

THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT OF THE ENGLISH SUBTITLE OF YORUBA PROVERBS IN NIGERIA HOME VIDEO: A STUDY OF MOSUNMOLA FILANI'S *IKU EWA*

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Abstract

The study is set to describe the content and context of the English Subtitle of the Yoruba proverbs in the home video titled "Iku Ewa". It also discusses the lexico-semantic choices made in the translation of the proverbs and determines the extent of meaning preservation, modification or distortion at the lexico-semantic level. The data for the study were drawn from the selected home video which has copious proverbs. The film was closely watched, taking note of the proverbs used and how they were translated in the subtitles. The English translations were placed side by side the source proverbs and a contrastive analysis was carried out at the lexico-semantic level. The work adopts Catford's and Newmark's translation theories and their applications in the context of Yoruba proverbs.

Keywords: *English Subtitle, Yoruba proverbs, Home video and Iku ewa*

Introduction

A study of Yoruba home video films requires the history of the overall industry under which film making is identified internationally. Nollywood has over ten years become a world phenomenon, as its movies are being sold to Ghana, Togo, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa as well as Jamaica, the united states of America and the united kingdom to name a few. Today Nollywood ranks third movie industry after Hollywood (USA) and Bollywood (India). It has been able to hold its head high despite so many deterrents, which include expensive technical tools of the trade, inconsistent supply of electricity, horrible traffic jam conditions all of which can induce extreme lateness in production.

In Nigeria, there is a large market for films, this is because of the vast population of the over 300 ethnic groups in the country. Three major ethnic languages; the Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa dominates the multifarious ethnic groups in the country. These groups are believed to be richer in proverbs than other languages. In Yoruba language particularly, several proverbs are used to salvage contextual needs as they arise among interlocutors. Some of these Yoruba proverbs have been studied by Omoloshio (2006), Yusuf (1994, 1995, 1997 and 1997) and Arua (1998). Other paremiological scholars in Nigeria include Adejumo (2009) and Adeyemi (2009), Adeleke (2009), Arimi (2009), and Alabi (2009). Another article in literature on Nigerian proverbs is that of Adedimeji (2009) to mention but a few. This paper sets out to contribute to the understanding of Lexico-semantic characteristics of proverbs subtitled in English. This is because none of the works above on pareminology has focused on proverbs in relation to translation and its Nigerianess. Majorly, the study sets out to describe the content and context of the English translated Yoruba proverbs in the selected home video; discuss the lexico-semantic choices of the translated proverbs and determine the extent of meaning preservation, modification or distortion at the lexico-semantic level.

Yoruba Paremiology

Yoruba proverbs studies started in 1852 when Samuel Ajayi Crowther collected many Yoruba proverbs in his book titled, *The Vocabulary of Yoruba Language* (Adeyemi, 2009; Bamgbose, 1968), for example, focused on the structure and forms of Yoruba proverbs. Other notable scholars in this field include Ogundeji (1992), Ogunsina (1992), Adekeye (2001), Adebowale (2006), Ojoade (2004), Adewoye (2006), Owomoyela (1975), Yusuf (1994, 1995), Alabi(2000) and Odebunmi (2006). All of these focus on the form, function, and use of proverbs, and as such have contributed greatly to Yoruba proverbs scholarship. For the Yoruba people, Adeyemi (2009) observes "modern Yoruba novelist and poets portray colonial and post colonial politics as they affect the historical past and present, and socio-cultural and

economic life of the people by using proverbs in Yoruba language to stimulate and provoke political consciousness in the readers” (p. 531). In Yoruba literary scholarship, there is hardly any literary criticism on Yoruba novels, plays or poetry that does not mention the use of proverbs in a discourse.

A Synopsis of the Film, “Iku Ewa”

The Yorùbá home-video selected for this study is “*Iku ewà*” (2010) written and produced by Mosúnmólá Fílání. Ewátómi, a beauty queen vows to become the crown prince’s wife. She succeeds into the royal family but is rejected by the prince who already has his heart elsewhere with a princess in a neighboring village. After the beauty pageant, Ewátómi wins and enters the palace as the king’s wife. She became the thorn in the flesh of the royal house. Since she is rejected by the prince, she begins to wrath evil in Prince Adéyanjú’s household, kills the king so that she would be inherited by the Prince as part of his inheritance and would kill any woman who marries Prince Adéyanjú.

The Content and Contextual Analysis of the Translated Proverbs

The film selected for this study is enriched with proverbs, which play important narrative/thematic roles. For instance, some of the proverbs relate to the actions of the characters; some are used in giving the audience the knowledge of past events; some make the audience see the future of the plot, while some others give premonition of doom. Some of these important functions of proverb in the play are illustrated below as follows.

S/N	Source Text	Target Text
1.	Oníkúrúnà tó ní inú òun kò dára ni, sebí àwa nàà ti rí bí ìta rẹ ẹ̀ se rí	Rashes needn’t boast of its being horrible, its appearance is evidence enough

A. For depicting character: This proverb above is used to tell the audience about the personality of a particular character in the play. It is uttered by one of Àlàbí’s family members in the video film to insult Olálóunpé, the dwarf. It is used to portray her as a very ugly person.

S/N	Source Text	Target Text
1.	Ogbón tó bá fo igi oró, tó fo igi àràbà, ẹ̀yìn kùlẹ̀ agò nàà ní padà bọ̀wá dá ilé sí.	Smartness that scale the small tree, scale the medium and even timbers. Those smartness often ended up in the stupid’s backyard.

B. For Premonition of doom: The proverb above is rendered by Bóládalé, Ewà’s close friend. She used it to warn her of her over confidence in her beauty. It was her deceiving beauty that eventually led her mysterious death.

S/N	Source Text	Target Text
1.	Ní ìgbà tí ọ̀fọ̀n ti wá tọ̀ sí inú gbẹ̀gìrì bá yí, kẹ̀lẹ̀kọ̀ kó ẹ̀kọ̀ ẹ̀ nílẹ̀ lókù	Now that things are as they were, it’s everyone to his camp.

C. Pointing Back to Past Incidents: This proverb is used by Bóládalé to make reference to the insult Ewà received from the prince on the first day they met. The prince took little or no notice of her presence not to talk of her beauty. So, Bóládalé uses the expression to tell her friend to erase the idea of marriage to the prince and be herself.

S/N	Source Text	Target Text
1.	A lẹ̀ fi tipá mú ẹ̀sin lodò lọ̀dọ̀tọ̀, sùgbón a lẹ̀ fi tipá fún un lómi	A horse can be forced to the river, but you can’t force it to drink water.

D. To Give Advice: The above proverb is rendered by Ógúndélé, Ewà’s father. He uses the proverb to advise his daughter over her turning down of marriage proposals of all her suitors. He advised her to make up her mind by making a choice, so that her ravishing beauty will not eventually turn against her.

S/N	Source Text	Target Text
1.	Òkété ní èṣẹ̀wò àwọn Oníkòyí, oúnje aláḍùn ni fún àwọn Elérin mọ̀sa. Báyií là á ẹ̀ ní ilé wa, èṣẹ̀wò ẹ̀lòmíí.	Bush rat is a taboo to the Ìkòyí people but a tasty delicacy to the Elérin mọ̀sa, it is different strokes to different folks.

E. Proverb that Depict Cultural Difference: Queen Adéṣẹ̀wà uses the proverb to tell her son (Prince Adéyanjú) about the uniqueness of their culture when it comes to marriage. Dance is the tradition for choosing a wife for both the king and the prince.

S/N	Source Text	Target Text
1.	Tí wọn bá ní ẹ̀ranko oníwo ni ó kan nipa, ìmòrán ìgbín wani?	Ògúndélé of all people?

F. Expression of Emotional Feelings of Surprise: The Ìwàrẹ̀fà i.e. the white priests, uses the proverb to express their feelings of surprise when they realize that, Ògúndélé (Ewà's father) of all people is behind all the calamities that has befallen the royal household all in the name of his daughter's marriage to Prince Adéyanjú.

S/N	Source Text	Target Text
1.	Ogún omódé kò le ẹ̀ eré fún ogún odún.	Twenty children cannot be together for twenty years.

G. Proverb Expresses the Basic Truth of Life: The expression above is uttered by Bóládalé. She uses the proverb to tell her friend Ewà that, she thinks that the two of them are inseparable. But her marriage to the royal family has brought a limit to their relationship because they now rarely get to see each other.

S/N	Source Text	Target Text
1.	Omo ẹ̀ni kò lè rẹ̀wà tíí ká fiṣe aya.	No matter how beautiful, one wouldn't marry his own daughter.

H. As Expression of Impossibilities: When Ewà is old enough to get married, many suitors come to ask for her hand in marriage but she finds none of them worthy of her beauty. Ògúndélé, her father uses the first proverb to tell one of his daughter's numerous suitors that, despite her daughter's beauty, it is impossible for him to marry her.

From the contextual analysis of the proverbs in the play above, it will be pertinent to say that, proverbs can be used to perform different functional roles in human communication. Therefore, in the Yoruba Home Video Films several proverbs are used to salvage contextual needs as they arise among interlocutors.

Lexico-Semantic Characteristics of the Translated Proverbs

Here, we analyze some of the translated proverbs in terms of their lexical patterns and semantic characteristics. The translated proverbs are related to their source texts for the purpose of showing their differences in relation to their lexico-semantic formations. To achieve clarity, the proverbs have been classified based on the lexico-semantic 'operations' carried out on the source proverbs by the producers of the subtitles. The semantic implications of the 'operations' are considered in relation to the context of the source proverb.

Tabular Analyses of the Proverbs

SN	Film Title	Source Text (ST)	Target Text/Translation into English (TT)	Typology	Extent of meaning preservation, modification and distortion on the TT
1.	Ikú Ewà	Àwòdì n̄ rẹ̀ barà, atégùn ta á nídi kán, ó ní ohun tó bá tí yá kan kì í pẹ̀ mọ̀.	The wind has aided the flight of the eagle, so it is up and away.	Partial Direct Translation	Meaning preservation
2.		Oní kúrúnà tó ní inú òun ò dani, sebí àwa nàà ti rí bí ita rẹ̀ se rí.	Rashes needn't boast of it's being horrible, its appearance is evidence enough.	Partial Direct Translation	Meaning preservation
3.		Ọmọ eni ò sa ní rewà tí títí ká fe fún ra eni.	No matter how beautiful, one wouldn't marry his own daughter.	Direct Translation	Meaning Preservation
4.		A lè fí tipá mèsin lodò lodótó, sùgbón a lè fí tipá fún un ló mi.	A horse can be forced to the river but water can't be forced into its mouth.	Direct Translation	Meaning Preservation
5.		Ọgbón tó bá fo igi òro, tó fo igi àràbà, èyinkulé agò nàà ní padà bọ wá da ilẹ̀ sí.	Smartness that scale the small tree, scale the medium and even timbers, those smartness often ended up at the stupid's backyard.	Direct Translation	Meaning Modification
6.		Ó kúkú wu Elédùwà ló dirí ewà fún àkùkọ.	It is the fate of the cock that made the creator adorn its head with a blazing crown.	Partial Direct Translation	Meaning Preservation
7.		Nígba tí ọfọn tí wá tọ sí inú gbègiri bá yí, kélékọ kó ẹkọ è nílẹ̀ lókù.	Now that things are as they were, it's everyone to his camp.	Indirect Translation	Meaning Distortion
8.		Eranko tó bá sé iyéméjì ni ọde n̄ pa lóko.	It is the doubtful game that fall prey to the hunter.	Partial Direct Translation	Meaning Modification
9.		Bí età ò bá tà, kò sí ọmọ eranko kẹranko tó le tà.	No animal sale ahead of the fox.	Direct Translation	Meaning Preservation
10.		Ọmọ Àjànàkú kan, kii yàrá, ọmọ tí eya bá bí eya nàà ní ní jọ.	An Elephant does not bear dwarf, children of the blade will always be sharp.	Partial Direct Translation	Meaning Modification
11.		Àjànàkú kú ó ní morí ykan firí, bí a bá rí erin, ká sọ pé a rí erin.	One must give honour where it is due.	Equivalent Meaning Translation	Meaning Distortion
12.		Màlùù tó jẹ̀bù ló ní	The cattle that ate the	Direct	Meaning Preservation

	ká na Fúlàní, ọmọ ọba tó ja olè lóní kí á bú bééré èun.	seed yam causes the beating of the Fulani. A thieving Prince attracted slight to his lineage.	Translation	
13.	Pàkúté tí a de fún àparò, agílíntí ló mú.	The trap set for the Partridge only caught an iguana.	Direct Translation	Meaning Preservation
14.	Aṣọ tí igbin bá bó sílẹ̀, kò sí eranko, kẹranko tó lè gbe wọ mọ.	I was a queen and no mere mortal can have me again.	Indirect Translation	Meaning Distortion
15.	Kàkà kí kìnìhún ó ẹ akápò ekùn ó ní kí kálukú ó ya ẹ ode tiẹ lọtòtò ni.	It's a nightmare how can I relate with Èwà.	Translation Shift	Meaning Distortion
16.	Ogún Ọmọdé kò le ẹrẹ fún ogún ọdún.	Twenty children cannot be together for twenty years.	Direct Translation	Meaning Modification
17.	Òkété ni èèwọ àwọn Oníkòyí, oúnje aláḍùn ni fún àwọn elerin mọsa. Báyi láa sé ní ilé wa, èèwọ elòmí.	Bush rat is a taboo to the Ìkòyí people, but a tasty delicacy to the elerin mọsa, it is different strokes to different folks.	Partial Direct Translation	Meaning Preservation
18.	Tí wọn bá ní eranko oníwo ní ó kan nipa, imòrán igbín wani.	Ògúndélé of all people?	Translation Shift	Meaning Distortion
19.	Gbogbo erú ló ní baba, ọnà ló jìn.	Slaves also have relations but for distance.	Direct Translation	Meaning Preservation

1. Semantic Retention

In sample three above, both the ST and the TT forms varies in terms of structural arrangement. The key words in the ST are, 'ọmọ', 'rẹwà', and 'fẹ'. These words are replaced with the words 'daughter', 'beautiful', and 'marry' (as wife). One can simply say that, the TT version is a paraphrase of the ST conveying the source information in a different lexical/structural pattern. There is a considerable level of lexical/semantic retention. The translator of the utterance obviously had no difficulty in doing his/her job. There is no deficiency of any sort and the intended meaning is preserved. Looking at sample 4 in the table above, the content of the ST and the TT version is the same. The key words that negotiate for attention includes 'ipá', 'ẹsin', 'odò', 'şùgbón', and 'omi'. The translated version includes 'force', 'horse', 'river' 'but', and 'water'. The difference between the two expressions in fairness is just the ordering of the two syntactic structures. The semantic interest here is direct translation. The presence of all the key words, verbatim in the TT presupposes that the translation retains the source language meaning.

2. Semantic Distortion

The semantic interest of the expressions in 15 and 18 above is that of meaning shift. The proverbs are given an equivalent meaning translation. The content and form of the ST and the TT's versions are totally different. Considering example 15, the plausible translation should read: "instead of the tiger to stand as treasurer of the lion, each would rather hunt separately". But the translator decided to paraphrase the proverb. The translator ignores the wordings of the proverb and gives the direct meaning and information

intended by speaker. The metaphorical use of the words “Lion” and “Tiger” are not reflected. The culturally rooted meaning embedded in the proverb in the use of animal imagery is lost.

Similarly, in sample 18, what we have in the TT is a complete digression from the ST. There is no similarity in both the content and form. The plausible interpretation should read “if they say one would be knocked down by the horn of an animal, definitely it is not that of a snail”. The translator in this case, equally disregards the root message and translates the information literally as “Ògúndélé of all people?” The metaphorical use of the word “ìgbín” i.e. “snail”, which is considered in the Yoruba culture as an easy going and harmless creature, is not reflected in the TT version. The metaphor of horn has been down played. This has resulted in the loss of the original meaning of the proverb. In translation studies, Catford (1965) and Newmark (1981) describe the TT’s style in these utterances as ‘structure shifts’, which involves a grammatical change between the structure of the ST and that of the TT. The translator simply summarizes the background implicatures from his MT knowledge of the said proverbs to translate the implicit information.

3. Semantic Modification

From example 5 above, the translator is a bit modest in his use of the word ‘smartness’ to describe the word ‘Ògbón’ which literally means ‘wisdom’. Though the two words can be use synonymously, but the word ‘wisdom’ is the most suitable interpretation for the word ‘Ògbón’. All other words in the statement are appropriately translated and the meaning preserved. Also in example 16, the content of the ST is directly translated in the TT. Despite the literal interpretation given to the proverb, the intended meaning in the ST is still perfectly retained. Except for the replacement of the phrase ‘play together’ for ‘be together’, which tends to modifies the meaning.

4. Semantic Extension

The expression in 6 above, literally translates directly meaningfully. The metaphors in these proverbs have been extended to enhance easy communication. While the source language addresses the wish of the creator to adorn the cock with beauty, the translator says ‘it is the fate of the cock that made the creator adorns his head with a blazing crown’. The credit of the beauty on the head of the cock in this scheme is given to the cock itself rather than the almighty God who has in his mercy endowed the cock with transcendental beauty. There is an inexplicable transfer of metaphorical meaning in this translation as carried out by the producer of the film ‘Ikú Ewà’. The meaning is partially preserved. Similarly, in the last proverb, prince Adeyanju solicits for the slaves in the film ‘Ikú Ewà’ by saying ‘slaves also have relations but for distance’. But the translator has extended the meaning in his inclusive use of the word ‘relations’ to include mother, aunt, uncle, brother, sister, e.t.c. rather than simply say ‘slaves also have father but for distance’. The meaning is however, partially preserved.

5. Semantic Narrowing

In example 1 above, there is an appreciable degree of meaning reduction. The translator disregards some part of the message and presents a portion that may pose no difficulty. The word ‘bara’ appears strange in terms of easy access to second language translation. In the source language, it is a place where the eagle goes to rest after retiring for the day. Also the last part of the proverb is not included in the translation. Instead of “whatever that is due, should not be delayed further”, the translator simply put “so it is up and away”. The semantic interest here is narrowing, while the translation partially preserves the meaning. Similarly in sample 2 above, there appears to be a partial translation of the proverb by the translator. The TT and the ST gave different senses of information. The ST talks about the inner part of the ‘one who have rashes all over his body’ but the TT addresses ‘rashes’ as a nominal subject of the clause. Hence there is a considerable amount of reduction in meaning done by the translator. The TT version partially preserves the meaning.

Discussion of Findings

From the above observations, it is evident that there is a great deal of meaning distortion in the translation of the proverbs in the Yorùbá film selected for this study. This is to say that, most of the proverbs are indirectly translated and usually the meaning is distorted. These translations do not follow the source language wordings but deductions of meaning through inferential processes. The translators simply

disregard the cultural rooted meaning embedded in the proverbs by translating the implied information literally as most of the imaginary and metaphorical characters that feature in the Source Text are neglected. Examples of this variable can be seen in numbers 7, 11, 14, 15 and 18, in the table above. Therefore, there is a great deal of semantic and pragmatic presupposition in the translated Yorùbá proverbs as carried out by the producers of the home videos. Another significant finding in this study is that, some of the proverbs retain the original wordings in the Source Text and the translations preserve the source language meaning. In this case, the proverbs are directly translated and the meaning preserved. Examples of this can be found in numbers 3, 4, 9, 12, 13, and 19 in the table above.

The proverbs under the category of Meaning Modification are given a partial direct translation. This is because the Source Text to a large extent is nearly perfectly translated, except for a slight change in either one lexical item or a phrase in the Target Text version. This is done to suit the intended meaning of the proverbs in question. Examples of such can be found in numbers 5, 8, 10 and 16, in the table above. It was also observed that some of the proverbs were given an equivalent meaning translation that is available in the dictionary of the Target Text language. Examples of such can be found in numbers 11, 14, 15 and 16. In this case, the translator finds an alternative relevant meaning with which to render the information. Overall, we find that most proverbs in this study were not translated directly, but inferentially. Thus, the implicit information rather than the overtly stated surface structure configuration of the proverbs were translated by the translator. There is above all, a wholesale Mother Tongue influence in the translation.

Conclusion

This study has shed light on the lexico-semantic characteristics of English translated Yorùbá proverbs found in the video film selected for the study. It indicated that the translated proverbs are characterized by semantic narrowing, modification, extension, retention, and distortion. It also showed that the degree of distortion in the meanings of the translated proverbs is considerably higher than that of meaning modification or preservation.

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