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Literal and Contextual Meanings Explication of Selected Ekiti Proverbs and their English Equivalents

Implication for Pedagogy and Language Preservation

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Abstract

Proverbs are metaphorical statements that express simple truth. Many studies have been done on proverbs. But the most common trend among these scholars is to investigate the interpretation and translation of some proverbs from one language into another. Also, majority of these works are on major languages, neglecting the fact that some dialects of these major languages also have proverbs that are exclusive to them. Proverbs serve as a vital repository for preserving the dialects and major languages, providing a window into the cultural heritage and linguistic diversity of a country. This study, therefore, examines the literal and contextual interpretation of selected Ekiti proverbs, with a view to determining the proverbs equivalent to some English proverbs or idioms. The study adopts the notion of contextual and literal implication of meaning. This is due to the appropriateness of these two concepts on meaning explication in a language. Fifteen Ekiti proverbs were purposively selected, from thirty randomly sampled Ekiti proverbs. The findings reveal that Ekiti proverbs are also used to perform some actions just like proverbs and idioms from the English language as well as other Nigerian major languages. Some of the functions these proverbs perform are: stating, informing, cautioning, warning and advising.

Keywords

context, Ekiti, proverb, translation, interpretation

INTRODUCTION

Proverbs are witty statements that express basic truth. They are striking paradoxical assertions that can be applied to common situation. Proverbs reflect the socio-cultural significance of a people. With proverbs, an elder can advise, settle quarrel, warn, counsel, persuade or encourage... with proverbs, threats are breathed out and love and affection is expressed (Bolaji, and Kehinde 11). Its structure, wordings and use are a mirror of the mindset, ideology and heritage of a given people (Alabi 257). In African settings, the extent with which an individual uses proverbs during conversation points to the wisdom of such an individual. Hence, the Yoruba proverbial saying *Owe lesin oro, oro lesin owe, boro ba sonu owe la fi n wa*. (Proverb is the horse with which word is conveyed, word is the horse with which proverb is conveyed, when word is lost, proverb is used to find it).

According to Akporobaro (69), proverbs remain 'a most powerful and effective instrument for transmission of culture, social morality, manners and ideas of a people from one generation to another'. From time immemorial, proverbs have been a powerful and effective vehicle for the transmission of culture, philosophy, social morality and values and sensibility of the people (Daramola 101). Proverbs are tribal-bound. This means that the proverb of a certain ethnic group encompasses the details of their daily life, and must be studied in that context. Proverbs are unique linguistic properties that are usually based on the traditions of its users.

Virtually all nations around the world have proverbial sayings that are unique or exclusive to them. Yoruba societies are not exemption to this. To validate this assertion, let us take a look at the following proverbial sayings which emanated from different nations and cultures, yet they have similar meaning and context of usage: Yoruba- *igba iponju la n m'ore* (you will know your friend in the time of hardship), Arabic language- *Assadeeq wakt addeed* (you will know

your friend in time of need) while its English equivalent is 'A friend in need is a friend indeed'. The three proverbs are not from the same culture. But they can be used in the same situation.

There are many sub-regions in Yoruba ethnic group and each of these ethnic groups also has some proverbs that are unique and exclusive to them. Ekiti dialect which is one of these ethnic groups also has proverbs that are distinct, unique and germane to her. Some of these proverbs have not been systematically collected and studied in literature. Therefore, this study is out to demonstrate the fact that Ekiti people also have proverbs like other sub-groups of Yoruba and these proverbs are aesthetically and semantically pleasing.

Values of proverb

Proverbs have tremendous value to their users, especially public speakers such as artists, anthropologists, linguists, educators, tribal lawyers and philosophers (Akinmade 88). Using proverbs in African societies signifies the fluency and the oratory power of the speaker and writer. It shows such individual's ability to express himself in an eloquent manner. The beauty of proverbs is the universality of their meaning. Everyone can relate to them in some way and on some level. It is an aspect of African folklore that helps to dispel the belief that Africans are barbaric and uneducated. It serves to instill values and norms of the society and educates the young. Through proverbs, immoral activities and acts that are incongruent with the social norms can be criticised by the elders.

In addition, proverb is a valuable tool that Yoruba people use in social gatherings to communicate or convey special information. They give aesthetic value to speech. Since most proverbial sayings are metaphorical in nature, it requires great wisdom from the hearers to give them suitable interpretation. So, we can say proverbial sayings can curb careless and thoughtless outbursts or statements in social gatherings. Proverbs can be used to perform various functions such as praising, correcting cautioning, warning and so on. Ekiti proverbs are also used to perform these mentioned functions too.

Ekiti people and Dialect

Ekiti is one of the states in the South-Western part of Nigeria. She derived her name from the word *ile olokiti* (land of hills). This is due to the hills found in the area. She also has her progeny in *Oduduwa* just like other states in the region. Ekiti is a sub-ethnic Yoruba derivation and often symbolised by their dialectical homogeneity that the people themselves pride one another in their most familiar greeting of 'o kun o' (Olomola 29).

The people of Ekiti are well known for their educational prowess and studious nature. This is one of the reasons why *Fountain of Knowledge* was chosen as her motto, not until recent times her motto was changed to *Land of Honour*. Ekiti people are well known for their quality of traditional arts, music, poetry and witty sayings. This further underscores the fact that Ekiti people have their own culture which includes proverbial sayings that are peculiar to them. Ekiti people are hardworking and articulate. While the men of Ekiti often engage in farming, the women engage in trading as common occupations among them.

Ekiti dialect is one of the numerous dialects of the Yoruba language. Ekiti people uniquely speak almost the same dialect. The homogeneous nature of Ekiti dialect makes her to be unique among other states in the Yoruba region. It is interesting to know that nearly all towns and villages in Ekiti can understand one another regardless of the little variations in their dialects. Despite its large geographical spread, the dialect remains relatively uniform except Omuo-Ekiti which speaks dialects close to the dialect of Kogi and Otun-Ekiti whose dialect is closer to a certain dialect in Kwara state.

The obvious homogeneity of Ekiti dialect makes it not to be out of place to study Ekiti proverbs as a general feature of the towns and villages in Ekiti. Hence, this study aims to address literal and contextual implications of selected Ekiti proverbs, providing insights into their preservation and transmission to future generations of scholars.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many works have been carried out on different aspects of proverb. While some are concerned with translation and interpretation strategies of proverbs (Yusuf & Lamidi, 2018; Olubode-Sawe 2009; Lamidi, 2008; Bolaji&Kehinde, 2017; Idowu, 2019), some only looked at the artistic aspect of proverb (Alabi 2017; Makinde, 2016). In addition, some scholars have worked on the grammatical aspect of proverb (Akanbi 2015, Ehineni 2016) while (Arewa & Dundes 1964) worked on the pragmatic and discourse structures of Yoruba proverbs. Others examined the pedagogical implications of proverbs and proverbs as a means of settling conflict or disputes among people (Adeyemi & Salawudeen, 2014; Agbaje, 2002). Most of the above works are on Nigerian major languages i.e. Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. It is Important to note that some dialects of these major languages also have proverbs which are peculiar to them. Ekiti has her own *sui generis* when it comes to the aspect of proverbial sayings. Presently, there is a lack of comprehensive documentation and analysis of Ekiti proverbs, leading to a limited understanding of their meanings and applications. Also, the impact of modernisation on the use and transmission of Ekiti proverbs among younger generations is not adequately studied, putting the proverbs at risk of being lost or forgotten. Hence, the need to research on the proverbs, for proper documentation and for the use of subsequent researchers on Ekiti proverbs. To address these gaps, this study, therefore, examines the artistic features of selected Ekiti proverbs in relation to their English equivalents, with a special focus on their literal and contextual implications at providing insights into their preservation and transmission to future generation of scholars.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been several studies conducted on proverb as an aspect of African folklore. Examining the pragmatic aspect of proverb, Idowu (2019) investigates selected Yoruba proverbs using Sytemic Functional Linguistic theory to match the linguistic properties of the proverbs with their functional use. This is done to highlight the importance of context to the interpretation and construction of knowledge for the younger Yoruba who are gradually becoming alingual and acultural. The study concludes that every instance of language use is not just a means of making statements or using language, but a purposeful and intentional way of performing specific actions. It is recommended that proverbs of other languages can be subjected to speech act analysis in order to explicate the values and ideologies of such languages through the functional tool of pragmatics. The paper is similar to the present study as they are both concerned with the meaning explication of proverbs.

In another study, Yusuf and Lamidi (2018) investigate the strategies employed in translating proverbs in selected Yoruba Nollywood epic movies. The aim of the study is to determine the appropriateness of the translation of the selected proverbs into the target language which is the English language. It was found out that the translators often use indirect translation strategies for the proverbs used in the movies due to cultural difference between the source text and the target text. This study differs in focus from the current study. While the current study is mainly concerned with the meaning and contextual implications of the selected proverbs in relation to the English equivalents of the proverbs, the reviewed study focuses on the appropriateness of the translation of the Yoruba proverbs into the English.

Considering proverbs as pedagogical tool in western education, Makinde (2016) highlights the use of proverbial expressions on socio-cultural and educational developments of the Yoruba people of Southwest Nigeria prior to the introduction of western education into the region. The paper argues that the use of English language in education only endangers the indigenous languages as well as their cultural heritage. There is a difference between the present study and the study under review as the later focuses on the pedagogical import of the Yoruba proverbs while the former examines the contextual usage of Ekiti proverbs.

Similarly, Bolaji and Kehinde (2017) examine some proverbs that Yoruba people live by. They highlight and analyse different Yoruba proverbs that relate to health matters by using corpus method of data analyses. This is with the intention to show the richness of the proverbs as well as their meanings in the maintenance of the health of every individual. They conclude that proper teaching and usage of these proverbs may be veritable tools for enhancing good health and hygiene of people. The paper is different from the present study as the reviewed paper only focuses on Yoruba proverbs on health matters, while the present study examines Ekiti proverbs that concern every aspect of human life.

In another study on proverb, Akanbi (2015) discusses the various syntactic forms that many of the Yoruba proverbs manifest. The study looks at the implication of the syntactic rule and how they account for the well-formedness condition of Yoruba grammatical sentences. The study reveals that all the proverbs in Yoruba are rule governed and that they are not just said without having their own grammatical structures. While the current study examines the selected proverbs from the semantic level of language, the reviewed study accesses proverbs from the syntactic level of language.

Looking at the importance of indigenous proverbs in Nigeria, Adeyemi and Salawudeen (2014) suggest the adaptation of indigenous proverbs from across the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria to be incorporated into peace education component of Social Studies education in Nigeria schools. They recommend that colleges and universities offering Social Studies as a course should introduce indigenous music, poetry, proverbs and songs as local content for teachers-in-training to acquire skills in using them to teach citizenship and peace education components of Social Studies curriculum. The reviewed work is not related to the present work as it explores pedagogical importance of proverb while the present study is concerned with the meanings of Ekiti proverbs in relation to their English equivalents in their context of usage.

In a work that is quite similar to the present study, Akinmade (2005) examines the themes, functions and poetic devices of Yoruba, Ondo proverbs. The aim of the work is to preserve Ondo proverbs since it is part of the cultural heritage of the ethnic group. And to establish the fact that Ondo has its own proverbs which are also unique to them. The two works are related because both of them examine the proverbs of the dialects of Yoruba. However, the present study examines the English equivalent of the selected Ekiti proverbs.

Agbaje (2002) looks at the nature of proverbs and submits that proverbs are analytical as well as concise in their formulation. According to him, proverbs are deduced from close observations with life, their characteristics, habits of creatures, the environment, natural phenomenon and sober reflections, flora and fauna and so on. They are used to express unspeakable truths, though, with some modifications. He posits further to say proverbs occur in various contexts but they seem to be particularly important in situations where there are conflicts and some obligations. Therefore, whenever appropriate proverb is presented to the parties in dispute, the tensions that are inherent in such relationships are controlled by the use of elliptical proverbial speech.

METHODOLOGY

Fifteen Ekiti proverbs were purposively sampled from thirty randomly selected Ekiti proverbs. The sampled proverbs were selected base on their artistic and aesthetic values and features. The proverbs were collected from various native speakers of not less than 40 years old residing in Ekiti state. The native speakers were interviewed orally to find out the literal and contextual meanings of the various proverbs. In the analysis, the proverbs were grouped base on the functions they usually perform in their context of usage. Then, they were translated into the English language, after which their

English equivalents were provided. Their semantic and contextual meanings were analysed to further reveal their aesthetic values and features. Below is the list of proverbs used for the study:

1. Èi ʒorò kàn-an m'èpo mí'yò i ʒe.
2. K' olúgbá bá pu'gba rẹ lákíkàragba, àn a ba mú kó'yin.
3. K' olúgbá bá pu'gba rẹ lákíkàragba, àn a ba mú kó'yin.
4. Am'órí balẹ a m'órí rẹ délẹ.
5. Omọ oko kà a jẹ búrédi, à mú'ʒu ránʒé sú'lé
6. Èkíkánán na mú í pín'ran ebí.
7. Àn r'óni bà'ni-í k' áʒo kàn-an tún m'ágbòn ka.
8. K'olókó lílá bá bá'ni-í sùn, gbígbi nan í gbi.
9. Òkété l' èrè ẹ lẹbìrà.
10. Àn jíkùtù i pọnmí èihú.
11. Mè yọọ kúnlẹ p'okété, kí mí tún kúnlẹ a taá.
12. Àn b' omi-í s'èrun kàn-án tún a fan'hò.
13. Àn m' iyọ i s'èrun í s'áyé ʒímí ʒe.
14. Àn wí kógbèlẹgbò mó dín' kàrà, ọk'oni kà a ba jẹ.
15. Atanni y'áírẹ ukókò básun, èrẹkàn ʒoo ní mọ.

Theoretical framework

Many linguists have studied proverbs using different theories. While some applied semiotic theory, others subjected it to syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and literary analyses. However, this study is subjected to contextual theory of meaning. This theory of meaning is selected because of the focus of this work which is examining the literal meanings and contextual implications of the selected proverbs. It is important to note that the context in which an utterance is used cannot be divorced from the meaning of such utterance. Hence the notion of Odebunmi (25) 'context is the spine of meaning'. Although, words can have some meanings in isolation, the fact still remains that full meanings of words are best realised in context (Odebunmi 26).

Various linguists such as Malinowski (1923), Firth (1957) and Hymn (1964) have shared different notions about the concept of context. But their views can be collapsed into the two notable types of contexts identified by Odebunmi (38-39). In this study, the literal meanings as well as the contextual meanings of the proverbs were examined. Each proverb is analysed base on their lexical composition before they are related to their possible contextual meanings.

Conceptual framework

There are two major aspects of meaning that are central to our discussion in this study. They are linguistic and social context. Both of them are briefly discussed below:

Linguistic context

This refers to the explication of an utterance using surrounding texts in the same utterance or expression. In many cases, proper importance given to the linguistic context will help us obtain the actual meaning of an utterance. Within the sphere of structural semantics, it is a unique network of syntactically related members within which each member derives its meaning from the interface of its semantico-syntactic relation with other members (Verschueren 326). Odebunmi (38) holds that meaning is largely determined by the lexical items that surround that particular word that interests a linguist, or a user of a language.

In this study, analysing the proverbs base on the texts that made them up (linguistic context) cannot be enough to decipher or understand the meanings of the proverbs. In order to understand them, they will require extra-linguistic cues, which is why the other type of context is very essential to our discussion.

Social context

Words cannot be separated from the socio-cultural factors that produce them. Utterances like proverbs, idiomatic expressions, figures of speech and all other culture-bound expressions need socio-cultural realities surrounding the linguistic acts for their meanings to be explicated. For example, the following Ekiti proverb, *amori bale amori re dele* (a bower will get home with his head) which means a humble person will face little or no challenges in life, needs socio-cultural clues for it to be interpreted meaningfully. Looking at it literally will not make any meaning whatsoever.

Data Analysis

a. Proverbs for advice

The proverbs in this section are mostly used to generate change in the behaviour of an individual. Hence, they are used to advice, admonish or counsel people.

1. Èi ʒorò kàn-an m'èpo mí'yò i ʒe.

Translation: Palm oil and salt are not only used for one ritual.

Literal meaning: In African societies, palm oil and salt are significant elements in her traditional religion's rites. The proverb above reiterates the importance of the two (palm oil and salt) as essential materials of every ritual or festival.

English equivalent: Do not burn your bridges.

Contextual implication: These proverbs are forms of advice. The Ekiti proverb as well as its English equivalent encourages appreciation, preservation and nurturing of valuable relationships, much like the idea of not ending a good relationship without careful consideration. It can be used in a situation where an individual is advised not to forfeit a previously built relationship because of a trivial matter. Through this proverbial saying, the person is persuaded to look at the brighter side of such relationship, as there are many other benefits such relationship can still bring notwithstanding the present situation. Its equivalent in Yoruba proverb is *ta aba diju kani k'eni buburu koja, t'eni 're maa fi koja lo, aa ni mo* (if we close our eyes for a bad person to pass by, we will not know when a good person will pass too). The Ekiti proverb is a statement of fact while its English equivalent is giving directive. Both proverbs can be used in the same situation to make similar effects.

2. K' ọlúgbá bá pu'gba rẹ lákíkàrágba, àn a ba mú kó'yin.

Translation: if you misuse your calabash, it will be used to pack faeces.

Literal meaning: *Ákíkàrágba* refers to an already spoilt or broken container that cannot be used for any important thing. So, when an individual says his or her container is spoilt, people tend to use such a container for unclean things.

English equivalent: Self-respect is the corner stone of all virtue.

Contextual implication: The two proverbs can be used to advise a person to be conscious of his or her self-respect. Both proverbs can be used in a situation where an individual is being disrespected due to his own attitude to himself. The proverbs emphasise the importance of self-respect and self-esteem in earning respect from others. In African settings generally, whoever that lacks self-respect is often looked down on in the society. Self-respect leads to self-discipline. It is always better not to do or say what will eventually damage one's self-respect. In another instance, the proverb can be used to caution an individual who is fond of disrespecting his or her older family members. The person can be corrected from behaving in such a manner as it might be a bad example to others who might disrespect them too.

3. Ọgbọgbọn nan mú í pàmúkùrù ẹpọ̀n.

Translation: Wisdom is required when killing a mosquito on the scrotum.

Literal meaning: the scrotum being a part of male's physiological features is a delicate and sensitive part of the body. Killing a mosquito needs wisdom not to talk of the one on a scrotum. The use of scrotum and mosquito in the proverb implies the delicateness of an issue.

English proverb equivalent: Discretion is the better part of valor (It is wiser to be cautious and tactful rather than being bold and reckless)

Contextual implication: The proverbs can be used to advise an individual on how to go about solving a delicate or tricky issue. The two proverbs are factual statements that teach us to apply wisdom always whenever one needs to deal with a very serious problem. Similar Yoruba proverbs are *pelekutu la fi n roko idi ope* or *Ogbon inu la fi n pefon* which also have the same meaning and effects. Whoever wants to cut the weeds that surround a palm tree must be more patient and calmer. This is to avoid having a cut or a wound during the cause of doing it.

The literal translation of the second proverb is 'wisdom is required when killing mosquito'.

4. Amóri balẹ a m'óri rẹ délé.

Translation: a bower will get home with his/her head.

Literal meaning: The proverb is oxymoronic in nature. There are two opposing ideas in the proverb. One who bows and still gets home with such a head.

English equivalent: Humility is the root of all virtue.

Contextual implication: These proverbs can be used to admonish someone on the importance of humility. The Ekiti proverb, though contradictory structurally strengthens the concept of humility. It can be used to advise a person not to be egoistic or arrogant as pride goes before a fall. The proverb underscores the uncanny importance of humility in man and what makes the society a haven worth living.

In a possible situation of usage, one can use the two proverbs to admonish a daughter-in-law who feels it is unnecessary to respect his brothers-in-law whom she is older than (an important culture of Yoruba). Seeing that her decision is causing misunderstanding in the family, the proverbs can then be used to call her to order.

b. Proverbs on logical statement of facts

The proverbs here are statement of facts that perform the acts of informing and educating individuals.

5. Ọmọ oko kà a jẹ búrẹ̀dì, à mú'su ránṣẹ̀ sù'lẹ̀.

Translation: a person in the farm who desires to eat bread will send yam to those at home.

Literal meaning: it is common among those who live in the farm to desire what those at home eat and at the same time, those at home often long for what those in the farm are eating. So, 'bread' which is a common foodstuff in the city can be desired by those in the farm, and in exchange, those at home might desire immediate farm produce such as 'yam' to be sent to them.

English equivalent: Tit for tat.

Contextual implication: The Ekiti proverb is a statement of fact and it coincides with the English idiom 'tit for tat' which also means responding to situation with an action that is equally good or bad. It educates a person about the philosophy of life, 'life is give and take'. It can be used to educate a self-centered person to give out what he has in exchange for what he desires. Its Yoruba equivalents are *gba fun Muri nile*, *oun ni gba fun Gbada loko* (giving to Muri at home necessitates giving to Gbada in the farm) and *bu funmi ki n bu fun o ni konko n ke nisale odo* (give to me I give to you is the song the frog sings underneath the river). All these proverbs have the same contextual meanings and they all generate the same effect on the part of the listeners when they are used.

6. Èkíkánán na mú í pín'ran ebí.

Translation: Relation's meat is usually shared using nails.

Literal meaning: The meat belonging to family relations is often shared among the entire members of the family. Therefore, no matter how small the meat is, everybody must have their own share of it. Hence, the nail is used instead of a knife for ease of sharing.

English equivalent: When the cake is shared, everyone gets a bite.

Contextual implication: The proverbs both showcase the importance of fair sharing of common wealth. The Ekiti proverb preaches the significance of family ties and kinship in African societies. Both proverbs can be used in a situation where people are more than the goods or resources to be distributed. With this proverb, the people can be assured of receiving their own share no matter how little it could be.

7. Án r'óni bà'ni-í k' áşò kán-an tún m'ágbòn ka.

Translation: You don't off-spread your cloth using your jaw when you see somebody to assist you.

Literal meaning: It will be unwise to use one's jaw to off-spread one's cloth when there are people who can assist in doing that.

English equivalent: Many hands make light work. (An English idiom that means a work can be made easier if many individuals work together).

Contextual meaning: Both proverbs are factual sayings that encourage division of labour. They are used to caution a person against overzealous attitude. The proverbs can be used in a situation where by somebody takes all responsibilities upon himself despite the availability of those that can assist him in sharing the responsibilities. Also, somebody might use the proverbs to show his readiness to share his responsibilities with whosoever cares to assist him.

8. K'olókó lílá bá bá'ni-í sùn, gbígbi nan í gbi.

Translation: When someone with big manhood is having an intercourse with a person, such person tends to grumble.

Literal meaning: For a woman, a man with an extra ordinary manhood can constitute a problem during any sexual relation. The woman might not be comfortable, and what she tends to enjoy ends up giving her an excruciating pain.

English equivalent: Woe is me (This is an expression of sorrow, grief, or distress).

Contextual implication: These proverbs are used when someone is having a problem or a kind of setback. Such a person might lose focus and interest in any social relation. When asked about his or her wellbeing, he or she can use the proverbs to make her problem known to others.

9. Òkété l' èrè elébìrà.

Translation: The gain of a farm-labourer is a pouch rat.

Literal meaning: Apart from the money that is meant to be paid to a farm-labourer by his hirer, any kind of game he kills will be his own gain apart from his wages.

English equivalent: You reap what you sow. (This means that the consequences of your actions will be in direct proportion to the effort and quality of those actions).

Contextual implication: Both are factual proverbs that imply that one reaps where one sows. Whatever benefit that comes from someone's hard work is a gain which should be amassed with joy. Its equivalent in Yoruba is *ibi taa ti se la ti n je* (We reap where we sow). All the proverbs can generate the same effect in the hearer.

10. Àn jíkùtù i pònmi èihú.

Translation: One does not fetch unsettled water early in the morning.

Literal meaning: In rural areas where there are little or no social amenities like borehole or pipe borne water, the people fetch water from the stream. However, people usually go very early in the morning because of the neatness of the water at this time. So, it is not common to fetch unsettled or dirty water early in the morning.

English equivalent: A bad beginning makes a bad ending. (This proverb encourages people to start their day on a positive note, avoiding arguments and disputes in the morning, which can set a negative tone for the rest of the day).

Contextual implication: The two proverbs express fact. They are used in a context where certain rift or argument is being prevented in the early hours of the day. For instance, when people engage in fight early in the morning, the proverbs could be used in calling them to order.

11. Mè yòò kúnlè p'okété, kí mi tún kúnlè a taá.

Translation: I can't kneel to sell a bush rat after kneeling (toiling) to kill it.

Literal meaning: killing a rat in the bush can be a tedious work. It involves series of tricky ideas and activities. Selling such a game with which many problems were encountered while killing shouldn't involve any kind of self-demeaning by begging people to buy it.

English equivalent: You can't put a price on self-worth (Self-worth is invaluable and cannot be bought or sold).

Contextual implication: These proverbs are about self-worth. The proverbs can be used in a situation where by an individual who has served a person decides not to serve the child of such a person. The proverbs encourage self-respect or worth.

c. *Proverbs on warning or cautioning*

The proverbs in this section are used to caution or warn people against some habits or attitudes that are not acceptable in the society.

12. Àn b' omi-í s'èrun kàn-án tún a fan'hò.

Translation: We do not whistle with a mouth filled with water.

Literal meaning: There are certain acts that cannot be performed simultaneously. For instance, it is not possible to whistle with water in the mouth.

English equivalent: You cannot eat your cake and have it. (You cannot enjoy the advantages of two opposing options simultaneously)

Contextual implication: These proverbs are forms of caution. They point to the impossibility of doing two unrelated things together. Whistling with a water-filled mouth could be fatal to one's health. The Ekiti proverb coincides with the English proverb, 'you cannot eat your cake and have it'. It indicates one should not have more than is reasonable. Whistling with a water filled mouth could be a desirable act for a person, but they are two contradictory options one has to choose from. The proverbs can be used to curb a newly married woman who often sleeps in her parent's house, leaving her husband all alone despite being married. Sleeping in her parent's house could mean she still loves spinsterhood even after getting married. Here, spinsterhood and marriage are like whistling with a water-filled mouth which are unrelated and can subsequently cause a serious problem.

13. Àn m' iyò i s'èrun í s'áyé òmí şe.

Translation: We cannot be proclaiming doomness with salt in the mouth.

Literal meaning: Salt is often ascribed to happy situations. Hence, one is not expected to curse or say foul things with a salt-filled mouth.

English equivalent: Don't be torn between two emotions. (The proverb advises against mixing contradictory emotions).

Contextual implication: These proverbs encourage a person to focus on the positive aspects of the occasion and to manage conflicting emotions. They are used in a joyous context where a person thinks about her misfortune which has been succeeded with goodness. The mood of such a person to whom the proverb is used could be that of joy and sadness. Using these proverbs, a bride who is also an orphan missing her parents on her wedding day could be cautioned not to brood over the past horrible experiences at such a happy occasion.

14. Àn wí kógbèlégbò mó dín' kàrà, òk'òni kà a ba jé.

Translation: They don't discourage an ulcerated person not to fry *akara*, what is left are those that will eat it.

Literal meaning: It is very important in the society that anybody cooking for public consumption should maintain good personal hygiene. Frying and selling of *akara* is a common act among Africans. So, it is possible for people not to patronise someone who has an open sore as this may irritate the buyers.

English equivalent: You can lead a horse to water but you cannot force it to drink.

Contextual implication: These proverbs warn against obstinacy. It can be used to correct an obstinate attitude of an individual. They warn a person about possible outcome of his character. The proverbs reiterate the wisdom in a prompt heed of warnings earlier given. They indicate the problem an obstinate individual may likely face when he flouts social order or norm. The equivalent in Yoruba proverb is *aa kii ni komode o ma dete, to ba ti le da'gbo gbe*. (We cannot say that a child should not have leprosy, if he or she can live in the forest alone). This also condemns obstinacy.

15. Atanni y'áiré ukókò básun, èrèkàn ọ̀o ní mọ.

Translation: One is only deceived into having sexual intercourse in a cocoyam farm-house once.

Literal meaning: A person who deceived someone into having an illicit sexual relation can only commit such a crime once. This is because the individual should be wiser after the first occurrence.

English equivalent: *Once beaten twice shy*. (This proverb encourages caution and prudence based on past experiences).

Contextual implication: The two proverbs are used to advise an individual not to fall a prey of an incident with which he or she had an unpalatable experience previously. They can also be used to warn an individual to be cautious of doing something that might bring about the repetition of an unpleasant experience he or she once had. The related Yoruba equivalent is *ina esisi kii joni leemeji* which also points to learning a lesson from one's previous downfall. The proverbs serve as a reminder that wisdom and foresight can come from learning from our mistakes.

CONCLUSION

This study has looked at the literal and contextual meanings of selected Ekiti proverbs in relation to their English equivalents and its implications on next generation of scholars. The study has demonstrated the existence of Ekiti proverbs with equivalent English translations, highlighting the richness and depth of the Ekiti dialect. The findings of this study underscore the importance of documenting and preserving Ekiti proverbs, not only as a means of promoting cultural heritage but also as a way to conserve the Yoruba language, of which Ekiti is a vital dialect.

Similarly, the documentation of Ekiti proverbs can serve as a valuable resource for language learning, cultural enrichment, and intellectual exploration. Also, it can contribute to the efforts aimed at preserving the Yoruba language and its dialects, which are an essential part of Nigeria's cultural identity.

This research has shown that Ekiti proverbs offer a unique window into the culture, values, and beliefs of the Ekiti people, and their English equivalents can facilitate cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. By documenting and studying Ekiti proverbs, we can gain a deeper understanding of the dialect and its significance in the context of Yoruba language and culture.

Ultimately, this research highlights the importance of language preservation and cultural documentation, particularly in the face of globalisation and linguistic homogenisation. By exploring and celebrating the richness of Ekiti proverbs, we can contribute to the preservation of linguistic diversity and cultural heritage, ensuring that the wisdom and knowledge embedded in these proverbs continue to inspire and enrich future generations.

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