

A Study of Yoruba-English Proverb Correspondent Strategies in Niyi Oshundare's *Dialogue with my Country*

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Abstract

*Proverbs are conventionalized expressions whose meanings and usage are context-sensitive. Yorùbá proverbs, like those in many other African societies, function as a powerful rhetorical device to code, embellish, and support arguments, thereby shaping moral consciousness and beliefs. They are essential tools for a skillful bilingual writer like Oshundare, who seamlessly manipulates both Yorùbá and English. While the cultural differences between English and Yorùbá people can complicate the transfer of certain ideas, universal concepts such as honesty, love, bravery, and hard work transfer easily. This study adopts Roman Jakobson's approach to translation equivalence to examine Oshundare's essays in *Dialogue with my Country*. The objectives are to identify instances of Yorùbá proverbs used, analyze how their use constitutes the writer's idiosyncratic ability, and identify the categories of ideas that lend themselves easily to transfer. Using a purposive sample of fifty proverbs selected from fifty percent of the collection's one hundred essays, findings reveal that Oshundare masterfully weaves the traditional elements of Yorùbá proverbs into the English language to represent the current experiences of the people. This is achieved without flaunting English linguistic rules while still maintaining the import of their Yorùbá essence. This corroborates the notion that when two languages have linguistic correspondences, transfer is easy and does not affect the meaning conveyed.*

Keywords: English Proverbs, Language Transfer, Linguistic Correspondences, Traditional Elements, Yoruba Proverbs.

Introduction

Proverbs serve as a vital component of African oral traditions, carrying cultural wisdom, moral lessons, and rhetorical power. Niyi Òṣúndáre, a celebrated poet and essayist, masterfully incorporates Yorùbá proverbs into English discourses in his collection *Dialogue with My Country*. This study examines Òṣúndáre's strategic use of Yorùbá proverbs, analyzing how he weaves them into the English language while retaining their cultural significance.

Historically, among the English people, proverbs are regarded as pearls of wisdom, which should be popular, memorable and concise. It should be able to provide sensible advice and contain unchanging truths, based on experience over the years. They are to be interpreted primarily, literally and metaphorically, contain universal truths, and apply to a host of situations and issues on life. Many English proverbs owe their origin to the Bible, for example, "A soft answer turns away wrath" from Proverbs chapter fifteen, verse one. In addition to the Bible, English proverbs have their origin in the works of English poets and dramatists, like William Shakespeare. Such proverbs include, "Brevity is the soul of wit" from *Hamlet*, "Cowards die many times before their death and "the evil that men do lives after them" from *Julius Caesar*, "The devil can cite scriptures for his purpose" from *The Merchant of Venice* and "Sweet are the uses of adversity" from *As You like it*.

In Yorùbá culture, proverbs are appreciated as the vehicle for words. Proverbs in Yorùbá land came into existence, as part of the oral tradition of the Yorùbá peoples. Folktales, songs, chants and proverbs, serve the people primarily as a means for entertainment intended for moral education as well the transfer of wisdom and knowledge, and the expression of ideas to ultimate reality and meaning, though these forms may also serve scholars as a means of understanding their history. Olatunji (1984) extensively interrogates the features and structures of Yoruba proverbs. He identifies varieties of structures including partial, parallel and full proverbs. Ojo and Olaiya (2022) also identify four patterns of proverbs in Leke Adeyemi's *Ìṣẹ̀lú Onírẹ̀ké Ògẹ̀*. They identified partial, full., hybrid and modern proverbs in Yoruba but are of the opinion that the setting, characterization and general tone of the work do not align with the proverbs used by the characters. Hence, the compromise in the character depiction in role reflection.

Sheba (2006) advocates that proverbs in Yoruba should not be literally translated. This is true to a great extent because most proverbs in Yoruba

have deeper meaning than the meaning of the words. Besides, some of their aesthetic coloration escape into the ecosystem of translation. This is also the case with Níyì Ọ̀ṣúndáre but he applies native intelligence alongside the principle of equivalence to transfer ideas in English to Yoruba and vice-versa. Proverbs are the key (*kókóró*) with which we unlock the difficult issues. (Ọ̀jọ́ and Ọ̀yágbénjọ́, 2024).

The Yoruba proverb (*òwe*) is a cornerstone of the culture's rich oral tradition. They are more than mere sayings because they act as a repository of cultural philosophy, history, and moral codes as well as serve as a primary tool for rhetorical skill and wisdom in discourse. The Yoruba believe that "the proverb is the horse of speech" (*'òwe lẹ́ṣin ọ̀rọ̀*), highlighting its function in carrying a speaker's message far and deep (Oluwadoro et al., 2025). Proverbs are not immutable, they have times and contexts of application, and in the Yorùbá worldview, it is a skillful verbal artist who knows the context of their use, has the ability of the appropriate time and context for its use. This is why the wrong use or application of proverbs is called "*àṣipà òwe*". This notion corroborates Ojo's (2016) description of proverbs as witty expressions that are based on practicable life experiences. A person who is able to detect "*àṣipà òwe*" and comes up with a counter proverb is also deserving of respect in the community. A great deal of importance is attached to the spoken word and speech generally, believing that it carries great psychic strength. The Yorùbá approach speech with deliberate care, taking great pains to avoid careless, casual or thoughtless statements, whose damage might outlast lifetimes. The proverb *Ẹ̀yin lohùn bó bá balẹ̀, fífọ́ ní ń fọ́* 'Speech is an egg, if it drops on the floor, it shatters', bears witness to this concern.

Yoruba proverbs are deeply rooted in metaphorical language as it draws analogies from nature, daily life, and mythology. Their intended meanings are often not literal, requiring a profound understanding of the cultural context for correct interpretation (Olubode-Sawe, 2009). Using a proverb is an art which lies in its application, but it takes a skilled speaker to adapt it to fit a new context (Lamidi, 2008).

The structure of Yoruba proverbs is linguistically sophisticated as they often mirror the complex grammatical features of the language itself. Scholars note that they are predominantly constructed as complex sentences, containing multiple clauses and verbs to convey multi-layered meanings (Ojo, 2015). The grammatical complexity of Yoruba proverbs allows for nuance and they often appear in negative, interrogative, or

topicalized forms, as each serves a distinct rhetorical purpose (Ehineni, 2016). The argument is that the structure is also designed to create a sense of balance and rhythm, which makes them highly memorable and effective in conversation.

Common categories, as documented by Akanbi (2020), include:

Ideational proverbs which are abstract statements that express universal truths or general principles about life;

Aphoristic proverbs which are concise sayings that offer a sharp, insightful observation about human nature or a specific situation;

Warning proverbs which are used to caution against potential dangers or undesirable behaviors;

Satirical proverbs which employ humor and irony to critique or mock social norms and individual faults.

Proverbs are so significant, that they permeate all aspects of human life, verbal texts, enhancing the effectiveness of those texts, and the areas of human life to which they are applied. Proverbs help to mirror the culture of both the English and Yorùbá people. They afford members of the society a means of psychological and emotional release, through the venting of prohibited expressions. Proverbs also aid in the education and socialisation of the people as well as the maintenance of conformity to accepted patterns, and the validation of institutions, attitudes and beliefs. Kwabena Nketia, an African writer argues that the value of a proverb to us does not lie only in what it reveals of the thoughts of the past but is a model of compressed or forceful languages drawn on for its words of wisdom, by taking an interest in its verbal techniques- its selection of words, its use of comparison as a method of statement, and so on (1958). Familiarity with its techniques enables the artist to create his own proverbs. This enables him to avoid hackneyed expressions and give a certain amount of freshness to his speech. This is what he concludes that accomplished speakers or poets use not only to represent a body of short statements built up over the years, but are also used to reflect the thought and insight of the writer into problems of life, as well as a technique of verbal expression.

The proverb functions as a structure for bridging an epistemological gap between the two levels of discourse, the known and

the unknown. Proverbs perform a host of functions in utterances (Table 1). They are employed by orators to drive their points home and to achieve some purposes.

Function	Examples
Counseling	A word is enough for the wise; A rolling stone gathers no moss; No pains, no gains
Cautioning	A stubborn fly accompanies the corpse to the grave.
Challenging	Saying is one thing, doing another
Persuading	Necessity is the mother of invention
Prioritizing	He whose house is on fire does not run after a rat; First things come first; First come, first served
Encouraging	The journey of one thousand kilometers begins with a step; Tiny drops of water make a mighty ocean; Do not despise little beginnings; Every cloud has a silver lining; Slow and steady wins the race.
Threatening	Bullies are generally cowards; Barking dogs seldom bite
Admitting	A fact confessed is half addressed.

Table 1: Some Proverbs and their functions

Proverbs are known to exist in all languages with similarities in terms of their reliance on vivid images, domestic allusions and word play. They are employed in African cultures more than in European cultures. This is owing to the fact that African writers articulate African ethos that enables a compelling realization of African aesthetics. *Òsúndáre* operates within a bilingual framework, where Yorùbá cultural expressions must be conveyed in English without loss of meaning. The theory of translation equivalence by Jakobson (1959) informs this study's approach to understanding how Yorùbá proverbs maintain their essence in English.

Statement of the Problem

When a writer has to contend with two different languages to convey his message there a bound to be bidirectional translation of ideas, which lead to different strategies some which may or may not work to achieve the desired goals of the writer. This is compounded when proverbs are involved in such translations because of their cultural undertones. Proverbs are a class of conventionalized expressions whose meanings, usage and understanding are context sensitive. Yorùbá proverbs like the proverbs of many other African societies are used to code, embellish and support arguments during communication and other oratory events. They constitute a powerful rhetorical device for shaping moral consciousness and beliefs. They can be tools in the hands of a skillful language user. It therefore, becomes imperative to examine how a skillful bilingual writer like Ọ̀ṣúndáre, manipulates the Yorùbá and English languages that the movement from one language to another appears seamless when he uses proverbs, the strategies he uses and how they make him stand out. As well as interrogate the kinds of transfer that occur when the two cultures that intersect (English and Yorùbá) are not similar.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to interrogate the use of proverbs as they intersect in the essays of Níyì Ọ̀ṣúndáre in *Dialogue with My Country* while the objectives are to:

1. identify the Yorùbá proverbs used in the essays and their stylistic integration into English;
2. highlight how instances of Yorùbá-English correspondences of proverbs are used in ways that set the Ọ̀ṣúndáre apart and thereby constitute his idiosyncratic ability;
3. identify the category of ideas that are most easily transferred between Yoruba and English in the proverbs used in the essays.

Literature Review

The Role of Proverbs in African Oral Traditions

Proverbs in African cultures function as tools for persuasion, storytelling, and the transmission of cultural values. Scholars like Finnegan (1970) and Bámbóṣé (1991) emphasize that proverbs are integral to African oratory, often used in legal, political, and social discourse.

A proverb is a remnant of the ancient philosophy preserved amid many destructions on account of its brevity and fitness for use and also ... short sentences into which, as in rules, the ancients have compressed life
(Owómóyèlá, 2005, p. 1)

The philosophy and wisdom of people are embedded in proverbs. They constitute one of the most popular store-houses of ancient, indigenous and eternal truth. It presents the events, ideas or phenomena as they are in the real environment.

Adéyemí and Noah (2009) examine the educational and socio-cultural values and utilities of Yorùbá proverbs and posit that they have the potentialities to promote visual literacy by interpreting and creating traditional symbols/icons that will creatively explain their meanings in any context they are found. This is the reason why Òṣòbà (2005, p. 276) ascertains that proverbs come with maturity, logicity and brevity of ideas. It is not surprising that cultural custodians, elders, orators and conflict mediators refer to proverbs to underscore their intention and drive home the message that would have wasted time or which would have been difficult to pass (Òjó, 2015). This is in tandem with Olátúnjí's (2005) acknowledgment of the magnificent impact proverbs have in Yorùbá discourses. It appears that scholars who generally study Yoruba proverbs have the opinion that someone is not considered a competent rhetoric until they have demonstrated their dexterity in the use of proverbs to corroborate their messages while addressing the public or resolving communal conflicts.

Since literature is a replica of what society mirrors, the dexterity of proverbs in Níyì Òsúndáre buttresses his bilingual and active linguistic dexterity in both English and Yorùbá. Proverbs, according to Yorùbá cosmology, is a mark of wisdom and deep linguistic aesthetics. Amasa and Abdulrauph (2016, p.4) also note that speakers of Yorùbá beautify and portray their speech with proverbs for aesthetic and communicative reasons. They are of the opinion that when the speakers of the language try to translate or transfer Yorùbá proverbs into English or vice versa, there is a tendency for distortion of meaning, loss of contextual meaning relation, because most of the proverbs are indirectly translated.

Most of the African worldviews and observations including eternal truths, are contained in their proverbs. This is why people

consider proverbs a store-house of wisdom and native intelligence. According to Òjó (2013, p.19), “proverbs are highly regarded as repositories of a people’s collective social, religious, political and cultural wisdom”. While some speakers of the Yorùbá language adopt creativity to weave their proverbs by altering their structures, it is indisputable that an observant critic will surely figure them out from wherever they are used, just like we have in Òṣúndáre’s *Dialogue with my Country*. He employs various strategies to present Yorùbá proverbs contextually; hence, he is a very active and competent bilingual, being proficient in the Yorùbá language, his mother tongue, and English, which is Nigeria’s *lingua franca*

Proverb Usage in African Literary Style

Comparative studies on Achebe (Igbo proverbs) and Sáyíńká (Yorùbá orature) provide insights into how African writers navigate linguistic hybridity. Òṣúndáre’s approach is unique in his seamless blend of Yorùbá syntax and English semantics. Sriraman (2012, p. 37) argues that while “style” is “a general term which can refer to the way or manner anything is done ... or designed”, stylistics “examines the style of written or spoken texts” and that it “attempts to study the style or language of literary texts”.

The style in literary works pertains to the manners and strategies adopted predominantly by a specific author or artist. The manner in question does not become a style until it is used repeatedly by the said author. It is when the style occurs consistently, such as when Òṣúndáre adopts and adapts Yoruba proverbs—transferring their semantic meaning to fit into his English works, as represented in the collection of essays being studied—that one can determine that an idiosyncrasy has emerged.

Òṣobà (2024) pontificates on the linguistic competency of Òṣúndáre that culminates into his style. He makes it explicitly clear that Òṣúndáre gets his style from the hybrid of indigenous language and English. Oyagbenjo and Ojo (2024) also examine the style inherent in Tunde Kelani’s works. They observe that the style of the playwright is evident in both language use and thematic preoccupation which by extension indicate the idiosyncratic uniqueness of Tunde Kelani. Invariably, this means that the style of any artist, author or essayist can be traced to their language use to convey their intended message that resonates all through their works. Therefore, examining Òṣúndáre’s style from his strategic use of proverbs is a means of establishing the connection between every language of the world and their capacity to be

competently used to convey even meanings that have cultural connotations associated with such specific communities while shedding light on those areas that lend themselves easily to such linguistic maneuver of the language.

Theory and Methodology

This work is anchored on the Theory of Translation Equivalence and the selected proverbs in *Dialogue with my Country* are examined via this theory of Roman Jakobson (1959).

Theory of Translation Equivalence

Theory of translation equivalence examines the relationship between a source text (ST) and a target text (TT) and determines if the translated text conveys the same semantic meaning or close meaning even if the linguistic structures of the languages of the ST and the TT differ. This theory was first popularised by Jakobson in 1959. He theorized the equivalence of translation where the communication of foreign text by establishing a relationship of identity or analogy. To him, “there is no signatum without signum” (Jakobson, 1959, p. 232) and he avows that there are three kinds of translation: Intralingual (within one language), interlingual (between two languages or translation proper), inter-semiotic (between sign systems or transmutation). Among the three key kinds of translations suggested by Jakobson, interlingual is very apt to examine Ōṣúndáre’s essays as he operates between Yorùbá and English languages both which have distinct structures.

In spite of the heated argument as to whether the theory is sustainable or not in which Catford (1965) tends toward the translation of equivalence, while Snell-Hornby (1988) expresses reservations about it, Baker (1992) strikes a middle course between the pro-equivalence and the anti-equivalence stances. Those in favor of equivalence-based theories of translation define equivalence as the relationship between a source-text and a target-text that allows the TT to be deemed as a translation of the ST in the first place. The different controversy surrounding the theory after Jakobson, made the discourse on equivalence evolve from a narrow, word-for-word view to a more dynamic, function-based approach which has key principles: Formal Equivalence, Dynamic/Functional Equivalence, Equivalence in Difference.

Formal Equivalence was championed by linguists like J.C. Catford and Eugene Nida. The principle focuses on the preservation of the source text's form and content. So, preserving literal translation, replicating grammatical structures, sentence patterns, and sometimes stylistic elements are its concerns in order to allow the target reader to understand the source culture and language as it is. The Dynamic/Functional Equivalence was also proposed by Eugene Nida but the focus shifts to the "equivalent effect" on the reader. The goal here is to produce, for the reader, a target text that has the same impact and elicits the same response from the target audience as the original text did. This means the translator would often have to abandon a strict literal translation in favour of adaptation of the content to the cultural and linguistic norms of the target audience.

Equivalence in Difference which was introduced by Roman Jakobson is the most relevant for this current study. According to Jakobson (1959, p. 114), there is no full equivalence between code-units. In his description, interlingual translation involves substituting messages in one language not for separate code-units but for entire messages in some other language. He argues that interlingual translation never achieves full equivalence between code units. Instead, translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes. The translator uses various techniques to overcome linguistic differences, such as paraphrasing or using neologisms, to maintain the original message.

This theory is very germane and useful for this study because Òṣúndáre adopts the bilingual assumption put forward by Jakobson (1959). Yet, he does not adopt it wholly because the structures of the English and Yorùbá languages are not the same. So, Òṣúndáre transfers the idea using the middle course by Baker (1992) that there is hardly a total equivalence nor total departure from equivalence. The subjectivity of this theory is its weakness but it remains a veritable measurement of a writer's skills in switching between languages and being able to domesticate culturally dense ideas to their audience. Another strength of Equivalence theory is that it provides a framework for the analysis of two different languages especially when used in an overlapping manner as done by Òṣúndáre in *Dialogue with My Country*. The theory helps to corroborate the fact that there is a fundamental link among languages that makes it possible for a skillful writer to exploit resources of two languages in ways that help to convey intended messages and thereby establish a unique idiosyncratic signature.

Methodology: Selection and Analysis of Essays and Proverbs

Proverbs in the one hundred (100) essays in the collection are identified, out of which, fifty percent from each of the representative sections are randomly selected because of the size of the study. This makes a total of fifty essays, from which we identified fifty proverbs and then isolated fifteen for analysis. The corpus of proverbs from both English and Yoruba languages in *Dialogue with My Country* are isolated and listed after a close reading of the text, noting where translation techniques are used. The proverbs are categorized under the observed translation techniques and they are then analyzed. Since this study is descriptive and qualitative in nature, the instances of Yoruba-English correspondences are identified and the categories of ideas that are transferred between the two languages as well as the stylistic integration by the writer of the text and the meanings conveyed are interrogated.

***Data Analysis: Selected Proverbs used in Dialogue with My Country
Ọ̀ṣúndáre's Idiosyncratic Use of Proverbs and Their Stylistic
Integration into English***

Ọ̀ṣúndáre employs Yorùbá proverbs in distinctive ways that set him apart as a bilingual writer. His idiosyncratic use and their stylistic integration into English are through direct translation, hybridization with English, and structural adaptation (these are discussed under those that have linguistic correspondences). All these strategies, as used by Ọ̀ṣúndáre, will be analysed in this section.

Direct Translation with Explanation

Some proverbs are translated word-for-word, followed by an explanation or contextualization in English. This is in line with total translation equivalence as contained in the theory of translation equivalence of Roman Jakobson (1959) precepts in the theory of translation equivalence. Examples of such as seen in *Dialogue with My Country* are as follows:

Ajá tí yóó sọ̀nù kì í gbọ̀ fẹ̀rẹ̀ ọ̀dẹ.

(A dog destined to be lost does not heed the hunter's
whistle.)

Context: This is used in the discussion of governance and leadership, critiquing political figures who ignore public warnings and constructive criticism. This is a warning proverb going by its functional utility in the context. He uses this to admonish the politicians to be cautious of their attitudes and actions in their respective political landscape.

A kì í fì ètè sílẹ̀ pa làpàlàpà.
(One does not ignore leprosy to cure eczema.)

Context: This highlights misplaced priorities in governance, such as focusing on minor issues while neglecting major crises. The usage above is apt even if it's a direct equivalence from Yorùbá. This indicates that Òṣúndáre is a competent bilingual who easily transfers ideas directly from Yorùbá, his native language, to his second language acquired.

Bí a bá dáké, á gbọ́.
(If we keep quiet, we will hear.)

Context: This advocates for patience and careful judgment in legal and social matters. Even if there is stillness in the atmosphere, the wise know what is happening. Based on Yorùbá aphorism, if the eye is patient enough, it will see the nose that seems impossible to see. Similarly, there is a direct transfer of the idea in the example below:

Ọmọ tí a kò bá kọ, ni yóò gbé ilé tí a kọ tà.
(A child not raised well will sell the house we built.)

Context: This focuses on the long-term consequences of poor parenting and education on societal development. This is to make a case for parental responsibility to the parents and the governments at all levels, the reason they should invest in education for the sake of posterity. Failure to do that amounts to chaos, insecurity and disharmony in the society.

Ibi tí a bá fì orí rọ, ni orí ń sùn.
(Where the head rests, it sleeps.)

Context: This critiques political decision-making and its effects on governance. This is a direct transfer of Yoruba proverbs to English to corroborate the message he is making. It is an equivalence of *ibi tí a bá fì Èlémòṣọ sọ ló ń sọ* 'Wherever Èlémòṣọ is appointed to guard, he

guards'. The whole implication of the strategy explained here by Òṣúndáre is that a child acquiring their indigenous language competency can help them to be unique in their conveyance of message as a writer. Obviously, a direct transfer of ideas through proverbs from Yorùbá to English is an indication of Òṣúndáre's uniqueness. Therefore, one can surmise that the indigenous intelligence is not in vain.

Hybridization

Hybridization occurs when certain proverbs are blended with English idioms to create a unique linguistic effect. Hybridization occurs when the structures of both Yoruba proverbs are blended together to form a witty saying in a particular context. This formulation has structures of proverbs and serves the function proverbs perform in the speech. One of such hybridization from *Dialogue with My Country* is:

A guest that overstays his welcome becomes a burden.

This is a proverb that warns the guest to always watch and observe the countenance of their host. When the host becomes peevish, it is an indirect way to tell the guest that he has begun to overstay his welcome. But the way Òṣúndáre portray this one depicts his idiosyncratic uniqueness. Only people who are versatile in Yorùbá and English proverbs will know the hybrid strategy of Òṣúndáre therein.

A man who chases two rats catches none.

(Focus and Prioritization)

There is obviously a blend of Yorùbá and English ideas here. The equivalence of this in Yorùbá here is *eni tó lé eku méjì lẹ̀ẹ̀kan ọ̀so ọ́ pàdànu méjéèjì* 'He who chases two rats will catch none'. This idea from Yorùbá proverb resonates in the work done in English to show the wealth of knowledge the author has. Similarly, in the one below, there is an obvious case of hybridization of English and Yorùbá ideas that results in the proverb.

The loudest drum does not always produce the sweetest sound.

(Quality over noise)

Yorùbá people would say, *àgbá tó lómi nínú kì í pariwo* ‘The drum that contains water, does not make any noise’. The proverb above is the hybrid of this proverb and they relate in the idea they present and portray to the audience. Therefore, even though the proverb is used in English, the Yorùbá relatedness is glaring for critics to see how they originated to serve the purpose the author intended. Another example of hybridization of proverbs is:

The snail moves slowly but arrives at its destination.
(Persistence and determination)

The proverb above preaches patience and persistence as the soul of achievement. This is the same thing that is contained in the proverbs *Asárétete kan kò ní sáré kojá ilé, aringbèrè kan kò ní sùn sònà* ‘The fast runner will not run beyond his destination, as a slow runner will not sleep by the roadside’. Òṣúndáre, who knows the nitty gritty of Yorùbá proverbs and is also vibrant in the structure of the English language makes this idiosyncratic choice of this kind of hybridization to enrich his works and thereby make him stand out.

Linguistic Correspondences and Transfers

Linguistic correspondence occurs when the ideas contained in one work or one culture is transferred from one language to another. Before this takes place, the author must be very familiar with the structures of the two languages and consider the context linguistically and socially transferable. This is the case in Òṣúndáre, where the cultural and linguistic aptness of proverbs is considered while adopting proverbs to buttress his intended messages in *Dialogue with My Country*. This section explains the concept of linguistic correspondence in question in Òṣúndáre’s *Dialogue with My Country*.

Weaving Yorùbá Elements into English

Òṣúndáre skillfully maintains the semantic depth of Yorùbá proverbs while ensuring readability in English. This is evident in his ability to retain Yorùbá metaphorical richness in English translations as seen in the example below:

Ọmọ tí a kò bá kó, ní yóò gbé ilé tí a kò tà.
(A child not raised well will sell the house we built.)

Context: This highlights the impact of poor parenting and education on national development. The idea of unintentional parenting spells evil for society in the future. The future of the society is not secured when parents fail in their duty.

Orúkọ rere sàṣ ju wúrà àti fàdákà lọ.
(A good name is worth more than gold and silver.)

In the above example, the phonological and syntactic elements of the proverb are adjusted for fluency and it emphasizes moral values and the long-term benefits of integrity.

Context: The emphasis is on moral values and the long-term benefits of integrity.

Use of Proverbial Parallelism

Here, Yorùbá expressions are mirrored with English equivalents. Examples of proverbial semantic parallelism are presented in Table 2 below.

Proverbs	Translation	Semantic parallelism retained	Social context
<i>Ibi tí a bá fí orí rọ̀, ní orí ń sùn</i>	(Where the head rests, it sleeps.)	Good choice is the best	Discussing the consequences of poor political choices.
<i>Oruko rere san ju wura ati fadaka lo.</i>	(A good name is worth more than gold and silver.)	Virtues over wealth	Emphasizes moral values, personal integrity, and reputation.
<i>Gbogbo alangba lo d'anú dele, a ko mo eyi to n'inu efo</i>	.(All lizards lie flat on their bellies; we do not know which has stomach pain.)	One should always be suspicious and cautious	Used to describe hidden struggles, implying that appearances

			can be deceptive.
<i>Ti a ba fi owó otún we owó osi, wọ́n á maa dán mọ́ra.</i>	(If the right hand washes the left, they both become clean.)	Cooperation and unity	Stresses mutual support and cooperation within society
<i>Èni tó bá m'ókan d'ókan á r'ẹ̀yìn.</i>	(One who understands patience will reap the benefits later.)	Perseverance	Promotes perseverance and long-term vision.
<i>Bí a kò bá gbin, a kò le ká.</i>	(If we do not plant, we cannot harvest.)	Diligence	Advocates for diligence and hard work.

Table 2: Samples of proverbial semantic parallelism

The proverbs in Table 2 above corroborate the masterful adoption of Yorùbá proverbs by Ọ̀ṣúndáre and his ability to use them according to how they are originally used in Yorùbá. This portrays Ọ̀ṣúndáre as a dexterous bilingual who is not just speaking the languages but actively speaking them appropriately to communicate values to the immediate and global audience according to the tenets of linguistic correspondence theory. This has become his style and idiosyncrasy over the years across his texts and essays.

Categories of Easily Transferable Ideas

Some Yorùbá proverbs translate seamlessly into English because they reflect universal themes such as morality, wisdom, and perseverance because they naturally lend themselves to cross-linguistic transfer.

S/N	Yorùbá Proverbs	English Translation	Embedded Values
1.	<i>"Orúkọ rere sàń ju wúrà àti fàdákà lọ."</i>	A good name is worth more than gold and silver.	Moral Values
2.	<i>"Ibi tí a bá fi orí rọ, ní orí ń sùn."</i>	Where the head rests, it sleeps.	Social Structure
3.	<i>"Ti a ba fi owó otún</i>	If the right hand	Social

	<i>wẹ owó òsì, wọn á máa dán mọ́ra''</i>	washes the left, they both become clean	Structure
4.	<i>"Bí a bá dáké, á gbọ."</i>	If we keep quiet, we will hear.	Eternal Truth
5.	<i>"Bí a kò bá gbín, a kò le ká."</i>	If we do not plant, we cannot harvest.	Diligence and determination
6.	<i>"Ìgì kan kò le dà'gbo sè"</i>	A single tree cannot make a forest	Social Structure
7.	<i>"Ajá tí yóò sọ̀nù kì í gbọ̀ fẹ̀rẹ̀ ọ̀dẹ."</i>	A dog destined to be lost does not heed the hunter's whistle.	Obedience

Table 3: Cross-linguistically transferred proverbs

These examples further illustrate how Osundare weaves Yorùbá proverbs into English discourse while maintaining their cultural depth.

Findings

Based on this study, the findings reveal that:

1. There were 100 Yorùbá proverbs identified in *Dialogue with My Country* and they are stylistically integrated into this English text using direct translation with explanation, hybridization and adaptation.
2. Òṣúndáre uses instances of Yorùbá-English correspondences of proverbs to weave the traditional elements of Yorùbá and English proverbs into the texture of his writings to represent the current experiences of the people. This is masterfully done such that the transfers do not in any way flaunt the linguistic rules of English and they still maintain the import of their Yorùbá essence. This dexterous use of the proverbs sets him apart and thereby constitutes his idiosyncratic ability;
3. The category of ideas that are most easily transferred between Yorùbá and English in Òṣúndáre's writings are those that are related to moral value, social structures, universal experiences, diligence and determination, and leadership and governance.

Recommendation

The study recommends that children should be encouraged to acquire their native languages and intelligence, which defines their uniqueness,

just like it is evident in Òṣúndáre's work. This amplifies the voice and message and thereby makes the message more appealing to varieties of audiences.

Conclusion

Òṣúndáre's use of Yorùbá proverbs in *Dialogue with My Country* showcases his linguistic dexterity and deep cultural awareness. His seamless integration of these proverbs into English highlights the possibilities of bilingual creativity, reinforcing the idea that when two languages share conceptual frameworks, linguistic transfer is both natural and enriching. This study underscored the importance of proverbs as cultural bridges in African literature. Findings of the research corroborated the notion that when two languages have linguistic correspondences, transfer is easy and does not affect the meaning conveyed. Òṣúndáre uses his style to deepen and amplify the listener's perception of the realities of life, or the situation he is discussing. This also suggests that there are shared cultural notions (as is the case with verbs) that connect world languages. A competent user's capacity allows them to convey meanings with cultural connotations, thereby shedding light on areas that easily lend themselves to such linguistic maneuver.

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Appendix

List of 50 Yoruba Proverbs selected from *Dialogue with My Country*

Below is a list of Yoruba proverbs identified from *Dialogue with My Country*, along with the section of the essay from which each is taken:

1. "A river that forgets its source will dry up." (Identity and Change)
2. "When the drum of justice beats, even the deaf will dance." (The Echo of Justice)
3. "A house without elders is a market of confusion." (Wisdom and Governance)
4. "A thief's shadow is always in flight." (The Guilty Mind)
5. "The belly of the nation is bloated with stolen wealth." (The Looting Culture)
6. "Even the blind see when the pocket is full." (Greed and Compromise)
7. "A throne built on lies will collapse in truth." (The Seat of Corruption)
8. "The tongue of the nation is tied with threads of deceit." (The Language of Power)
9. "A nation that eats its young starves its future." (Sacrifices and Leadership)
10. "A broken ladder can still lead to the rooftop if the climber is careful." (Resilience in the Storm)
11. "A child who refuses to listen will sleep in ruins." (The Consequences of Disobedience)
12. "The tortoise may be slow, but it never forgets the path home." (Patience and Cunning)
13. "A pot that boils without fire has a hidden flame." (Secrets and Betrayal)
14. "The elephant's footprint is never covered by dust." (Influence and Power)
15. "A farm without a fence invites the goat." (Leadership and Responsibility)
16. "When the crocodile smiles, the fish should beware." (Deception and Strategy)

17. "He who fetches ant-infested firewood invites the lizard." (Actions and Consequences)
18. "A man who refuses to sweat in the sun will shiver in the rain." (Diligence and Hard Work)
19. "The bird that flies too high risks losing sight of the nest." (Hubris and Overambition)
20. "The monkey's dance is controlled by the drummer's beat." (Power and Influence)
21. "The tongue has no bone, yet it breaks the strongest walls." (Speech and Its Consequences)
22. "When rain falls on the leopard, it does not wash away its spots." (Identity and Consistency)
23. "The lizard nods, not because it agrees, but because it understands." (Wisdom and Subtlety)
24. "A single tree cannot make a forest." (Unity and Cooperation)
25. "A lazy man's farm is overgrown with weeds." (The Price of Indolence)
26. "He who rides on the back of a tiger will end up in its belly." (Risk and Foolish Choices)
27. "A drum sounds loudest when it is empty." (Boastfulness and Superficiality)
28. "The palm wine tapper does not reveal the secrets of the tree." (Confidentiality and Trust)
29. "A road without obstacles leads nowhere." (Struggles and Growth)
30. "A man who does not know where the rain began to beat him will not know where it stopped." (Understanding the Root of Problems)
31. "The fish that opens its mouth too wide will find the hook." (Greed and Its Consequences)
32. "A king's greatness is measured by the prosperity of his people." (Leadership and Accountability)
33. "A dog that barks too much will eventually lose its voice." (Excessive Complaints and Ineffectiveness)
34. "The goat that roams alone is an easy prey for the leopard." (Vulnerability and Protection)
35. "A tree with deep roots fears no storm." (Stability and Resilience)
36. "The river that is too proud to bend will dry up in the sun." (Pride and Flexibility)
37. "The tortoise says: slow and steady wins the race." (Patience and Strategy)

- 38."A basket cannot carry water unless it is lined with wisdom."
(Knowledge and Resourcefulness)
- 39."The hunter who does not respect the forest will one day be hunted."
(Respect for Nature and Karma)
- 40."The snake that sleeps in the path will be trampled by travelers."
(Laziness and Complacency)
- 41."A debtor's handshake is never firm." (The Weight of Debt and Obligation)
- 42."The eye that cries today sees clearer tomorrow." (Pain and Growth)
- 43."The firewood of yesterday cannot cook today's food." (The Importance of Adaptability)
- 44."A guest that overstays his welcome becomes a burden." (Knowing When to Leave)
- 45."A man who chases two rats catches none." (Focus and Prioritization)
- 46."The shadow of a snake cannot bite, but it causes fear." (Perception and Reality)
- 47."A child who dances to the tune of flattery will stumble into a pit."
(False Praise and Deception)
- 48."The hand that feeds the crocodile must never forget its teeth." (Trust and Caution)
- 49."The loudest drum does not always produce the sweetest sound."
(Quality Over Noise)
- 50."The snail moves slowly but arrives at its destination." (Persistence and Determination)