanembu/Kanuri came to dominate many settled Chadic-speaking groups through political influence and the spread of Islam. Under the pressure of Borno expansion, many Margi communities gradually migrated southwards (Abubakar, 1980). Today, the Malgwa settlement area extends across parts of Borno State, including Dikwa,

Bama, Pulka, and Sambisa, as well as communities along the Gwoza–Damboa road. Although the Malgwa predominantly live alongside Kanuri speakers, they are also commonly found in mixed communities with Margi speakers, particularly in Damboa (Modu, 2017).

Kanuri and Margi belong to different language families. Nevertheless, prolonged contact between their speakers has resulted in extensive lexical borrowing from Kanuri into Margi (Modu, 2017). The present study investigates the adaptation patterns of Kanuri loanwords in Margi, focusing specifically on the treatment of suprasegmental features, particularly tone. The analysis demonstrates that suprasegmental adaptation in loanwords involves a range of modifications affecting tonal patterns in different ways.

2.0 Literature Review

Cross-linguistically, loanword adaptation has been examined at both the segmental and suprasegmental levels. Segmental adaptation has received considerable scholarly attention across a wide range of languages, including Kanuri (Abdullahi, 2008; Bulakarima, 1999; Dikwa, 1988; Grema, 2011), Hausa (Baldi, 1991; Salim, 1981), Fulfulde (Sadiq, 2012), Fijian (Kenstowicz, 2007), and Korean (Boersma & Hamann, 2009; Kang, 2003), among others. According to Kang (2010b, as cited in Shafi, 2017), the phonological adaptation of loanwords may affect multiple levels of the phonological system, including individual segments, phonotactic constraints, suprasegmental features, and morphophonological processes in the recipient language. At the segmental level, Hock and Joseph (2009) argue that when a source language contains phonemes that are absent from the phonemic inventory of the borrowing language, such sounds are typically replaced by the closest available equivalents. For example, the English dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ are realised as dental-alveolar stops

/tʰ/ and /dʰ/ in Hindi (Hock, 1991), while English /f/ is adapted as the aspirated bilabial stop /ph/ in Burmese (Chang, 2009).

Suprasegmental adaptation, involving adjustments to stress, tone, or pitch patterns, also occurs when lexical items are borrowed from one language into another. In such cases, the prosodic features of the source language are mapped onto those of the recipient language (Kenstowicz, 2007). For instance, in the adaptation of English loanwords into Cantonese, stressed syllables are generally assigned a high tone (H), whereas non-final unstressed syllables are mapped onto a mid tone (M). This pattern is illustrated by the adaptation of the English word *buffet* as /pow [H] fey [M]/ (Shafi, 2017).

A particularly relevant study for the present research is that of Modu (2017), which investigates the phonological structure of Kanuri loanwords in Margi. The study reveals that many Kanuri loanwords undergo phonological modifications in order to conform to the phonological structure of Margi. These adaptations involve both consonantal and vocalic changes, including palatalisation, denasalisation, degemination, devoicing, rule inversion, vowel lengthening, vowel raising, vowel fronting, and vowel backing. While Modu's (2017) study focuses primarily on segmental adaptation, the present study extends this line of inquiry by examining the suprasegmental features of Kanuri loanwords in Margi, particularly tonal adaptation. Furthermore, Modu's work serves as an important source of data for the current investigation.

Kenstowicz and Kisseberth (1979), in their discussion of generative phonology, devote attention to the tonal system of Margi. Drawing on data originally presented by Hoffmann (1963), they identify three principal tonal categories in the language, as illustrated below:

1. **Rising tone:** *fí* ‘to swell’
2. **Low tone:** *tì* ‘cry’
3. **High tone:** *kyí* ‘compound’

Based on the behaviour of these tonal patterns, Kenstowicz and Kisseberth (1979) argue in favour of a suprasegmental representation of tone.

Using classical phonemic discovery procedures, particularly minimal-pair analysis and the examination of free variation, Dlibugunaya (2016) establishes the phonemic inventory of Margi. The study identifies and describes the consonant and vowel systems of the language, paying particular attention to their distributional characteristics. The findings indicate that the consonant /v/ does not occur in word-initial position, whereas the consonants /b, w, f, v, t, d, dʃ, z, dz, n, tl, dl, sh, zh, c, gy, ky, hy, ghy, ny, k, g, h, gh, j, w, y/ do not occur in word-final position. In addition, the consonants /j/ and /v/ occur only in word-initial and word-medial positions. With regard to vowels, the study shows that all phonetic vowels may occur in word-initial, word-medial, and word-final positions.

Mohammed (2008, as cited in Modu, 2023, p. 46) examines the segmental phonology of Kanuri, focusing on its phonemic inventory and major phonological processes. The study identifies 26 consonant phonemes and six vowel phonemes in Kanuri, in contrast to Bulakarima's (1987) analysis, which proposes 28 consonant phonemes. Mohammed argues that the phonemes /L/ and /ts/, identified by Bulakarima (1987), should instead be treated as allophonic variants. Specifically, /L/ is considered a variant of /l/, while /ts/ is viewed as a sound introduced into Kanuri through contact with Hausa. The study further identifies three highly productive phonological processes in Kanuri: (a) assimilation, including simple assimilation, voicing assimilation, sonorisation, and palatalisation; (b) spirantisation; and (c) deletion.

Bulakarima and Shettima (2012) provide a concise description of Kanuri phonology and tone. Their analysis indicates that Kanuri has two underlying tones, high and low. In addition to these basic tonal categories, syllables may also bear rising or falling contours, while a mid tone occurs only rarely. On this basis, the authors conclude that Kanuri exhibits five phonetic tonal realisations: high, low, rising, falling, and mid tones.

Nwabudike et al. (2015) conduct a contrastive analysis of the segmental phonemes of Tiv and English. Their study examines the implications of phonological differences between the two languages for the acquisition of English as a second language by native Tiv speakers. The findings reveal that Tiv possesses a larger consonant inventory than English. Although both languages have comparable vowel inventories, certain vowels, such as /a/ and /o/, occur in Tiv but not in English, while vowels such as /ə/ and /æ/, which occur in English, are absent in Tiv. The absence of these English vowel phonemes in Tiv is identified as a potential source of difficulty for Tiv learners of English.

Overall, the reviewed studies demonstrate that loanword adaptation involves both segmental and suprasegmental modifications. However, while considerable attention has been devoted to segmental adaptation in Kanuri and other languages, relatively little research has examined the suprasegmental adaptation of Kanuri loanwords in Margi. The present study seeks to address this gap by investigating how tonal features are adapted when lexical items are borrowed from Kanuri into Margi.

3.0 Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study employed both primary and secondary methods of data collection. Primary data were obtained from native speakers of Margi, while secondary data were sourced from relevant published and unpublished materials. The Kanuri data analysed in this

study were extracted primarily from Modu's (2016, 2017) dissertation and article on the segmental adaptation of Kanuri loanwords in Margi.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is Autosegmental Phonology, proposed by Goldsmith (1976). The theory was developed primarily to account for tonal phenomena in tone languages, where tonal features often function independently of segmental features. In Autosegmental Phonology, tones are represented on a separate tier, known as the tonal tier, while consonants and vowels are represented on the segmental tier. The relationship between tones and segments is established through association lines, which indicate the linkage between tonal units and tone-bearing units (TBUs). This multi-tiered representation facilitates the analysis of tonal processes such as tone spreading, tone shifting, delinking, and tone stability.

3.1.1 Basic Assumptions of Autosegmental Phonology

Autosegmental Phonology is founded on several key assumptions.

3.1.1.1 Tonal Autonomy

Tones function independently of consonants and vowels. Consequently, tonal features are not permanently attached to specific segments but may operate autonomously within the phonological system.

3.1.1.2 Association Lines

Tones are linked to tone-bearing units, typically vowels or syllables, through association lines. These lines indicate the relationship between tonal and segmental elements and may be altered through various phonological processes.

3.1.1.3 Well-Formedness Condition

The Well-Formedness Condition ensures that tonal representations are systematically organised. It stipulates that:

- a. Every tone must be associated with at least one tone-bearing unit.
- b. Every tone-bearing unit must be associated with at least one tone.
- c. Association lines must not cross.

These principles maintain a coherent relationship between tonal and segmental representations.

3.1.1.4 Tone Stability

When a segment bearing a tone is deleted, the associated tone does not necessarily disappear. Instead, it may remain as a floating tone and subsequently reassociate with a neighbouring tone-bearing unit. This principle accounts for the preservation of tonal information despite segmental loss.

3.1.2 Tonal Processes in Autosegmental Phonology

Within the autosegmental framework, tonal modifications may occur through a number of processes.

3.1.2.1 Delinking

A tone may become detached from the tone-bearing unit to which it was originally associated.

3.1.2.2 Tone Spreading

A tone may extend its association to adjacent tone-bearing units, resulting in the sharing of tonal features across multiple segments.

3.1.2.3 Reassociation of Floating Tones

A floating tone may reassociate with an available tone-bearing unit. Such reassociation may result in phonological effects such as contour tones, downstep, or upstep.

Autosegmental Phonology is particularly suitable for the present study because it departs from earlier linear models of phonology by representing tonal and segmental features on separate but interacting tiers. This theoretical perspective provides an effective framework for analysing the tonal adaptations observed in Kanuri loanwords in Margi.

4.0 Data Presentation and Discussions

This section presents and discusses the tonal patterns that exist in the treatment of Kanuri Loanwords in Margi.

4.1 The Tonal Pattern

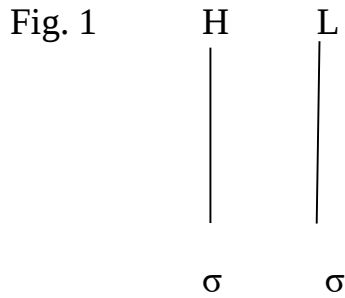
Both Kanuri and Margi are described as tonal languages, and all tone levels are found in both languages, i.e., high, low, rising, falling and mid. However, the words that correspond in sound and meaning can also be differentiated by tone marking. That means, there is contrast in the High-Low Tone in Kanuri to High-High Tone levels in Margi. The data below show how the tonal changes are accounted for.

3. Kanuri	Margi	Meaning
a. ruwo	rubo	writing
[rúwò]	[rúbó]	

b.	masku [máskù]	masku [máskú]	expert
c.	butu [bútù]	butuu [bútúu]	cheap
d.	riwa [ríwà]	riba [ríwá]	profit
e.	reta [réta]	reta [réta]	half
f.	sala [sálà]	sala [sálá]	prayer
g.	zanna [zánnà]	janna [dʒánná]	paradise
h.	ganga [gáŋgà]	ganga [gáŋgá]	drum
i.	duwu [dúwù]	duku [dúkú]	praise singer, musician
j.	tasa [tásà]	tasa [tásá]	metal dish
k.	yala [jálà]	yala [jálá]	North

4.2 Source Language Representation

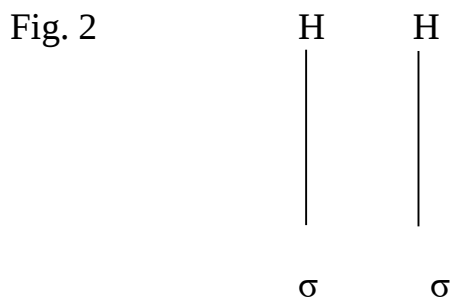
The above data shows that the Kanuri forms typically exhibit a High Tone on the first syllable and a Low Tone on the second syllable.



The pattern H – L occurs consistently in Kanuri as seen in the examples (a – k) above.

4.3 Target Language Representation

Based on the data set above, it is identified that Marghi, the target language's output displays a High Tone on both the first and the second syllables. This can be seen in the representation below.

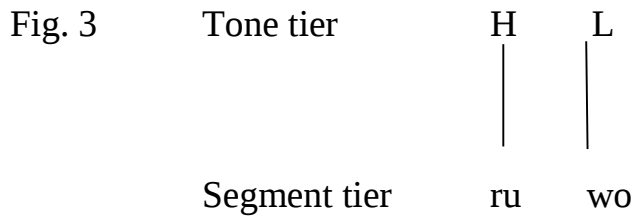


In the adaptation of Kanuri loanwords in Margi, Margi eliminates the final Low Tone of Kanuri to High Tone. This is due to the fact that in some instances, Margi does not have cooccurrence constraints in terms of its tonal phonology. It is indicated in the works of Margi linguists that two vowels need to be adjacent in a sequence, meaning, two adjacent tones must be the same. Therefore, the Kanuri words borrowed into Margi with High-Low tone must conform to the phonetic constraint of Margi as High-High.

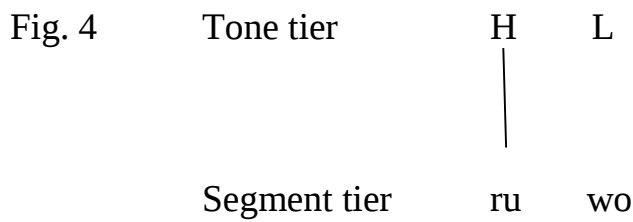
4.4 Data Analysis

Consider the derivational illustration of the tonal adaptation of the Kanuri loanwords. The derivation for *rúwò* → *rúbó* 'writing' illustrates the process below:

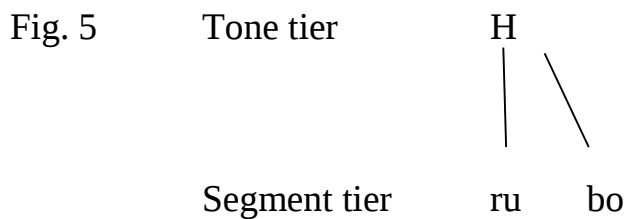
The Kanuri Underlying Representation



Low Tone Delinking



The Margi High tone spreading



The Margi process above indicates that there is delinking of L and rightward spreading of H. It is the same derivations applied across all loanwords from Kanuri to Margi as seen in the examples (a – k).

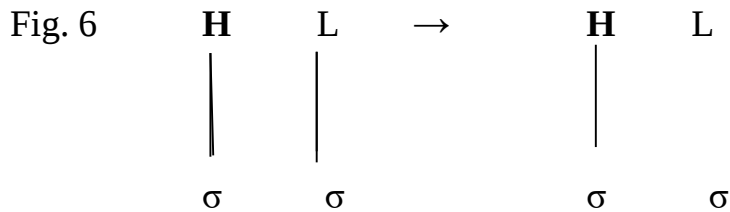
4.3.1 Data Discussion

Based on the data analyzed, it is observed that the tonal adaptation process in Kanuri Loanwords in Margi involves two main operations:

4.
 - a. Low Tone Delinking
 - b. High Tone Spreading

4.3.1.1 Low Tone Delinking

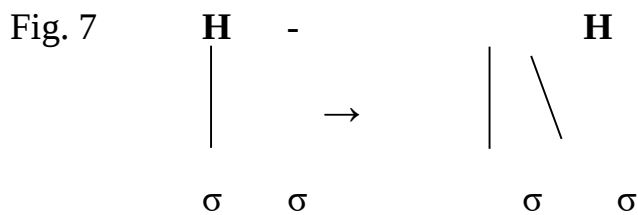
The Low Tone associated with the final syllable in Kanuri is delinked during borrowing into Margi. This can be represented in the figures below:



The Low tone becomes floating and is subsequently deleted.

4.3.1.2 High Tone Spreading

Following delinking, the remaining High Tones spread to the adjacent syllable to satisfy the requirement that each tone bearing unit must be associated with a tone.



The Margi output results in a High-High pattern.

4.4 Rule Formulation

The tonal adaptation can be formalized as follows:

Low Tone Deletion

$$L \rightarrow \emptyset \quad / \quad H \text{ ______ } \sigma$$

High Tone Spreading

$$H \rightarrow \text{spreads rightwards to adjacent TBU}$$

4.5 Data Discussion

From the above data analyzed, it is apparent that both languages share the same words that are constructed with the same consonants and vowels, but they differ in tone. It is

apparent that in Kanuri words consisting of H tone in the first syllable, such a syllable is mapped to the L of Margi. Going by the above examples in 4. *máskù* → *máskú* ‘expert’ and the remaining data, the word *máskù* in Kanuri is pronounced with High-Low tone, while in Margi it is pronounced *máskú* with High-High tone.

As indicated in the data analysis, the tonal adaptation pattern of the Kanuri loanwords in Margi suggests several properties of Margi phonology. The data indicates that in the treatment of Kanuri loanwords in Margi, there is *tone stability*, *neutralization of final low tone* and *borrowing repair strategy*. In relation to the tone stability, it is observed that deletion of low tone triggers reassociation rather than leaving a toneless syllable, neutralization of final low tone suggests that Margi appears to prohibit final low tones which results to systematic tonal raising while the borrowing repair strategy indicates that Margi loanwords are adapted to conform to both segmental and Margi tonal constraints while preserving some structures where necessary. For the segmental adaptation of Kanuri loanwords in Margi, see Modu (2017).

5.0 Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that Kanuri and Margi are typologically and linguistically distinct languages. However, their long-standing contact has resulted in the borrowing of lexical items from one language into the other. The study has shown that many Kanuri and Margi words are similar in spelling, pronunciation, and meaning, yet they can be differentiated on the basis of tone. The paper argues that tonal contrasts play a crucial role in distinguishing corresponding words in the two languages.

Furthermore, the tonal adaptation of Kanuri loanwords in Margi provides strong empirical support for Autosegmental Phonology. The analysis, conducted within the theoretical framework of Autosegmental Phonology, demonstrates the independence of tonal representation, as well as the systematic processes of Low Tone deletion,

High Tone spreading, and tonal neutralisation in loanword phonology. The analysis further reveals that the Kanuri High–Low tonal contrast is restructured in Margi through delinking and reassociation, resulting in a High–High tonal pattern.

The findings confirm that the adaptation of Kanuri loanwords in Margi is governed by the phonological constraints of the recipient language. They also illustrate the explanatory power of Goldsmith’s Autosegmental Framework in accounting for tonal adaptation processes in loanword phonology.

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Audience Engagement and Cultural Identity Promotion through Nigerian Pidgin on Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM, Uyo.

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Abstract

This study investigated the role of Nigerian Pidgin in promoting audience engagement and cultural identity on Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM, Uyo. Adopting a descriptive survey research design, the study purposively sampled 384 regular listeners from a population of 305,961 residents in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Data were gathered using a validated, researcher-designed questionnaire demonstrating good internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.845) and analysed using frequencies and simple percentages. Findings revealed that Nigerian Pidgin plays a central role in enhancing audience comprehension, engagement, and loyalty. Furthermore, the language fosters informational clarity, emotional resonance, and inclusivity by accurately reflecting the multilingual and multicultural composition of the listening community. The study concludes that Nigerian Pidgin is a powerful instrument for reinforcing cultural identity and building communal ties in radio broadcasting.

Consequently, it is recommended that broadcasters strategically integrate Nigerian Pidgin across diverse programming—including news, entertainment, and public education—to maximize audience engagement while maintaining content credibility.

Keywords: Audience engagement, cultural identity, Nigerian Pidgin, broadcast media, Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM.

1.1 Introduction

Multilingualism in Nigeria has created a complex linguistic landscape where communication is both a challenge and a reflection of national identity. With over 500 languages spoken across the country (Ahaotu, 2019; Ehondor, 2020), effective communication across ethnic and social boundaries remains a major concern. Although English serves as the official language, it often alienates large segments of the population who have limited proficiency, particularly among rural and less-educated dwellers. Within this context, Nigerian Pidgin (NP) has emerged as an accessible, expressive, and unifying linguistic code that bridges communication gaps and fosters social cohesion. As Crystal (2013) noted, over 40% of Nigerians use Pidgin as a second language, making it one of the most widely spoken and culturally relevant languages in the country.

In Uyo, the capital of Akwa Ibom State, Nigerian Pidgin has become a lingua franca that facilitates interaction among the city's ethnically diverse population. The use of Pidgin in local media, particularly radio broadcasting, has deepened audience connection by reflecting the linguistic realities and cultural nuances of its listeners. Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM exemplifies this shift towards linguistic inclusivity in media practice. By adopting NP in its programmes, the station communicates in a way that resonates with the everyday speech, humour, and cultural expressions of its audience, fostering a stronger sense of engagement and belonging. As Nweke *et al.*

(2023) observed, Nigerian Pidgin functions as a unifying language that transcends ethnic and cultural divisions, enhancing the inclusivity of public discourse.

Audience engagement in broadcasting depends significantly on the extent to which the language of communication reflects the cultural identity and lived experiences of the listeners. In Nigeria, the dominance of English in formal communication has historically created a social divide, marginalising those who cannot express themselves fluently in the language. The use of Nigerian Pidgin in radio reverses this exclusionary trend by empowering audiences to participate in the communicative process. Through humour, music, commentary, and interactive segments, radio presenters employ Pidgin not merely as a language but as a social instrument for building community and a shared identity.

The media, as Choudhary (2020) explained, plays a significant role in shaping public attitudes and social consciousness. In the Nigerian context, the adoption of Nigerian Pidgin by radio stations has transformed the communicative landscape, providing a platform for linguistic diversity and cultural representation. According to Balogun (2023), the prevalence of Pidgin in broadcast and digital media has expanded rapidly, with many stations incorporating it into their programming to reach broader audiences. Similarly, Akindele (2019) attributed this trend to the informality and accessibility of Nigerian Pidgin, which make it attractive to media outlets seeking to engage both literate and non-literate audiences.

Furthermore, the use of Nigerian Pidgin in the media contributes to the promotion of cultural identity and inclusivity. Osoba (2014) noted that Pidgin extends beyond a mere linguistic code to serve as a medium of cultural expression, reflecting indigenous humour, music, and storytelling traditions. In an era of globalisation where indigenous identities risk erosion, Nigerian Pidgin reaffirms local creativity and cultural pride. It embodies a sense of ownership and shared identity among Nigerians, countering the

alienation that accompanies the dominance of English. This aligns with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1993) critique of linguistic imperialism, as cited in Kamwangamalu (2016), which warns that dependence on colonial languages perpetuates cultural subordination.

In the case of Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM, Uyo, the deliberate use of Nigerian Pidgin reflects an understanding of the sociolinguistic realities of its audience. It demonstrates how language choice can become a strategic tool for enhancing listener engagement and promoting inclusivity. The use of NP enables the station to communicate complex ideas in relatable terms, evoke shared cultural experiences, and foster dialogue that cuts across class and ethnic lines. As Karabulatova *et al.* (2017) explained, the relationship between language and society is reciprocal; language both shapes and reflects social behaviour. Thus, by integrating Nigerian Pidgin into its programmes, Inspiration Radio not only mirrors the cultural diversity of its listeners but also reinforces their sense of belonging within Nigeria.

The significant deployment of NP in radio broadcasting on Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM reflects a major shift in media communication strategies. However, despite its communicative advantages, there is limited empirical evidence on how NP contributes to listeners' emotional connection, participatory behaviour, and identification with broadcast content. The absence of such research creates a gap in understanding how NP functions not just as a linguistic medium, but also as a cultural resource that promotes collective identity and inclusivity among radio audiences. The station's increasing reliance on NP also raises questions about the depth and quality of audience engagement. While NP may foster immediacy and intimacy, its informal tone and variable structure may alienate certain listener groups, especially older or more educated audiences who associate Standard English with prestige and authority.

This linguistic divide could lead to differentiated audience participation and selective listening habits, affecting the station's inclusivity and cultural reach.

Additionally, the absence of a standardised orthography or grammar in NP may limit its ability to serve as a stable cultural symbol, leading to inconsistencies in meaning and interpretation. Moreover, while NP bridges ethnic and linguistic boundaries, its dominance in the media could unintentionally diminish the visibility of indigenous languages and erode linguistic diversity. Hence, the central problem this study addresses is the dual role of NP in radio broadcasting as a tool for enhancing audience engagement and as an agent of cultural representation, alongside how these roles intersect to influence public perception and participation.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to investigate audience engagement and the promotion of cultural identity through Nigerian Pidgin (NP) on Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM, Uyo. The specific objectives are to:

- Assess how the use of Nigerian Pidgin influences audience engagement and reception on Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM, Uyo.
- Examine the role of Nigerian Pidgin in promoting cultural identity and inclusivity on Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM, Uyo.

1.3 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does the use of Nigerian Pidgin influence audience engagement and reception on Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM, Uyo?

2. What is the role of Nigerian Pidgin in promoting cultural identity and inclusivity on Inspiration R
3. Audio 105.9 FM, Uyo?

1.4 Literature Review

This study is anchored on the Preponderance Theory, propounded by the American economist and political scientist Anthony Downs (2002) within his economic and public interest models. According to McQuail (2002), Downs posited that the core thrust of the Preponderance Theory is the imperative for the media to give paramount consideration to the aggregate interests of the majority of the public. The theory suggests that media outlets will prioritise content that appeals to the largest segment of their audience, ultimately shaping public opinion and influencing socio-political outcomes. Downs argued that this approach is necessary for media organisations to remain financially viable and relevant in a competitive market, a phenomenon he termed the 'Majoritarian Way'.

Under this framework, the public interest is believed to align with the majority choice, maximizing individual preferences while simultaneously serving the common good. McQuail (2002) noted that this majoritarian demand can be measured through market forces, voting patterns, and the weight of public opinion. Consequently, the public interest cannot, by definition, be on the 'losing side' or stand demonstrably contrary to the desires of the majority. In essence, the 'Majoritarian Way' emphasizes that media organisations must align their content with public market demands to ensure financial success and long-term relevance.

This research maintains that using Pidgin in broadcasting is a strategic mechanism for Nigerian media organisations to expand their market reach and increase listenership. Because Nigerian Pidgin is the most accessible language to the majority of Nigerians

(Ahaotu & Umera-Okeke, 2025), incorporating it into media programming can attract a broader audience and improve a station's popularity. Curran *et al.* (2000), as cited by McQuail (2002), stated that without narrative appeal and human interest, news is unlikely to be widely disseminated or retain commodity value in a competitive market. Therefore, by utilising Pidgin, media organisations can effectively engage audiences and enhance the marketability of their content, leading to increased revenue and sustainability.

Applying the Preponderance Theory to this study sheds light on how Pidgin impacts audience engagement and market penetration. It implies that the success or failure of radio programmes broadcast in Nigerian Pidgin can be measured by message reach, public acceptability, commercial patronage, and listener feedback. However, broadcasters must strike a structural balance: using Nigerian Pidgin to reach a wider audience while ensuring that content remains authentic, credible, and relatable to the target demographic.

1.5 Language Situation in Nigeria

Nigeria is a highly multilingual nation comprising diverse speech communities and ethnic groups. Sociolinguistic studies have long highlighted the complexity of the country's native languages. Bamgbose and Okike, as cited in Ndimele (2014), estimate the number of Nigerian indigenous languages at 374 and 400, respectively. Conversely, Adegbija, as cited in Bahir (2014), claims that over 500 languages are spoken across the country. This stark linguistic diversity necessitated the adoption of English—a colonial legacy—as Nigeria's official language and primary lingua franca.

Predominant among the nation's many languages are Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, and Nigerian Pidgin. Igbo is spoken predominantly across the five states of the south-eastern region, while Yoruba is spoken across the south-west and extends into parts of

the north-central region. Of the three major indigenous languages, Hausa enjoys the largest population of native users, dominant across the 19 states of the northern region.

However, Nigerian Pidgin commands a larger population of total users than the three major indigenous languages combined. Jowitt (1991), as cited in Bahir (2014, p. 36), confirms this widespread popularity:

"The situation today is that pidgin flourishes as a medium of inter-ethnic communication, especially in the large cities with many non-indigenous residents (Bendel, Benin, Port Harcourt, etc.) or throughout states with many ethnic groups..."

Consequently, regarding widespread geographical spread and usage across all socio-economic strata, neither the three major indigenous languages nor Standard English can match the demographic reach of NP.

English retains its status as the nation's official second language and has served as the formal lingua franca since independence. It is primarily acquired in formal classroom settings and is a compulsory subject at all levels of education; for example, it is taught as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to freshmen in tertiary institutions. Although Nigerian English possesses peculiar local flavours and nuances, it is globally recognised as a distinct subset of World Englishes.

1.6 The Relationship between Language and Communication

Language functions as a social institution that both shapes and is shaped by the society in which it is used, serving as a foundational cultural element. Communication within a community is facilitated primarily through this shared tool. Formally defined, communication is the interchange of information between an encoder (sender) and a decoder (receiver) via a chosen channel, executed in a manner that elicits an

appropriate feedback response. This process can be achieved with or without words; verbal communication relies on speech or writing, whereas non-verbal communication relies on shared structural symbols, gestures, and signs. When language is deployed, the mutual baseline of the interlocutors must be considered, as comprehension is the primary motive of communication.

Effective communication occurs only when words are carefully chosen and language is applied with due consideration for the varied backgrounds of the interlocutors, including differences in age, gender, social status, and educational attainment. In verbal communication, the topic and contextual situation dictate the appropriate diction required to make a message accessible. Conversely, if language is misused or ideas are vaguely expressed, information is obscured rather than transmitted, resulting in a breakdown of communication. Speakers and writers must therefore use words appropriately according to context. The deployment of high-sounding or bombastic vocabulary to appear elitist often alienates audiences, making the communicator appear pompous. True linguistic competence lies in applying simple, concrete words that allow listeners or readers to construct clear mental pictures of their immediate environment. To achieve effective communication, a language user must:

- a. Use language that suits the comprehension level of the receiver.
- b. Adhere to acceptable grammatical standards.
- c. Deploy the appropriate linguistic register based on the topic of discourse.

1.6.1 Empirical Review of Related Literature

Several researchers have investigated the communicative functions of Nigerian Pidgin. **Nweke *et al.* (2023)** evaluated the influence of Pidgin English in Nigerian media and its broader societal implications. Employing a systematic literature review methodology, they screened studies across databases such as Web of Science, Google

Scholar, and ResearchGate, retaining 16 studies based on strict inclusion criteria. Using a qualitative meta-synthesis, the authors found that Pidgin is extensively used across Nigerian print, television, and radio media for both education and entertainment. The study highlighted several societal benefits of this trend, including the promotion of linguistic diversity, national unity, cultural identity, and communication accessibility. They concluded that NP plays a unique role as a bridging language across Nigeria's fractured ethnic lines.

Akinola and Charles-Owuamanam (2023) examined the structural nature and functional roles of Nigerian Pidgin. They noted that NP serves critical socio-political functions, including fostering national unification, improving literacy for average citizens, facilitating inter-ethnic commerce, and expanding opportunities for grassroots participation in socio-economic programmes. This utility stems from the fact that NP is the only language mutually intelligible across almost all speech communities in Nigeria. Their descriptive study evaluated expert perspectives on the functionality of Pidgin, ultimately recommending its formal standardisation and recognition as a major national language.

Oyabola and Ugwuanyi (2023) conducted a preliminary study titled *"Nigerians' Attitudes towards BBC Pidgin"*. Through a systematic review alongside an interview-questionnaire approach, they investigated how Nigerian audiences perceive the BBC World Service's Pidgin news platform launched in 2017. Their findings indicated that while respondents held generally positive attitudes toward both local Nigerian Pidgin and BBC Pidgin, they expressed negative attitudes toward using either variety for official state purposes. Respondents noted that BBC Pidgin often diverges from local varieties, particularly in its formal orthography and vocabulary choices.

Yusuf and Idris (2023) investigated *"Code-switching among Nigerian Pidgin Speakers in the Masaka Market Area of Nasarawa State"*. Rooted in Dell Hymes's

Ethnography of Communication framework, this qualitative study utilised audio recordings and field observations to assess interactions between traders and buyers. Using a purposive sampling technique to select market participants, the findings revealed that buyers and sellers—regardless of age, gender, or educational background—rely heavily on NP and strategic code-switching to execute business transactions and build social rapport. The study concluded that NP breaks down structural inferiority complexes for less-educated traders, recommending standardisation to accommodate regional variations.

Affia (2023), in his study *"Nigerian Pidgin: The Identity of a Nigerian away from Home"*, explored how NP functions as a marker of social identity within the diaspora. Through informal interviews and focus group discussions with ten Nigerians (five men and five women) in Canada, the study revealed that participants actively chose NP to express their national identity abroad. Interestingly, while female participants tended to embrace Standard English in formal settings, male participants demonstrated highly positive attitudes toward NP, suggesting the presence of covert prestige.

Finally, **Okpeki et al. (2023)** examined the contributions of radio musical broadcasting to national development efforts, comparing perceptions between media practitioners and general audiences. Anchored on the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the researchers surveyed 500 participants across two major cities in Delta State using a multi-stage sampling technique. The results showed high levels of exposure to development-focused musical broadcasts among both cohorts. Audiences and practitioners agreed that such programming fosters themes of justice, equity, democracy, and national integration. However, a significant discrepancy emerged: media practitioners systematically overrated the developmental impact of their musical programming compared to the ratings given by the actual audience. The study

recommended that stations conduct regular audience surveys to align programming with listener realities.

1.7 Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. This design is highly suitable as it facilitates a comprehensive overview of the current deployment of Nigerian Pidgin (NP) in radio broadcasting, allowing for an empirical exploration of audience engagement and cultural identity promotion on Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM, Uyo.

The target population for the study comprised the 305,961 residents of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria (National Population Commission [NPC], 2023). This population encompassed both the radio presenters who use NP in their broadcasts and the regular listeners of the station within the metropolis.

From this population, a sample size of 384 respondents was selected. The justification for this sample size was based on the psychometric recommendations of the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, which dictates that for a population within the range of 75,000–1,000,000, a minimum sample of 384 is statistically robust. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was deployed to select participants who are regular listeners to Inspiration 105.9 FM programmes. This technique ensured that the selected participants possessed the requisite familiarity and proficiency with the station's programming to provide valid insights while capturing a diverse range of demographic characteristics.

Primary data were obtained via a self-structured questionnaire administered directly to the respondents. Secondary data were drawn from relevant academic literature on Nigerian Pidgin and sociolinguistics to contextualise the study's empirical framework.

The primary instrument for data collection was a 16-item questionnaire titled the "*Audience Engagement and Cultural Identity Promotion through Nigerian Pidgin Questionnaire (AECIPNPQ)*". The instrument was structured into two core sections:

- **Items 1–8** measured the first objective, focusing on how NP usage influences audience engagement and reception.
- **Items 9–16** measured the second objective, examining the role of NP in promoting cultural identity and inclusivity.

The questionnaire items were rated on a five-point scale (comprising *Very High*, *High*, *Moderate*, *Low*, and *Very Low*), utilizing a benchmark mean criterion of 2.5 for decision-making.

To establish the reliability of the research instrument, a pilot test was conducted by administering the questionnaire to 20 participants outside the Uyo metropolis; these individuals were entirely excluded from the final study. The collated pilot data were analysed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a high internal reliability coefficient of 0.845.

Descriptive statistics—specifically frequencies, simple percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations—were used to answer the research questions. All statistical computations were executed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26.

2.0 Results and Discussion

Research Question One: How does the use of Nigerian Pidgin English influence audience engagement and reception on Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM, Uyo?

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of how the Nigerian Pidgin usage influences audience engagement and reception on Inspiration Radio, 105.9 FM, Uyo

Items	Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To what extent does the use of Nigerian Pidgin on Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM impact audience understanding and connection?	Very High	330	85.9
	High	18	4.7
	Moderate	34	8.9
	Low	2	0.5
	Very Low	-	-
Total		384	100.0
How does the incorporation of Nigerian Pidgin on the radio station affect listener participation and interaction?	Very high	325	84.6
	High	59	15.4
	Moderate	-	-
	Low	-	-
	Very low	-	-
Total		384	100.0
Do you think the use of Nigerian Pidgin influences audience loyalty and retention on Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM?	Very high	198	51.6
	High	3	0.8
	Moderate	167	43.5
	Low	16	4.2
	Very low	-	-
Total		384	100.0
Do you think the presence of Nigerian Pidgin English in radio broadcasting contributes to the station's popularity and reach among listeners?	Very high	375	97.7
	High	1	0.3
	Moderate	8	2.1
	Low	-	-
	Very low	-	-

	Total	384	100.0
	Very high	328	85.4
Do you think Nigerian Pidgin play a key	High	37	9.6
role in shaping the audience's perception of	Moderate	10	2.6
Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM as a local radio	Low	9	2.3
station?	Very low		
	Total	384	100.0
	Very high	287	74.7
Do you think the use of Nigerian Pidgin	High	77	20.1
enhances listener engagement with the	Moderate	10	2.6
content broadcast on Inspiration Radio	Low	10	2.6
105.9 FM?	Very low		
	Total	384	100.0
	Very High	186	48.4
To what extent does the use of Nigerian	High	131	34.1
Pidgin contribute to creating a sense of	Moderate	11	2.9
community and belonging among listeners	Low	16	4.2
of Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM?	Very Low	40	10.4
	Total	384	100.0
	Very High	93	24.2
How likely are you to recommend	High	111	28.9
Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM to others based	Moderate	101	26.3
on their use of Nigerian Pidgin?	Low	73	19.0
	Very Low	6	1.6
	Total	384	100.0

2.1 Analysis of Table 1: Nigerian Pidgin Usage, Audience Engagement, and Reception

The analysis of Table 1 reveals that Nigerian Pidgin (NP) not only facilitates better listener understanding but also contributes significantly to a participatory media culture, audience loyalty, and a sense of shared identity.

Audience Comprehension and Participation (Items 1 & 2)

The first item in the table assessed how NP impacts audience understanding and connection. An overwhelming majority of respondents (**85.9%**) rated this impact as *Very High*, while **4.7%** rated it as *High*, and **8.9%** rated it as *Moderate*. Only **0.5%** perceived the impact as *Low*, and none selected *Very Low*. This dominant positive trend confirms that NP enhances comprehension and strengthens the emotional connection between the station and its audience.

Regarding listener participation and interaction, **84.6%** of the participants indicated that NP's contribution was *Very High*, and **15.4%** rated it as *High*. Critically, no participants selected *Moderate*, *Low*, or *Very Low*. This unanimous positive recognition demonstrates that NP functions as an effective participatory tool, providing a linguistic comfort zone that encourages the audience to call in, comment, joke, or engage directly in broadcast dialogue.

Audience Loyalty, Retention, and Reach (Items 3 & 4)

When evaluated on whether NP influences audience loyalty and retention, the responses showed more structural variance across the scale. While **51.6%** of respondents rated the influence as *Very High*, a substantial **43.5%** rated it as *Moderate*, with only **0.8%** and **4.2%** choosing *High* and *Low*, respectively. This distribution indicates that while NP is an attractive tool for retaining a core audience,

long-term loyalty remains nuanced and likely depends on intersecting factors such as programme quality, broadcast consistency, and topical relevance.

Conversely, an overwhelming **97.7%** of participants rated NP's contribution to the station's popularity and market reach as *Very High*. This near-unanimous consensus underscores the fact that the language widens the demographic appeal of the station, serving as a unifying medium that transcends ethnic, class, and educational divisions.

Local Alignment and Content Engagement (Items 5 & 6)

Regarding the station's regional positioning, **85.4%** of respondents believed that the use of NP shapes the perception of Inspiration 105.9 FM as a local radio station to a *Very High* extent. This finding affirms the sociolinguistic principle that language choices serve as powerful markers of geopolitical belonging and community anchoring. Because NP is the primary lingua franca of urban Nigeria, local listeners readily perceive the station as speaking "their language" and representing "their voice".

In terms of specific content engagement, a combined **94.8%** of respondents rated NP's capacity to enhance engagement favorably, with **74.7%** indicating *Very High* and **20.1%** indicating *High*. Only a small fraction (**5.2%**) remained neutral or negative (*Moderate* or *Low*). This majority opinion proves that NP increases attentiveness and emotional investment in programming. However, the minor presence of lower scores implies that for a small segment of the audience—particularly those who associate Standard English with prestige—NP may be viewed as less appropriate depending on the specific program context.

Community Fostering and Station Recommendation (Items 7 & 8)

The extent to which NP fosters a sense of community and belonging yielded a broader distribution: **48.4%** rated it as *Very High*, **34.1%** as *High*, and **2.9%** as *Moderate*. Meanwhile, **4.2%** rated it as *Low* and **10.4%** as *Very Low*. While the majority clearly recognise the community-building potential of NP, a small minority do not perceive it as an effective medium for collective identity. This divergence may stem from lingering language ideologies that continue to stigmatise Pidgin as an "inferior" or less formal linguistic variety, especially among highly educated demographics.

Finally, the last item measured how likely respondents are to recommend the station to others based on its deployment of NP. A clear majority of **53.1%** rated their likelihood as either *Very High* or *High*, while **26.3%** offered a *Moderate* rating, and **20.6%** stated their likelihood was *Low* or *Very Low*.

Research Question Two: What is the role of Nigerian Pidgin in promoting cultural identity and inclusivity in radio broadcasting at Inspiration 105.9 FM, Uyo?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the role of Nigerian Pidgin in promoting cultural identity and inclusivity on Inspiration Radio, 105.9 FM, Uyo

S/N	Items	Respondents (n = 384)		
		Mean	Std. D	Decision
	Nigerian Pidgin is essential in connecting with the diverse audience in Uyo.	3.16	0.93	Agree
	The use of Nigerian Pidgin helps to create a sense of belonging among listeners.	2.99	0.40	Agree

Nigerian Pidgin allows for better communication with the local community.	3.19	0.55	Agree
Radio broadcasting in Nigerian Pidgin showcases the rich cultural heritage of Uyo.	1.92	0.88	Disagree
The inclusion of Nigerian Pidgin in radio programming reflects the diversity of Uyo's population.	2.99	0.40	Agree
Listeners feel more engaged and involved when Nigerian Pidgin is used on air.	3.16	0.93	Agree
Nigerian Pidgin serves as a unifying language that bridges cultural differences among listeners.	3.10	0.77	Agree
The use of Nigerian Pidgin in radio broadcasting at Inspiration 105.9 FM promotes a sense of pride in local traditions and customs.	3.12	0.76	Agree
Grand Mean	2.95		

2.2 Analysis of Table 2: Cultural Identity and Inclusivity

(Criterion Mean = 2.50; Mean range: 1.00–2.49 = Disagree, 2.50–4.00 = Agree)

The results presented in Table 2 outline the role of Nigerian Pidgin (NP) in promoting cultural identity and inclusivity in radio broadcasting on Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM, Uyo. The data reveal that the majority of respondents agreed with **Items 1–3** and **5–8**, generating individual mean scores equal to or greater than the criterion baseline of 2.50. Conversely, the majority of respondents disagreed with **Item 4**, which yielded a mean score below the 2.50 threshold.

The calculated grand mean of **2.95** implies that Nigerian Pidgin, as perceived by the audience, is not merely a functional language of convenience. Instead, it serves as a significant sociolinguistic symbol of urban identity, inclusivity, and collective belonging within contemporary Nigerian media.

3.0 Discussion of the Findings

The findings from Table 1 demonstrate that Nigerian Pidgin plays a central role in enhancing audience engagement, comprehension, and brand loyalty on Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM, Uyo. The language fosters informational clarity alongside emotional resonance, cultural relevance, and a shared communal identity among listeners. However, while NP is generally effective and well-received, a minority of listeners retain reservations regarding its formal appropriateness or social prestige. This divergence highlights the necessity for context-sensitive programming strategies.

This observation aligns with the work of Ogunyombo (2016), who noted that while some audience segments appreciate the accessibility and relatability of Pidgin, others express concern over its potential impact on the structural quality of communication when addressing complex national development issues. Therefore, while broadcasting in NP is highly effective for expanding demographic reach, media houses must carefully balance its use to protect long-term language proficiency and professional communication standards.

Furthermore, the results of Table 2 indicate that the majority of respondents agree that Nigerian Pidgin substantially promotes cultural identity and inclusivity. This consensus stems from the recognition that NP accurately reflects the multilingual and multicultural composition of Uyo. By deploying a language that is mutually intelligible across disparate ethnic groups, the station reinforces the diverse identities of its audience and avoids privileging any single indigenous language group.

These insights are consistent with Nweke *et al.* (2023), who argued that the adoption of Pidgin in Nigerian media yields profound societal benefits, including the preservation of linguistic diversity, the enhancement of cultural expression, and the democratisation of public discourse. Ultimately, these findings underscore its pervasive utility across media, politics, and daily human interactions, emphasising its unique function as a bridging mechanism across Nigeria's pluralistic population.

4.0 Conclusion

This study concludes that Nigerian Pidgin serves as a powerful vehicle for driving audience engagement and reinforcing cultural identity on Inspiration Radio 105.9 FM, Uyo. The expanding footprint of NP within the broadcast landscape marks a significant shift in media communication strategies aimed at maximising public inclusion. Programming in NP appeals to a broad demographic—particularly youth and urban dwellers—because it mirrors everyday speech patterns and addresses local realities in relatable ways.

Its informal, accessible nature fosters deep emotional connections, improves comprehension, and mirrors the linguistic diversity of the immediate listening community. Beyond mere communicative efficiency, the language serves as a vital medium for expressing cultural values, indigenous humour, and local idioms rooted in the Nigerian worldview. By bridging historic ethnic and social divides, Nigerian Pidgin functions as both a communicative and cultural unifier.

However, the mixed perceptions regarding its prestige suggest that media practitioners must deploy it strategically—preserving its democratic accessibility and cultural resonance while maintaining corporate professionalism and broadcast standards. Ultimately, the study underscores the transformative potential of Nigerian Pidgin in

building participatory, culturally grounded, and socially cohesive media spaces in Nigeria.

5.0 Recommendations

Based on the empirical insights generated by this study, the following recommendations are offered:

- **Strategic Content Integration:** To sustain and scale audience engagement, broadcasters should strategically integrate Nigerian Pidgin across diverse programming genres—including news, entertainment, and public education—while strictly maintaining production quality and content credibility.
- **Supplementary Indigenous Programming:** While leveraging NP to ensure broad public inclusivity, radio stations should simultaneously develop supplementary programming in local indigenous languages or introduce dedicated segments that spotlight regional cultural heritage, thereby deepening traditional identity representation.

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L'ARGENT COMME PESTE SOCIALE DANS GAGLO DE GEMZO KIFFO

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Résumé

L'homme est un être de besoins, constamment en quête de satisfaire les nécessités essentielles de la vie telles que le logement, l'alimentation, les soins de santé et bien d'autres. Pour répondre à ces besoins, il a recours à ce précieux sésame communément appelé argent, quelle qu'en soit la forme. La pauvreté et les inégalités sociales qui caractérisent les sociétés contemporaines montrent qu'il est aujourd'hui difficile de dissocier l'argent de l'existence humaine et de la recherche du bien-être. Certains estiment même qu'il permet, dans une certaine mesure, de résoudre de nombreux problèmes auxquels l'être humain est confronté. Toutefois, si l'argent joue un rôle essentiel dans la vie de l'homme, il peut également constituer une source de tensions et de déséquilibres sociaux ; son utilisation exige donc prudence et responsabilité. Comme le montre *Gaglo* (1991), l'argent suscite les convoitises, détruit les liens familiaux, fragilise le tissu social et remet en question les valeurs morales. La question de l'argent dans la littérature africaine a déjà fait l'objet de nombreuses études sous différents angles. La présente contribution se propose d'analyser comment l'argent devient, dans cette œuvre, un moteur de désintégration familiale, de manipulation

affective et de promotion des jeux de hasard dans la société contemporaine. À travers ce drame social, Gemzo Kiffo met en scène Kayigan qui, dans le but de combler le vide affectif laissé par son ex-mari, instrumentalise le personnage éponyme, Gaglo, afin de relancer ses activités commerciales déclinantes et de l'éloigner de son épouse. Malheureusement, Gaglo se laisse séduire par ce pseudo-amour et finit par perdre son intégrité morale. S'inscrivant dans le cadre théorique de la sociocritique, cette étude analyse la place de l'argent dans les relations sociales et interpersonnelles. Elle conclut que l'argent est certes un bon serviteur, mais que son mauvais usage et l'attachement excessif qu'il suscite peuvent corrompre l'être humain, compromettre son intégrité morale et le conduire à des comportements répréhensibles.

Mots-clés : argent, littérature africaine, morale, peste sociale, sociocritique.

Introduction

L'une des principales missions de la littérature consiste à braquer ses projecteurs sur la société afin de dénoncer les dysfonctionnements et les anomalies qui affectent l'existence humaine. Elle propose également des pistes de réflexion susceptibles de favoriser un développement harmonieux et durable des sociétés. La littérature africaine, en particulier, s'est toujours située à l'avant-garde des luttes pour l'indépendance du continent, la défense de la dignité des peuples noirs et la préservation des valeurs socioculturelles africaines.

Si le colonialisme demeure un thème majeur de la littérature africaine, force est de constater l'émergence de nouvelles préoccupations qui touchent aussi bien les sociétés africaines que l'humanité dans son ensemble. Parmi celles-ci figure la question de l'argent, souvent représenté comme un symbole de pouvoir, de corruption, d'aliénation et de domination sociale. De nombreux écrivains africains ont exploré les conséquences de la tyrannie de l'argent sur les individus et les collectivités, mettant en lumière les inégalités et les injustices qui en découlent. De Chinua Achebe à Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, en passant par Mongo Beti, Sembène Ousmane et Ahmadou Kourouma, plusieurs auteurs ont abordé cette problématique dans leurs œuvres, proposant des réflexions critiques sur les effets du colonialisme, du capitalisme et de la mondialisation.

L'argent devrait pourtant être perçu comme un moyen au service de l'être humain, dans la mesure où il lui permet de satisfaire ses besoins fondamentaux et de contribuer au développement de la société. Cependant, lorsqu'il devient une fin en soi, il peut être à l'origine de nombreux maux sociaux. Son mauvais usage favorise notamment l'exploitation, la corruption, la pauvreté, les inégalités sociales et la dégradation des valeurs morales. Dans de nombreuses sociétés contemporaines, l'argent est devenu le principal critère d'évaluation de la réussite et du statut social, alimentant ainsi une quête effrénée de richesse et de pouvoir.

La thématique de l'argent dans la littérature africaine reflète les réalités économiques, sociales et culturelles du continent. De la période coloniale à nos jours, l'argent a joué un rôle déterminant dans la vie des Africains, influençant leurs relations sociales, leurs choix et parfois même leur destinée. Dans *Gaglo* (1991), Gemzo Kiffo met en scène la tyrannie de l'argent et ses conséquences néfastes sur la famille, les relations humaines et la société tout entière.

Cadre théorique

La tyrannie de l'argent et ses conséquences sur la société constituent une problématique qui mérite une attention particulière. La présente étude se propose d'examiner l'influence de l'argent sur les relations sociales ainsi que sur la conscience humaine. Pour ce faire, elle s'inscrit dans le cadre théorique de la sociocritique.

Développée notamment par Claude Duchet, la sociocritique est une approche d'analyse littéraire qui s'intéresse à la socialité du texte, c'est-à-dire à la manière dont le social s'inscrit dans la structure même de l'œuvre. Selon cette perspective, le texte littéraire ne doit pas être considéré comme un simple reflet de la société, mais comme un espace où les réalités sociales sont mises en forme, transformées et parfois contestées. La sociocritique privilégie ainsi une lecture sociohistorique des œuvres littéraires.

Comme le soulignent Duchet (1971) et Cros (1973), la littérature constitue un lieu de médiation où se manifestent les structures sociales, idéologiques et culturelles d'une époque. Elle se caractérise par une tension féconde entre la création esthétique et les déterminations historiques et sociales qui la sous-tendent. Dans cette perspective, l'analyse de *Gaglo* permettra de mettre en évidence les mécanismes par lesquels l'argent devient un facteur de tensions, de désintégration sociale et de dégradation morale.

L'application des principes de la sociocritique à cette œuvre vise ainsi à montrer comment Gemzo Kiffo représente les effets destructeurs de la quête excessive de richesse et comment cette représentation constitue une critique des dérives sociales engendrées par le pouvoir de l'argent.

Résumé de la pièce

La pièce de théâtre *Gaglo ou l'argent, cette peste* (1991), écrite par Gemzo Kiffo, est une comédie dramatique en trois actes et six scènes qui explore la problématique de l'argent et ses conséquences sur la société, notamment la corruption, la déchéance morale et l'infidélité. L'intrigue est centrée sur Gaglo, un employé de banque séduit par Kayigan, une riche commerçante spécialisée dans la vente de tissus.

La situation se complique lorsque Gaglo accepte d'entretenir une relation extraconjugale avec Kayigan. Pour cette dernière, cette liaison représente une occasion de satisfaire un double objectif : combler le vide affectif laissé par son ancien compagnon et profiter de la position professionnelle de Gaglo pour relancer ses activités commerciales en difficulté. Femme autoritaire, rusée et influente, Kayigan entretient également des relations privilégiées avec le commissaire Napo.

Elle parvient à convaincre Gaglo de détourner une somme d'un million de francs afin de financer la relance de ses affaires. Plus grave encore, elle l'incite à investir son

argent dans les jeux de hasard, notamment les paris sportifs. De retour à son domicile, Gaglo invente une mission professionnelle à l'intérieur du pays avec le président-directeur général de son entreprise afin de dissimuler son infidélité à son épouse, Dédé.

La tension familiale s'intensifie progressivement jusqu'à provoquer une violente dispute. Les cris de douleur de Dédé alertent le voisinage et conduisent à son évacuation d'urgence vers l'hôpital. Cependant, la situation se dégrade davantage lorsque les coupons de loto vendus à Kayigan sont déclarés frauduleux et que son associé, Laguidi, disparaît avec l'argent. Dans le même temps, Débi, à qui elle avait confié des marchandises destinées à être vendues au Zaïre, demeure introuvable.

Submergée par les événements, Kayigan est victime d'un malaise et est transportée d'urgence au Centre hospitalier universitaire (CHU). Gaglo se retrouve alors face à un dilemme : porter secours à sa maîtresse ou soutenir son épouse hospitalisée. Finalement, Dédé donne naissance à un garçon, tandis que Kayigan demeure inconsolable.

L'argent comme peste sociale dans *Gaglo*

Dans les sociétés contemporaines, l'argent suscite de nombreuses convoitises en raison de l'importance qu'il revêt dans les relations humaines et dans l'organisation sociale. Il procure un statut social, permet de satisfaire les besoins essentiels et contribue à l'amélioration des conditions de vie. Toutefois, son mauvais usage ainsi que l'attachement excessif qu'il suscite sont souvent considérés comme la source de nombreux maux sociaux.

En effet, la quête effrénée de l'argent favorise l'exploitation, la corruption, les inégalités et diverses formes de dégradation morale. Dans de nombreuses sociétés africaines, et particulièrement au Nigeria, l'argent est devenu un indicateur majeur de

réussite sociale, de pouvoir et de prestige. Cette situation pousse certains individus à tout entreprendre pour s'enrichir, quitte à sacrifier leurs valeurs morales. Si posséder de l'argent n'est pas condamnable en soi, l'usage qui en est fait peut profondément influencer le comportement humain.

Dans *Gaglo*, Gemzo Kiffo analyse les conséquences du mauvais usage de l'argent sur la conscience individuelle et sur la société. L'argent y apparaît comme une véritable peste sociale lorsqu'il cesse d'être un simple moyen d'échange pour devenir une fin en soi, capable de corrompre les relations humaines, de détruire les valeurs morales et de perturber l'équilibre social. La recherche obsessionnelle de l'argent transforme progressivement l'individu en esclave de ses désirs et réduit les rapports humains à de simples transactions matérielles.

Le personnage de Kayigan constitue une parfaite illustration de cette dérive. Femme d'affaires prospère, elle cherche à combler le vide affectif laissé par son ancien compagnon en déstabilisant le foyer conjugal de Gaglo. Sa relation avec ce dernier n'est nullement fondée sur l'amour, mais sur les avantages financiers qu'elle espère tirer de lui afin de redresser ses affaires commerciales en déclin.

Pour parvenir à ses fins, elle exige que Gaglo passe davantage de temps avec elle :

« En tout cas, prévenue ou pas, tu passeras cette soirée avec moi ; on causera ensemble, on mangera ensemble » (Kiffo, 1991, p. 18).

Son désir de conquérir Gaglo apparaît également dans ses confidences à Débi :

Ha ha ha ! Quelle belle façon de dire les choses... Mais ça n'a pas été facile comme tu pourrais le croire. Avant qu'il ne lâche le morceau, j'ai dû perdre de la salive (Kiffo, 1991, p. 27).

Ces propos montrent que l'obsession de l'argent peut conduire certains individus à utiliser tous les moyens possibles pour atteindre leurs objectifs. Dans cette

perspective, les relations fondées sur l'intérêt financier favorisent la manipulation et l'exploitation. Kayigan instrumentalise ainsi Gaglo dans le seul but d'obtenir les ressources nécessaires à la relance de ses activités commerciales.

La somme qu'elle réclame à Gaglo est considérable lorsqu'on sait qu'il n'est qu'un simple employé de banque :

Bon, Débi, plus de temps à perdre en bavardages. Il faut que tu ailles tout de suite avec le chauffeur chercher les tissus à la douane pendant que je m'occupe de mon ami Laguidi. Voilà huit cent mille francs. Le chauffeur connaît l'endroit et tous les papiers sont avec lui (Kiffo, 1991, p. 28).

L'attitude de Kayigan atteint son paroxysme lorsqu'elle encourage Gaglo à détourner de l'argent de la banque :

« Emprunte-les à ta caisse en attendant de les restituer » (Kiffo, 1991, p. 23).

À travers cette suggestion, l'argent apparaît comme une véritable peste sociale, car il pousse les individus à transgresser les normes morales et juridiques en cautionnant des actes répréhensibles tels que le détournement de fonds.

Par ailleurs, la pièce met également en évidence le rôle de l'argent dans la promotion des jeux de hasard. Ceux-ci connaissent aujourd'hui un essor considérable dans de nombreuses villes africaines. Loin de contribuer au développement économique et social, ils favorisent souvent l'illusion de l'enrichissement rapide et l'aliénation des individus.

Kayigan, passionnée par les paris, encourage Gaglo à investir dans ce secteur :

« Mais attention, il ne faut pas jouer n'importe où et n'importe comment. J'ai un Nago spécialement pour ça. S'il passe ce matin, laisse l'argent ; je m'occuperai du reste » (Kiffo, 1991, p. 21).

Elle déclare également :

Laguidi, écoute-moi bien. Cette semaine, je veux jouer gros pour gagner gros. Je veux avoir toutes les chances de mon côté. C'est pourquoi je ne veux pas lésiner sur les moyens. Deux cent mille francs, voilà ce que je mise aujourd'hui (Kiffo, 1991, p. 24).

Sous l'influence de Kayigan, Gaglo finit par succomber à la tentation et investit à son tour dans les jeux de hasard. Cependant, la disparition de Laguidi avec l'argent des parieurs provoque une crise majeure. Cette situation entraîne une altercation entre plusieurs joueurs et nécessite l'intervention de la police.

Ainsi, l'argent apparaît comme une peste sociale dans la mesure où il engendre des pertes financières importantes, favorise les comportements déviants et contribue à la déstabilisation des rapports sociaux. À travers cette représentation, Gemzo Kiffo met en garde contre les dangers d'une société dominée par la quête excessive de richesse et par la logique du profit à tout prix.

Conclusion

Cette étude a permis d'analyser l'influence de l'argent sur la société et de montrer comment il peut constituer un facteur d'aliénation pour l'être humain. *Gaglo* est un drame social qui reflète les réalités de notre société contemporaine. L'argent n'est pas mauvais en lui-même ; c'est plutôt son usage excessif, son culte et la place disproportionnée qui lui est accordée dans la hiérarchie des valeurs qui en font une véritable peste sociale.

Lorsqu'il devient une fin en soi, l'argent fragilise le tissu social en remplaçant les valeurs fondamentales que sont la solidarité, la dignité, l'intégrité morale et le sens de la communauté. À travers les personnages de *Gaglo*, Gemzo Kiffo met en lumière les conséquences néfastes de l'obsession de l'enrichissement, notamment la corruption morale, l'infidélité, la cupidité et la désintégration des relations humaines.

En définitive, cette œuvre rappelle que l'argent doit demeurer un moyen au service de l'homme et non une finalité. Il importe donc d'en faire un usage responsable et mesuré, afin qu'il contribue à la satisfaction des besoins légitimes de l'être humain et au bien-être collectif, plutôt qu'à la dégradation des valeurs sociales et morales.

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**LE VIH/SIDA ET L'ÉCRITURE SOCIO-RÉALISTE DANS LA BANDE
DESSINÉE AFRICAINE FRANCOPHONE : ANALYSE DE *LE SIDA TUE, ET
ALORS ?* DE KOUADIO ET DES *DIAMANTS DE KAMITUGA* DE
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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article porte sur la manière dont le VIH/sida est représenté à travers l'écriture socio-réaliste dans la bande dessinée africaine francophone, en prenant pour corpus *Le Sida tue, et alors ?* de Benjamin Kouadio et *Les Diamants de Kamituga* de Séraphin Kajibwami. Bien que les recherches sur les récits de la maladie en littérature africaine se soient multipliées, la bande dessinée francophone reste encore peu étudiée comme un espace capable de produire et de diffuser un discours socio-réaliste sur le VIH/sida. C'est dans ce constat que s'inscrit la présente étude. En s'appuyant sur la méthode d'analyse textuelle et sur une approche sociocritique, ce travail cherche à comprendre comment ces récits graphiques donnent du sens à la maladie, au croisement du discours médical, des réalités sociales et du contexte postcolonial. L'analyse montre que le VIH/sida n'y est pas seulement présenté comme une maladie biologique, mais

aussi comme un fait social marqué par la stigmatisation, les inégalités et certaines tensions morales. Grâce à la combinaison du texte et de l'image, les auteurs proposent une écriture proche du réel, qui met en scène des expériences vécues tout en remettant en question les discours dominants. Ces œuvres jouent ainsi un double rôle, à la fois éducatif et critique, et participent à une meilleure compréhension du VIH/sida dans les sociétés africaines contemporaines.

Mots-clés : VIH/sida, écriture socio-réaliste, bande dessinée africaine, théorie sociocritique,

INTRODUCTION

Depuis plusieurs décennies, le VIH/sida demeure un enjeu majeur de santé publique en Afrique, mais aussi un thème central dans les productions culturelles du continent. Au-delà de sa réalité biomédicale, cette maladie s'inscrit dans un ensemble complexe de discours sociaux, moraux et politiques qui influencent profondément sa perception et sa mise en récit. Dans la littérature africaine, plusieurs études ont montré que le VIH/sida est souvent représenté à la fois comme une expérience individuelle marquée par la souffrance et comme une réalité collective traversée par la stigmatisation, les inégalités sociales et les dynamiques culturelles (Ngugi, 2009 ; Farmer, 1992). Toutefois, ces analyses se sont surtout concentrées sur des formes narratives classiques, laissant encore peu de place à la bande dessinée africaine francophone.

Pourtant, la bande dessinée africaine s'impose aujourd'hui comme un espace d'expression particulièrement riche, où le texte et l'image se combinent pour produire du sens de manière originale. Cette dimension multimodale permet de construire un discours médical qui dépasse la simple transmission d'informations biomédicales, en intégrant également des représentations sociales et des expériences vécues de la maladie (Groensteen, 2011). Dans cette perspective, l'écriture socio-réaliste apparaît comme une approche pertinente pour analyser la manière dont ces récits graphiques mettent en scène le VIH/sida, non seulement comme une maladie, mais comme un fait social inscrit dans des contextes historiques et postcoloniaux spécifiques. La maladie apparaît ainsi comme une construction discursive à travers laquelle les sociétés

négoient leurs angoisses liées à la sexualité, à la responsabilité et à l'ordre social. Comme le souligne Kekeghe (2021), les maladies et les pathologies prennent naissance dans l'espace social et sont, de ce fait, socialement construites. Autrement dit, les écrivains élaborent leurs représentations de la maladie à partir de leurs interactions avec les réalités sociales. Dans cette logique, la mise en scène de personnages souffrant de pathologies, qu'elles soient physiques ou mentales, s'inscrit dans une dynamique créative profondément ancrée dans les comportements et les normes sociales.

En s'appuyant sur l'approche sociocritique, qui examine les liens entre texte, société et idéologie (Duchet, 1979), il devient possible de mieux comprendre comment ces œuvres produisent un discours sur le VIH/sida. Cette démarche permet notamment de mettre en évidence la manière dont les récits de Benjamin Kouadio et de Séraphin Kajibwami articulent discours médical, réalités sociales et expériences humaines, tout en proposant une réflexion critique sur les structures sociales dans lesquelles la maladie prend sens. Dans ce cadre, la présente étude vise à analyser comment la bande dessinée africaine francophone contribue à la construction d'un discours médical alternatif sur le VIH/sida. Elle mettra en lumière les enjeux sociaux, culturalistes et idéologiques qui façonnent sa représentation, à travers une approche sociocritique et une analyse textuelle des œuvres sélectionnées.

La bande dessinée africaine

La bande dessinée combine le texte et l'image pour produire du sens. Ce mode d'expression, selon Bumatay (2013, p. 12), était autrefois associé aux colonisateurs, car il servait à configurer l'iconographie coloniale et les stéréotypes visuels de l'Afrique et des Africains. D'après Bumatay (2012, p. iii), « la littérature graphique (bande dessinée) d'Afrique subsaharienne est de nature didactique ». Pour aller un peu plus loin, Petersen (2011, p. xvi) ajoute que tous les récits graphiques, en tant que

modes de communication, possèdent des qualités didactiques, car ils moralisent les actions qu'ils représentent, soit pour exalter une certaine vertu, soit à travers une vision négative visant, par exemple, à afficher un comportement méprisable. À l'heure actuelle, on assiste à la prolifération d'auteurs africains prolifiques dans le domaine des récits graphiques, notamment l'Ivoirienne Marguerite Abouet avec son œuvre *Aya de Yopougon*, le Camerounais Christophe Ngalle Edimo avec *Pour une couleur de peau* (2019) et *Malamine* (2009), ou encore le Centrafricain Didier Kassai avec *Tempête sur Bangui* (tomes 1 et 2).

Le VIH/sida en Afrique

Dans la littérature graphique africaine d'expression française, le sida apparaît non seulement comme une crise médicale, mais aussi comme un puissant facteur d'histoire, façonnant les récits, les identités et la mémoire collective. Le virus de l'immunodéficience humaine (VIH) s'est propagé dans les années 1980 et 1990 (Rochi, 2008, p. 350). Il a profondément impacté les sociétés africaines depuis son apparition. Guerrero note que le sida est la menace pathogène la plus redoutable de ces dernières décennies ; il l'identifie également comme « un monstre » dont la simple transmission suffit à infecter ou à pénétrer les défenses psychologiques d'une personne (1990, pp. 87-89). Les historiens jouent un rôle essentiel dans la documentation de l'épidémie de VIH, en retraçant ses origines, sa propagation et les réponses qu'elle a suscitées de la part des gouvernements et des sociétés. Le processus d'historisation implique de situer le VIH dans un contexte sociopolitique et économique plus large, permettant une compréhension globale de l'impact de l'épidémie. L'historisation met l'accent sur les inégalités structurelles qui ont exacerbé la propagation du VIH en Afrique. Des chercheurs comme Iliffe (2006) ont souligné la pauvreté, l'inégalité entre les sexes et la faiblesse des infrastructures de santé comme des facteurs déterminants de la propagation rapide du VIH à travers le continent africain.

La Côte d'Ivoire a été l'un des pays les plus touchés par cette épidémie. Le bureau d'évaluation de l'ONUSIDA (2023) affirme qu'avec une prévalence du VIH de 1,9 % en 2021, la Côte d'Ivoire compte près de 280 000 personnes vivant avec le VIH, dont 18 000 enfants. C'est à partir de ce fait que la bande dessinée de Kouadio situe l'épidémie de sida dans un contexte historique et culturel spécifique, offrant aux lecteurs une compréhension globale de l'émergence de la maladie et de ses ramifications dans la société ivoirienne. En intégrant des événements réels, tels que les campagnes de santé publique et les réponses gouvernementales au récit, Kouadio propose une chronique de la trajectoire de l'épidémie. Cette approche s'inscrit dans le concept d'épidémiologie littéraire, où la littérature sert de support pour retracer et interpréter l'évolution des maladies dans les cadres sociétaux. Tout en s'appuyant sur la réalité historique, *Le Sida tue, et alors ?* utilise également des éléments fictifs pour humaniser la crise du sida. À travers la vie de ses personnages, Kouadio dépeint une société où les jeunes femmes sont souvent poussées à se prostituer par leurs parents en quête de profit (Kouadio, 2013, p. 35), et où les hommes aisés exploitent leur fortune pour satisfaire leurs désirs, négligeant le bien-être de leur famille (Kouadio, 2013, p. 9). Le sida est ainsi à la fois une maladie et un symbole de vulnérabilité sociale. La maladie prend une forme narrative ; elle alimente l'intrigue et transforme la vie des personnages, ajoutant une dimension symbolique : le sida devient une métaphore du coût de la cupidité et de l'injustice sociale. Kouadio dénonce avec force les comportements sexuels irresponsables, l'indifférence collective et la stigmatisation des personnes vivant avec le VIH, en inscrivant ces problématiques dans un contexte social plus large propre aux communautés ouest-africaines.

Dans le récit, le personnage principal, John Koutoukou, assume la fonction de moraliste et de moralisateur social (Ajah, 2024). Il tente à plusieurs reprises de sensibiliser ses concitoyens à la gravité du VIH/sida et d'éveiller les consciences face au danger. Selon ses mots : « L'éveilleur des consciences anesthésiées par les mauvais

comportements est dans la place » (Kouadio, 2013, p. 29). Ses appels à l'adoption de comportements préventifs, notamment l'usage du préservatif ou la limitation des relations sexuelles occasionnelles, se heurtent cependant au mépris, à la moquerie, voire à la violence. Cette réaction collective met en lumière le déni profond et l'indifférence généralisée qui caractérisent sa communauté. L'auteur met en scène un personnage qui, confronté à un message de sensibilisation contre le sida à travers un journal, manifeste une attitude de déni et d'indifférence en le jetant à la poubelle tout en déclarant : « Sida, sida, je n'en ai rien à cirer » (Kouadio, 2013, p. 13). De son côté, Amy répond sèchement : « Laissez-moi tranquille, vous n'êtes pas mes parents pour oser me donner ces leçons. Compris ? Je mène ma vie à ma guise et je n'ai rien à cirer de votre morale » (Kouadio, 2013, p. 20).

La scène impliquant le père de Sita est particulièrement révélatrice. Lorsque John lui conseille d'envoyer sa fille à l'école, celui-ci rétorque avec sarcasme : « C'est cela l'éducation que tu lui donnes ?... Mon cher, dis que tu es jaloux de ma mine d'or » (Kouadio, 2013, p. 35).

La bande dessinée montre ainsi que la libération sexuelle, lorsqu'elle est déconnectée de toute responsabilité, devient un facteur de danger, favorisant la propagation de la maladie et la souffrance collective. L'auteur nous montre Sita qui marchandise son corps en ces termes : « Je vends de la marchandise moins chère ça tin... Je fais de mon corps ce que je veux » (Kouadio, 2013, p. 3). Cette situation traduit une critique plus large de l'irresponsabilité sociale, qui ne se limite pas aux individus, mais englobe également les structures familiales et culturelles. Les parents sont parfois présentés comme complices de pratiques sexuelles exploitantes lorsqu'ils encouragent ou tolèrent des relations transactionnelles pour des raisons économiques. Le cas du père de Sita, qui incite ouvertement sa fille à multiplier ces pratiques, est éloquent : « Ramène beaucoup d'argent ! Compris ? Oui, papa » (Kouadio, 2013, p. 35).

Implications socioculturelles et stigmatisation

L'un des aspects les plus marquants de l'œuvre de Kouadio réside dans son traitement de la stigmatisation et de l'exclusion sociale. Des personnages comme Sita et Monsieur Difouêté contractent le VIH à la suite de leurs choix, mais le récit s'attarde moins sur la souffrance médicale que sur les conséquences sociales du diagnostic : le rejet, l'intolérance et l'abandon. Cette représentation reflète une réalité bien connue dans de nombreux contextes africains, où le VIH est synonyme non seulement de maladie, mais aussi de marginalisation sociale, nourrissant la peur et le silence autour de l'infection. L'auteur illustre cette dynamique lorsque les amis de Monsieur Difouêté déclarent : « Difouêté a le sida... plus question de lui rendre visite, ni même de lui parler, ni de lui serrer la main. Il est très contagieux ! » (Kouadio, 2013, p. 40). La stigmatisation s'étend même à ses enfants, victimes de moqueries et de rejet. L'auteur le confirme à travers cette réplique : « Ton papa a le sida, ne viens pas nous contaminer aussi » (Kouadio, 2013, p. 48).

La bande dessinée devient ainsi un espace où se confrontent la réalité biomédicale de la maladie et ses interprétations sociales et culturelles. Dans de nombreuses sociétés africaines, le VIH/sida reste associé à la sexualité, à la faute morale ou à une punition divine. Par le biais de la satire, Kouadio met en évidence la manière dont ces jugements moraux et ces tabous culturels aggravent la souffrance des personnes séropositives en freinant le dialogue, la prévention et le recours aux soins.

La satire comme critique sociale

Le recours à la satire graphique et à la caricature renforce la portée critique de l'œuvre. À travers des situations exagérées et des personnages typés, Kouadio expose à la fois les erreurs individuelles et le déni collectif face au VIH/sida. Plus tard, face aux premiers symptômes, Monsieur Difouêté attribue sa souffrance à des forces occultes et affirme : « C'est peut-être des sorcières de mon village, mais je ne me

laisserai pas faire » (Kouadio, 2013, p. 13), révélant la persistance des croyances mystiques dans l'interprétation de la maladie. Il croit également que le virus provient de l'étranger et s'exclame : « Sida, sida... ce sont des histoires inventées par les Blancs pour décourager les amoureux » (Kouadio, 2013, p. 35).

L'humour propre au genre de la bande dessinée rend cette critique plus accessible, sans pour autant en atténuer la gravité. Les conséquences restent dramatiques : maladie, mort et isolement social. Le titre même de l'œuvre, *Le Sida tue, et alors ?*, résume cette indifférence collective teintée d'ironie amère. Cette forme satirique remplit également une fonction pédagogique en invitant le lecteur à réfléchir sur ses propres attitudes face à la maladie.

Pour conclure, nous pouvons affirmer que *Le Sida tue, et alors ?* de Benjamin Kouadio dépasse largement le cadre d'une simple production artistique. Il s'agit d'une véritable intervention sociocritique qui met à nu les contradictions, les préjugés et les défaillances d'une société confrontée à la réalité persistante du VIH/sida. En plaçant un personnage moraliste au cœur d'une communauté marquée par le déni, Kouadio reflète les représentations dominantes de la sexualité et de la maladie, tout en interpellant le lecteur sur sa propre responsabilité face au silence et à l'ignorance. Par la satire, la critique sociale et une narration empreinte d'empathie, l'œuvre appelle à une prise de conscience collective, à davantage de responsabilité et à une compassion indispensable dans un contexte où la stigmatisation continue de compromettre la prévention et la prise en charge du VIH.

Analyse sociocritique de *Les Diamants de Kamituga*

De même, dans *Les Diamants de Kamituga*, Kajibwami représente la situation socio-économique réelle de la République démocratique du Congo (RDC) à cette époque, caractérisée par la pauvreté et l'exploitation économique (Kajibwami, 2010, p. 6). Il évoque de véritables problèmes de santé publique, notamment le manque de

sensibilisation et l'accès limité aux soins. Ce sont principalement les populations marginalisées par la pauvreté qui sont confrontées aux dangers du VIH (Kajibwami, 2010, p. 23). L'économie minière et les transactions sexuelles sont présentées comme des facteurs structurels de la maladie, soulignant l'intersection entre le capitalisme, le travail et la santé, une critique historiquement fondée.

Contexte narratif et socioculturel

Loin de se limiter à une fonction de divertissement, *Les Diamants de Kamituga* inscrit une trajectoire individuelle dans un cadre social plus large. Le récit s'articule autour d'Asha, une mère vivant avec le VIH/sida, qui raconte aux plus jeunes comment le départ de son mari vers les mines de Kamituga, motivé par la quête d'un mieux-être économique, a conduit non seulement à la découverte de diamants, mais aussi, de manière tragique et involontaire, à la transmission du VIH (Kajibwami, 2010, p. 22). Cette mise en récit établit un lien explicite entre marginalisation économique et vulnérabilité sanitaire. Elle montre comment la pauvreté structurelle, la mobilité liée au travail minier et l'accès inégal à l'information sanitaire favorisent la propagation de l'épidémie, notamment à travers l'ignorance initiale de l'infection par le mari et la transmission ultérieure au sein du couple.

Kajibwami mobilise le langage visuel propre à la bande dessinée pour rendre perceptibles les conséquences humaines des dysfonctionnements systémiques : le chômage, l'accès limité aux soins de santé et l'insuffisance des infrastructures sanitaires dans les zones rurales affectées par les conflits armés de l'est de la RDC. Le contraste entre l'attrait symbolique des diamants et la dévastation provoquée par le VIH/sida permet une critique implicite des inégalités sociales qui exposent les populations vulnérables à des risques majeurs dans leur quête de survie économique. Comme le souligne Asha : « C'est vrai, mon mari a réussi à nous sauver, mais il n'est

pas revenu à la maison avec les diamants. Il a bien gardé le secret de sa cachette » (Kajibwami, 2010, p. 22).

Une bande dessinée comme intervention de santé publique

Un aspect central de l'analyse sociocritique des *Diamants de Kamituga* réside dans sa fonction de dispositif d'intervention en santé publique. Produite et diffusée en partenariat avec SOS Sida à Bukavu et dans la province du Sud-Kivu, la bande dessinée a été distribuée gratuitement à grande échelle, touchant des dizaines de milliers de lecteurs. Elle s'impose ainsi comme un outil éducatif accessible, remettant en question la frontière entre production culturelle « légitime » et pédagogie communautaire.

L'œuvre intègre des messages de prévention du VIH/sida, notamment la promotion du dépistage volontaire et la sensibilisation aux modes de transmission (Kajibwami, 2010, p. 22). À cet égard, Asha exhorte sa fille : « Lina, accompagne tes amis pour le test de dépistage » (Kajibwami, 2010, p. 24).

Par ailleurs, le récit valorise l'accompagnement psychologique et la prise en charge médicale des personnes vivant avec le VIH, comme le note l'auteur à travers la voix d'Asha : « Avec le soutien psychologique de ma famille qui a su m'accompagner dans ma thérapie et accepter ma maladie comme vous le faites en ce moment en me rendant visite, puis grâce à l'aide médicale gratuite, j'ai repris espoir et j'espère vivre encore longtemps » (Kajibwami, 2010, p. 22). Cette approche évite de réduire les personnages à de simples figures allégoriques. Le message sanitaire est intégré à la narration sans verser dans un didactisme rigide. L'épidémie est représentée comme une réalité du quotidien, inscrite dans l'expérience vécue.

Symbolisme et critique structurelle

Sur le plan symbolique, les « diamants » du titre renvoient à l'économie extractive de l'est congolais et au paradoxe d'une région riche en ressources naturelles mais marquée par une pauvreté persistante et une forte vulnérabilité sanitaire. Kamituga, en tant que ville minière, apparaît comme un microcosme des dynamiques néocoloniales d'exploitation des ressources et de leurs coûts sociaux. Les espoirs des personnages, placés dans l'exploitation minière comme voie d'ascension sociale, reflètent des pressions socio-économiques plus larges propres aux États africains postcoloniaux, où l'absence de protection institutionnelle pousse les individus vers des formes de travail informelles et risquées. À travers ces trajectoires, l'œuvre propose une critique des conditions structurelles qui aggravent les crises sanitaires au lieu de les contenir.

L'alternance entre la tension dramatique et les séquences éducatives explicites permet ainsi de dépasser une lecture moraliste des comportements individuels. La bande dessinée interroge les déterminants sociaux de la maladie (pauvreté, mobilité, rapports de genre, précarité du travail et faiblesse des infrastructures) et inscrit la crise du VIH/sida dans un système socio-économique global. Elle invite le lecteur à questionner l'inégalité structurelle plutôt qu'à blâmer les individus, contribuant à une compréhension sociocritique de la santé comme enjeu social.

Pour conclure, dans *Les Diamants de Kamituga*, l'art de Séraphin Kajibwami dépasse les limites de la bande dessinée traditionnelle pour devenir un puissant outil d'intervention sociocritique dans le champ de la santé publique. L'œuvre articule une critique fine des inégalités structurelles, mobilise la narration comme vecteur d'éducation et d'émancipation, et démontre le potentiel du récit graphique comme instrument de transformation sociale. En inscrivant le discours sur le VIH/sida au cœur de la vie quotidienne en RDC, elle incite le lecteur à considérer non seulement les dimensions biomédicales de l'épidémie, mais aussi les forces socio-économiques

qui façonnent la vulnérabilité et la résilience. En somme, les deux récits analysés mobilisent des scènes dramatiques, des dialogues ciselés et des images percutantes pour captiver le lectorat tout en proposant une critique de la marchandisation des corps au sein des dynamiques sociales contemporaines.

L'approche sémiotique

L'approche sémiotique met en lumière l'importance des images dans la construction du discours médical. Dans la bande dessinée, la maladie est représentée à travers des signes visuels et verbaux qui traduisent l'expérience de la souffrance, du corps malade et de la guérison. Les images deviennent ainsi un langage à part entière qui complète le texte et permet de transmettre des émotions ainsi que des significations complexes. Comme l'explique Barthes (1964), l'image fonctionne comme un système de signes capable de produire des significations culturelles et idéologiques.

Dans notre corpus d'étude, composé de *Le Sida tue, et alors ?* de Benjamin Kouadio et des *Diamants de Kamituga* de Séraphin Kajibwami, une lecture sémiotique met en lumière la manière dont les signes visuels et textuels s'articulent pour construire le sens autour du VIH/sida. En s'appuyant sur les principes de Ferdinand de Saussure, ces récits peuvent être interprétés à travers la relation entre le signifiant (la forme visible ou matérielle du signe) et le signifié (le concept ou l'idée que ce signe évoque). Nous remarquons également que dans ces bandes dessinées, les couleurs jouent un rôle essentiel comme signifiants qui orientent la lecture et l'interprétation de l'histoire. Les couleurs sombres ou ternes apparaissent souvent dans les scènes marquées par la peur, la mort, la maladie ou le rejet social ; elles deviennent ainsi des signifiants de la souffrance et de l'angoisse associées au VIH/sida. Les signifiés qui en découlent renvoient au désespoir, à la stigmatisation et au poids émotionnel vécu par les personnes touchées par la maladie. À l'inverse, des couleurs plus vives, comme le vert ou le bleu, apparaissent dans les scènes de sensibilisation, de consultation médicale ou

de solidarité communautaire, évoquant l'espoir, la guérison et la possibilité d'un soutien social.

De la même manière, certains éléments visuels, tels que les hôpitaux, les vêtements médicaux, les préservatifs ou encore les affiches de sensibilisation, fonctionnent comme des signifiants dans le récit. Leurs signifiés renvoient à la prévention, à l'intervention médicale et à l'éducation sanitaire. Les expressions du visage et les postures des personnages participent également à cette construction du sens : des visages inquiets ou des personnages isolés traduisent la peur et la marginalisation, tandis que les gestes d'entraide, de dialogue ou de rapprochement symbolisent l'empathie et la responsabilité collective.

Ainsi, à travers l'interaction entre signifiants et signifiés, les œuvres de Kouadio et de Kajibwami transforment les images en un véritable système de communication. Les récits ne se contentent pas de raconter une histoire ; ils contribuent aussi à informer, à sensibiliser et à déconstruire les stigmates liés au VIH/sida, tout en encourageant la solidarité et des comportements responsables au sein de la communauté.

Conclusion

Cette étude a montré que la représentation du VIH/sida dans les bandes dessinées africaines francophones dépasse largement le simple discours biomédical pour devenir un véritable espace d'interrogation sociale, culturelle et idéologique. À travers une lecture sociocritique de *Le Sida tue, et alors ?* de Benjamin Kouadio et des *Diamants de Kamituga* de Séraphin Kajibwami, la recherche met en évidence la manière dont la maladie est construite comme un texte social inscrit dans des réalités historiques, des tensions morales et des angoisses collectives.

Dans une perspective sociocritique, ces œuvres révèlent les structures de domination, de stigmatisation et de silence qui entourent le VIH/sida dans les sociétés africaines

postcoloniales. La maladie n'y est pas seulement présentée comme une tragédie individuelle, mais comme le symptôme de dysfonctionnements sociaux plus larges tels que la pauvreté, la désinformation, les tabous sexuels et la rupture entre valeurs traditionnelles et modernes. Les récits fonctionnent ainsi comme des miroirs critiques des contradictions existant entre le discours officiel de santé publique et l'expérience sociale vécue.

Par ailleurs, l'écriture socio-réaliste adoptée dans ces deux bandes dessinées renforce leurs fonctions didactiques et idéologiques. En ancrant les histoires dans des environnements quotidiens et à travers des personnages proches du lecteur, les auteurs rendent le VIH/sida mais aussi les enjeux de santé plus compréhensibles et émotionnellement accessibles. La complémentarité entre l'image et le texte permet de mettre en scène la peur, le déni, la culpabilité et la responsabilité, tout en favorisant la sensibilisation, la prévention et la solidarité sociale. De ce fait, ces œuvres se présentent comme des contre-discours qui déconstruisent les mythes, les stéréotypes et les jugements moraux liés à la maladie.

En fin de compte, cette recherche confirme que la bande dessinée africaine francophone constitue un espace dynamique où le discours médical se croise avec la critique sociale. À travers l'analyse sociocritique, *Le Sida tue, et alors ?* et *Les Diamants de Kamituga* révèlent le VIH/sida à la fois comme une réalité biologique et comme une construction grandiose et symbolique façonnée par l'idéologie, la culture et les rapports de pouvoir. Ces œuvres affirment donc le rôle de la bande dessinée non seulement comme un moyen d'expression artistique, mais aussi comme un outil d'intervention sociale, contribuant à la déconstruction de la stigmatisation et à la réhumanisation du sujet infecté dans les réalités africaines postcoloniales. Cette recherche contribue ainsi à enrichir les études sur la littérature africaine en intégrant pleinement la bande dessinée dans les champs des humanités médicales et de la sociocritique. Elle ouvre enfin des perspectives pour de futures analyses portant sur

d'autres maladies et d'autres récits graphiques, afin de mieux comprendre le rôle du langage visuel dans la construction des représentations sociales de la maladie en Afrique.

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L'intervention de la traduction dans la vitalité sociolinguistique de la langue ikwéré

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Résumé

La langue ikwéré, parlée dans l'État de Rivers au Nigeria, présente une vitalité sociolinguistique fragilisée par son exclusion des domaines formels tels que l'éducation, les sciences et la gouvernance. Bien qu'elle demeure vivante dans les contextes informels, la limitation de ses fonctions sociales à ces seuls espaces d'usage accélère le changement linguistique et compromet sa transmission intergénérationnelle. Cet article de position soutient que le recours à la traduction, notamment par l'adaptation systématique des connaissances scientifiques en ikwéré, constitue une stratégie sociolinguistique essentielle pour élargir les fonctions de la langue, renforcer son prestige et assurer sa pérennité. S'appuyant sur le cadre théorique de Fishman (1991) relatif au renversement du changement linguistique ainsi que sur la perspective écologique de Mufwene (2017), l'article examine comment le développement terminologique planifié et la production de ressources pédagogiques peuvent favoriser la transformation de l'ikwéré, d'une langue principalement orale, en un vecteur moderne de transmission des savoirs. Enfin, il propose un cadre d'intervention concret et formule des recommandations à l'intention des communautés linguistiques, des éducateurs et des décideurs politiques.

Mots-clés : vitalité sociolinguistique, maintien des langues, traduction scientifique, intervention traductive, langue ikwéré.

Abstract

The ikwéré language, spoken in Rivers State, Nigeria, is experiencing weakened sociolinguistic vitality due to its exclusion from formal domains such as education, science, and governance. Although it remains vibrant in informal settings, this domain restriction accelerates language shift and threatens intergenerational transmission. This position paper argues that translation intervention, particularly the systematic adaptation of scientific knowledge into ikwéré, constitutes a powerful sociolinguistic strategy for expanding the language's functional reach, enhancing its prestige, and ensuring its long-term survival. Drawing on Fishman's (1991) framework of reversing language shift and on Mufwene's (2017) ecological perspective on language vitality, the paper examines how deliberate terminological development and the production of pedagogical materials can transform ikwéré from a primarily oral language into a modern vehicle of knowledge. It proposes a practical intervention framework and concludes with recommendations for communities, educators, and policymakers.

Keywords: language vitality, language survival, translation intervention, scientific translation, ikwéré language.

Introduction

La langue ikwéré, parlée principalement dans l'État de Rivers, au Nigeria, illustre un paradoxe fréquent parmi les langues africaines : largement utilisée dans la vie quotidienne, elle demeure simultanément marginalisée dans les sphères formelles et institutionnelles. Avec plus de deux millions de locuteurs (Eberhard, Simons et Fennig, 2024), l'ikwéré conserve une présence importante dans les échanges familiaux, les cérémonies traditionnelles et les rassemblements communautaires. Toutefois, l'anglais domine sans partage les domaines de l'éducation, de l'administration et de la communication professionnelle, reléguant l'ikwéré à des registres de faible prestige. Cette dynamique entraîne une réduction progressive de ses domaines d'usage et compromet sa transmission aux générations futures (Fishman, 1991 ; Batibo, 2005).

Les études sociolinguistiques menées au sein de la communauté ikwéré mettent en évidence des effets concrets de cette situation. Ihemere (2006, 2007) montre, à travers une analyse tri générationnelle réalisée à Port Harcourt, qu'un processus de changement linguistique est en cours : les jeunes locuteurs privilégient progressivement le pidgin nigérian et l'anglais, notamment dans les contextes éducatifs et semi-formels. Ezi-Nlerum et Ken-Maduako (2023) confirment que l'exposition scolaire à l'anglais affaiblit la position fonctionnelle de l'ikwéré, y compris chez les locuteurs qui continuent de l'utiliser au foyer. L'une des causes structurelles de ce recul réside dans l'absence d'une terminologie scientifique normalisée, laquelle limite l'utilité éducative de la langue et renforce la perception de son inadéquation aux systèmes modernes de production et de diffusion des connaissances (Taljard et Gauton, 2007).

Cet article soutient que le recours à la traduction, entendue comme l'adaptation systématique et planifiée des connaissances scientifiques et techniques en ikwéré, constitue une réponse directe à cette situation. Loin de se réduire à un simple exercice de préservation culturelle, une telle démarche contribue à élargir le champ fonctionnel de la langue, à restaurer son prestige sociolinguistique et à renforcer son attractivité auprès des jeunes générations. L'argument central défendu ici est que les efforts traductifs planifiés ne constituent pas seulement des actes linguistiques, mais également de véritables instruments de planification sociolinguistique au service de la vitalité de l'ikwéré dans le Nigeria contemporain.

Cadre théorique

L'analyse développée dans cet article s'inscrit principalement dans le cadre de la théorie du renversement du changement linguistique élaborée par Fishman (1991). Selon cette approche, la survie d'une langue dépend non seulement du nombre de ses locuteurs, mais aussi de son maintien dans une diversité de domaines d'usage.

Lorsqu'une langue minoritaire perd les domaines à fort prestige au profit d'une langue dominante, elle connaît une érosion progressive de son prestige, de son utilisation et de sa transmission intergénérationnelle. Pour enrayer cette dynamique, Fishman préconise des interventions institutionnelles délibérées visant à élargir les fonctions de la langue menacée et à restaurer son utilité perçue dans les contextes contemporains.

Mufwene (2017) apporte un complément écologique essentiel à cette perspective. Selon lui, la vitalité linguistique dépend avant tout des comportements communicatifs des locuteurs en réponse à leur environnement socio-économique, et non simplement du nombre de locuteurs. Lorsque cet environnement n'offre aucun avantage à l'usage de l'ikwéré dans les contextes techniques ou formels, la vitalité de la langue continue de s'éroder, indépendamment de la taille de la communauté linguistique. Cette perspective met en garde contre les approches de revitalisation déconnectées des réalités pratiques des locuteurs : le développement terminologique ne peut avoir d'effet durable que s'il s'ancre dans des pratiques effectives d'enseignement et de communication (Nhongo, 2024).

Pris ensemble, ces deux cadres théoriques permettent de concevoir la traduction non comme un acte linguistique isolé, mais comme une forme de planification sociolinguistique susceptible de transformer des facteurs abstraits de vitalité en actions concrètes sur le terrain.

La restriction des domaines d'usage comme moteur du changement linguistique

La restriction des domaines d'usage se produit lorsqu'une langue est essentiellement confinée à des contextes informels ou à faible prestige — tels que le foyer, le marché ou les cérémonies culturelles — tandis qu'une langue dominante contrôle les sphères à fort prestige, notamment l'éducation, la science, la gouvernance et la technologie. Ce déséquilibre constitue l'une des forces sociolinguistiques les plus puissantes favorisant

le changement linguistique. Dans l'État de Rivers, l'anglais est étroitement associé aux perspectives professionnelles et à la réussite sociale, tandis que l'ikwéré est perçu par de nombreux locuteurs comme une langue adaptée principalement à la communication informelle. En conséquence, les jeunes Ikwéré orientent prioritairement leur parcours scolaire et leur développement professionnel vers l'anglais (Igboanusi et Peter, 2005 ; Ndimele, 2010).

Cette dynamique engendre un cercle vicieux : à mesure que l'anglais s'impose dans les domaines formels, l'ikwéré perd à la fois son prestige et son utilité pratique, ce qui décourage les parents de le transmettre pleinement à leurs enfants. L'étude fondée sur la technique du *matched guise* menée par Ihemere (2006) illustre les conséquences attitudinales de ce processus : les bilingues étaient évalués plus favorablement sur des attributs tels que la modernité et l'ambition scolaire lorsqu'ils recouraient au pidgin nigérian plutôt qu'à l'ikwéré. Ce résultat montre comment l'absence de la langue dans les domaines formels finit par générer, chez ses propres locuteurs, des représentations négatives qui renforcent le processus de changement linguistique.

Pour l'ikwéré, cette restriction est particulièrement manifeste dans l'enseignement des sciences et des questions environnementales, domaines dans lesquels l'absence d'une terminologie adéquate impose le recours systématique à l'anglais. Or, comme le souligne Bamgbose (1991), les langues africaines exclues des secteurs stratégiques de la société perdent progressivement leur capacité à influencer les décisions qui affectent directement leurs communautés. Dans le cas de l'ikwéré, cela signifie que des enjeux aussi cruciaux que la pollution pétrolière ou la gestion des ressources naturelles sont débattus dans une langue qui demeure étrangère à une partie importante des communautés les plus concernées.

L'intervention par la traduction comme moyen d'expansion des domaines d'usage

L'intervention par la traduction désigne l'adaptation systématique et planifiée des connaissances scientifiques et techniques en langue ikwéré. Elle s'oppose directement à la restriction des domaines d'usage en permettant à la langue d'investir des sphères à fort prestige telles que les sciences de l'environnement, la santé publique, le discours sur le changement climatique et la communication technique. Grâce à la création et à la validation rigoureuses de terminologies spécialisées, l'ikwéré acquiert la capacité d'aborder des problématiques contemporaines à partir de ses propres ressources linguistiques.

Ce processus ne revêt pas uniquement une dimension technique ; il constitue également une stratégie d'élargissement du champ fonctionnel de la langue. La disponibilité du Nouveau Testament en ikwéré, dont la traduction a été réalisée par des équipes locales avec l'appui de Lutheran Bible Translators (2010), démontre que cette langue est structurellement capable de transmettre des idées complexes et abstraites lorsqu'elle bénéficie des ressources institutionnelles nécessaires. Alerechi (2017) confirme, sur le plan linguistique, que l'ikwéré possède un système grammatical pleinement développé, caractérisé par une morphologie productive et un riche système nominal. Les ressources structurelles nécessaires à l'expression de savoirs scientifiques existent donc déjà au sein de la langue. Ce qui fait défaut réside plutôt dans le développement lexical et terminologique permettant d'exploiter pleinement ces ressources dans les domaines formels. L'extension d'un investissement institutionnel comparable au domaine de la traduction scientifique permettrait ainsi à l'ikwéré d'occuper des espaces fonctionnels actuellement dominés par l'anglais.

L'impact potentiel d'une telle expansion est considérable. En fournissant le vocabulaire nécessaire pour traiter des effets de l'exploitation pétrolière, des stratégies d'adaptation au changement climatique ou encore des questions de santé publique, la

traduction scientifique fait de l'ikwéré un véritable outil de développement communautaire et de participation au débat public. Nhongo (2024) souligne à cet égard que le développement terminologique est plus durable lorsqu'il émerge de pratiques effectives d'enseignement et de communication plutôt que de projets purement lexicographiques. Cette observation est particulièrement pertinente pour la conception d'interventions traductives destinées à s'inscrire durablement dans les contextes éducatifs.

Prestige, identité et transmission intergénérationnelle

La relation entre prestige linguistique et survie des langues est largement documentée dans la littérature sociolinguistique. Bamgbose (1991) observe que les langues africaines bénéficiant d'un prestige élevé ont davantage de chances d'être transmises aux enfants et maintenues dans les contextes formels. La traduction d'idées scientifiques complexes en expressions ikwéré naturelles et valorisantes peut contribuer à transformer le statut de la langue, en la faisant passer d'une langue du foyer à une langue du savoir et de l'engagement public. Lorsque l'ikwéré devient capable d'exprimer de manière naturelle des concepts scientifiques modernes, les locuteurs tendent à percevoir leur langue comme pleinement compétente et légitime dans les contextes formels, plutôt que comme secondaire ou inadéquate.

Ce renforcement du prestige linguistique revêt une importance particulière pour les jeunes générations. Fishman (1991) rappelle que la transmission intergénérationnelle ne repose pas uniquement sur la fidélité parentale ou l'attachement culturel, mais également sur la capacité de la langue à demeurer fonctionnelle dans les espaces où les jeunes construisent leur identité sociale et intellectuelle. Or, Ihemere (2007) montre que les jeunes locuteurs ikwéré manifestent une forte préférence pour l'anglais et le pidgin nigérian dans les contextes éducatifs, non par rejet de leur identité linguistique, mais en raison d'une évaluation pragmatique de l'utilité relative des

langues à leur disposition. Ce n'est donc pas l'attachement affectif à l'ikwéré qui fait défaut, mais plutôt la perception de sa pertinence dans les domaines associés à la réussite sociale et professionnelle.

L'intervention par la traduction peut contribuer à modifier cette perception. En dotant la langue des ressources nécessaires pour traiter de questions qui concernent directement les jeunes — telles que la pollution environnementale, la santé publique ou les changements climatiques —, elle transforme l'ikwéré d'un simple héritage culturel en une ressource pratique permettant de comprendre et d'agir sur les réalités contemporaines. Ce passage d'une langue perçue comme marginalement utile à une langue reconnue comme fonctionnellement pertinente constitue l'un des facteurs les plus déterminants pour assurer une transmission intergénérationnelle durable (Heugh, 2013). L'intervention traductive apparaît ainsi comme un investissement dans l'avenir de la langue plutôt que comme un simple exercice de préservation patrimoniale.

Cadre d'intervention proposé

À partir des arguments développés dans les sections précédentes, il est possible de proposer un cadre d'intervention articulé autour de trois axes complémentaires.

Le premier axe concerne le développement terminologique. Il s'agit de mettre en place un comité pluridisciplinaire réunissant des linguistes spécialistes de l'ikwéré, des scientifiques, des éducateurs et des représentants de la communauté, chargé d'élaborer, de valider et de normaliser une terminologie scientifique dans des domaines prioritaires tels que les sciences de l'environnement, la santé publique et les sciences naturelles. Ce processus devrait privilégier les ressources morphologiques et lexicales existantes de la langue plutôt que le simple recours à l'emprunt ou à la translittération, afin de produire des termes à la fois naturels, intelligibles et pédagogiquement efficaces.

Le deuxième axe porte sur l'intégration éducative. Des programmes bilingues d'enseignement des sciences pourraient être mis en œuvre à titre pilote dans des établissements primaires et secondaires de l'État de Rivers, en s'appuyant sur des ressources pédagogiques produites en ikwéré parallèlement à l'anglais. Cette approche s'inscrit dans les orientations de la politique nationale d'éducation (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013), qui préconise l'enseignement en langue maternelle au cours des premières années de scolarisation. Toutefois, comme l'observe Williamson (1989), la mise en œuvre de cette politique demeure largement insuffisante dans de nombreuses communautés linguistiques nigérianes.

Le troisième axe : la diffusion communautaire et numérique

Le troisième axe concerne la diffusion communautaire et numérique. Des projets de traduction portant sur des questions locales liées à l'environnement et à la santé, menés en partenariat avec des organisations communautaires et des stations de radio, permettraient de rendre accessibles en ikwéré des informations directement utiles à la population. Le développement de ressources numériques — glossaires en ligne, applications mobiles et supports audiovisuels — contribuerait à diffuser largement la nouvelle terminologie auprès des élèves, des enseignants et du grand public.

Conclusion

L'intervention traductive offre une voie concrète et théoriquement fondée pour renforcer la vitalité sociolinguistique et assurer la pérennité de la langue ikwéré. En élargissant ses domaines d'usage, en restaurant son prestige et en renforçant sa pertinence auprès des jeunes générations, elle contribue à transformer l'ikwéré d'une langue principalement orale en une langue capable de fonctionner pleinement dans les contextes éducatifs, scientifiques et communautaires du Nigeria contemporain. Le cadre théorique de Fishman (1991) fournit une justification solide à cette démarche

fondée sur la reconquête des domaines d'usage, tandis que la perspective écologique de Mufwene (2017) en garantit l'ancrage dans les réalités socio-économiques des locuteurs.

Les implications de cette réflexion dépassent le seul cas de l'ikwéré. Si une telle intervention peut renforcer la vitalité d'une communauté linguistique de cette importance et de ce profil, elle peut également constituer un modèle pour d'autres langues africaines confrontées à des dynamiques similaires de restriction des domaines d'usage et d'érosion du prestige linguistique. La survie des langues au XXI^e siècle requiert davantage qu'une simple valorisation culturelle : elle exige des actions stratégiques, planifiées et durables, ancrées dans les réalités éducatives et sociales des communautés concernées. Sans intervention de cette nature, la contraction progressive des domaines d'usage de l'ikwéré risque de se poursuivre. À l'inverse, une politique traductive ambitieuse peut permettre à la langue de reconquérir sa place en tant que vecteur du savoir, de l'identité et du développement communautaire pour les générations futures.

Recommandations

1. Constituer un Comité de terminologie scientifique ikwéré réunissant des linguistes, des scientifiques, des éducateurs et des représentants communautaires, chargé d'élaborer, de valider et de normaliser les termes scientifiques destinés à l'enseignement et à la communication publique.
2. Mettre en œuvre, à titre pilote, des programmes bilingues d'enseignement des sciences dans des établissements primaires et secondaires de l'État de Rivers, en s'appuyant sur des ressources pédagogiques en ikwéré parallèlement à l'anglais, conformément aux orientations de la Politique nationale d'éducation.
3. Soutenir des projets communautaires de traduction portant sur les questions locales liées à l'environnement et à la santé, en partenariat avec des

organisations de la société civile et des stations de radio, afin de produire en ikwéré des contenus accessibles consacrés à la pollution, aux changements climatiques et à la santé publique.

4. Développer des ressources numériques — glossaires en ligne, applications mobiles et supports audiovisuels — afin de rendre la nouvelle terminologie scientifique largement accessible aux élèves, aux enseignants et au grand public.
5. Plaider, en collaboration avec le ministère de l'Éducation de l'État de Rivers, en faveur de l'intégration formelle de l'ikwéré dans les politiques relatives à l'éducation, à la communication scientifique et à la sensibilisation environnementale, afin d'assurer un ancrage institutionnel durable à l'intervention traductive.

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Naming the Devil: Missionary Translation and the Reconfiguration of Indigenous Cosmologies in Colonial Nigeria

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Abstract

This article examines translation as a key instrument of religious colonialism in Nigeria. It argues that missionary translation was not a neutral act of communication but a strategic practice that contributed to the reordering of cultural and spiritual life under colonial rule. By translating Christian texts into Yoruba, Igbo, and other Nigerian languages, missionaries sought to reshape belief systems and undermine indigenous cosmologies. Through a close analysis of religious translations, the study demonstrates how concepts central to African religions were misrepresented and recast through Christian categories. The rendering of Yoruba Èsù and Igbo Ekwensu as equivalents of the Christian Devil illustrates how translation became a vehicle for symbolic violence and cultural displacement. Drawing a comparison with the Tagalog experience under Spanish colonial rule, the article situates Nigeria within a broader pattern in which translation, conquest, and conversion functioned together as instruments of domination. By foregrounding these dynamics, the article contributes to decolonial approaches in Translation Studies and calls for greater attention to the ethical and political implications of translation in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Keywords: Religious translation, colonial discourse, indigenous cosmologies, Èsù, Ekwensu.

Introduction and Conceptual Framework: A Glance into the Modern State

In a previous study (Ajayi, 2018), I examined, among other issues, the dynamics of precolonial translation in relation to Grillo's first configuration of the state—the patrimonial nation-state—which derived from a system of governance and administration in which absolute power and control of resources were vested in the traditional ruler. The focus of the present study is Grillo's second configuration of the state—the modern state. Defined by Weber (1947) as a "system of administration and

law which is modifiable by statute, and which guides the collective actions of an executive staff,” the modern state, according to Grillo (1998), epitomizes the idea of rational governance, relying largely on sophisticated bureaucratic structures to facilitate administration. While patrimonial states were known to possess bureaucratic structures, they “lacked the procedural predictability stemming from the systematic application of the rational rules of conduct established by modern bureaucratic procedures” (Grillo, 1998, p. 13). In other words, the appointment of government officials, as well as the conduct of daily commercial activities, was greatly influenced by tradition and custom in the patrimonial state, whereas the modern state relied more heavily on what Grillo (1998) describes as “objective criteria of organization” (p. 13).

The modern state was founded on two principal ideas. The first was the need to improve the living conditions of the citizenry through the adoption of policies and practices designed to reform communities and expose their inhabitants to a new, “civilized” way of thinking, acting, and being. This, the ruling powers believed, could be achieved by redefining the state’s role in society and consolidating its authority with the aim of creating a powerful state that claimed to act on behalf of the governed. Second, it was widely assumed at all levels of government and across all spheres of governance that a state built upon ethnic diversity was vulnerable to fragmentation along ethnic lines. Against this backdrop, a new vision of the modern state emerged, revolving around the conceptualization of the state as a homogeneous entity seeking, among other objectives, a “common, uniform identity and a common uniform loyalty among its citizens” (Grillo, 1998, p. 15).

The modern state therefore emerged from a deep-seated European ambition to modernize the role of the state in society through rapid industrialization and to rally citizens around the perceived redemptive qualities of modernity. This modernist ideology continued unabated for centuries until European leaders came to realize that new sources of raw materials for European industries, as well as new markets for their

manufactured products, were necessary if the European concept of modernity and its attendant benefits were to survive. Herein lay the initial ideological currents that fuelled the colonial enterprise.

The focus of this study is not so much the theoretical and practical origins of the modern state as the transplantation of modernist ideology to other parts of the world—an issue that lies at the heart of the colonial social order. Whether the focus is Africa, the Americas, or Asia, the principal rationale for European colonization appears to have remained the same: self-enrichment and the emancipation of the cultural other. The former involved the exploitation of the colonies' vast human and natural resources, while the latter reflected a self-imposed moral obligation to bring civilization and empowerment to peoples who were considered to be in need of social, economic, and spiritual redemption. In his justification of the colonial enterprise, Christopher Columbus, the famous Italian explorer, emphasized both the material and redemptive value of the natural resources found in the conquered territories:

Gold is the most precious of all commodities... He who possesses it has all he needs in the world, as also the means of rescuing souls from Purgatory, and restoring them to the enjoyment of paradise. (as cited in McAllister, 1984, pp. 80–81)

Bernal Díaz, a prominent Spanish colonial officer who served in Mexico, corroborates Columbus's allusion to the spiritual and material objectives of colonialism with the audacious admission that the colonizers came to Mexico to "serve God and get rich" (as cited in Thomas, 1993, p. 60). Speaking specifically of the African experience, Young (1985) argues that colonialism derived not only from the desire for a "mere tributary suzerainty over distant populations" but also from the ambition to "impose upon them new social and cultural patterns identified with civilization" (p. 69). Lord Lugard, a British soldier and colonial administrator in Nigeria, described the colonial

project in Africa as a “Dual Mandate”—a characterization that aptly captures Europe’s desire both for Africa’s untapped resources and for the civilizing mission commonly referred to in French colonial discourse as *la mission civilisatrice*:

The civilized nations have at last recognized that while on the one hand the abounding wealth of the tropical regions of the earth must be developed and used for the benefit of mankind, on the other hand, an obligation rests on the controlling power not only to safeguard the material rights of the natives, but to promote their moral and educational progress. (Lugard, 1922, p. 18)

More specifically, Lugard attributed the invasion and colonization of Africa to Europe’s decision to assume the moral high ground by bringing the light of modernity to African cultures and civilizations, which were portrayed as primitive and deprived of the benefits of European progress, values, and lifestyles:

As Roman imperialism laid the foundations of a modern civilization, and led the wild barbarians of these islands along the path of progress, so in Africa today we are repaying the debt and bringing to the dark places of the earth, the abode of barbarism and cruelty, the torch of culture and progress, while ministering to the material needs of our own civilization. (Lugard, 1922, p. 618)

In addition to these justifications for European colonization, some scholars have argued that Europe also viewed Africa and other conquered territories as representations of its own primitive past and as reminders of how far it had advanced along the path of progress, enlightenment, and modernity:

Europe was in search of a pristine and unadulterated past, and therefore conveniently transfigured Africa in colonial representations of the continent

in a distant and primitive era, which it held up to itself as the mirror image of a Europe that had not yet lost its innocence, but also a reflection of the very opposite of European modernity. (Bandia, 2009, p. 5)

We find that the colonial state emerged from the desire to extend the benefits of modernity, however contrived, to other parts of the world. One of those benefits, according to Grillo (1998), was the modern state's assumption of responsibility for the social and economic well-being of its citizens. The modern state therefore represented a deliberate departure from premodern systems of governance and social organization, which had little interest in the economic and social empowerment of their citizens (Grillo, 1998). While both patrimonial and modern systems depended upon resource extraction and the maintenance of order for their survival, they differed in that the former showed little interest in transforming or "civilizing" its subjects, whereas the latter actively sought to transform societies and cultures in addition to extracting and mobilizing resources. It is on the basis of this emphasis on social transformation, empowerment, and civility that such systems are regarded as "modern." The transplantation of the modern state to colonized territories undoubtedly triggered profound changes in governance, social organization, culture, religion, and the economy.

This paper argues that, once introduced into the regions that now constitute Nigeria, the modern state carried a vision of transformation that extended far beyond administrative authority. It sought not merely to govern but also to reshape the cultural and social imagination of colonized peoples by introducing new understandings of order, value, and identity.

A new nation was thus created with clearly defined territorial boundaries, but the most significant elements that made the nation possible emerged through processes that were more psychological than physical. Herein lies the crucial role of translation in

the creation and maintenance of the colonial nation-space. Since this study is concerned with translation within the discursive framework of colonialism, it contends that the major forms of translation carried out within colonial Nigeria, particularly under the auspices of religious proselytization, were designed to perpetuate the underlying colonial principles of denigration, subjugation, and exploitation.

Having established the ideological foundations that define and shape the notion of religious translation, the discussion now turns to the practical ways in which translation both shaped and was shaped within what Niranjana (1992, p. 2) describes as “the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism.”

Translation within the Colonial Nation: A cursory Look at Religious Translations

Religious translation was, arguably, one of the most important forms of language mediation that characterized the colonial period in Nigeria’s history. Translation is understood in this context in its conventional sense—that is, as the transfer of texts between two distinct language systems. Within the specific context of religious colonialism, translation involves the transfer of texts between the imperial languages of Europe and the subaltern languages of Africa.

Scholars such as Austen (1990) and Tiberondwa (1988) argue that the intersection between European missionaries and African orality was far more complex than the experience of colonial anthropologists. From the perspective of anthropological translation, it is often argued, based on evidence from various colonial ethnographic writings, that efforts were made to preserve African oral literatures, beliefs, and customs from the disruptions and violence of colonialism, even if the ultimate objective was to redirect such knowledge towards the subjugation of indigenous peoples for colonial purposes. The landscape of religious translation, as will be shown shortly, presented a markedly different set of dynamics. European missionaries, unlike

the anthropologists who preceded them, were initially far less interested in preserving African (and, by extension, Nigerian) orality and the belief systems it embodied, since these were perceived as being incompatible with the Christian values they sought to promote. Christian missionaries came to Africa with what may be described as a modernist conception of religiosity that sought to dismantle the foundations of African cosmology and its religious institutions while illuminating humanity's path with the Christian message of hope, love, and repentance. However, confronted with the near impossibility of replacing the "darkness" of indigenous African religiosity with the light of the Gospel and its associated values without adequate knowledge of African languages, European Christian missionaries set out to document, codify, and learn these languages in the hope that doing so would facilitate their proselytizing efforts. More importantly, they came to recognize the necessity of understanding African orality if the belief systems it embodied were to be displaced and replaced by Christianity. This realization paved the way for the collection and translation of African oral narratives, alongside the codification of the languages in which they were expressed. As Austen (1990) notes, the collection and codification of these oral texts were limited to narratives considered compatible with Christian values, while those that conflicted with Christian teachings were deliberately excluded.

The role of translation in the spread of Christianity becomes increasingly evident when one considers that the European colonizers and the African colonized spoke entirely different languages and adhered to different religious traditions. Translation therefore served colonial purposes by providing the tools necessary to conquer and convert indigenous peoples to European modes of thought and conceptions of the Divine (Sugirtharajah, 2005). Two key words stand out in the discourse of religious colonialism—"conquer" and "convert"—and it is useful to examine the theoretical and practical insights they offer to this important discussion of translation.

“Conquest” and “Conversion”: Symbolic Elements in Religious Colonialism

Vicente L. Rafael (1993) examines the concepts of translation, conquest, and conversion under Spanish colonialism in *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule*. In this seminal work, Rafael argues that translation, conquest, and conversion are historically and semantically related concepts and should therefore be understood as working together toward a common ideological objective. Drawing on the *Diccionario de la lengua española* of the Real Academia Española, Rafael (1993) defines *conquista* (conquest) as both the “forcible occupation of a territory” and the attainment of another person’s “voluntary submission and consequently his or her love and affection” (p. xviii). Conversion normally refers to the act of transforming something or changing it into something else, but it may also denote bringing an individual into a new religion or practice. Like conquest, conversion may therefore be understood as crossing into another person’s physical, emotional, religious, or cultural space and claiming that territory for oneself (Rafael, 1993). It follows, according to Rafael’s argument, that the Spanish invasion and colonization of the Philippines, together with the subsequent conversion of the Tagalog people to Christianity, paved the way for the comprehensive transformation of the colonized in the image of the colonizer. In this context, conquest and conversion worked together to achieve the modernist objective of bringing civilization and empowerment to peoples who had previously been regarded as being in need of social, economic, and spiritual redemption.

Translation, both as an activity and as a process, was undoubtedly implicated in the implementation of these transformative objectives through textual exchange and what may be described as the modernist logic of the “psychological conversion” of colonized peoples. While textual exchange refers to the practical process of language transfer necessitated by the linguistic gap between colonizers and colonized, the logic of psychological conversion revolves around the belief that the colonizer’s religion,

informed by modernist ideology, prohibited the economic exploitation of conquered territories without prior or simultaneous efforts at religious proselytization (Sugirtharajah, 2005; Thomas, 1993). In other words, the hegemonic and exploitative processes of European colonialism had to be accompanied by a corresponding altruistic gesture aimed at liberating indigenous peoples from the darkness of their “primitive” ways and ushering them into the light of Christianity and the salvation it promised. England’s mission, as B. G. Johns reveals, was to

Reclaim these kingdoms of darkness and of Satan, and bring
them beneath the sway of truth, light, and knowledge¹.

The requirement of Spanish Catholicism that the Tagalog be completely transformed—that is, colonized through both conquest and conversion² further reinforced the role of translation in religious colonialism. This comprehensive transformation of the natives and their consciousness was carried out in two major ways.

First, much like the Nigerian experience, where missionaries were obliged to learn local languages and produce texts in them, fundamental Christian texts also had to be translated into Filipino languages. This necessity compelled Spanish missionaries to learn local languages, particularly Tagalog, in order to preach and produce religious texts and translations. Tagalog and other indigenous languages were subsequently codified using the Roman alphabet, while the native syllabic script in which they had previously been written was relegated to the background because of its alleged ephemerality and incompatibility with Spanish culture, religiosity, and pedagogy. The codification of native Tagalog culture during Spanish rule was therefore heavily shaped by an elaborate logic of translational reductionism that relied on the overt

¹ B. G. Johns, *The Times*, 8 October 1857, pg. 8, col. 3., cited in Sugirtharajah (2005, 84).

² In other words, they must be conquered body and soul.

simplification and reduction of Tagalog cultural artistry and artefacts into signs that could be interpreted through Spanish categories. Following Rafael (1993), it can be argued that translation, in light of these dynamics, became synonymous with the processes of publicizing or “making known” the unknown, distinguishing between “legitimate and illegitimate native practices,” and “harnessing native signs” in furtherance of the mission to propagate the Gospel and “consolidate its gains” (p. 106).

The second transformative process concerns the manner in which the Tagalog were “converted” or “translated” into what Rafael (1993) describes as “imitation Spaniards.” The transformation and representation of the Tagalog in the image of their Spanish colonizers occurred through the implantation of the Spanish language as the official language and, consequently, as a means of achieving upward social mobility within the colony. It also occurred through the conversion of the Tagalog to Christianity and the reconfiguration of the machinery of governance and social organization to reflect Spanish ways of thinking, acting, and being. Rafael (1993) argues that the Spanish verb *convertere* originally meant “to translate,” while *convertir*, as far back as the sixteenth century, also meant “to translate.” In contemporary usage, texts are translated and people are converted, whereas in earlier periods it was common to “convert” texts. The argument here is that the terms *translate* and *convert* both refer to the process of rendering Spanish texts and concepts into Tagalog, a process that also resulted in the morphological transformation of Tagalog language and thought through the importation of Spanish words, expressions, worldviews, and modes of thought. The representation of Spanish thought in Tagalog, for all intents and purposes, transported its speakers into a new psycho-cultural space designed to reify and valorize the Spanish conception of humanity. Thus, when Rafael (1993) refers to the translation or conversion of the Tagalog into “imitation

Spaniards,” he is referring to this psycho-cultural transformation of the colonial subject at the hands of Spanish colonial agents.

The dynamics involved in the introduction of Christian doctrine into indigenous vernaculars are also worthy of consideration. In his analysis of the Tagalog experience of religious colonialism, Rafael (1993) argues that the Spaniards were unable to find local equivalents for such important terms as *Dios* (God), *Espíritu Santo* (Holy Spirit), and *Jesucristo* (Jesus Christ). Consequently, they took the executive decision to retain these terms in their source-language forms in order to “punctuate the flow of Christian discourse in the vernacular” (Rafael, 1993, pp. 20–21). Operating on the assumption that certain concepts could not be translated because of cultural and ideological differences, Spanish missionary-translators therefore sought to “prescribe” and “proscribe” the medium through which indigenous peoples were expected to “receive and return God’s word” in the service of conversion (Rafael, 1993, p. 21). The question remains: What does it mean to prescribe and proscribe a language? To Spanish missionaries, Tagalog suffered from significant morphological deficiencies that rendered it unsuitable for the expression and propagation of Christian thought. Its indigenous words for God, spirit, and God’s son, for example, were considered too distant from Christian doctrine to capture adequately the essence of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit (Robinson, 1997). The perceived untranslatability of these Spanish biblical concepts meant that they had to be calqued into Tagalog. The production of Christian doctrine in Tagalog therefore prescribed the language as the medium through which the natives would receive, internalize, and disseminate God’s word. This process resulted in the stripping away of what Nadella (2012) describes as “unwanted indigenous cultural and religious baggage” (p. 55), followed by the enrichment of the language with terms and concepts that valorized Christian values.

These transformative processes proscribed the Tagalog language in such a way that the language through which indigenous peoples received and returned God’s word—

the Tagalog of old—was no longer the same language with which they had been familiar before the advent of Spanish colonialism (Rafael, 1993). The transformation of Tagalog described above was underpinned by the principle of the “hierarchy of languages” (Robinson, 1997), which laid the foundation for the adoption of a top-down approach to translation and signalled the emergence of vertical translation practices within the colony. This hierarchical conception of language explains the progression of religious translations in the Philippines from Latin into Castilian and from Castilian into Tagalog. More importantly, the principle of the hierarchy of languages led to each target language in the translation chain being regarded as significantly “weaker” and less adequate for the expression of Christian truth than its predecessor (Robinson, 1997). Castilian was therefore considered less adequate than Latin, while Tagalog occupied an even lower position in relation to Latin.

The principle of the hierarchy of languages foregrounds the logic of untranslatability, as evidenced in Rafael’s (1993) discussion of the use of the Spanish word for God rather than the Tagalog representation of the concept in Tagalog religious texts:

To use the signifier *Dios* rather than the Tagalog *bathala* presupposed the perfect fit between the Spanish word and its Christian referent in a way that would be unlikely to occur were the Tagalog word used instead. (Rafael, 1993, p. 29)

According to Spanish missionaries, this linguistic inadequacy did not arise from ordinary differences between languages. Rather, it derived from what Robinson (1997, p. 86) describes as “increasing historical and geographical distances from God.” In other words, the farther a language and its culture are from God, the less capable their speakers are of participating in what religious discourse commonly refers to as “divine

commerce.”³ Spanish missionaries therefore relied on translation to facilitate the displacement of subaltern languages such as Tagalog toward a more godly presence, a process that involved transforming them into mirror images of languages believed to be closer to God and therefore infused with divine presence. As the Tagalog experience of religious colonialism demonstrates, religious translation became a powerful instrument through which colonial authorities perpetuated asymmetrical relations of power.

The Tagalog experience, it should be noted, is largely transferable to other societies that experienced colonialism in one form or another. By and large, the experience of religious colonialism in the Philippines demonstrates the ways in which religious translations—particularly the Bible and other liturgical texts—were deployed as instruments of Western hegemony and used to denigrate subaltern cultures in furtherance of colonial objectives.

Translation and Religious Colonialism in Nigeria

The dynamics of translation and religious colonialism in Nigeria followed patterns that were largely similar to the Filipino experience discussed in the preceding section. Adegbiya (2004) reports that Christian missionary contact in Nigeria predates the arrival of the British, as Portuguese missionaries had arrived alongside traders in the fifteenth century, leaving in their wake such place names as Lagos in the South-West and Forcados in the Niger Delta region. Unlike their British counterparts, the Portuguese sought primarily to establish religious and commercial ties with the cultures they encountered. British missionaries arrived in the nineteenth century and, as previously mentioned, worked in collaboration with the colonial state to bring what they perceived as empowerment and civilization to Nigerian societies. These civilizing and evangelizing initiatives were initially carried out in English, the use of

³ This term denotes the exchange of prayers and answers, gifts and gratitude between God and believers; See Robinson (1997, p. 86).

which spread as colonial influence extended into the hinterlands. The missionaries, Adegbija (2004) continues, soon realized that the “message of the soul” would be more effectively communicated and understood when “couched in the native language or mother tongue of the addressee” (p. 21). Diedrich Westermann, a missionary-linguist of considerable repute, notes:

We do not want Christianity to appear in the eyes of the natives as the religion of the white man, nor do we want the opinion to prevail that the African must become a pseudo-European in order to become a Christian; rather, we want to implant the Gospel deep into the soil of the African mind, so that it may grow there in its own African form, not as a gift of the white man...⁴

While religious colonialism brought the Gospel of Christ to Nigerians either in their native languages or through the language of colonial imposition, it also sought to dismantle the cultural and religious ethos that had hitherto prevailed within indigenous communities.⁵ Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther’s translation of the Bible and other religious texts into Nigerian languages provides a concrete example of the ways in which religious colonialism contributed to the erosion of indigenous values and belief systems.⁶

Renowned as the first African to be ordained as an Anglican bishop, Samuel Ajayi Crowther’s life was shaped largely by his experience of slavery. Captured and sold into slavery at a young age, he was rescued by British anti-slavery forces and placed under the care of the Church Missionary Society in Sierra Leone. He was educated by Christian missionaries, who facilitated his conversion to Christianity and subsequently sent him to England for missionary training. His zeal for Christianity and his

⁴ Cited in Omolewa (1979).

⁵ See Bandia (2009, p. 7); Tiberondaw (1998).

⁶ See Adegbija (2004).

remarkable linguistic abilities, including proficiency in several African languages, earned him considerable respect among fellow missionaries and endeared him to his superiors. Upon completing his missionary training in England, he returned to West Africa, where he became a central figure in the mission to bring civilization to the region through Christianity and various industrialization initiatives.

Ajayi Crowther established a mission station in Abeokuta, where, in addition to spreading the Gospel, he played a significant role in diversifying the local economy through the cultivation and trade of cotton as an alternative to the slave trade. In order to facilitate the spread of Christianity through indigenous languages, he spearheaded the codification and standardization of Yoruba and proceeded to develop a vocabulary and dictionary designed to promote a standard form of the language.⁷ Following these efforts, Bishop Crowther translated the Bible, the *Book of Common Prayer*, and other religious texts into Yoruba and later into Igbo, thereby facilitating the dissemination of Christianity within Yoruba communities and beyond (Adegbija, 2004). It should be noted at this juncture that the codification of Yoruba and other indigenous vernaculars, the translation of Christian texts and other literature into these languages, and the implantation of English as the official language all worked together to create a significant space for print capitalism—and the writing tradition it embodies—thereby reinforcing the preference for written texts over oral literary forms within the colony.

Ajayi Crowther's translations of the Holy Bible into Yoruba under the title *Bibeli Mímó Tàbí Màjè mú Láéláé àti Titun* (1900), as well as his translation of other Christian literature into Yoruba and other Nigerian languages, earned him widespread acclaim both within and outside the Church. His representation of Yoruba traditional values in these works, however, attracted considerable criticism because of what many

⁷ Prior to Ajayi Crowther's intervention, there were several dialects of Yoruba associated with their respective regional and sub-ethnic groups. Most of these regional variations, such as Ijebu, Ijesa, Egba, Yewa, Ekiti, Ilaje, to mention but a few are still spoken today alongside the standard variety of the language.

regarded as the systematic undermining of Yoruba religious beliefs, values, and cultural artefacts for the benefit of Christianity.

The liturgical texts published by Bishop Crowther and his team, particularly the Yoruba Bible, were especially unkind to the most important supernatural figure in Yoruba cosmology—Èṣù—whom they equated with the Christian Devil or Satan. As demonstrated in the verses below, taken from the English Bible, the Christian Devil is represented throughout the Yoruba Bible either as Èṣù or through an indigenized rendition of Satan (*Sàtánì*):⁸

and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by *Satan*. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. (Mk. 1:13 [New International version]) (Mine italics)

I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of *Satan* to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me. (Acts 26:17-18 [New International version]) (Mine italics)

Yoruba translations:

Ó sì wà ní ogójì ní ijù, a ti ọwọ Sàtánì dán wò, ó sì wà pẹlú àwọn ẹranko ìgbé; àwọn ángélì sì ń ẹ ìránṣẹ́ fún un. (*Mààkù* 1:13)

Èmi ó máa gbà ọ láti ọwọ àwọn èniyàn àti lówọ àwọn kẹfẹrí tí èmi rán ọ sí nísinsinyí láti là wọn lójú, kí wọn lè yípadà kúrò nínú òkùnkùn sí ìmólẹ àti kúrò lówọ agbára Sàtánì sí Olórun, kí wọn lè gba ìdàríjì ẹṣẹ àti ogún

⁸ While Èṣù was used in initial versions of the Yoruba Bible, *Satani* was coined and used in revised editions. Èṣù and *Satani* were used interchangeably in other religious and secular texts, which practice has endured to date.

pèlú àwọn tí a sọ di mímọ́ nípa ìgbàgbọ́ nínú mi. (*Ìṣe àwọn Àpóstélì 26:17–18*) (Mine italics).

In Crowther's translations of the Bible into other Nigerian languages, similar supernatural beings and concepts were identified within various ethnolinguistic communities and subjected to treatment similar to that accorded Èṣù in Yoruba. *Ekwensu*,⁹ for instance, which occupies a position in Igbo cosmology comparable to that of Èṣù in Yoruba belief, was superimposed upon the concept of the Christian Devil and rendered in the same biblical passages either as *Ekwensu* or as the Igboized form *Setan*,¹⁰ thus:

O wee nọ n'ọhia ụbọchị iri anọ, Setan na-anwa Ya; Ya na anụ ọhia niile nọkwa; ndị mmụọ ozi na-ejekwaara Ya ozi. (*Mak 1:13*) (Mine, italics)

Na-ewereputa gị n'aka ndị Juu na n'aka ndị mba ọzọ, ndị Mụ onwe m na-eziga gị jekwuru ha, imeghe anya ha, ka ha wee si n'ọchịchiri chigharia bịa n'ihè, sikwa n'ike Setan chigharikute Chineke, ka ha wee nata mgbaghara mmehie nile na ihe nketa n'etiti ndị e doro nsọ site n'ikwere na Mụ. (*Ọrụ Ndịozì 26:17–18*) (Mine, italics).

In his rejection of the depiction of the Yoruba divinity Èṣù as the local equivalent of the Christian Devil or Satan, Bewaji (1998) accuses Bishop Crowther and his team of pandering to their Euro-Christian counterparts in an effort to weaken Yoruba religion and redirect worship away from Èṣù toward the Christian God. Following closely in Bewaji's footsteps, Aiyejina (2010) argues that the Èṣù of Yoruba cosmology is not—and should never have been—construed as the Euro-Christian Devil who comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. The Yoruba Èṣù, he continues, is:

⁹ In Igbo cosmology, *Ekwensu* is both a trickster god and the god of war

¹⁰ As is the case with *Satani* in the Yoruba Bible, the word "*Setan*" is strange to Igbo cosmology and was only coined after the fact and used in later editions of the Igbo Bible in response to the criticisms that trailed the use of *Ekwensu*.

A divine trickster, a master of disguise, a mischief-maker, a rebel, a challenger of orthodoxy, a shape-shifter, and an enforcing deity. Èsù is the custodian of the divine *àṣẹ* with which Olódùmarè created the universe; a neutral force who controls both benevolent and malevolent supernatural powers; and the guardian of Orunmila's oracular utterances. Without Èsù to open the portals to the past and the future, Orunmila, the deity of divination, would be blind. As a neutral force, he straddles all realms and serves as an essential factor in any attempt to resolve conflicts between contrasting but coterminous forces in the world. Although he is sometimes portrayed as whimsical, Èsù is in fact devoid of emotion. He supports only those who perform prescribed sacrifices and act in conformity with the moral laws of the universe as laid down by Olódùmarè. As the deity of the *oríta* ..., it is Èsù's duty to deliver sacrifices to their intended deities. Without his intervention, the Yoruba believe, no sacrifice, no matter how elaborate, can be efficacious. Philosophically speaking, Èsù is the deity of choice and free will. Thus, while Ogun may be the deity of war and creativity, and Orunmila the deity of wisdom, Èsù is the deity of prescience, imagination, and criticism—literary or otherwise. (Aiyejina, 2010, p. 4)

In a comparative analysis of the traditional Èsù in Yoruba cosmology and the “new Èsù” espoused by Ajayi Crowther and his associates, Oyeyemi (2012) reveals that Èsù seeks at all times to fulfil the will of the Supreme Being, whereas the Christian Devil is intent on destroying God's work and undermining His authority whenever possible. The Yoruba Èsù is also renowned for intervening on behalf of the afflicted, provided they are willing to submit to divine commandments, whereas the Christian Devil's principal objective is to intensify the suffering of the afflicted while simultaneously creating physical and spiritual distance between them and the Supreme Being. Finally,

Èsù in Yoruba religion is a “straddle,” a “neutral force,” and a factor in “any attempt to resolve conflicts between contrasting but coterminous forces in the world,” whereas the Christian Devil is far from neutral, demands absolute devotion to himself and his ways, and creates rather than resolves conflict (Oyeyemi, 2012).

The representation of the Christian Devil as Èsù in the Yoruba Bible, despite the obvious distinction between the two concepts, lends credence to Bandia’s (2009) position on the dehumanizing effects of religious colonialism on African cultures. According to him, religious translations in colonial Africa sought above all else to:

Minimize those elements of African religious belief that were in contradiction with Christian doctrine, and to establish parallels between African and Christian belief systems likely to enhance proselytizing and conversion. (Bandia, 2009, p. 7)

The redefinition of Èsù in terms that closely mirrored the Christian Devil gradually gained a foothold in the popular imagination, finding its way into the *Dictionary of the Yoruba Language* published in 1913 by the Church Missionary Society Bookshop¹¹, the University of London’s *Dictionary of Modern Yoruba* (1958), and several other religious and secular publications¹². Suffice it to say that this conception of Èsù has since displaced the original understanding of the deity from its rightful place in the Yoruba imagination, thereby acquiring an undeserved status in popular discourse that persists even in contemporary times.

Rejecting the argument that the representation of the Christian Devil in the Yoruba and Igbo Bibles resulted from morphological limitations in the two languages, Aiyejina (2009) contends that Ajayi Crowther was too knowledgeable to be constrained by such a logic. He suggests instead that Crowther may have deliberately

¹¹ See *Dictionary of the Yoruba Language* (1913, p. 40).

¹² See Aiyejina (2010, p. 4).

demonized the concept of Èsù in an attempt to avenge the atrocities committed by Yoruba slave traders:

The irony of choices made by the Crowthers of the African world is that in their psychological disdain for, and rejection of, African culture, which was in part a response to the African involvement in their enslavement, they became a new generation of middle-men and women who functioned as arrowheads for the denigration of African cultures. So, while a number of pre-colonial African chiefs and merchants betrayed their fellow Africans by selling them into slavery, the intellectual Crowthers, acting as priests, interpreters, translators, policemen, postmasters and schoolteachers, were key players in the process of the religious, psychological and mental enslavement of African peoples. (Aiyejina, 2009, pp. 4–5)

Further advancing his argument that Ajayi Crowther and his contemporaries deliberately undermined and disparaged African traditional values, Aiyejina (2009) argues that those who readily equated the Christian Devil with the Yoruba Èsù, despite evidence to the contrary, should have been equally willing to find a dynamic equivalent for Jesus Christ in the local vernacular rather than adopting the foreignized form *Jesu Kristi*:

If Satan translates into Èsù because of some perceived incidental similarities between the two, how come Jesus does not translate into Orunmila, given the fact that Orunmila is as proverbial, wise, calm, peaceful, and forbearing as Jesus? How come he does not translate into Ela, the divinity of regeneration? (Aiyejina, 2009, p. 5)

Without a doubt, such an approach would have undermined colonial efforts to dismantle the foundations of African traditional religion. Moreover, the use of

indigenous equivalents for Christian concepts such as God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in Yoruba religious texts would likely have met with the disapproval of colonial and missionary agents because it implied a degree of cultural parity between the source and target cultures. As Nadella (2012) observes with respect to colonial India:

The process of translating (religious) texts from English into Telugu (was) seen not as a mutual transaction or as a symbiotic process between two languages and cultures of similar value and importance, but as (a) one-way traffic whereby one language spoke, while the other sat at the feet of the master language and listened. (Nadella, 2012, p. 54)

The logic of cultural parity between Western Christian cultures and traditional African belief systems eventually gained traction in places such as the Caribbean and Brazil, where Baptist missionaries, working in collaboration with freed African slaves, created platforms that facilitated dialogue between Christianity and African traditional religions.

By and large, we find that, much like the Tagalog experience, religious colonialism contributed to both the conquest of the Nigerian native and their conversion to Euro-Christian ways of thinking, acting, and being. The translation of religious texts into Yoruba, for instance, proscribed both the language and the culture it embodied by demonizing and undermining those mystical concepts and symbols that conferred splendour, legitimacy, and authenticity upon Yoruba traditional religion. Conceivably, the negative connotations imposed upon Yoruba traditional values and their associated practices encouraged the abandonment of indigenous cultural traditions in favour of Euro-Christian notions of religiosity and their attendant values, owing to their perceived proximity to modern enlightenment.

In this discussion of religious colonialism, translation is employed in both pragmatic and symbolic ways to expose the roles of Western colonial administrators and

missionaries in implementing the tripartite colonial ideology of denigration, subjugation, and exploitation. The translation of the Bible into indigenous Nigerian languages, as demonstrated above, focused largely on representing indigenous religious and cultural icons in an overwhelmingly negative light. To this end, such concepts as Èsù, Aje, and Orunmila, which lie at the heart of Yoruba cosmology, were stripped of their agency, demonized, and associated with Euro-Christian notions of darkness, evil, and destruction.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that translation was not a peripheral activity within the colonial encounter in Nigeria but rather one of its most decisive instruments. Through the deliberate reshaping of language and the careful selection of religious terminology, missionaries introduced new spiritual categories that unsettled existing cosmologies and redirected cultural allegiance toward the values of the colonial order. What began as an effort to communicate the Christian message through familiar linguistic forms soon evolved into a broader project of cultural transformation that penetrated deeply into the moral imagination of Nigerian societies. Translations of scripture, prayers, and liturgical materials became vehicles through which European ideas of virtue, evil, authority, and divine presence were introduced and normalized.

The portrayal of deities such as Èsù and Ekwensu as manifestations of the Christian Devil stands as one of the most striking examples of this process. These translations did not arise from an innocent search for lexical equivalence but from a framework that evaluated African religions through the lens of European theology. As a result, important indigenous concepts were recast in negative terms, and entire religious systems were measured against foreign definitions of truth and salvation. These distortions, repeated across generations and disseminated through written texts, helped

to undermine the intellectual and spiritual authority of indigenous traditions and contributed to their marginalization in public life.

Through a methodical comparison of the Nigerian experience with that of the Tagalog people in the Philippines, this study has also revealed the global nature of these translational strategies. Across different imperial contexts, translation functioned as a means of conquest and conversion, as well as a subtle political tool that reshaped the inner worlds of colonized peoples long after the first wave of military or administrative control had been established. This comparison underscores the extensive reach of translational power and the need to understand its effects not only as historical phenomena but also as ongoing influences that continue to shape religious and cultural identities.

Yet the task of understanding translation within colonial contexts is far from complete. Several avenues remain open for further research. One promising direction is the study of African translators who worked alongside missionaries. Their choices often reveal a complex interplay of loyalty, pressure, negotiation, and quiet resistance. A detailed examination of their letters, diaries, and draft translations could provide fresh insights into the contested nature of missionary language work.

Another area deserving sustained attention is the role of oral tradition in responding to or resisting the religious categories introduced by missionaries. Many communities continued to express their worldviews through oral narratives, songs, divination poetry, and ritual performances. Bringing these forms into conversation with translated texts would offer a fuller picture of how Nigerians navigated the encounter between indigenous belief systems and missionary teachings.

Further comparative research could also examine the translation practices of Islamic scholars in northern Nigeria. Their work created another layer of religious encounter in which Arabic terms, Qur'anic concepts, and local idioms interacted in complex

ways. Studying these parallel translational traditions may uncover alternative models of cultural negotiation distinct from those introduced by Christian missions.

Finally, contemporary community-based studies could explore how present-day Nigerians reinterpret the concepts that were transformed during the colonial era. Such research would not only deepen our understanding of the past but also reveal how living communities continue to reclaim voice, agency, and spiritual memory in the present.

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POLYPHONIE, ORALITÉ ET PRATIQUES LINGUISTIQUES DANS *Terra Sonâmbula* DE MIA COUTO : VERS UNE MÉMOIRE PLURIELLE DU MOZAMBIQUE POSTCOLONIAL

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Résumé

Cette étude examine comment *Terra Sonâmbula* de Mia Couto mobilise la polyphonie, l'oralité et l'hybridité linguistique pour reconfigurer une mémoire plurielle du Mozambique postcolonial. À travers une structure narrative fragmentée, où s'entrelacent les voix des vivants, des morts et du rêve, l'auteur reconstruit des fragments de mémoire individuelle et collective liés à la guerre civile ainsi qu'aux héritages du passé colonial. Le cadre théorique de cette recherche s'inscrit dans une approche interdisciplinaire mobilisant la théorie de la polyphonie de Mikhaïl Bakhtine, les études sur l'oralité africaine ainsi que les perspectives postcoloniales. La méthodologie adoptée repose sur une démarche qualitative fondée sur l'analyse textuelle et discursive, mettant l'accent sur les procédés narratifs et linguistiques qui structurent l'œuvre. Le roman apparaît ainsi comme un espace de dialogue entre l'oralité africaine et l'écriture littéraire moderne, mettant en lumière une esthétique de la persistance et de la résistance. Les pratiques linguistiques de Mia Couto, notamment le recours aux néologismes, aux ruptures syntaxiques, à l'insertion de proverbes et aux formes narratives issues de la tradition orale, traduisent un processus de réappropriation culturelle et identitaire. La problématique de cette recherche consiste à déterminer comment Mia Couto élabore une poétique de la reconstruction articulant la pluralité des voix narratives, la mémoire traumatique et la créativité linguistique. Autrement dit, il s'agit de montrer comment le langage devient un lieu de reconfiguration du réel ainsi qu'un vecteur de résilience et de guérison collective. L'article conclut que la créativité linguistique et la polyphonie chez Mia Couto constituent un dispositif de reconstruction mémorielle dans le contexte postcolonial mozambicain.

Mots-clés : polyphonie, oralité, mémoire plurielle, postcolonialisme, Mia Couto.

POLYPHONY, ORALITY, AND LINGUISTIC PRACTICES IN *Terra Sonâmbula* BY MIA COUTO: TOWARD A PLURAL MEMORY OF POSTCOLONIAL MOZAMBIQUE

Abstract

This study examines how *Terra Sonâmbula* by Mia Couto mobilises polyphony, orality and linguistic hybridity to reconfigure a plural memory of postcolonial Mozambique. Through a fragmented narrative structure, in which the voices of the living, the dead and the dream world intertwine, the author reconstructs fragments of individual and collective memory associated with the civil war as well as the legacies of the colonial past. The theoretical framework of this research is grounded in an interdisciplinary approach drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of polyphony, studies of African orality, and postcolonial perspectives. The methodology adopted is qualitative in nature and is based on textual and discourse analysis, with particular emphasis on the narrative and linguistic devices that structure the work. The novel thus emerges as a space of dialogue between African orality and modern literary writing, highlighting an aesthetics of persistence and resistance. Mia Couto's linguistic practices, notably his use of neologisms, syntactic disruptions, the incorporation of proverbs, and narrative forms derived from oral tradition, reflect a process of cultural and identity reappropriation. The central concern of this study is to determine how Mia Couto develops a poetics of reconstruction that articulates the plurality of narrative voices, traumatic memory and linguistic creativity. In other words, the study seeks to demonstrate how language becomes a site for the reconfiguration of reality as well as a vehicle for resilience and collective healing. The article concludes that linguistic creativity and polyphony in Mia Couto's work constitute a mechanism of memorial reconstruction within the postcolonial Mozambican context.

Keywords: polyphony, orality, plural memory, postcolonialism, Mia Couto.

Introduction

La littérature africaine constitue un espace privilégié de représentation, d'interprétation et de reconfiguration des expériences historiques liées à la colonisation et à ses héritages. Elle permet non seulement de dénoncer les violences du passé colonial, mais aussi d'explorer les dynamiques contemporaines des sociétés africaines dans toute leur complexité. Dans ce contexte, le Mozambique, indépendant

depuis 1975, offre un terrain particulièrement fécond pour l'expression littéraire des traumatismes liés à la domination coloniale, à la guerre civile et aux processus de reconstruction nationale.

Parmi les figures majeures de cette littérature, Mia Couto occupe une place singulière. Dans *Terra Sonâmbula* (Couto, 1992), l'auteur déploie une esthétique narrative marquée par l'entrelacement du réel et du merveilleux, du mythe et de l'histoire, ainsi que par une hybridité linguistique qui conjugue le portugais aux langues africaines. Cette écriture, souvent rapprochée du réalisme magique, s'enracine également dans les traditions orales africaines, conférant à l'œuvre une dimension à la fois érudite et populaire.

Le roman met en scène un univers où se croisent rêve et réalité, passé et présent, vie et mort, donnant lieu à une pluralité de voix, de langages et de mémoires. Ce dispositif narratif dépasse la seule dimension esthétique pour refléter la complexité des expériences individuelles et collectives dans le contexte postcolonial mozambicain.

Dès lors, cette étude s'interroge sur la manière dont la polyphonie, l'oralité et les pratiques linguistiques dans *Terra Sonâmbula* participent à la construction d'une mémoire plurielle du Mozambique postcolonial. Plus précisément, il s'agit d'analyser comment l'articulation de ces éléments permet de reconfigurer les traces du passé colonial et de donner voix aux subjectivités marginalisées.

Le cadre théorique de cette recherche s'appuie sur la théorie de la polyphonie développée par Bakhtine, les réflexions sur l'oralité africaine portées notamment par Senghor et Hampâté Bâ, ainsi que sur les approches du postcolonialisme linguistique élaborées par Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin et Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. La méthodologie adoptée repose sur une analyse qualitative, textuelle et discursive des procédés narratifs et linguistiques à l'œuvre dans le roman.

Enfin, l'article s'organise autour de trois axes principaux. Il examine d'abord la polyphonie comme mode de construction d'une mémoire fragmentée ; il analyse ensuite l'oralité comme vecteur de transmission et de pérennisation des savoirs ; enfin, il étudie les pratiques linguistiques comme instruments de réappropriation culturelle et de reconstruction identitaire dans le contexte postcolonial mozambicain.

Avant d'aborder ces différents axes, il convient de présenter le cadre théorique de l'étude et de proposer un résumé analytique du roman à l'étude.

I. Cadre théorique, revue de la littérature et bref aperçu de *Terra Sonâmbula*

I.1. Cadre théorique : polyphonie, oralité et postcolonialisme linguistique

L'analyse de *Terra Sonâmbula* de Mia Couto s'inscrit dans un cadre théorique interdisciplinaire articulant la polyphonie, l'oralité et le postcolonialisme linguistique. Ce dispositif conceptuel permet d'appréhender le texte comme un espace de production de sens où s'entrelacent voix, mémoires et pratiques langagières dans un contexte marqué par les fractures historiques du Mozambique postcolonial.

La notion de polyphonie, telle que formulée par Bakhtine, constitue le socle de cette analyse. Pour cet auteur, le roman est fondamentalement « un plurilinguisme social organisé artistiquement » (Bakhtine, 1978, p. 88), où « plusieurs consciences indépendantes et non fusionnées » coexistent dans un même espace narratif (Bakhtine, 1970, p. 32). Cette conception dialogique du texte permet de penser *Terra Sonâmbula* comme une structure ouverte, traversée par des voix hétérogènes qui ne se résolvent pas dans une synthèse univoque. La fragmentation narrative devient ainsi le reflet d'une mémoire disloquée, où les récits individuels et collectifs se croisent, se répondent et parfois se contredisent. La polyphonie ne relève donc pas uniquement d'un procédé formel ; elle participe également d'une épistémologie du multiple.

Cette pluralité des voix s'articule étroitement avec la dimension de l'oralité. Dans les traditions africaines, l'oralité constitue un mode fondamental de connaissance et de transmission. Comme le souligne Hampâté Bâ (1960), « en Afrique, un vieillard qui meurt, c'est une bibliothèque qui brûle » (p. 15), formule devenue emblématique de la centralité de la mémoire orale. De son côté, Senghor (1964) insiste sur la dimension esthétique et communautaire de la parole africaine, fondée sur le rythme, l'image et la participation collective. Dans *Terra Sonâmbula*, cette oralité se manifeste à travers des récits enchâssés, des proverbes et une structuration narrative proche du conte, ce qui confère au texte une « textualité seconde » (Zumthor, 1983), où l'écrit devient le prolongement de la parole. L'oralité apparaît dès lors comme un lieu de résistance culturelle face à l'hégémonie des formes écrites héritées de la colonisation.

Par ailleurs, les pratiques linguistiques de Mia Couto s'inscrivent dans une dynamique de subversion et de réappropriation analysée par les études postcoloniales. Selon Ashcroft, Griffiths et Tiffin (1989), les écrivains postcoloniaux procèdent à une « appropriation de la langue impériale » (p. 38), en la transformant afin d'exprimer des réalités locales. Dans la même perspective, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) affirme que « la langue porte la culture » (p. 13), soulignant ainsi les enjeux politiques du choix linguistique. Chez Mia Couto, cette appropriation se traduit par une créativité lexicale et syntaxique qui déstabilise le portugais normatif, produisant une langue hybride, poétique et profondément ancrée dans l'imaginaire mozambicain.

L'articulation de ces trois cadres théoriques permet de mettre en évidence le rôle central du langage comme lieu de médiation entre mémoire, identité et histoire. La polyphonie rend compte de la multiplicité des voix ; l'oralité assure la continuité des savoirs ; et le postcolonialisme linguistique éclaire les stratégies de transformation de la langue. Ensemble, ces approches révèlent que *Terra Sonâmbula* ne se contente pas de représenter la réalité postcoloniale, mais participe activement à sa reconfiguration symbolique.

I.2. Revue de la littérature

L'œuvre de Mia Couto a suscité un intérêt critique considérable, notamment en raison de son écriture singulière et de son inscription dans les dynamiques postcoloniales. Les études consacrées à *Terra Sonâmbula* se sont développées autour de plusieurs axes majeurs, parmi lesquels figurent la mémoire, l'oralité, l'identité et la question linguistique.

Un premier ensemble de travaux met l'accent sur la représentation de la mémoire et du trauma. Des chercheurs tels que Leite (2003) et Rothwell (2004) montrent que le roman constitue une tentative de reconstruction symbolique de la mémoire nationale mozambicaine après la guerre civile. Ils soulignent que la fragmentation narrative et l'imbrication des récits reflètent les discontinuités de l'histoire ainsi que la difficulté de produire un récit unifié du passé. Dans cette perspective, la mémoire apparaît comme un processus dynamique, marqué par l'oubli, la réécriture et la subjectivité.

Un deuxième axe critique concerne l'oralité et ses manifestations dans l'écriture de Mia Couto. Des études telles que celles de Chabal (1996) et de Leite (2012) insistent sur l'intégration des formes orales dans la structure narrative, notamment à travers les contes, les proverbes et les récits enchâssés. Ces travaux montrent que l'oralité ne constitue pas un simple héritage culturel, mais un principe structurant de l'esthétique de l'auteur, permettant de réactiver des modes de pensée et de narration propres aux sociétés africaines.

Par ailleurs, la question linguistique occupe une place centrale dans la critique de l'œuvre de Mia Couto. Plusieurs chercheurs (Leite, 2012 ; Rothwell, 2004) ont analysé sa créativité linguistique comme une stratégie de subversion du portugais colonial. Cette écriture hybride, marquée par des néologismes et des innovations syntaxiques, est interprétée comme une forme de « décolonisation linguistique », rejoignant ainsi les analyses de Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986). Elle témoigne d'une

volonté de reconfigurer la langue afin d'exprimer au mieux les réalités locales et les imaginaires africains.

Enfin, certains travaux adoptent une approche plus globale en articulant ces différentes dimensions. Des études récentes mettent en évidence le caractère profondément interdisciplinaire de l'œuvre de Mia Couto, à la croisée de la littérature, de l'anthropologie et de la sociolinguistique. Elles soulignent que *Terra Sonâmbula* constitue un espace de convergence où se rencontrent mémoire, langage et identité dans une dynamique de reconstruction postcoloniale.

Malgré la richesse de ces contributions, peu d'études proposent une analyse intégrée de la polyphonie, de l'oralité et des pratiques linguistiques en tant qu'éléments conjoints de construction d'une mémoire plurielle. C'est dans cette perspective que s'inscrit la présente recherche, qui vise à combler cette lacune en proposant une lecture transversale et articulée de ces trois dimensions.

I.3. Bref aperçu de *Terra Sonâmbula*

Le roman *Terra Sonâmbula* de Mia Couto se déroule dans un Mozambique ravagé par la guerre civile, où deux personnages, le vieil homme Tuahir et le jeune Muidinga, errent dans un paysage de destruction à la recherche d'un refuge et d'un sens à leur existence. Leur parcours est ponctué par la découverte de cahiers appartenant à Kindzu, dont le récit enchâssé constitue une seconde trame narrative.

Le roman repose ainsi sur une structure polyphonique et fragmentée, articulant plusieurs temporalités et plusieurs registres — le réel, le rêve et le mythe — qui se superposent et se répondent. À travers cette configuration narrative, l'œuvre met en scène une mémoire éclatée, marquée par le traumatisme de la guerre et les séquelles du passé colonial.

L'originalité du texte réside également dans son recours à l'oralité et à une langue fortement hybridée, où néologismes, images poétiques et formes narratives traditionnelles participent à la construction d'un univers symbolique singulier. Cette écriture permet de transformer l'expérience du chaos en un espace de création et de résilience.

Ainsi, *Terra Sonâmbula* apparaît comme une allégorie du Mozambique postcolonial, où la quête identitaire des personnages reflète celle d'une nation en reconstruction, cherchant à recomposer son histoire à partir de fragments de mémoire dispersés.

II. Analyse de *Terra Sonâmbula* de Mia Couto

II.1. Polyphonie : multiplicité des voix et reconstruction du récit national

Dans *Terra Sonâmbula*, Mia Couto construit un dispositif narratif profondément polyphonique, au sein duquel les voix des personnages se croisent, interagissent et parfois se contredisent. Cette configuration textuelle permet de rendre compte du morcellement de la mémoire mozambicaine à la suite de la période coloniale et de la guerre civile. Dans la perspective de Bakhtine (1970), la polyphonie repose sur la coexistence de « consciences indépendantes et non fusionnées », révélant ainsi la pluralité irréductible des points de vue. Appliquée au roman, cette approche met en évidence l'absence d'une instance narrative dominante : aucune voix ne détient une vérité absolue, et le sens émerge de leur interaction.

Le récit s'ouvre sur une scène emblématique où deux personnages, Tuahir et Muidinga, errent sur une route dévastée par la guerre, dans un paysage marqué par « une terre brûlée, peuplée de fantômes et de silences » (*Terra Sonâmbula*, 1992, p. 11). La découverte des cahiers de Kindzu introduit une seconde strate narrative, instaurant une dynamique de récit enchâssé qui articule le présent de l'errance et le passé

remémoré. Ce dispositif favorise une circulation des voix et des temporalités, renforçant ainsi l'hybridité narrative du texte.

Comme l'énonce Kindzu :

“As palavras são como as pessoas: nascem, crescem e morrem. Algumas, porém, não morrem nunca. Ficam dormindo dentro de nós.” (*Couto, 1992, p. 27*)

Cette affirmation suggère que les voix du passé subsistent dans la mémoire collective, prêtes à être réactivées par le récit.

En lisant ces cahiers, Muidinga devient le relais d'une parole autre, instaurant un dialogue entre les vivants et les morts, entre mémoire individuelle et mémoire collective, entre réalité et imaginaire. La polyphonie se manifeste également dans la diversité des registres discursifs : le ton introspectif de Kindzu, la naïveté interrogative de Muidinga ou encore la parole des personnages secondaires, souvent empreinte de sagesse populaire. Comme le souligne Chabal (1996), la littérature postcoloniale lusophone « substitue au monologue colonial un chœur de voix plurielles », affirmant ainsi une esthétique du multiple.

Par ailleurs, l'usage récurrent de la première personne accentue cette pluralité énonciative, le texte opérant des glissements constants d'une conscience à une autre. Cette instabilité narrative rejoint la conception bakhtinienne du roman comme espace dialogique, où le langage devient le lieu d'une confrontation des discours. Dans cette logique, la guerre elle-même acquiert une dimension vocale et symbolique :

“A guerra é uma cobra que usa o homem para ter voz.” (*Couto, 1992, p. 65*)

Par cette métaphore, la guerre est personnifiée comme une entité discursive qui infiltre les paroles humaines, soulignant ainsi son omniprésence dans l'expérience collective.

Enfin, la polyphonie s'articule étroitement à une poétique de la mémoire. Chaque voix, qu'elle émane d'un personnage, d'un défunt ou d'un rêve, contribue à la reconstruction d'un passé fragmenté. Comme l'affirme Kindzu :

“O passado não dorme, apenas muda de casa.” (Couto, 1992, p. 91)

Cette formulation suggère que la mémoire n'est pas figée, mais constamment reconfigurée à travers le langage et le récit.

Ainsi, la polyphonie dans *Terra Sonâmbula* dépasse le cadre d'un simple procédé esthétique : elle constitue un véritable dispositif de reconstruction symbolique. En articulant des voix multiples, elle permet de recomposer une mémoire collective éclatée et de proposer une forme de réconciliation narrative dans le contexte postcolonial mozambicain.

II.2. L'oralité : entre mémoire culturelle et résistance à l'oubli

Dans *Terra Sonâmbula*, l'oralité occupe une place centrale en tant que mode d'expression, vecteur de mémoire et instrument de résistance face aux processus d'effacement liés à l'histoire coloniale et postcoloniale. Loin de se réduire à un simple héritage culturel, elle s'impose comme un principe structurant de l'esthétique narrative et comme un dispositif de survie symbolique dans un univers marqué par la guerre, la dislocation sociale et la perte.

L'écriture de Mia Couto s'inscrit ainsi dans une poétique de la « voix vivante », où les personnages racontent, chantent, murmurent et transmettent des récits qui participent à l'élaboration d'une mémoire collective. Cette centralité de la parole fait écho aux réflexions de Hampâté Bâ (1960), pour qui « en Afrique, quand un vieillard meurt, c'est une bibliothèque qui brûle » (p. 15). Dans le roman, ces « bibliothèques vivantes » prennent forme à travers des figures telles que Taímo, père de Kindzu, dépositaire d'un savoir ancestral transmis par la parole :

« Meu pai dizia que as palavras são como os ventos. Se as prendemos, elas adoecem. Deixemos que corram, que falem com as árvores e as águas » (Couto, 1992, p. 48).

Cette métaphore souligne la nature fluide, mouvante et relationnelle de la parole orale, conçue comme un élément vivant qui ne peut être figé sans perdre sa vitalité. Dans un monde dévasté, où les structures sociales et institutionnelles ont été anéanties, la parole devient un espace de préservation et de circulation de la mémoire.

Par ailleurs, le roman se caractérise par une forte imprégnation des formes narratives issues de la tradition orale, notamment à travers l'intégration de contes, de légendes, de proverbes et de récits mythiques. Les références aux esprits, aux forces invisibles et aux figures légendaires participent à une reconfiguration du réel, où le visible et l'invisible coexistent. Cette hybridation des registres narratifs, souvent rapprochée du réalisme magique, permet de donner sens à l'expérience du chaos et de la souffrance collective. Comme l'affirme Kindzu :

« As histórias servem para curar. Quando não se contam, as feridas continuam abertas » (Couto, 1992, p. 103).

Cette affirmation met en évidence la fonction thérapeutique du récit, en écho au rôle social de l'oralité dans de nombreuses sociétés africaines, où la parole contribue à restaurer les liens communautaires et à apaiser les traumatismes.

Sur le plan formel, l'oralité se manifeste également à travers une écriture marquée par la fluidité, la répétition et le rythme, qui reproduisent le souffle et la musicalité de la parole. Cette stylisation du langage participe de ce que certains critiques ont qualifié de « réécriture de l'Afrique dans la langue portugaise » (Massa, 1998, p. xx), où le portugais est remodelé pour accueillir des structures discursives issues des langues et des imaginaires africains. L'écriture de Mia Couto se situe ainsi à l'intersection de l'oral et de l'écrit, brouillant les frontières entre ces deux modes d'expression.

L'oralité acquiert en outre une dimension politique en tant que pratique de résistance. Dans un contexte où la colonisation a contribué à marginaliser les langues et les savoirs locaux, le recours à la parole vernaculaire devient un acte de réaffirmation identitaire. Raconter, transmettre et imaginer sont autant de gestes qui s'opposent au silence imposé par les violences de l'histoire. Cette critique est explicitement formulée dans le roman :

« Os brancos trouxeram os livros, mas esqueceram de ouvir as vozes das pedras »
(Couto, 1992, p. 79).

À travers cette formulation, l'auteur met en lumière les limites d'une épistémologie fondée exclusivement sur l'écrit, tout en valorisant une forme de connaissance ancrée dans l'écoute, la mémoire et l'expérience.

Enfin, l'oralité joue un rôle fondamental dans la transmission intergénérationnelle et la construction identitaire. Le parcours de Muidinga peut être lu comme une initiation progressive, au cours de laquelle les récits de Kindzu fonctionnent comme des vecteurs d'apprentissage et de transformation. Ces voix multiples constituent un véritable « palimpseste mémoriel », dans lequel s'inscrivent à la fois le passé, le présent et les potentialités de l'avenir. Comme le suggère le texte :

« As vozes dos mortos não morrem, andam conosco, ensinando o caminho » (Couto, 1992, p. 116).

Ainsi, loin d'être tournée vers une simple nostalgie du passé, l'oralité chez Mia Couto s'affirme comme une pratique dynamique, orientée vers la reconstruction et la réinvention. Elle constitue un espace de médiation entre mémoire et devenir, permettant de penser le Mozambique postcolonial non seulement à partir de ses blessures, mais également à partir de ses ressources culturelles et symboliques.

II.3. Pratiques sociolinguistiques et mémoire plurielle : la langue comme espace de récréation

Dans *Terra Sonâmbula*, la langue excède largement sa fonction communicationnelle pour devenir un espace de mise en récit de l'histoire mozambicaine, où s'articulent à la fois les violences du passé colonial et les dynamiques de réinvention culturelle. Chez Mia Couto, le portugais — langue héritée de la colonisation — est soumis à un processus de transformation qui en subvertit les normes et en reconfigure les usages. Il devient ainsi un lieu d'appropriation identitaire et de créativité esthétique.

Cette démarche s'inscrit dans une perspective postcoloniale que l'on peut rapprocher des analyses de Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986), pour qui la langue constitue un enjeu fondamental de pouvoir et de représentation. Comme il le souligne, « language carries culture » (p. 13). Dès lors, écrire dans une langue héritée du colonisateur ne relève pas nécessairement d'une aliénation, mais peut devenir un acte de réappropriation, à condition de transformer cette langue de l'intérieur. C'est précisément ce que réalise Mia Couto lorsqu'il affirme écrire « em moçambicano », signalant ainsi une distance critique vis-à-vis du portugais normatif.

Dans le roman, cette hybridation linguistique se manifeste par une créativité lexicale et métaphorique qui permet de traduire des réalités culturelles difficilement exprimables dans le cadre du portugais standard. Ainsi, l'énoncé suivant :

« As árvores conversavam com o vento, e as folhas respondiam em língua de sussurro » (Couto, 1992, p. 24)

Attribue à la nature une capacité d'énonciation, inscrivant le langage dans une cosmologie animiste propre à de nombreuses cultures africaines. L'usage du verbe *conversar* appliqué aux éléments naturels produit un effet de déplacement sémantique

qui témoigne de cette « africanisation » du portugais, où la langue coloniale est investie de nouvelles significations.

Par ailleurs, le texte donne à voir un processus d'oralisation de l'écrit à travers une syntaxe souple, rythmée et fortement marquée par les structures de la narration orale. Comme l'illustre la formule suivante :

« No nosso falar, as palavras têm corpo, ganham alma e viajam conosco » (Couto, 1992, p. 56),

la langue est conçue comme une entité vivante, porteuse de mémoire et d'affect. Cette conception rejoint ce que Chabal (1996) désigne comme une « reterritorialisation du portugais » (p. xx), processus par lequel la langue coloniale est réinscrite dans des contextes culturels et sociaux locaux.

D'un point de vue sociolinguistique, cette hybridité reflète également la réalité plurilingue du Mozambique, caractérisée par la coexistence du portugais et de nombreuses langues bantoues (changana, sena, macua, entre autres). L'écriture de Mia Couto capte cette diversité en produisant une langue liminaire, située à l'intersection de plusieurs systèmes linguistiques. Cette position intermédiaire traduit à la fois les tensions héritées de la colonisation et les potentialités d'une identité en recomposition.

Un exemple particulièrement significatif de cette fusion linguistique et culturelle apparaît dans l'énoncé suivant :

« Os mortos não morrem, apenas se mudam para dentro das árvores » (Couto, 1992, p. 131).

Cette formulation, grammaticalement portugaise, véhicule une conception du monde dans laquelle la mort s'inscrit dans un cycle de transformation et de continuité, révélant ainsi une vision métaphysique ancrée dans les traditions africaines. La langue

devient alors un espace de médiation entre différents régimes de sens — historique, culturel et symbolique.

En définitive, cette reconfiguration linguistique revêt une portée éminemment politique. Elle participe de ce qu’Ashcroft, Griffiths et Tiffin (1989) désignent comme une écriture qui « répond à l’Empire » (*writes back to the Empire*), en détournant les outils linguistiques hérités de la domination coloniale. Chez Mia Couto, cette réponse prend la forme d’une poétique de la transformation, où la langue se fait à la fois mémoire, résistance et invention. Comme le suggère le texte :

« As palavras que herdámos dos colonos agora ganham asas, falam a nossa fala »
(Couto, 1992, p. 149).

Ainsi, la langue, loin d’être un simple vecteur de communication, devient un instrument de libération symbolique, permettant au Mozambique de se dire dans ses propres termes et de construire une mémoire plurielle à la croisée des héritages.

Conclusion

À travers *Terra Sonâmbula*, Mia Couto élabore un espace discursif où mémoire, langage et imagination s’articulent pour reconfigurer l’expérience postcoloniale mozambicaine. L’œuvre dépasse ainsi le simple cadre narratif pour proposer une véritable poétique de la mémoire plurielle, fondée sur l’interaction dynamique entre le passé, le présent et l’imaginaire.

L’analyse de la polyphonie a mis en évidence une pluralité de voix — celles des vivants et des morts, du réel et de l’onirique — qui déconstruisent toute vision univoque de l’histoire. Cette hétérogénéité discursive constitue un dispositif de reconstruction symbolique permettant de restituer la complexité d’une mémoire fragmentée.

L'étude de l'oralité a montré que l'inscription des formes traditionnelles de la parole dans l'écriture participe d'un double mouvement de transmission et de résistance. La parole, en tant que mémoire vivante, devient un outil de médiation entre les générations ainsi qu'un moyen de surmonter les ruptures engendrées par l'histoire.

Enfin, l'analyse des pratiques sociolinguistiques a révélé la dimension profondément novatrice de l'écriture de Mia Couto, caractérisée par une hybridation du portugais qui en fait une langue plurielle, capable d'exprimer des réalités culturelles spécifiques. Cette reconfiguration linguistique s'inscrit dans une logique de réappropriation postcoloniale, dans laquelle la langue devient un espace de création, de résistance et d'affirmation identitaire.

L'étude conclut que la polyphonie, l'oralité et la créativité linguistique constituent, chez Mia Couto, des dispositifs complémentaires de reconstruction d'une mémoire postcoloniale plurielle, au sein de laquelle le langage fonctionne comme un lieu de médiation entre l'histoire, l'identité et l'imaginaire.

En ce sens, *Terra Sonâmbula* s'impose comme une œuvre majeure de la littérature postcoloniale africaine, dans la mesure où elle démontre que l'écriture peut devenir un instrument de résilience et de réinvention, capable de transformer les fractures de l'histoire en possibilités de recomposition symbolique.

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TRANSLATION AND CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF SELECTED IGBO PROVERBS WITH ANIMAL IMAGERY.

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Abstract

This study translates and presents a conceptual analysis of selected Igbo proverbs featuring animal imagery, focusing on how meaning is constructed, transferred, and communicated across cultural boundaries. Like many other African cultural communities, the Igbo oral tradition employs proverbs as culturally rich expressions that encode worldview, moral values, and ethical principles. This paper adopts Eugene Nida's Dynamic Equivalence Theory to emphasize the reproduction of meaning and communicative effect rather than literal correspondence in proverb translation. A qualitative research method is employed to analyse selected proverbs and examine how semantic nuances, metaphorical expressions, and pragmatic functions are preserved or modified in English translations. The findings reveal that although literal translation may convey surface meanings and retain cultural flavour, deeper cultural concepts often require interpretive strategies to achieve equivalence. The study recommends that African literary translators should be culturally sensitive and adopt translation strategies that go beyond literal meaning while prioritizing functional and cultural equivalence.

Keywords: Animal Imagery, Conceptual Analysis, Igbo Proverbs, Translation, Dynamic Equivalence

Résumé

Cette étude traduit et présente une analyse conceptuelle d'un corpus sélectionné de proverbes igbo mettant en scène l'imagerie animale, en s'intéressant à la manière dont le sens est construit, transféré et communiqué à travers les frontières culturelles. À l'instar de nombreuses communautés culturelles africaines, la tradition orale igbo utilise les proverbes comme des expressions culturellement riches qui véhiculent une vision du monde, des valeurs morales et des principes éthiques. Cet article s'appuie sur la théorie de l'équivalence dynamique d'Eugene Nida afin de mettre l'accent sur la reproduction du sens et de l'effet communicatif plutôt que sur la correspondance

littérale dans la traduction des proverbes. L'étude adopte une approche qualitative pour analyser un ensemble de proverbes sélectionnés et examiner la manière dont les nuances sémantiques, les expressions métaphoriques et les fonctions pragmatiques sont préservées ou modifiées dans leur traduction en anglais. Les résultats montrent que, bien que la traduction littérale puisse transmettre les significations de surface et préserver la saveur culturelle, les concepts culturels plus profonds nécessitent souvent des stratégies interprétatives pour atteindre une équivalence satisfaisante. L'étude recommande que les traducteurs littéraires africains fassent preuve d'une sensibilité culturelle et privilégient des stratégies de traduction qui dépassent le sens littéral tout en favorisant l'équivalence fonctionnelle et culturelle.

Mots-clés : Analyse conceptuelle, Équivalence dynamique, Imagerie animale, Proverbes igbo, Traduction

INTRODUCTION

Igbo proverbs containing animal metaphors are deeply rooted in indigenous worldviews, belief systems, and social values. When translated into foreign languages, many of the cultural associations attached to these animals may not carry the same symbolic weight, leading to partial or distorted meanings, metaphorical non-equivalence, and the loss of indigenous intellectual heritage in global literary circulation. Consequently, a lack of in-depth ethnolinguistic knowledge on the part of the translator may result in the oversimplification or misinterpretation of culturally specific metaphors.

In African tradition, proverbs occupy a prominent position in oral literature. They are important tools for the transmission of rich cultural heritage. The Igbo are one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, located in the West African region. They predominantly inhabit southeastern Nigeria. Within the Igbo sociolinguistic community, proverbs are regarded as symbols of wisdom. They are recognized as repositories of collective knowledge and are deeply embedded in everyday speech, social interactions, and literary expressions.

Traditionally, proverbs function as more than mere aesthetic embellishments. They embody communal beliefs, moral values, and social norms through symbolic imagery

drawn from nature, animals, agriculture, and everyday life. These proverbs communicate complex ideas about human behaviour and destiny. Their importance is captured in the popular Igbo saying that proverbs are the “palm oil with which elders eat words.”

Animal imagery in Igbo proverbs is rarely arbitrary. Each animal embodies culturally recognized traits that communicate complex meanings about human behaviour and social expectations. For example, certain animals may symbolize wisdom, cunningness, laziness, strength, or opportunism. Through these metaphorical associations, abstract ideas become relatable and didactic. This is because such proverbs are deeply rooted in indigenous worldviews, belief systems, and social values. However, when translated into foreign languages, many of the cultural associations attached to these animals may not carry the same symbolic weight, leading to distorted meanings and metaphorical non-equivalence.

This study is motivated by the need for a systematic investigation of the challenges associated with translating these proverbs into English. Accordingly, the study seeks to answer the following research questions: What conceptual meanings are encoded in the animal metaphors used in Igbo proverbs? To what extent do translations preserve or alter the cultural and symbolic associations attached to animals in the Igbo context? How do translation strategies affect the meaning and communicative function of these proverbs?

In response to these questions, this paper aims to achieve the following objectives: to identify selected Igbo proverbs containing animal metaphors; to translate them into English; to investigate the semantic shifts that occur during the translation process; and to propose culturally sensitive translation techniques capable of preserving the conceptual depth and indigenous knowledge embedded in Igbo proverbs. These objectives are pursued within the scope of the selected proverbs. The study is

significant because it contributes to scholarship in interdisciplinary fields such as African Literary Studies, Translation Studies, and Digital Humanities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This chapter reviews relevant scholarly works on animal symbolism in proverbs in order to examine existing perspectives on the subject, as well as the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

In African societies, oral traditions have established proverbs as important instruments of cultural expression among indigenous speakers. This has made them central to oral communication and social interaction, promoting communal wisdom rather than serving merely as ornamental speech. In the Igbo context, proverbs are indispensable elements of discourse, used to navigate conversations, negotiate meaning, and maintain diplomacy, while transmitting sociolinguistic knowledge across generations. They also serve as a medium for discussion and interaction among elders. Achebe (1958) illustrates this when he notes that Okoye spoke the next half-dozen sentences in proverbs. This demonstrates the value attached to proverbial discourse among native speakers who possess the extralinguistic competence necessary for interpreting proverbs.

Proverbs have long been recognized as vital components of African oral literature. Finnegan (1970) describes proverbs as repositories of communal wisdom, social norms, and philosophical thought in African societies. Emphasizing their central role in Igbo communication, persuasion, and cultural continuity, proverbs are not merely decorative linguistic devices but instruments of moral instruction and social regulation. Animal imagery in proverbs is one of the means through which various

Igbo ethnic groups impart morals, wisdom, ethics, knowledge, and ideologies to younger generations. Through such imagery, society is reflected and interpreted. These proverbs address various aspects of human life, including laziness, bravery, hard work, and other qualities essential to human existence.

Mbiti (1969) argues that African oral forms, including proverbs, encode collective beliefs about life, morality, and social responsibility. Similarly, Okpewho (1992) emphasizes that oral traditions such as proverbs function as structured literary systems with aesthetic, social, and educational roles. Nwoga (1975) further highlights that proverbs reflect indigenous logic, worldview, and rhetorical sophistication.

Studies on metaphor illuminate how meaning is structured in proverbial language. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphor is fundamental to human cognition, shaping how people conceptualize abstract experiences through familiar domains. Such metaphors make moral lessons vivid and culturally relatable. From a semiotic perspective, Lotman (1990) explains that symbols derive meaning within cultural systems. Animal imagery in proverbs functions as a culturally coded sign system whose interpretation depends on shared cultural knowledge. Furthermore, Irobi (2010) notes that, in African performance traditions, meaning in oral art is inseparable from its cultural context.

Apart from their proverbial symbolism, some animals in African communities are regarded as sacred and are consequently revered or worshipped. This view is reflected in Ohwovoriolè's (2008) assertion that "every totem animal is regarded as sacred and is not to be killed, harmed or eaten" because such animals are associated with mysterious narratives and beliefs. Similarly, in Idemili Local Government Area of Anambra State, pythons are revered and worshipped by traditionalists. Achebe (1964) reflects this cultural reality in *Arrow of God* when he notes that the royal python was sacred to Idemili and that anyone who killed it would be regarded as having killed a

kinsman. For further illustration, it was this same sacred snake that Oduche, Ezeulu's son, trapped in a box after converting to Christianity, an act regarded as a serious abomination (Achebe, 1964). Likewise, in *The African Child*, Laye (1959) presents the snake as a sacred guide when he describes it as a father's guiding spirit. These examples demonstrate that, beyond their symbolic function in proverbs, certain animals possess profound totemic significance in Igbo culture.

In translating such proverbs, Bandia (2008) observes that the translation of oral forms involves negotiating between linguistic meaning and cultural symbolism, a process that often risks the loss of indigenous nuances. However, while numerous studies have examined African proverbs and translation, relatively few have specifically investigated conceptual meaning shifts in animal metaphors within translated Igbo proverbs. This gap forms the basis of the present study. Consequently, this study examines how metaphor, culture, and translation interact in the construction and transmission of meaning.

Theoretical Framework

Dynamic Equivalence, a translation theory proposed by Nida (1964), is adopted as the theoretical framework for this study. The theory guides the analysis of how metaphors are rendered from one language into another. Nida (1964) argues that translators should aim to preserve the intended effect and communicative function of the source text in the target language rather than produce a strictly literal, word-for-word translation. This perspective highlights the challenges involved in retaining cultural meaning when translating proverbs that are deeply rooted in indigenous knowledge systems.

The theory further suggests that animal metaphors represent not only linguistic expressions but also cognitive, cultural, and translational constructs. Nida's concept of

Dynamic Equivalence therefore provides the analytical framework for examining how meaning is created, conveyed, and transformed in the translation of Igbo proverbs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employs a qualitative and analytical approach to conduct an in-depth conceptual analysis of ten (10) selected Igbo proverbs containing animal metaphors. The objective is to describe how their meanings are constructed and represented in translation. The analysis is guided by Nida's Dynamic Equivalence Theory in order to evaluate how meaning is conveyed in proverb translation. This methodology facilitates a deeper understanding of the interaction between language and culture in Igbo proverbs and demonstrates how translation reshapes meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

DATA ANALYSIS

In this section, ten selected proverbs are translated and analysed to determine how effectively their meanings are conveyed in English translation. Nida's (1964) theory of Dynamic Equivalence is adopted to guide the analysis.

Proverb 1

“Nne ewu na-ata agba, nwa ya a na-ene ya anya n’onu”

Literal Translation: “When the mother goat chews grass, the kid watches her mouth.”

This implies that young goats often observe their mother while she eats.

Literally, this proverb means that a child watches the mother's mouth while she eats. Linguistically, the translation is accurate; however, it may sound strange or confusing to English-speaking readers. Consequently, the moral lesson may not be readily

understood because goats do not strongly symbolize imitation in many English-speaking cultures.

Cultural and Conceptual Meaning: In Igbo culture, the goat is a familiar domestic animal associated with everyday communal life. The proverb conveys the idea that children learn from their parents through close observation and imitation of their character, values, and lifestyles. It emphasizes moral influence, parental responsibility, and the power of leading by example rather than merely giving instructions. Thus, it implies that children imitate both positive and negative behaviours from their immediate environment, particularly within the family.

Nida's Dynamic Equivalent Translation and Evaluation

“Children learn by watching their parents.”

“Like mother, like daughter.”

“Like father, like son.”

Nida's (1964) theory emphasizes that translation should reproduce in the target audience an effect equivalent to that experienced by the source audience. Although these translations sacrifice the animal imagery, they successfully reproduce the intended message and communicative impact, thereby aligning with the principle of Dynamic Equivalence. The original proverb uses the culturally familiar image of a goat to communicate a moral lesson. While the literal translation preserves the imagery, it weakens cultural interpretation. Conversely, the functional translation preserves the meaning but reduces the cultural specificity of the proverb. This demonstrates the major challenge identified by Nida (1964): balancing form and effect in culturally bound expressions.

Proverb 2

“Ochụ ọkụkọ nwe ada, ọkụkọ nwe nwọ nwo ọsọ.”

Literal Translation: “The hawk that pursues the chicken has a sharp beak; the chicken has the ability to run.”

Literally, this means that the hawk possesses a weapon with which to attack, while the chicken is not entirely helpless because it possesses speed and survival instincts.

Culturally, this proverb reflects the Igbo worldview that power is never entirely one-sided. Even when one party appears stronger, the other possesses some form of advantage or means of self-defence. Symbolically, the native chicken represents vigilance, alertness, and awareness. Because chickens live closely with humans, they are frequently used to convey practical wisdom grounded in everyday experience and common sense. The moral lessons embedded in the proverb are that every action encounters resistance and that the oppressed are never completely powerless.

Analysis Using Nida’s Dynamic Equivalence

In a word-for-word translation, non-Igbo speakers may perceive only an animal chase without grasping the deeper message concerning the balance of power. The moral lesson may therefore remain obscure. To achieve a similar communicative impact in English, the proverb may be rendered as:

“Even the weak have their own defence.”

“Every strength meets its resistance.”

“No one is completely powerless.”

The proverb employs the imagery of *okuko* (chicken) to express a universal principle concerning power and resistance. While the literal translation preserves the imagery, it fails to convey the deeper significance of the proverb. Nida's Dynamic Equivalence, on the other hand, preserves the intended lesson but reduces the cultural flavour. This provides an excellent example of the challenges involved in translating Igbo proverbs.

Proverb 3

“Egbe belu, Ugo belu; nke si ibe ya ebela, nku kwaa ya.”

Literal Translation: “Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch; whichever says the other should not perch, may its wings break.”

Imagistically, two birds—the kite (*Egbe*) and the eagle (*Ugo*)—are permitted to perch peacefully. However, if one denies the other the right to perch, it is cursed with broken wings. The English translation communicates the imagery clearly. Nevertheless, without cultural knowledge, an English reader may not fully appreciate the political and philosophical significance of the proverb. Furthermore, the curse element (“may its wings break”) may sound unusually harsh in English.

Symbolically, birds in Igbo cosmology often represent power, status, freedom, and authority. The eagle, in particular, symbolizes strength and nobility. The proverb promotes equality, coexistence, justice, fairness, rejection of oppression, and mutual tolerance. It is frequently used to encourage peaceful coexistence and condemn domination.

Analysis Using Nida's Dynamic Equivalence

To reproduce a similar communicative impact, the proverb may be rendered as:

“Live and let live.”

“Whoever denies others their rights invites destruction.”

These translations preserve the intended moral force, although they reduce the poetic imagery. Two observations emerge from this analysis. First, the literal translation preserves the imagery and cultural flavour of the proverb. Second, the functional translation preserves its political and moral force.

To address this challenge, the study recommends a combined strategy. A literal translation accompanied by an explanatory note would more effectively achieve Dynamic Equivalence. This recommendation is justified by the fact that achieving Dynamic Equivalence often requires balancing cultural symbolism with communicative clarity.

Proverb 4

“Ukpana okpoko gburu, nti chiri ya.”

Literal Translation: “The insect that the hornbill killed closed its ears.”

This implies that the insect ignored warning signs that could have helped it avoid danger.

Symbolically, *Okpoko* (hornbill) is associated with noisy movement. Therefore, any insect that falls victim to its attack is metaphorically considered deaf. The proverb warns against ignoring advice, warnings, or impending danger. In Igbo thought, “closing one’s ears” symbolizes stubbornness, refusal to listen, and disregard for sound counsel.

Conceptually, the proverb reflects the moral principle that those who refuse to listen expose themselves to avoidable harm.

Analysis Using Nida's Dynamic Equivalence

Literal Translation Evaluation: "The insect the hornbill killed closed its ears" may sound strange in English because insects are not normally associated with closing their ears. Consequently, the figurative meaning may be lost.

Dynamic Equivalent Translation:

"Those who refuse to listen pay the price."

"He who will not hear must feel."

"Ignoring warnings leads to disaster."

The proverb employs a simple rural image to communicate a serious moral lesson concerning attentiveness and wisdom. While the literal translation preserves the imagery, it risks confusion. The dynamic equivalent translation preserves the warning and communicative effect. This illustrates the core challenge identified by Nida (1964) in translating culturally grounded proverbs.

Proverb 5

"Nwanyị hokoka di, ọ lụọ eke ọgba."

Literal Translation: "A girl who is too choosy with suitors ends up marrying a python."

This suggests that a woman may eventually find herself in a dangerous or undesirable situation because of her inability to make a wise and timely choice. The imagery is deliberately exaggerated to emphasize the dangers of excessive selectiveness.

Culturally, in Igbo society, *Eke* (python) symbolizes sacredness and spiritual significance. The proverb teaches that people sometimes accept harmful situations because of social pressure resulting from delayed decisions.

Analysis Using Nida's Dynamic Equivalence

Literal Translation Evaluation: "A girl who is too choosy with suitors ends up marrying a python" may appear unrealistic or humorous to English readers. Without explanatory notes, the warning embedded in the metaphor may not be immediately understood.

Dynamic Equivalent Translation:

"A stitch in time saves nine."

This version sacrifices the animal imagery but successfully reproduces the intended moral lesson, thereby aligning with Nida's (1964) concept of Dynamic Equivalence. The proverb uses dramatic animal imagery to warn against poor decisions resulting from delay and social pressure. It demonstrates how culturally grounded metaphors create translation challenges: literal translation preserves cultural colour, whereas Dynamic Equivalence preserves communicative force.

Proverb 6

"Bunu, bunu, ibu anyi Danda."

Literal Translation: "Let us carry the load, for no load is too heavy for Danda."

Culturally, in Igbo society, this proverb is used to demonstrate the communal practice of sharing one another's burdens in order to make life easier.

Analysis Using Nida's Dynamic Equivalence

Literal Translation Evaluation:

"Let us carry the load, for no load is too heavy for the ant (Danda)" may sound strange or unrealistic to English-speaking readers.

Dynamic Equivalent Translation:

"United we stand, divided we fall."

"Unity is strength."

These versions lose the original imagery but successfully reproduce the intended moral lesson, which aligns with Nida's (1964) concept of Dynamic Equivalence.

Proverb 7

"Anyi ga-amara mbe abuo, nke bu oke."

Literal Translation: "We shall find out which of the two tortoises is male."

Culturally, in Igbo oral literature, the tortoise (*Mbe*) often symbolizes cunningness and strategic intelligence. This proverb therefore implies that true identity is revealed through closer examination, or that superiority and authenticity become evident through comparison.

Analysis Using Nida's Dynamic Equivalence

Literal Translation Evaluation:

"When we see two tortoises, we will know which one is male" or "We shall find out which of the two tortoises is male" may sound confusing or insignificant to English-

speaking readers. The symbolic significance of the tortoise in Igbo culture may not be recognized.

Dynamic Equivalent Translation:

“Time will reveal the real one.”

“True character is revealed through comparison.”

These versions preserve the philosophical meaning but reduce the animal imagery. This proverb highlights the Igbo belief in observation, experience, and discernment. It further demonstrates the tension between preserving cultural imagery through literal translation and preserving intended meaning through Dynamic Equivalence. According to Nida (1964), the translator must prioritize the response of the target audience, even when this requires modification of the original form.

Proverb 8

“O nwu Okwa na-aka were bia be anyi.”

Literal Translation: “She came to our house with Okwa in her hands.”

Culturally, in Igbo society, *Okwa* (Francolin or Spur Fowl) symbolizes punctuality and accurate timekeeping. The proverb is used to describe a person who is consistently punctual in attending appointments or social occasions.

Analysis Using Nida’s Dynamic Equivalence

Literal Translation Evaluation:

“She came to our house with Okwa in her hands” may sound strange to English-speaking readers because the symbolic association between the bird and punctuality

does not exist in their cultural context. Although the bird may be familiar within their ecological environment, it is not generally regarded as a symbol of timekeeping.

Dynamic Equivalent Translation:

To preserve the communicative effect, “She is an early bird” provides the closest equivalent.

This translation retains bird imagery, although not specifically that of *Okwa*. Consequently, it partially preserves the symbolic value of the original proverb. While the dynamic translation loses the cultural colour associated with the Igbo rural experience represented by *Okwa*, it successfully conveys the intended meaning.

Proverb 9

“Okuko nti ike na-anu ihe n’ite ofe.”

Literal Translation: “A deaf fowl hears when it falls into a pot of soup.” Or, “A hard-eared chicken hears the matter inside the soup pot.”

Analysis Using Nida’s Dynamic Equivalence

Literal Translation Evaluation:

“A hard-eared chicken hears the matter inside the soup pot” may not produce the same cognitive and emotional response in English-speaking readers. The imagery may appear humorous because the association between a stubborn chicken and a cooking pot is unusual in English-speaking contexts. Nevertheless, the literal version preserves the rich Igbo imagery of the “chicken and soup pot.”

Dynamic Equivalent Translation:

“The fly that does not heed advice follows the corpse to the grave.”

“A hard head makes a soft back.”

Although the dynamic translations lose some of the metaphorical and cultural significance associated with the chicken (*okuko*) imagery, the first translation preserves both the moral lesson and a degree of cultural flavour by replacing the chicken with a fly. The second translation retains the moral lesson but sacrifices much of the cultural symbolism.

Proverb 10

“Aku fechaa, o dalu awo.”

Literal Translation: “Termites fall down for toads when they are tired.”

Culturally, termites symbolize abundance, fragility, and smallness, whereas toads symbolize opportunistic predators. Within the Nigerian ecological environment, termites swarm and fly during the rainy season. As they become weak, they fall to the ground, where toads readily feed on them. Conceptually, this suggests that weakness invites exploitation. In other words, when vigilance is lost, others may take advantage.

Analysis Using Nida’s Dynamic Equivalence

Literal Translation Evaluation:

“Termites fall down for toads when they are tired” is linguistically acceptable and retains the cultural flavour of the original expression. Nevertheless, it may not adequately convey the symbolic meanings associated with the two animals to English-speaking readers.

Dynamic Equivalent Translation:

“Everything that has a beginning must surely have an end.”

“What goes up must surely come down.”

These versions preserve the philosophical meaning but reduce the animal imagery. The proverb reflects the Igbo belief in patience, endurance, and the inevitability of decline. While the translation preserves the functional meaning in accordance with Dynamic Equivalence, the cultural imagery is lost. According to Nida (1964), the translator must prioritize the response of the target audience, even if this requires modification of the original form.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study reveals that Igbo proverbs are deeply rooted in cultural symbolism and indigenous worldviews. Animals represent culturally recognized traits such as wisdom, cunningness, power, imitation, resistance, weakness, and desperation. In addition, the analysis demonstrates that literal translation often preserves imagery but weakens meaning. In other words, although word-for-word translation maintains the surface structure of the proverb, it frequently fails to reproduce the deeper moral lesson or emotional effect for English-speaking readers who do not share the same cultural associations.

On the other hand, the application of Nida’s Dynamic Equivalence Theory (Nida, 1964) demonstrates that functional or meaning-based translation reproduces the intended communicative impact more effectively. However, this approach sometimes sacrifices poetic structure and cultural flavour. Consequently, a balance between formal equivalence and Dynamic Equivalence appears to be the most effective approach, particularly when literal translation is accompanied by explanatory notes.

In conclusion, this study has examined selected Igbo proverbs through conceptual and translational perspectives, with particular emphasis on Dynamic Equivalence. The findings reveal that translation is not merely a process of linguistic transfer but also

one of cultural negotiation. Therefore, the successful translation of Igbo proverbs requires an understanding of cognitive metaphor, semiotics, and indigenous knowledge systems. The study further demonstrates that achieving full equivalence in translation is complex because proverbs operate simultaneously at linguistic, cultural, and cognitive levels. While literal translation preserves form, Dynamic Equivalence more effectively preserves communicative impact.

Recommendations

Ultimately, this study recommends the adoption of a culturally sensitive translation strategy based on a hybrid approach that combines translation with concise explanatory glosses in order to preserve metaphorical depth. It also recommends the integration of African oral literature and culturally bound metaphors into the Nigerian university curriculum in order to equip translators with the ethnolinguistic competence required for effective intercultural communication. Finally, comparative studies of Igbo animal metaphors and those found in other African languages are recommended in order to highlight cross-cultural similarities and differences in metaphor construction.

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An Analysis of Alternative Hausa Loanwords in Adamawa Fulfulde: A Phonological Aspect

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the integration and use of alternative Hausa loanwords among native speakers of Adamawa Fulfulde, focusing on how these speakers perceive such borrowings whether as integral components of the Adamawa Fulfulde lexicon or as communicative strategies aimed at simplifying expression. The research is grounded in Haugen's (1958) model of language borrowing, specifically examining one of its core processes. Data were collected through purposive sampling from six wards across three local government areas in Adamawa State: Song, Girei, and Yola South. Alternative Hausa loanwords were identified and categorized into unadapted and adapted types. Unadapted forms exhibit no structural modification, while adapted forms show phonological changes prior to full nativization into Fulfulde. The findings indicate that alternative Hausa loanwords are actively used by native speakers of Adamawa Fulfulde, driven by underlying phonological adaptation processes. The study further reveals strategies to avoid unnecessary lexical duplication within Adamawa Fulfulde.

1.0 Introduction

When different linguistics communities live in close contact, their languages tend to influence one another, often resulting in lexical borrowing. In Northern Nigeria, Hausa functions as a widely spoken lingua franca, exerting considerable influence on neighboring languages, including Fulfulde. This paper examines how native speakers of Adamawa Fulfulde employ different forms of Hausa loanwords referred to as alternative loanwords. Drawing on Haugen's (1958) framework of lexical borrowing, the study identifies how Hausa words are borrowed directly, partially modified, or replaced by Fulfulde equivalents that adopt Hausa meanings. By analyzing these borrowing patterns, the paper seeks to clarify the role of language contact in shaping Adamawa Fulfulde and to understand how speakers adapt borrowed lexical items in daily communication.

1.1 History of Fulfulde

The works of Greenberg (1984) on African languages seem to have put to this notion by proving that Fulfulde is one of West Atlantic languages of Niger Congo family. Greenberg also suggests that, Fulfulde is designated by names such as Pulaar, Pular, Fula, Peul, Fulani as well as Fellata. Fulfulde is a language spoken by Fulbe. Abubakar (1991) states that the area of the spread of Fulbe is wide from Senegal to Ethiopia to Mauritania, the language is spoken in Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cameroon, Libya and Chad. Fulbe have substantial group of speakers in almost the Savannah land from Senegal to Sudan. The spread of the language is due to the nomadic nature of its speakers.

Fulfulde has six (6) main dialects. these include: Futa Tooro (Senegal), Futa Jalo (Guinea), Masina (Mali), Sokoto and Western Niger with parts of Upper Volta, central northern Nigeria (roughly North and Kano state, the Jos Plateau and the Bauchi and Borno section of North East state) and Adamawa (in both Nigeria and Cameroon), (Arnott, 1974).

The coming of the Fulbe in what is now Adamawa state goes back to over 400 years ago. The pioneers of these groups were the Mbororo'en who actually came through the Southeast to Gongola valley in order to avoid Borno Empire. Some other Fulbe came through the southern part of Borno in stages over a long period (inside Adamawa). However, the main problem for the Fulbe was the maintenance of the system they had established. Politically, the Fulbe lived in small units led by Ardo'en (Kindred leaders), whose authority was strongly supported by a code of conduct, Pulaaku. Unlike the Kanuri and the Hausa system, the Fulbe political system was inadequate for Fombina. The Emirate by Hausa Kanuri system under which the Fulbe lived before their entry into Fombina. Indeed, an Emirate did emerge, with Modibbo Adama as its head and Yola as its Capital but the operation was far from the smooth, (Abubakar 1977).

Fombina (south land) was quite different from most of the emirates in Nigeria, that it contained diverse ethnic groups, were extensive in area and supported several Fulbe clans. The cultural homogeneity which prevailed in Hausa land was lacking in Fombina which has the large body of Muslims necessary for the successful functioning of an Islamic system.

This paper intends to study the alternative Hausa loanwords in Adamawa Fulfulde as lexicons meant to simplify communication by employing different loanwords. The objectives of this paper are to examine the analysis of alternative Hausa loanwords in Adamawa Fulfulde, and to study the processes involved in the usage.

1.2 Brief History of Hausa Language

The word Hausa is Songhai, which means "people from the east". To some, it justifies the claims of the natives that their descendants came from the Middle East. Today the word refers to both people and the language. In a nutshell, the Hausas claim that their traces back to the time when a prince of Baghdad named Bayajida came and killed the snake which lived in a well in Daura town. The snake had prevented people from

fetching water from the well except on Fridays that people were allowed to go and fetch water. Linguistic classification of Greenberg (1966) classifies Hausa under Chadic group of Afro-asiatic language family. The vocabulary reflects heavy borrowing from Arabic, English, Fulfulde and African languages primarily because of the Hausa's traditional commercial enterprise in many parts of West Africa. Their language has become a lingua franca, used as second language by many people in other countries. Hausa language also has been written in Arabic script for several hundred years. (Encyclopedia Americana Volume 13, 1st ed. 1833). The history of Hausa people is tied to Islam and the Fulani who wrested political power from the Hausa in the early 1800's through a series of holy wars.

2.0 Review of Related Literature

This section contains the review of various scholarly works related to this study on loanwords, loanwords in Fulfulde and other languages.

2.1 Loanwords

Presently, there are some 6000 different languages spoken on our planet, and any one of these languages has a vocabulary containing many thousands of words. Moreover, speakers of every one of these languages are in contact with neighbours who speak different languages; this is true today even for people living on remote pacific island on which they had previously been isolated for centuries. Consequently, everybody is in position to learn some of their neighbours words and take those words over into their own language (Millar, 2007, pp. 21-22).

Loanwords are words borrowed from donor languages and incorporated into recent languages. Kidida (1979) observes that, loan of whatever kind may be analysed and described in terms of the extent to which they are modified. (As the borrowing group usually has no word for the terms in its own language, it is only natural for them to also borrow words for the items from the source language). Borrowing of words is the

simplest kind of influence that one language may exert on another, when there is cultural borrowing there is always the likelihood that the associate words may be borrowed. Loans of any kind may be analysed and described in terms of the extent of their modification, the borrowing group usually lack word for the term(s) in its language, and it's natural to borrow from the source language.

According to Holder (1976), the historical study loanwords has provided the diachronic evidence required to draw a conclusion making pronouncements on matter related to the question of dating features such as sound changes in both donor and receiving languages. But recently the position has changed as Scholars of linguistics are of the opinion that linguistic borrowing is an important source of evidence for various proposals concerning the synchronic state of the target language.

Crystal (1985) defines the linguistics borrowing as “an attempt to produce in one language pattern which has been previously found in another language”. Many languages of the world borrow from one language to another to keep their languages alive, especially in this new world of science and technology without borrowing the languages will no longer exist.

According to Thomason and Kaufman (1988, cited in Dikwa 2006), borrowing is an instance where foreign elements are introduced. Linguistics borrowing also depends upon the nature and degree of contact between two cultures. Thus, Bloomfield (1933, p. 44 cited in Abdullahi) distinguishes between cultural borrowing and dialect borrowing. The former involves borrowing from different languages, while the latter involves borrowing within the same speech area. He also gave a distinction between ordinary cultural borrowing and intimate cultural borrowing. Ordinary cultural borrowing is mutual, while intimate cultural borrowing, which is usually one-sided, occurs when one culture has more to give in terms of ideas and concepts to the other.

Mohammed (1987) opines that borrowing by one language from another is by way of bilingual proportion, which is based on the extent of bilingualism among speakers of the borrowing language.

Millar (2007, p. 22) says that, borrowing is one of the most frequent ways of acquiring new words, and speakers of all languages do it. English – speakers have long been among the most enthusiastic words have been acquired in just this way. We get ‘Kayat’ from an Eskimo language, whisky from Scottish Gaelic, ukulele from Hawaiian, yoghurt from Turkish, mayonnaise from French, algebra from Arabic, sherry from Spanish etc.

Usman (2014), declared about loanwords in Tangale, he said every language borrows its neighbours word through the process of learning the new words or concepts that are not available in their language.

Shadarach (2015) noticed that English loanwords are found in Longuda and are pronounced similar to that of English. And at the same time there are some words that have the same spellings but different pronunciation due to individual differences and exposure of the people in use of the words.

2.1.1 Types of Loans

Hockett (1963) identifies the following types of loans;

1. Ideological Loan
2. Specialized Loan
3. General Loan

(i) Ideological Loan

Ideological loans refer to loanwords which are only present in the speech of an individual who wants to mark him linguistically different from the rest of the speech

community for instance, in speaking Hausa language, typical examples of this type of loan words such as Mallam, Almajiri, Zahiri, Alkali, Ilimi etc.

(ii) Specialized Loan

There are words associated with specific profession and therefore, are limited in use: the example is an Arabic loanword in Fulfulde for religious purpose such as Liman, Ladan, Resuwa, Hisbeera, Kur'aanuure, etc.

(iii) General Loan

These are items which have been completely integrated into the languages lexicon that is known and used frequently by the speakers of the target language, because they are words that are common to everybody in the target language.

2.1.2 Alternative Loanwords

Haugen (1958) identifies and describes several processes by which loanwords are adapted into a new language. One key concept he introduces is the idea of “alternative loanwords.” These are loanwords that are adapted in a way that reflects a compromise between the source language and the borrowing language.

In the context of Haugen’s theory, alternative loanwords can arise in different ways:

1. **Phonological Adaptation:** The sounds of the loanword are adjusted to fit the phonological system of the borrowing language.
2. **Morphological Adaptation:** The structure of the loanword may be changed to fit the grammatical rules of the borrowing language.
3. **Semantic Shift:** The meaning of the loanword may be altered or extended to suit the cultural context of the borrowing language.

On the other hand, Abubakar (2025), alternative loanwords refer to instances where native speakers, either consciously or unconsciously, seek terms outside their native lexicons meant to simplify communication by employing different loanwords.

Bagari (1985) identified two processes of borrowing words in Hausa and English, first; is adaptation, words contain a sound which is foreign to the borrowing languages. In the second stage, the whole word is then considered as an underlying form. He also observes that, the phenomenon of phonological adaptation of Hausa borrowed items, that is, how the phonological properties of a language determine the phonological shape of borrowing words. This is done through the insertion of an epenthetic vowel to disperse certain consonant clusters, example:

English	Hausa
a. bread	biredi
b. trousers	turoza
c. tray	tire

By this, it means that, there is a constraint in Hausa phonology that one cannot have certain consonant clusters in the borrowed items so that the borrowed items conform completely to the phonological structure of the Hausa language.

Based on the above examples ‘Bagari’ is limited to examine the phonological adaptation of Hausa borrowed words from English while the present study focuses on phonological adaptations of alternative Hausa loanwords.

2.2 Fulfulde Loanwords

Many scholars have written on issues related to the Fulfulde loanwords focusing on adaptations.

Muhammed (1987) observes that, Fulfulde had borrowed many words from Arabic and English language, either directly or indirectly by giving the borrowed words class suffixes. Most of the borrowed words from Arabic are religious and socio-cultural. Administrative terms and modern technology from English like numerous other languages in Nigeria. Fulfulde has also been forced to borrow a considerable number

of lexical items from the English language. It has also been established that when two languages come into contact, the phenomenon known as linguistic borrowing often results. So, it is quite natural that Fulfulde should borrow from English with which it has been in contact for a considerable period of time. One of the compelling reasons for linguistic borrowing is the desire to acquire new ideas and artifacts from other culture. He also explains that, the English consonants in Fulfulde, as it is inevitable, should be subjected to various consonantal adjustments among these adjustments, is acceptable to Fulfulde as the recipient language. Some of these adjustments are necessitated by the absence in Fulfulde of such English consonants as /v/, /x/, /z /, /q/. Whenever these sounds occur in Fulfulde, they are invariably replaced by their nearest equivalents in the language. In quite a few cases, when the consonants do exist in Fulfulde, they are still replaced by others which are more appropriate to that particular environment. There are also cases where consonants are either deleted or inserted as the case may be. All these consonantal adjustments are absolutely necessary for the purpose of nativization of incoming words.

Based on the above discussion, we can conclude that, ‘Muhammed’ worked in Fulfulde, and nativized the English loanwords found in Gombe Fulfulde due to their absence in the language, in order to fit the structure of the borrowing language. This study examines how Adamawa Fulfulde native speakers borrow from Hausa alternatively while the words they borrow exist in Fulfulde.

Girei (2007) declares that, most of the Hausa words were borrowed into Fulfulde due to their absence in the language.

Hammadikko (2022) investigated the morphological patterns of Hausa loanwords adopted into Adamawa Fulfulde. In his analysis, he demonstrated how various suffixes were attached to Hausa-origin words to fit Fulfulde grammatical structures. Some examples include:

Hausa	Fulfulde	Gloss
Ashana	acaana-hi	match
Akwati	akootii-ru	modern box
Agola	agoolaa-jo	step child
Lema	leemaa-ru	umbrella
Kusa	kuusa-yel	nail
Buhu	buhuu-re	sack

From these examples, it is evident that Hammadikko added specific noun suffixes to the borrowed Hausa words to assign them to the appropriate noun classes in Fulfulde. This adaptation occurred because the original Hausa terms did not previously exist in Adamawa Fulfulde. However, the present study focuses on the alternative Hausa loanwords in Adamawa Fulfulde, aiming to discover why native speakers borrow these words even when equivalent terms already exist in their language.

Abanga, Modu, and Abdullahi (2025) examine the presence and integration of French loanwords in Dazaga, a Nilo-Saharan language, based on the Dazaga Dictionary (2008). Their findings indicate that French borrowings occur across several interactional domains such as education, technology, food, government, and place names and undergo notable phonological changes including fricativization, assimilation, and deletion. This study enriches the understanding of language contact and lexical borrowing in the Sahel, illustrating the intricate processes of linguistic adaptation and cultural exchange within Dazaga. Whereas their work focuses on a Nilo-Saharan language and the phonological adaptation of French loanwords, the present study shifts focus to a Niger-Congo language, specifically investigating the phonological adaptations of alternative Hausa loanwords in the speech of native speakers of Adamawa Fulfulde.

Regarding to various reviewed related to this work, the current study adopts Haugen (1958) as its model of approach, this is because the Haugen's model of adaptation discussed alternative loanwords and how loanwords undergo morphological and phonological changes to fit the structure of the borrowing language.

3.0 Data Collection

The data for this study were obtained from primary sources. The primary sources of data collection employed for the purpose of this study are observation and interview.

Observation was carried out by listening to the daily conversations of native speakers of Adamawa Fulfulde, who hailed from different wards in Song, Girei and Yola South local government areas of Adamawa state. The observations were carried out based on personal intuition as a native speaker. In addition, all the Fulfulde native speakers have been observed were indigenes of Song, Girei, Yola South local government areas. Indirect observation was also adopted in the research, where the researcher carried out his observations of the subject without the subject knowing he/she is being observed.

The interview was carried out on thirty (30) native speakers. Ten (10) of the 30 interviewees are females, while the remaining 20 are males.

A research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that is the main focus of a scientific query. Adamawa state has twenty-one (21) local government areas; each local government area has the native speakers of both Hausa and Fulfulde.

The sample of this study consists of selected native speakers of Adamawa Fulfulde, in three Local Government Areas in Adamawa State; namely: Song, Girei and Yola South Local Government Areas. The purpose for selecting these Local Government Areas is because of their dominance in native speakers of both Hausa and Fulfulde; each Local Government Area has more than one ward that speaks the languages. A

sample of population is drawn to represent the whole. The researcher however, took ten (10) from the sampled population of native speakers of Adamawa Fulfulde from each of the above Local Government Areas. It should be twenty (20) males and ten (10) females. A total of thirty (30) respondents have been interviewed. The study covered three selected Local Government Areas in Adamawa state. The study area is made up of six (6) wards in three (3) Local Government Areas, two (2) wards from each Local Government Area, namely: Fadde Murke and Fadde Babal in Song, Lelewalji and Holmaare in Girei, Fadde Magaaji and Fadde Sanda in Yola South in Adamawa State, which were covered by the research.

3.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents and analysis the data collected from the speech of native speakers of Adamawa Fulfulde. The chapter identified the Alternative Hausa Loanwords in their speech and classified them into adapted and unadapted alternative Hausa loanwords. It analyses the phonological adaptations that are involved in the process of usage. The chapter finally describes the formalized rules that are found to be applied in the processes.

The data are hereby presented and analysed simultaneously under different categories of alternative Hausa loanwords in Adamawa Fulfulde.

3.1.1 Unadapted Loanwords

Unadapted loanwords are the Hausa lexical items that are alternatively loaned into Fulfulde language without changes, as presented in the following table:

Table 3.1: The Unadapted Hausa Loanwords

S/No	Hausa	ALT	Fulfulde	Gloss
a	áró	aro	ngu`aari	lend
b	dámí	dami	waare	bundle
c	múrnà	murna	seyo	happiness
d	sàrká	sarka	callallu/oldi	chain/necklace
e	áyá	aya	waccuure	tiger nut

The table 3.1 above disclosed that the Fulfulde native speakers use Hausa words directly as it is, in the source language. As in example (3.1:a-e), the word **aro** meaning 'borrowing' dami “bundle”, murna meaning “happiness”, sarka meaning “chain/necklace” and aya meaning “tiger nut” respectively are loaned into Fulfulde without any apparent changes on phonological and morphological adaptations.

3.1.2 Adapted Alternative Hausa Loanwords

There are Hausa loanwords that are alternatively borrowed into Fulfulde with changes. This study examined some alternative Hausa loanwords in Fulfulde that have undergone phonological and morphological adaptations before it finally became nativized into Fulfulde.

3.1.2.1 Phonological Adaptation

There are many phonological adaptations that are found to be operated in the Alternative Hausa loanwords in Adamawa Fulfulde that necessitates changes within the borrowed words. These are consonant change, simplification, vowel change, vowel lengthening, and diphthongization.

3.1.2.1.1 Consonant Change

This process occurs in the situation where the alternative word is loaned into Fulfulde. As exemplified in the following table:

Table 3.2: Example of Consonant Change

S/No	Hausa Sound	Fulfulde Sounds	Hausa	ALT	Fulfulde	Gloss
a	/z/	/dʒ/	kàzàmtá	kajamta	dakkaare	dirty
b	/tʃ/	/s/	mútúncì	mutumsi	nedɗaaku	self-respect
c	/f/	/p/	tsáftà	sapta	sewaaku	cleanness
d	/ʃ/	/tʃ/	kánshí	kamci	ureenga	fragrance
e	/kw/	/k/	kwàndó	kondo	silaawo	basket

The examples in above table 3.2 revealed that how the Hausa consonants change to their equivalents or near sounds to Fulfulde sounds. The Hausa sound in example number (3.2:a) as voiced alveolar fricative /z/ becomes voiced post-alveolar affricate /dʒ/ in Fulfulde, but the educated Fulfulde Speakers in this area produce the correct Hausa sounds due to the effect of the formal training received on Hausa language in school and colleges.

The Hausa sound in example in number (3.2:b) has it that, voiceless post-alveolar affricate /tʃ/ becomes voiceless post-alveolar fricative /s/ in Fulfulde. Example number (3.2: c) voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ becomes voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ in

Fulfulde, while in example number (3.2:d) the Hausa sound voiceless palato-alveolar fricative /ʃ/ becomes voiceless post-alveolar affricate /tʃ/ in Fulfulde. However, apart from consonant deletion, the case of assimilation was also observed in example (3.2:d), where the nasal assimilation is found in the Adamawa Fulfulde native speakers' speech, in which the Hausa sound voiced nasal alveolar /n/ becomes voiced nasal bilabial /m/ in Fulfulde as kanshi and kamci. More so, in (3.2:e) example, the Hausa sound voiceless labialized-velar stop /kw/ becomes voiceless velar stop /k/ in Fulfulde.

3.1.2.1.2 Simplification

The alternative Hausa loanwords involved the process of simplification. Some alternative Hausa loanwords in Adamawa Fulfulde undergo simplification. Observe the following examples in table below;

Table 3.3: Examples of Simplification

S/No.	Hausa	ALT	Fulfulde	Gloss
a	gyára	geera	wo`ina	to repair
b	kwaí	koy	geeraade	eggs
c	kwàndó	kondo	silaawo	basket
d	tsìré	sire	cettal	roasted meat
e	lánkwàsá	lonkisa	turna	to bend

Regard to the examples given from a-e in the table 3.3 above, the consonant substitution occurs in the word-initial position and word-medial position as in examples (a-e).

In example (3.3: a) gyara → geera, the palatalized velar stop /gj/ is substituted by /g/, similar to the word-initial change. The shift from the palatalized consonant to a

simpler velar stop is a direct result of Fulfulde's phonemic preferences, likely due to the language's more straightforward stop consonant system.

In example (3.3: b: c) kwai → koy and kwando → kondo, the initial /kw/ (a labialized velar stop) undergoes delabialization, transforming into the simple /k/ sound. This reflects a loss of the labial feature, which is not a feature that Fulfulde retains in this environment.

In (3.3: d) tsire → siire, the substitution of /ts/ (a post-alveolar affricate) with /s/ aligns with the earlier shift in the word-initial position. The original affricate is simplified to a fricative in Fulfulde.

In example (3.3: e) lankwasa → lonkisa, the same process occurs: the /kw/ cluster is delabialized, and the word also experiences the simplification of affricates to fricatives (/s/). The final /a/ in Fulfulde suggests that the language may favour open syllables at word-final positions, as Fulfulde often allows for such syllable structures.

3.1.2.1.3 Vowel Change

Some words on alternative Hausa loanwords in Adamawa Fulfulde, when loaned undergo the process of vowels change in the certain positions. It is illustrated below:

Table 3.4: Examples of Vowel Change

S/No.	Hausa	ALT	Fulfulde	Gloss
a	táttàrá	tattira	fawa	to gather
b	kwáà	kooba	laama	to mix
c	gàngàrá	gangira	dirta	slope down
d	jérà	jeera	sila	to put in a line

e	ɗǎnà	ɗani	tuufi	to set a trap
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Based on the above examples in table 3.4, we observed from a-e, there is vowel change at the medial and final positions of a word. The Hausa words in (3.4: a-c) which are; `tattara, warwara, gangara` were alternatively borrowed into Fulfulde which becomes `Tattira, warwira, gangira` where the low central unrounded vowel /a/ becomes high front unrounded vowel /i/ at medial position of a words. While the (3.4: d-e) that are rikita, ɗana becomes rikiti, ɗani in which the low central unrounded vowel /a/ becomes high front unrounded /i/ at the final position of a words. The change from /a/ to /i/ in alternative Hausa loanwords in Fulfulde results in vowel rising and fronting that enhance conformity to Fulfulde vowel harmony and phonotactic constraints. This adjustment improves syllable well-formedness, simplifies morphological integration, and contributes to the nativization of loanwords within the Fulfulde phonological system.

3.1.2.1.4 Vowel Lengthening

Vowel lengthening is the phonological adaptation whereby a vowel sound is lengthened. We observe that alternative Hausa loanwords in Adamawa Fulfulde are lengthened, it lengthened cannot change the meaning of it lengthened word. Though, lengthening in Fulfulde is a phenomenon that changes word meaning. Let us consider the following table below:

Table 3.5: Examples of Vowel Lengthening

S/No.	Hausa	ALT	Fulfulde	Gloss
a	gádò	gaado	ndonngu	inheritance
b	géfé	geefe	sera	aside
c	ríjìyá	riijiya	ɓunndu	well

d	ròró	rooro	tebtol	to plug as groundnut
e	gúgà	guuga	woggol	pressing cloth

The data presented in the table 3.5 above shows, how the Hausa words with short vowels; /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/ that were alternatively borrowed into Adamawa Fulfulde have been lengthened to becomes; low central unrounded /a:/ as in **gaado**, mid front unrounded /e:/ as in **geefe**, high front unrounded /i:/ as in **riijiya**, mid back rounded /o:/ as in **rooro** and high back unrounded /u:/ as in **guuga**. The lengthening of alternative Hausa loanwords did not change the meaning of it counterparts.

3.1.2.1.5 Diphthongization

Diphthongization is the phonological adaptations found to be operated in the alternative Hausa loanwords in Adamawa Fulfulde. Diphthong is two different vowels articulated simultaneously. It may also be pure vowel and semi-vowel respectively.

Consider the following examples in the table below:

Table 3.6: Examples of Diphthongization

S/No	Hausa Diphthongs	Fulfulde Diphthongs	Hausa	ALT	Fulfulde	Gloss
a	/ai/	/ey/ /oy/	dáidái kwaí	deydey koy	kalkal geeraade	equal eggs
b	/au/	/aw/	làujé	lawje	wafdu	sickle

The table 3.6 above contains the Hausa diphthongs and Fulfulde diphthongs. The Hausa diphthongs are /ai/ and /au/. The /ai/ is the combination of /a/ high front unrounded and /i/ low central unrounded vowels. While the /au/ consists of /a/ low central unrounded and /u/ high back rounded vowel sound.

The Fulfulde diphthongs which this study found in the alternative Hausa loanwords are; /ey/, /oy/ and /aw/. Its usage is depending on the Hausa word to be borrowed. It is the combination of pure vowels and a semi-vowel sound.

The Hausa diphthong /ai/ in the example (3.6: a) becomes; /ey/ as in **deydey**, and /oy/ as in **koy** which were the Hausa words alternatively borrowed into Adamawa Fulfulde. Also, the Hausa diphthong /au/ in the example (3.6: b) becomes /aw/ as in **lawje** respectively.

4.0 Discussion

The analysis reveals that alternative Hausa loanwords in Adamawa Fulfulde undergo a systematic set of phonological adaptations, which can be grouped into two broad patterns: full nativization and partial retention. The unadapted loanwords (e.g., aro, murna) suggest that lexical items with syllable structures and segmental compositions already permissible in Fulfulde are borrowed directly, minimizing cognitive load for bilingual speakers. Conversely, the adapted forms demonstrate clear phonological restructuring driven by the native phonotactic constraints of Fulfulde.

Key adaptation strategies include consonant change (e.g., /z/ → /dʒ/ in **kajamta**), simplification of complex onsets (e.g., /kw/ → /k/ in **kondo**), and vowel raising (/a/ → /i/ in **tattira**). These changes point to a preference for open syllables, avoidance of labialized velars, and conformity to Fulfulde's vowel harmony system. Vowel lengthening (e.g., **gaado**) occurs without semantic contrast, indicating that length is borrowed as a redundant phonetic feature rather than a phonemic one in these contexts. Diphthongization (e.g., /ai/ → /ey/ in **deydey**) further illustrates how

Fulfulde speakers map Hausa vowel sequences on native diphthong templates. Taken together, these adaptations reflect a classified phonological grammar where borrowed items are systematically restructured to satisfy Fulfulde's segmental inventory, syllable structure constraints, and prosodic preferences. The findings support the view that loanword nativization is not random but rule-governed, and they highlight the distorted influence of Hausa as a donor language on Fulfulde in multilingual Adamawa communities.

5.0 Conclusion

This study has examined the phenomenon of alternative Hausa loanwords in Adamawa Fulfulde with particular emphasis on the phonological processes that accompany their integration into the language. The findings demonstrate that native speakers of Adamawa Fulfulde actively employ Hausa lexical items not only to fill lexical gaps but also as alternative forms alongside existing Fulfulde equivalents. This supports the view that language contact between Hausa and Fulfulde has produced a dynamic pattern of lexical interaction that extends beyond simple borrowing.

The analysis revealed two major categories of alternative Hausa loanwords: unadapted and adapted forms. While some Hausa words are incorporated into Adamawa Fulfulde without noticeable structural modification, others undergo systematic phonological adaptation before becoming accepted in everyday speech. These adaptations include consonant substitution, simplification of consonant clusters, vowel change, vowel lengthening, and diphthongization. Such processes enable the borrowed items to conform to the phonological structure and phonotactic constraints of Adamawa Fulfulde.

The study further confirms Haugen's (1958) proposition that borrowed lexical items are often reshaped to fit the linguistic patterns of the recipient language. The adaptations identified in the data are not random occurrences but regular and

predictable processes governed by the phonological system of Fulfulde. Consequently, the use of alternative Hausa loanwords reflects both the strong sociolinguistic influence of Hausa in Northern Nigeria and the resilience of Fulfulde in maintaining its structural integrity through nativization mechanisms.

In conclusion, alternative Hausa loanwords constitute an important feature of contemporary Adamawa Fulfulde and serve as evidence of sustained bilingual interaction and cultural contact. The study contributes to the understanding of loanword adaptation in Nigerian languages and highlights the need for further research on the sociolinguistic motivations, frequency of usage, and long-term effects of alternative borrowing on the development of Fulfulde.

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