

**A CROSS-CULTURAL TRANSLATION OF PROVERBS IN CHINUA  
ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART* FROM ENGLISH INTO EKEGUSII'S  
*BINTO MBISEBEREREKANI***

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of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Arts in Applied  
Linguistics of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology**

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## DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work prepared with no other than the indicated sources and support and has not been presented elsewhere for a degree or any other award.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

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## CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certify that they have read and hereby recommend for acceptance by Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology a thesis titled “**A Cross-cultural translation of proverbs in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* from English into Ekegusii’s *Binto Mbisebererekani*”.**

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## **DEDICATION**

To my beloved parents, Christopher and Hellen, whose love, support and wisdom have always been my guiding light. I have learned from them not only the value of education but also the importance of embracing and preserving our cultural heritage especially through the Ekegusii language. I also extend this dedication to all those who treasure cultural identity.

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May the good Lord always bless you.

## ABSTRACT

Proverbs play a crucial role in the cultural expression of a community's wisdom, beliefs and worldview through various forms of figurative language. Due to this cultural significance, the translation of proverbs requires careful consideration to preserve meaning across languages. This study examined the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii in *Binto Mbisebererekani* in terms of cultural equivalence and non-equivalence. The study was guided by the following three objectives, to: analyse aspects of cultural equivalence and non-equivalence in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii; examine the cultural functionality of translated proverbs from *Things Fall Apart* within the context of Ekegusii language; and evaluate how Skopos theory accounts for translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii. The study utilised a descriptive research design and a qualitative approach. Primary data were gathered through five semi-structured interviews and four focus-group discussions involving 30 Ekegusii native speakers. The participants were obtained through snowball sampling. Secondary data was collected from *Things Fall Apart* as the source text and *Binto Mbisebererekani* as the target text. A census approach was adopted whereby all the 28 proverbs were studied. The data were then analysed qualitatively while looking at the translation strategies for proverbs in both texts using Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model for translating cultural expressions. Vermeer's (1978) Skopos theory was used to evaluate the effectiveness of various translation strategies in preserving cultural functionality and ensuring communicative equivalence. The theory posits that the purpose of the translation (skopos) in the target language and culture dictates the translation strategy applied. Consequently, this ensures that the target text functions effectively for its readers in the target culture's context. The findings revealed that oblique strategies promoted cultural equivalence by preserving Igbo proverb meanings in Ekegusii, while direct strategies led to cultural non-equivalence by retaining surface forms while losing contextual meaning. This study foregrounds the role of African languages as epistemic resources for the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AI –</b>	Artificial Intelligence
<b>FGD –</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>MT –</b>	Machine Translation
<b>NACOSTI –</b>	National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation
<b>SC–</b>	Source Culture
<b>ST–</b>	Source Text
<b>TA–</b>	Target Audience
<b>TC–</b>	Target Culture
<b>TL-</b>	Target Language
<b>TR–</b>	Target reader
<b>TT–</b>	Target Text

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

<b>Cross-cultural translation:</b>	A process of rendering proverbs from English (representing Igbo culture) into Ekegusii (Gusii culture).
<b>Cultural functionality:</b>	The role a proverb plays in shaping attitudes, norms or behaviour within a speech community.
<b>Culture specific items:</b>	Words or expressions in Igbo culture that do not have direct equivalents in Ekegusii language and culture.
<b>Equivalence:</b>	How proverbs in <i>Things Fall Apart</i> have been translated into Ekegusii variants in <i>Binto Mbisebererekani</i> to ensure relevance for Ekegusii readers.
<b>Non-equivalence:</b>	The absence of a direct linguistic or cultural counterpart in the target language for a source text item, resulting in a translated proverb that does not fully achieve the intended rhetorical force or cultural functionality in the Ekegusii context.
<b>Proverb:</b>	A concise, culturally grounded and metaphorical expression used to convey traditional wisdom, social norms or moral values.
<b>Relevant:</b>	That which readers of <i>Binto Mbisebererekani</i> are able to relate to in the text.
<b>Source language:</b>	Refers to English, the language in which <i>Things Fall Apart</i> was originally written.
<b>Source text:</b>	The original text before translation, <i>Things Fall Apart</i> .

- Target language:** Ekegusii, the language in which the translated version is written in.
- Target readers:** Readers of the translated text, *Binto Mbisebererekani*.
- Target text:** The translated text, *Binto Mbisebererekani*.

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

The present study examined cultural equivalence and non-equivalence in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii. It interrogated how the strategies employed by the translator determined cultural equivalence or non-equivalence. Grounded in Vermeer's (1978) Skopos theory, the research investigated whether the translated proverbs retained their cultural functionality within the Ekegusii linguistic and socio-cultural environment. Consequently, this study examined how the translator negotiated between maintaining fidelity to the source text and ensuring cultural relevance in the Ekegusii context.

This chapter contains the background to the study, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, scope and delimitations, significance and justification of the study. The background section contextualises the study within the existing literature and theory while the problem statement identifies the specific issue to be addressed. The objectives outline the goals of the research, while the research questions guide the investigation. Furthermore, the scope and delimitations section define the boundaries of the study whereas the justification section underscores the necessity of the present study. The final part of this chapter explains the contributions of this study to the field of linguistics and the potential impact to studies in translation.

#### 1.2 Background to the Study

Translation of proverbs across different languages and cultures is a difficult undertaking due to their deep cultural and social nature of encapsulating collective wisdom and societal values (Fahmi,2016).

Proverbs, therefore, serve as key vehicles of cultural identity and continuity. According to Mieder (2004:3) a proverb refers to “a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorisable form and which is handed down from generation to generation”. Accordingly, proverbs use language in a non-literal way to convey meaning beyond the explicit content of the words used and are integral cultural resources that carry the weight of oral traditions that reflect the unique values of the communities from which they originate (Finnegan, 2012; Mieder, 2004). Consequently, when proverbs are used in literary texts, they do not merely embellish the narrative; they also contribute to the interpretation of the cultural setting that the text is set in (Mieder, 2004).

Studies show that an effective translation requires both linguistic fidelity and cultural sensitivity if it is to maintain the impact of the original text while remaining accessible and relevant to the target audience (Nida & Taber (1982). As such, rendering proverbs into another language bridges the gap between the source and target language cultures through adaptations that may preserve their functions in the target culture (Nida, 1964). However, Baker (2011) argues that the process is not without remarkable problems, owing to the cultural specificity of the imagery and context within which each proverb becomes meaningful. This occasions non-equivalence, a phenomenon defined as “the absence of a direct linguistic or cultural counterpart in the target language” (Baker, 2011:20).

Although scholars argue that the linguistic and cultural gaps among languages create the possibility of non-equivalence in translation, there are instances when a direct target culture linguistic substitute for a phenomenon in the source language and culture is available, necessitating equivalence strategies (Mudogo, 2018; Aulia, 2012). Thus, equivalence ensures that the meaning, message and style of the source text are

accurately conveyed in the target language (Aulia, 2012). Similarly, Larson (1984) emphasised on the need for lexical equivalence, stating that translators must find appropriate equivalents for words in the target language while considering their conceptual meaning. The concepts of equivalence and non-equivalence are, therefore, central to the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii. This applies both in cases where a word-for-word translation may result in a loss of meaning or cultural functionality in the target language and in instances where it can produce an effective translation.

The Sapir wolf hypothesis emphasises on the influence of culture on a language. Notably, Sapir (1929) stated that culture influences how the audience of the individual language view their world by providing them with the lexical choices, grammar and structure of language. Thus,

No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached. (Sapir, 1929, in Mandelbaum ed. 1949:162).

The proverbs used in *Things Fall Apart* are expressed in English but they encapsulate the Igbo worldview, social norms and cultural logic. However, when rendered into Ekegusii, a language grounded in the distinct Gusii cultural context, the proverbs inevitably undergo shifts in meaning and social reality. The divergence in traditional values, modes of expression and worldviews between the Igbo and Gusii peoples means that cultural equivalence may not be fully achieved. The translation, therefore, requires not only linguistic accuracy but also a sensitive cross-cultural reinterpretation that acknowledges the distinct identities and worldviews of the two communities.

Boase-Beier (2006) posits that literary approaches to style and translation mainly depend on the interaction of stylistic universals and stylistic characteristics that are particular to a language and culture. This means that despite stylistics being universal, its elements such as proverbs can only be functional and understood in the context of their specific cultures and languages.

Therefore, the aspect of specificity makes translating proverbs across cultures both difficult and susceptible to meaning loss in their target languages. For this reason, proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* may lack an equivalent expression in the Ekegusii version if certain ways of life in the Igbo culture do not parallel the Gusii ones, and this may cause mistranslation. It is on such basis that Mudogo (2018) asserted that no matter how competent a translator may be, the translation might lose a certain degree of meaning relative to the original text.

### **1.2.1 Gusii and Igbo Cultural Orientation**

The worldviews of the Igbo and Gusii people are largely reflected through their distinct agricultural and cultural practices. This is shaped by the ecological conditions and economic activities of their respective regions. Among the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria, the kola nut (*Cola acuminata*) and yam (*Dioscorea spp.*) are not merely food crops but powerful cultural symbols representing life, fertility and social unity ((Okoloye & Enemu, 2018; Unya, 2021). The kola nut, for instance, is deeply embedded in rituals of hospitality and reconciliation, hence the popular saying, ‘He who brings kola brings life’ (Ogbalu, 2019). Yams, regarded as the ‘king of crops’ occupy a central place in the Igbo worldview, symbolising wealth and masculinity (Uchendu, 1965).

In contrast, the Ekegusii of western Kenya inhabit a high-rainfall, densely populated region where crops such as bananas, maize and tea dominate production (Matogo et al., 2023). These ecological and economic conditions have fostered a worldview centered on communal labour, food security and interdependence with the land. Consequently, while the Igbo worldview is ritualised around exchange and prosperity tied to symbolic crops, the Ekegusii worldview emphasises practical sustenance and social cohesion grounded in subsistence and cash-crop farming.

Early structuralist perspectives conceptualised translation primarily as a process of linguistic substitution, emphasising formal correspondence between source and target languages (Catford, 1965). However, subsequent scholarship recognised that translation extends beyond mere linguistic equivalence, encompassing complex cultural, stylistic and pragmatic considerations. Within this paradigm shift, Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) translation model marked a seminal contribution to translation studies. Their model systematically categorized translation strategies into direct (literal) and oblique (free) procedures, thereby offering an analytical framework for understanding how translators navigate structural and cultural divergences between languages.

The model has since been regarded as foundational to modern translation theory, as it bridges the gap between linguistic and functionalist approaches and provides a methodological basis for subsequent analytical frameworks (Munday, 2016; Baker, 2011). Given that proverbs in both Ekegusii and Igbo languages are deeply rooted in indigenous cosmologies and lived experiences, literal translation alone may fail to convey their intended meanings. The distinction between direct and oblique translation procedures in the model enables translators to select strategies that preserve both semantic content and cultural resonance.

### 1.2.2 Uniqueness of the Source Text

The source text in the present study is Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, which was first published in 1958. According to Sangeetha (2023), it stands out as the best African novel known for portrayal of pre-colonial African life and the impact of European colonization on the indigenous cultures. Achebe has stylistically used proverbs to convey wisdom and community ethics native to the Igbo society (Gogoi, 2017). Therefore, to achieve culturally meaningful renditions of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii, the translator must navigate cultural and linguistic differences to ensure relevance for the target audience.

Skopos theory by Vermeer (1978) provides a framework that can be used to evaluate the suitability of the Ekegusii proverb versions in their new environment. Skopos theory posits that the choice of the translation strategy is pegged on the purpose of the translation and its intended function in the target language and culture (Vermeer, 1978). According to Nord (2018), Skopos theory is applicable to literary texts where multiple layers of meaning such as linguistic, cultural and aesthetic must be interpreted. Igbo proverbs, therefore, can be adapted to fit Ekegusii expressions that convey similar wisdom and societal values allowing the translation to serve the purpose of making Igbo culture accessible and meaningful to the Ekegusii-speaking audience.

According to Library of Congress (2008), *Things Fall Apart* has been translated into more than fifty languages across the world. Consequently, these translations have attracted significant scholarly attention, including studies specifically examining proverbs. For instance, Yong and Nwosu (2016) investigated the difficulties of translating culturally rich texts while focusing on Michel Ligny's translation of Igbo proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into French. However, the present study examined cultural equivalence and non-equivalence in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall*

*Apart* into Ekegusii in *Binto Mbisebererekani* and examined their cultural functionality within the Ekegusii language context. The analysis was guided by Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model of translation.

Other studies on the translation of proverbs have highlighted the cultural and linguistic complexities involved in transferring proverbial meaning across languages. For instance, Hmaidan (2024) examined how Jordanian university students translated English proverbs into Arabic, revealing a preference for proverbs of similar meaning but different form, with paraphrase being the least used strategy. Nevertheless, Mahmood and Jamal (2022) emphasised the difficulties of maintaining fidelity in English–Arabic proverb translation due to cultural mismatches.

Belkhir (2022) similarly investigated metaphoric proverbs among Algerian EFL learners and observed that familiarity with a proverb influenced whether students used equivalence, literal translation or paraphrase. Most recently, Wang et al. (2025) explored proverb translation in the context of neural machine translation and large language models, arguing that while artificial intelligence systems perform well, standard evaluation metrics remain inadequate because they fail to capture cultural dimensions.

Despite the foregoing contributions, most existing scholarship has concentrated on English–Arabic, English–European or machine-assisted translations in pedagogical or experimental settings. Very little attention has been given to the translation of literary texts where proverbs are embedded in English but carry the cultural weight of African oral traditions. This is precisely the case in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, where proverbs, though expressed in English, retain their Igbo cultural essence. The present study addressed the need to examine how Achebe's proverbs are rendered into

Ekegusii, an African language with its own rich proverbial tradition. In doing so, the study went beyond previous research by highlighting the dynamics of re-translating culturally embedded English proverbs into Ekegusii, thereby contributing to fidelity, cultural equivalence and the preservation of oral heritage in literary translation.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

*Things Fall Apart* has been translated into over fifty languages, including Ekegusii, since its first publication in 1958. Such a process inevitably involved translating the novel's proverbs, which serve as an essential stylistic and cultural element. However, linguistic and cultural differences between English and Ekegusii are profound, as the two languages belong to distinct language families, Indo-European and Niger-Congo, respectively. The differences pose significant challenges in achieving accurate and culturally functional translations.

Given that proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* rely heavily on figurative language deeply rooted in the Igbo culture and filtered through the English colonial language, their direct equivalents may not always exist in the Ekegusii language and Gusii culture. The translator must therefore navigate instances of non-equivalence by applying appropriate strategies to preserve meaning and cultural functionality within the Ekegusii context. Despite the growing body of translation studies in Africa, there remains a paucity of research on intra-African literary translation, particularly on the translation of proverbs between African languages. This phenomenon underscores the need to examine how African translators negotiate cultural and linguistic boundaries within the continent. The present study, therefore, focused on *Binto Mbisebererekani*, the first literary translation of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* into a Kenyan Bantu language. The study sought to determine the strategies employed in the Ekegusii translation of *Things Fall Apart* to preserve the cultural functionality of its proverbs.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

- i. To analyse aspects of cultural equivalence and non-equivalence in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii.
- ii. To examine the cultural functionality of translated proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* within the context of Ekegusii.
- iii. To evaluate how Skopos theory accounts for translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

- i. How does cultural equivalence and non-equivalence manifest in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii?
- ii. To what extent do translated proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* retain or lose their cultural functionality in the Ekegusii language context?
- iii. How does Skopos theory account for the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii?

#### **1.6 Scope and Delimitations of the Study**

The study focused on examining how the proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* were rendered to their Ekegusii versions in *Binto Mbisebererekani*. It analysed aspects of cultural equivalence and non-equivalence by looking at the strategies applied to make the renditions accessible, culturally functional and meaningful to the Ekegusii audience. The study utilised Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model for translation of cultural expressions for analysing the translation strategies used to achieve equivalence and non-equivalence. The study was guided by Skopos theory, a functional approach that assesses the conformity of the translation strategies employed with the purpose and function of the translation.

*Things Fall Apart* is rich in cultural elements such as: folktales, myths, idioms, metaphors and proverbs, all shaping the cultural setting of the novel (Gogoi, 2017). However, its extensive use of proverbs over other cultural elements to depict Igbo culture makes them an ideal source for studying cross-cultural translation (Emodi, 2022; Obiechina, 1975). Consequently, the present study was confined to proverbs only. Focusing solely on proverbs provided a well-defined and manageable scope that allowed the researcher to conduct an in-depth exploration of preservation or loss of their cultural functionality in translation.

### **1.7 Justification of the Study**

The study is primarily justified by its contribution to African translation studies, specifically by moving the debate beyond Eurocentric and limited language-pair analyses (Kashgary, 2011; Aldhahi & Alshehri, 2019). While these works emphasise the lack of direct counterparts, they rarely interrogate how such gaps affect meaning transfer in African literary contexts with distinct oral traditions. For instance, Lubis's (2018) demonstrates how Indonesian–English proverbs resist equivalence. However, the study's findings cannot be assumed to apply to African languages, which carry distinct oral traditions and culture-specific epistemologies. This study is justified by situating the question of non-equivalence within African translation studies, specifically through the English–Ekegusii pairing. Unlike Indonesian–English translation, where cultural asymmetries arise between global and local contexts, English–Ekegusii translation foregrounds the postcolonial tension between a dominant colonial language and an indigenous African language.

Ngũgĩ (1986) argues that language is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture; therefore, the dominance of colonial languages represents a form of continued mental subjugation. Translating from English into Ekegusii can thus be understood as

an act of linguistic and cultural reclamation by restoring value and expressive power to African languages. Similarly, Bassnett (2002) notes that postcolonial translation studies interrogate how power relations are inscribed in language transfer, highlighting the translator's role in negotiating cultural authority and identity.

The present study is especially timely because African languages are undergoing intensified pressures of marginalisation in education, media and literature (UNESCO, 2023). Investigating how proverbs are translated in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii offers a critical intervention into ongoing debates about linguistic decolonisation and cultural preservation.

The study's focus on cultural equivalence and the retention of proverbial functionality interrogates the implications of translation choices for meaning-making, identity and heritage transmission in African contexts.

### **1.8 Significance of the Study**

This study contributes to literary translation studies by shedding more light on the constraints of translating proverbs from one African culture to another in distinct languages. Since proverbs are carriers of culture, they reflect the worldview, ethics and wisdom of a particular community. Analysing the strategies used to achieve cultural equivalence is therefore very essential. The analysis will enhance further understanding of how proverbs can be adapted to retain their cultural functionality in the target languages.

It will benefit translators of African literary texts, curriculum developers creating bilingual materials for Kenyan schools and scholars of African oral literature by providing insights into effective cross-cultural translation and the preservation of indigenous expression. The findings of this study inform translation practices that

prioritise the preservation of cultural and aesthetic integrity of African proverbs when translated across languages. This ultimately improves the accessibility of African literature and promote cross-cultural understanding.

### **1.9 Chapter Summary**

The chapter provided a general background that contextualise the problems experienced in translating culturally rich proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii. It laid a basis for assessing whether the translated proverbs preserved or lost their cultural functionality, and whether they ensure that their intended meaning resonates with Ekegusii-speaking readers. The chapter sets the stage for an exploration of how translation can bridge cultural gaps and ensure that the proverbs meanings remain authentic and accessible within the Ekegusii language context. The next chapter will discuss literature review and the theoretical framework that guides the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive literature review on cultural equivalence and non-equivalence in translation, the Ekegusii linguistic and cultural context, the cultural functionality of proverbs and the challenges of cross-cultural translation. A critical review of similar studies is done while discussing similarities and differences between such studies and the present study. The final section of the chapter discusses the theoretical framework, which guided the analysis of translation strategies to establish whether the cultural functionality of the proverbs is retained or lost in Ekegusii language and culture.

#### 2.2 Cultural Equivalence in Translation

Equivalence is the fundamental principle in translation that ensures the meaning, style and function of a source text are accurately conveyed in the target text (Baker, 2011). Therefore, the message should be transferred to the target language with the highest accuracy possible through application of the appropriate strategies. It is in this light that Jakobson (1959;2012) and Panou (2013) argue that successful translation should maintain a level of sameness between languages. However, attaining equivalence in the translation of proverbs is complex mainly because proverbs are embedded in cultural and linguistic contexts of their source languages (Berestean, 2020). In order to successfully translate proverbs, translators must unpack their cultural meanings rather than just linguistic structures (Tymoczko, 2007). Jakobson (2012:232) asserts that “there is no signatum without signum”. This underscores the argument that

meaning exists only through linguistic signs, making it essential for translators to find the closest possible match in the TT.

Equivalence can take various forms. Catford (1965) suggests linguistic equivalence in cases where direct word-to-word translation is possible. On the other hand, Nida (1964) proposes formal and dynamic equivalence. According to him, formal equivalence aims to preserve the structure and wording of the original text while dynamic equivalence focuses on conveying the same impact in the target language. Khair et al. (2024) argue that functional equivalence is the most effective strategy for translating culture-specific expressions. Consequently, this approach preserves the original meaning while adapting the translation to suit the target audience. They emphasise that a reliance on formal equivalence often results in semantic miscues in cases where direct word-for-word translations distort the intended message. The current study sought to find out how cultural equivalence was manifested in the translation of the proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii in order to preserve the cultural functionality of the proverbs within Ekegusii linguistic context.

Another related study by Alshammari (2015) examined Nida's translation theory in rendering Arabic proverbs into English using a comparative analysis approach. The study evaluated both formal and dynamic equivalence strategies on 20 Arabic proverbs. The findings indicated that while formal equivalence preserved linguistic accuracy, it often resulted in misinterpretation. In most cases, this approach led to a loss of cultural and religious meanings. On the other hand, dynamic equivalence enhanced communication and readability but sacrificed cultural and religious subtleties. However, a key challenge of this study is the inevitable loss of cultural and religious significance of the proverbs in the target language. In the present study, the researcher utilised Skopos theory to address the need to emphasise the translator's

purpose and strategy in preserving these cultural elements in *Things Fall Apart* for Ekegusii audience.

Newmark (1988) distinguished between communicative and semantic equivalence. He argued that while communicative equivalence prioritises naturalness in the target language, semantic equivalence preserves the cultural elements of the original text. This equivalence can occur at different levels; word, phrase and discourse (Baker, 2011). Hasyim et al. (2020) examined semiotic equivalence based on Saussure's theory. They argue that translation involves accurately transferring the relationship between signifier (word form) and signified (concept) into the target language. The findings reveal that equivalence occurs when both source and target texts share the same conceptual meaning. The study concluded that translation is not just linguistic transfer but also requires cultural and cognitive adjustments. The study relies on semiotic theory, hence focusing on linguistic structures rather than the purpose of translation. The present study applies Skopos theory to address this gap by shifting the focus from linguistic equivalence to cultural equivalence. It emphasises the functionality of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* when translated into Ekegusii.

Samovar et al. (2015) argue that proverbs can have direct equivalents across languages due to presence of shared human experiences. They illustrate this with the English proverb 'A penny saved is a penny earned', whose equivalent version in German translates to 'One who does not honour the penny is not worthy of the dollar', and an Indonesian equivalent, *Hemat pangkal kaya* 'Being thrifty is the source of wealth'. Hence, this direct comparison suggests that universal values can result in conceptual equivalence. Lubis (2018) supports this by comparing Indonesian and English proverbs. The comparison indicates that while some proverbs share meaning and structure, others differ in lexical choice. This necessitates application of adaptation.

For instance, the English proverb ‘It is no use crying over spilled milk’ finds an equivalent in the Indonesian *Nasi sudah menjadi bubur* ‘Rice has turned into porridge’.

Both versions express the idea that past mistakes cannot be undone. However, not all proverbs have direct equivalents in other languages and cultures. Translators must therefore either modify the expression or find a functionally similar alternative (Lubis, 2018). To fill this gap, the present study analyses how cultural equivalence has been attained in the cultural translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii.

Rusieshvili-Cartledge and Dolidze (2017) proposed a pragma-semantic model for translation of proverbs. They argued that proverb equivalence should be assessed across three interdependent layers: metaphorical form, general meaning and cultural background knowledge. Their study found that only 30.3% of the proverbs that were analysed exhibited full equivalence across languages. This underscores the cultural specificity embedded in proverbial expressions. Fahmi (2016) argues that although some proverbs have universal themes, their specific linguistic and cultural references often require localisation rather than direct translation. This underscores the socio-semiotic aspect of proverbs and their environment specific nature. The present study analysed the cultural equivalence of the proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* with their counterparts in *Binto Mbisebererekani*. The analysis was made using Vinay and Darbelnet’s (1995) model for translating cultural expressions.

Nyakundi (2018) analysed the translation of figurative expressions and idioms in Ekegusii to determine the extent of equivalence achieved. The study revealed that functional and dynamic equivalence strategies were most effective in preserving the cultural meanings of Ekegusii idioms. Literal translation often failed to communicate the intended emotion and tone. Nevertheless, the weakness in Nyakundi (2018) was

its small sample size and lack of triangulation, as it relied mainly on text analysis without incorporating audience's perspectives to validate interpretive findings.

The present study benefitted from Nyakundi (2018) by adopting a broader corpus of proverbs drawn from diverse contexts to enhance representativeness. Similarly, Soi (2015) conducted a stylistic and pragmatic study of Kipsigis proverbs to explore their meanings and translatability. Soi (ibid) found that the cultural context of the Kipsigis community heavily influences the meaning of proverbs, making literal translation into English insufficient to preserve subtleties. It underscored the importance of pragmatic equivalence, where meaning is conveyed through context rather than form. The limitation of this research was its failure to employ a clear translation model. To fill this gap, the present study adopted Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) translation model for more reliable findings.

Ahtif and Gandhi (2022) investigated the similarities, differences and challenges in the translation of Arabic and English proverbs. They found out that in both languages, proverbs act as linguistic and cultural tools that reflect societal values, wisdom and moral lessons. They also discovered that the differences arise because Arabic proverbs are shaped by Islamic teachings and Bedouin traditions. In contrast, English proverbs are influenced by Greek, Roman and Christian heritage. The study has weakness in terms of reliance on secondary sources and bias in the selection of the proverbs for analysis. The present study sampled proverbs for analysis of cultural equivalence directly from the primary texts: *Things Fall Apart* and *Binto Mbisebererekani* to enhance validity and reliability of the findings.

Jepri (2023) examined the cultural equivalence in translation of Batakese, Indonesian and English proverbs in reflecting cultural values, beliefs and worldviews. The study utilises cultural equivalence theory to find proverb translations that maintain similar meanings and cultural significance. The study finds that Batakese, Indonesian and English proverbs share common cultural values despite linguistic differences.

However, the study analysed only 10 Batakese proverbs, which may limit the comprehensiveness of its findings. Moreover, the study does not consider how native speakers of the target language perceive the translated proverbs, yet this is crucial for evaluating their cultural impact. The present study examined all the proverbs in the ST to ensure validity of the findings. The study also applied Skopos theory's tenet of audience-oriented translation that views the renderings from the perspective of the target audience. This ensured that the functionality of the proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* were examined in the context of Ekegusii language context.

### **2.3 Aspects of Cultural Non-equivalence in Translation**

Non-equivalence occurs when a word, phrase or concept in the source language has no direct equivalent in the target language due to deep-seated cultural distinctions between the languages (Baker, 2011). Newmark (1988) observes that proverbs reflect the beliefs, customs and experiences of a specific culture and may not have an equivalent in another culture. Due to this inherent nature of proverbs, translating them by use of equivalence strategies may not yield TL versions that are culturally meaningful to the target audience. Baker (2011) states that linguistic differences between languages also contribute to non-equivalence. She further argues that variations in grammar, syntax and lexical resources can make it difficult to replicate the brevity, rhythm or wordplay that is characteristic to proverbs. These variations make it difficult to translate the proverbs verbatim.

Cammenga (2002) observes that Ekegusii language uses agglutination and compound words to express ideas in ways that are impossible to condense into a single phrase in English. Accordingly, translating proverbs in an English source text such as *Things Fall Apart* with such elements into Ekegusii is likely to pose difficulties. Baker (2011) states that semantic complexity adds yet another complication to the translation of proverbs necessitating the application of non-equivalence strategies to solve the problem.

This is because proverbs carry layered meanings that include both metaphorical and symbolic associations. These symbolic meanings may fail to match those that are available in the target language and culture.

On the other hand, Kashgary (2011) observes that non-equivalence requires use of adaptive strategies rather than a futile pursuit of perfect equivalence. Baker (2011) further argues that non-equivalence is a relative and context-dependent phenomenon requiring additions, omissions or adaptations to meet grammatical and pragmatic needs. This means that what is functional in one language may not be in another, taking creativity to fit it in the target language. However, Pym (2010) rejects the notion of perfect equivalence entirely and frames it as an assumption. Instead, he emphasises on directional strategies that acknowledge the inherent asymmetry in translation.

Saussure (1959), through his semiotic model, describes the arbitrary nature of the relationship between signifiers (forms) and signifieds (concepts). This relationship is shaped by cultural and social agreements that vary across languages. Jakobson (2012) supports Saussure's view by arguing that translation is a process of creating meaningful connections between signifiers and signifieds rather than achieving exact equivalence. Similarly, Panou (2013) notes that equivalence represents a shared

meaning between source and target texts but is limited by linguistic and cultural differences. Stepanova et al. (2018) argue that in actual practice translation extends beyond linguistic conversion and includes transcoding of social and cultural contexts which is vital for addressing non-equivalence. The present study sought to analyse how cultural non-equivalence has been navigated in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii by taking Ekegusii cultural context into consideration.

Non-equivalence arises because different societies attribute distinct symbolic meanings to animals, objects or actions used in proverbs (Larson, 1984). On translation, the meanings may lack their matches in the target culture. The functionality of such proverbs in different languages is therefore susceptible to loss. Lubis (2018:15) provides an example of the English proverb 'Time is money' and explains that the proverb reflects the English capitalist emphasis on efficiency and productivity while the Indonesian culture lacks a comparable view. The translation of such a proverb would fail to convey the intended sense since its original meaning is not readily decipherable in the target language. Consequently, non-equivalence results in loss of cultural functionality of the proverb in the new linguistic context.

Samovar et al. (2015) further argue that while shared human experiences may create some equivalent proverbs across cultures, the lexical and metaphorical construction are divergent. Lubis supports this perspective by citing the varying cultural connotations of animals. For instance, the mouse deer symbolises wisdom in Mandailing culture, but represents cunning in Malay folklore (Lubis, 2018:12). This suggests that translating proverbs featuring such animals without careful consideration may compromise their intended meaning, as cultural contexts differ. Consequently, the

cultural functionality of the proverbs fails to transfer into the target language and culture, and it is therefore lost. The present study sought to examine whether the functionality of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* is preserved or lost on translation into Ekegusii. The extent of preservation or loss was determined through assessment of how natural the translated versions resonated with the Ekegusii audience.

Dabaghi et al. (2010) studied the difficulties of translating culture-specific items while focusing on English and Persian proverbs. The study found that cultural context is essential for accurately interpreting and translating proverbs.

It also recommended non-equivalence strategies to retain their intended meanings. While the study discusses translation strategies, it does not explore how proverbs reflect indigenous worldviews beyond the English-Persian context. This prompts for another study in another language pair with distinct cultures to find out whether the findings can be generalised. On this basis, the present study sought to analyse the cultural non-equivalence of Igbo proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* in their Ekegusii translations. An observation was made on how meaning, imagery and cultural functionality of the original proverbs are preserved or altered.

Farahani and Ghasemi (2012) carried out an investigation on the translation strategies employed in the Persian adaptation of *Adventures of Pinocchio* with a focus on how idioms and proverbs were handled to maintain both their naturalness and cultural relevance for Persian-speaking readers. The study relied on frequency counts to determine the most used translation strategies. However, it lacks a deeper qualitative analysis of why specific choices were made and their effect on meaning retention. While the study identifies paraphrasing as the most frequent strategy, it does not critically assess whether this approach leads to a more natural or accurate translation.

Furthermore, the study does not evaluate how Persian readers perceive the translated idioms and proverbs. This lack of target audience evaluation limits the investigation into the most effective strategy for achieving naturalness in translation. These gaps were addressed in the present study by justifying the translator's choices using the tenets of Skopos theory. The selection of translation strategies for navigating non-equivalence were based on the function the translation serves in the target language. Moreover, the Ekegusii renderings were evaluated from the perspective of the Ekegusii audience to determine their acceptability and applicability.

Oyioka et al. (2015) examined non-equivalence in the translation of Ekegusii kinship terms into English. The study reported that Ekegusii's detailed kinship system contrasts with that of English's simpler one resulting into non-equivalence. The study used Baker's (2011) taxonomy to identify translation issues like cultural specificity and semantic complexity. The researchers proposed strategies such as paraphrasing using general terms and cultural substitution as solutions for improving translation accuracy while preserving cultural meaning. The current study focuses on proverbs and seeks to evaluate how Skopos theory accounts for their translation into Ekegusii.

Khan (2014) explored non-equivalence in the translation of English idioms and proverbs into Urdu. The findings exhibited that there is loss of meaning when literal translations are made due to cultural differences. The study recommended contextual adjustments to retain the impact and relevance of proverbs and idioms across languages. However, the study examined only idioms and proverbs with animal connotations, excluding those without. This consequently limits the application of its findings to other idioms and proverbs. Due to reliance on equivalence theory, the study does not account for the purpose-driven nature of translation. The present study sampled proverbs on various themes and analysed their equivalence and non-

equivalence with their Ekegusii renderings. This ensured that the findings were informative of a wide range of proverbs and therefore more reliable.

Itieba et al. (2023a) investigated the extent of contextual meaning loss and gain in the rendering of *Animal Farm* into Kiswahili. They found out that loss occurs when specific concepts from the SL fail to transfer to the TL due to use of omission and substitution with general terms as strategies for translation. In their analysis, they pointed out that the omission of the word “naturally” from ‘teaching and organizing the others fell naturally upon the pigs’ in the Kiswahili version alters its original connotation.

Consequently, this omission reduces the clarity of the sentence in the target language. Further, the researchers observed that cultural substitution contributes to meaning loss. They provided an example of the rendering of ‘Crown Derby dinner service’ to *sahani zenye tunu* where the cultural essence of the SL term is diluted. Conversely, gains emerge when translators creatively adapt expressions to enhance relevance such as explaining unfamiliar concepts like ‘dogcart’ through paraphrase (Itieba et al., (2023a). While Itieba (ibid) focused on the translation of words and phrases, the present study focused on proverbs. The analysis examined cultural non-equivalence by focusing on how the translator has applied strategies like adaptation and modulation to maintain the cultural functionality of translated proverbs in the TL context.

#### **2.4 Ekegusii Linguistic and Cultural Context**

Ekegusii language has two dialects: Rogooro and Maate whose main difference is distinguished in the articulation of /t/ where speakers of Maate dialect substitute it with /d/ (Onkwani, 2023). She further observes that despite this phonological diversity, Ekegusii embodies a shared cultural ethos making it a cornerstone of Gusii

sociolinguistic and cultural expression. It is an agglutinating language that relies heavily on prefixation within its noun class system to form words in a process that triggers morphophonemic changes such as vowel deletion, alternation and consonant mutation (Cammenga,2002; Onkwani, 2023). The Ekegusii linguistic and cultural context are inseparable with the traditions and oral literature of the Abagusii people.

According to Keragori (1995), Ekegusii is a vital marker of identity and cultural heritage that plays a major role in classifying the Gusii people among Bantu communities. This is because it has similar features with other languages that have been classified under the same category. Similarly, Ayioka (2014) asserts that proverbs are a central feature of Ekegusii culture and describes them as hidden ways of preserving values, identity and historical realities of Abagusii people.

This underscores their attachment to the ways of life specific to the Gusii people as passed from generation to posterity. Similarly, Atemba (2011) emphasises that Ekegusii proverbs embody shared beliefs and values that articulate unity and moral rectitude while encouraging resilience in overcoming the challenges of life. The current study sought to find out the extent to which the functionality of the translated proverbs was retained within the Ekegusii linguistic and cultural context.

Ekegusii proverbs are integral in oral traditions and embody layered meanings that combine literal and symbolic interpretations to facilitate transmission of moral guidance and communal norms across generations (Otiso, 2016). In the study on Ekegusii proverbs, Otiso (2016) finds out that proverbs construct and reinforce social structures such as gender roles where masculinity is linked to leadership and provision while femininity is associated with domestic responsibilities. For instance, a proverb like ‘A good man is the one who hides something in his fist so that when he gets home,

he brings joy to his family’ emphasises on the expected roles of men as providers. On the other hand, ‘How will a woman who roams from place to place know where the ugali has been cooked?’ critiques deviations from traditional female roles of cooking. Further, Otiso (2016) asserts that the presence of proverbs in Ekegusii borrowed from Kiswahili such as *Amatuko y’omoibi nemerongo ene* ‘A thief’s days are forty’ which is a translation of *Siku za mwizi ni arobaini* illustrates cultural contacts and adaptation between the two languages that maintains the community’s unique perspectives.

From the foregoing arguments, Ekegusii proverbs are deeply seated in the linguistic and cultural fabric of the Gusii community and effectively convey societal values through the use of metaphors. However, the current study examined whether the proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* reflect the Ekegusii cultural context where indigenous proverbs subscribe to.

The present study was guided by the tenets of Skopos theory in order to evaluate whether the renderings are both relatable and meaningful among the Ekegusii audience.

Ekegusii proverbs also capture the paradoxes of life such as unrealised expectations through expressions (Mandi, 2012). This exemplified in ‘The threatening heavy clouds do not always bring rain’ which call for resilience and preparedness at times of uncertainty. Therefore, Mandi (2012) argues that proverbs provide a cultural framework for navigating inevitabilities like death as exemplified by ‘Death has always been there’ which helps to normalise grief while encouraging continuity. The present study found out how such paradoxes are expressed in the context of Ekegusii language since English and Ekegusii are diverse in terms of cultural and linguistic subtleties. Additionally, metaphors are central to Ekegusii proverbs to create vivid

imagery that resonates with the history and lived experiences of Abagusii people. Such metaphors are drawn from human relationships and environmental elements (Nyabokeye et al., 2017). Since translations of Igbo proverbs into Ekegusii included imagery and symbolism that resonated with the Ekegusii cultural context, the present study sought to establish whether the imagery in the ST proverbs was meaningfully aligned in the Ekegusii translation to resonate with the Ekegusii audience.

Proverbs culturally preserve societal values like morality and unity, while serving as educational tools by elders to impart wisdom and historical knowledge to younger generations (Nyabokeye et al. 2017:836). They further illustrate this assertion by the proverb *Chiombe n'abana* 'Cows are children' which stresses on the value of children and livestock in sustaining lineage and cultural practices such as dowry. They also observe that some of the proverbs draw from the community's cultivation activities and pastoral lifestyle. Evidence given on this is the proverb *Omote nigo ogokumbwa kore omorere* 'A tree can only be bent when young' which expresses the importance of instilling morals early in life thereby paralleling tree farming practices in the community.

Societal values are equally invaluable within Ekegusii cultural context; hence, the present study examined how these values have been upheld in the context of the target language. The tenet of purpose of translations in Skopos theory was used to carry out the evaluation. Venuti (2017) suggests that successful cultural adaptation stretches beyond linguistic accuracy to deep resonance with the cultural sensibilities of the target audience. As such, the efficacy of the translated Igbo proverbs should be viewed from the perspective of Ekegusii readers. This means that if *Binto Mbisebererekani* is to be meaningful to Ekegusii readers, then it must be a reflection of societal values, norms and beliefs that are native to the Gusii culture. One of Skopos theory's tenets dictates

that a translation be made depending on the context of the target audience. The current study applied this tenet in examining whether the renderings of the proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* retain or lose their cultural functionality in the Ekegusii cultural context.

## **2.5 Cultural Functionality of Proverbs**

Proverbs are only meaningful to specific communities whose cultural and intellectual fabric they hold (Baker, 2011). Proverbs, therefore, function as a gallery of collective wisdom and beliefs of their respective communities. Mieder (2004: 4) defines proverbs as “short, generally known sentences or folk expressions that contain wisdom, truths, morals and traditional views in a fixed and memorable form”. This implies that proverbs express community identity through a reflection of the historical and social values in a concisely impactful manner. Ebrahimi (2020) asserts that proverbs act as cultural mirrors that embody societal attitudes and practices that preserve collective community experiences over generations. This implies that proverbs are a repertoire of the cultural obligations of a people, from which one is not expected to deviate.

Proverbs in *Things Fall Apart*, therefore, reflect the Igbo culture. To make them carriers of Ekegusii culture, their functionality ought to be matched to that of Ekegusii proverbs through careful selection of translation strategies. In the current study, the Ekegusii sociocultural context was used to examine whether the Ekegusii renderings are functional in their new forms. According to Norrick (1985) and Mieder (2004), proverbs function as vessels of culture, housing collective wisdom and traditions while fostering intergenerational continuity. Achebe (1958:4) underscores the significance of proverbs by describing them as ‘the palm-oil with which words are eaten’ a metaphor that stresses on their essential role in the Igbo society.

Said (1978) argues that by Achebe weaving proverbs into his narratives, he not only preserves and showcases the richness of Igbo oral traditions, but also challenges the simplistic Eurocentric depictions of African cultures. This illustrates the role of proverbs that goes beyond aesthetics to advance various themes such as political independence in literary texts. Leech (1981) asserts that proverbs function as more than linguistic expressions; they are cultural markers that reveal the interconnectedness of language and shared experiences. This assertion is supported by Kara (2023) who argues that the integration of proverbs in narratives bridges cultural divides. Kara illustrates this by citing Achebe's use of English interlaced with Igbo proverbs to make Igbo traditions accessible to a global audience. The present study sought to examine whether the cultural functionality of the proverbs in the source text was retained upon translation. This was carried out from the perspective of Ekegusii audience, as posited by the tenet of prioritisation of target audience by Skopos theory. Nida (1964) advocates for functional equivalence, which requires translators to find expressions within the target language and culture that convey a similar effect. This ensures that the target language readers appreciate the text as the source readers would the source text.

Consequently, the Igbo proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* can be modified in translation to preserve their functions in Ekegusii, depending on the translator's choices and idiosyncrasies. The present study explores whether their functionality is maintained or altered in the process. Nida and Taber (1982) propose dynamic equivalence as an alternative in translation. They argue that a translated text should elicit the same response from the target audience as the original does from its audience.

Accordingly, a rendition can only get this response if it is creatively orchestrated to meet its function in the target culture. With the dynamic equivalence approach, Igbo proverbs must undergo domestication to fit the Ekegusii cultural setup. They are adapted to reflect Ekegusii linguistic and cultural frameworks, ensuring that the audience engages with the translated proverbs as the Igbo community does with the original versions. The present study evaluated whether their translations in *Binto Mbisebererekani* conforms to Skopos theory, focusing on cultural equivalence in Ekegusii. According to Tamimy (2019), proverbs serve as vehicles for transmitting ethical norms and social philosophies, thus illuminating the identity of a community. They, therefore, act as tools for social cohesion in promoting shared understanding and mutual respect. These cultural norms and philosophical underpinnings may vary significantly between Igbo and Gusii societies. This would potentially lead to non-equivalence and functional misalignment in translation. The current study found it imperative to examine the extent to which the original functions of the proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* have been preserved in the translated text.

Hani'ah et al. (2019) investigated the role of proverbs on cultural identity and communication in the Madurese community. They analysed written texts and ethnolinguistic data using a cultural hermeneutic model and established that Madurese traditional proverbs greatly influence cultural identity and communication among the Madurese people. The proverbs function as descriptions of the community's way of life, reflecting its standard character, behaviour and thought processes. However, in the present study, the functionality of the translated proverbs was examined from the perspective of Vermeer's Skopos theory. This new framework helped evaluate how the renderings are purposively settled upon.

Al-Azzam (2018) studied the cultural layers involved in translating Jordanian proverbs into English with a focus on how cultural details affect translation fidelity. The research discusses the constraints of accurately translating cultural and contextual references rooted in Jordanian culture. He discussed the concept of cultural untranslatability while illustrating how some cultural meanings resist translation without distorting the original message. However, the study leaves a gap for further research on the pragmatic translation strategies that can bridge cultural divides and increase accessibility for target language speaking audiences. It also does not consider the target reader's perspective, yet this could influence how English readers interpret and appreciate the translated proverbs. To fill these gaps, the current study examined the functionality of the Ekegusii version of the Igbo proverbs based on the context of Gusii culture.

## **2.6 Cross-Cultural Translation Challenges**

Achieving conceptual, semantic and content equivalence between SL and TL is difficult but it is the central concern of every translation exercise. Maneesriwongul and Dixon (2004) assert that even when using rigorous methods, forward translators may select terms in the target language that do not fully align with the intended meaning in the source language. They further argue that this misalignment can compromise the validity of the translated concept. The phenomenon of cultural uniqueness further amplifies this problem as certain concepts in the ST may not exist or evoke same sense in different cultures. Cui (2012) describes this issue as “untranslatability” and argues that it arises from linguistic differences or cultural gaps where concepts in the source language lack equivalents in the target language.

The differences are common in languages that belong to different families like English which is Indo European and Ekegusii which belongs to Niger Congo. Ndhlovu (2012) stresses on the need for translators to possess deep cultural and linguistic knowledge to ensure accurate communication. Similarly, Aguado-Giménez and Pérez-Paredes (2005) describe translation as both a decision-making and problem-solving process requiring strategic choices to balance cultural specificity and linguistic clarity. One of the tenets of Skopos theory is that the translator is viewed as a cultural mediator, and therefore makes the source text accessible to the target audience in the target language. This study examined the role of the translator in making choices that domesticated the proverbs to be meaningful in Ekegusii cultural context.

Bassnett (2002) states that cultural elements such as proverbs and idioms are embedded in the source language, making direct translation inadequate hence necessitates cultural adaptation or explanatory annotations. Translation, therefore, extends beyond mere linguistic proficiency; it necessitates a deep understanding of the cultural contexts involved to ensure that the choices made effectively convey the intended meaning. Hadebe (2005) discusses the technical constraints faced by untrained translators in navigating unfamiliar terminology which commonly results into miscommunication. This problem is mainly caused by occurrence of phenomena that are semantically complex and rendering them to languages that do not experience them is an uphill task.

According to Lefevere (1992), translators frequently reshape texts to fit the ideological and cultural norms of the target audience. However, this manipulative nature of translators further complicates fidelity to the source texts. Nida (2001) introduces the concept of dynamic equivalence stressing the importance of reproducing the effect of the source text in the target culture.

Tymoczko (1999) and Hermans (1999) describe the translator as a cultural mediator whose every decision in translation involves an ethical dimension balancing the need for accessibility and preservation of integrity of the original work.

Yong and Nwosu (2016) investigated the complexities encountered when translating texts rich in culture-specific expressions with a focus on Michel Ligny's French rendition of Igbo proverbs in *Things Fall Apart*. They observe that Ligny's translations frequently dilute the cultural essence embedded in the Igbo proverbs, consequently affecting the originally intended meaning in Achebe's proverbs. Their analysis cautions against the risk of cultural loss when literal translations are prioritised over culturally sensitive interpretations. The researchers champion for translation approaches that strive to maintain the original cultural texture allowing readers from other linguistic backgrounds to gain a fuller understanding of African traditions and philosophies as Achebe intended in the original work. However, the study fails to account for the target audience but fixedly consults the source text at their expense. Thus, the present study analysed the equivalence and non-equivalence in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii and examined their cultural functionality by assessing how they resonate with Ekegusii audience.

Al-Khresheh and Almaaytah (2018) evaluated the effectiveness of machine translation (MT) tools in translating English proverbs into Arabic. Their aim was to identify the challenges that emerge due to linguistic and cultural differences between the two languages. They reported in their findings that MT tools frequently produced literal translations that did not accurately convey the intended idiomatic meanings. They concluded that MT has limited ability to translate context sensitive idiomatic expressions. Al-Khresheh and Almaaytah's (2018) study has a weakness in terms of a limited variety of the proverbs analysed.

Since proverbs widely differ in structure and complexity, the limited selection may not yield results sufficiently representative of proverbial translation constraints. Therefore, there is need for more research to include a broader and more diverse selection of proverbs for more comprehensive findings into capabilities and constraints of MT. Although the present study did not focus on MT, it considered selecting quite a variety of proverbs for analysis till there was saturation hence anticipated for more credible results.

Crisostomo et al. (2022) investigated how challenging it is to undertake a cross-cultural translation using artificial intelligence. The study discussed the limitations of automated systems in addressing cultural and contextual expressions. They concluded that AI should be integrated with human interpretive skills to ensure relevance and effectiveness in cross-cultural translation. The study examines widely spoken languages such as English, Chinese, Russian and German. It neglects the complexities of translating languages such as Ekegusii that are not widely spoken. These languages lack extensive datasets necessary for machine learning, posing challenges in translation. Unlike this study, which focuses on machine translation, the present study explores an African language spoken predominantly within the Gusii community. It addresses the linguistic and cultural equivalence and no-equivalence that arise in the translation of Igbo proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii.

Correspondingly, Hanson (2019) observes that AI translation fails to interpret idiomatic expressions and cultural symbolism resulting into potential miscommunication. This could be attributed to the specificity of symbols and images in diverse cultures and programming software to such a task cannot yield much. In the same vein, Boroditsky (2019) argues that despite fears of AI replacing human

translators, translation is inherently a cognitive and interpretive process whose cultural awareness and ethical judgment AI cannot reproduce in another language.

This argument underscores the complexity of translating cultural items and the essence of having human translators in interpretation of culturally unique subtleties.

Pavlović and Poslek (2003) discuss inherent difficulties in the translation of culture-specific concepts. They noted that cultural items like Croatian “bura” and British “highlands” lack direct equivalents hence require strategies like cultural borrowing or paraphrasing to communicate their meaning effectively. Ivir (1996) argues that successful translation relies on shared linguistic and extralinguistic experiences between the source and target cultures. However, she acknowledges that these differences lead to inevitable translation loss. Literal translations in most instances fail to capture the intended meaning like in the case of English phrases like “to smell a rat” which cannot be rendered directly into Croatian without losing their connotation. (Pavlović & Poslek, 2003:166). According to Phongphanngam and Lach (2019), adaptations are necessary in cross-cultural translation to mitigate the challenge on non-equivalence and deliver meaningful communication across cultures. In their study on translation constraints, they provide an example of translating “taking a bath or shower” into Thai, a case where the translator was necessitated to employ adaptation since bathtubs are uncommon in Thai homes. As a result, the term was simplified to “taking a bath” to fit Thai cultural norms.

Baker (2011) provides practical strategies to mitigate the challenge of non-equivalence including borrowing, cultural substitution and paraphrasing in a bid to adapt texts to culturally fit in the target culture context. Itieba et al. (2023b) studied the contextual frames of reference in the translation of *Animal Farm* into Kiswahili.

They focused on the strategic adaptations needed to reconcile linguistic and cultural differences between the ST and the TT. The translators applied sociocultural, organizational, textual, and communicational contextual frames of reference. This ensured the relevance and accessibility of the source text for Kiswahili-speaking readers.

They demonstrated this by the phrase ‘Manor Farm’ in the ST which was rendered as *Shamba Ibura* depicting a thematic shift that aligns with the target culture’s cognitive environment. Accordingly, textual shifts also played a role in solving non-equivalence as observed in the simplification of “He would acknowledge in private” in the ST to *angemung’amia* in TT thus passing the meaning in a culturally meaningful term. Their study focused on addressing non-equivalence for words and phrases. The present study focused on how proverbs have been rendered from English into Ekegusii by analysing their cultural equivalence and no-equivalence with their translated versions.

Owino et al. (2024) studied the categories of shifts in the translation of English Holy Bible into Dholuo and according to them, translation shifts such as unit shifts, class shifts, intra-system shifts and structure shifts are critical in addressing the differences arising from non-equivalence. They give an example of unit shifts where the clause ‘Keeping you from your neighbour’s wife’ in the source text is translated into a complete sentence in Dholuo as *Ginyalo miyo ibed maber gi mon maricho* ‘They keep you from your neighbour’s wife’ by adding the subject ‘they’ for clarity. However, they note that non-equivalence can lead to meaning loss as observed in downward shift where ‘You strengthen me with raisins’ is simplified to *omiyo duogo chunya gi gik mamit* ‘strengthen me with raisins,’ thus omitting the full sense of the original text. While their study illustrates the translator’s effort to balance linguistic accuracy and cultural relevance, the present study evaluated the functionality of the proverbs in

*Things Fall Apart*. It assessed whether their meaning was retained or lost in the translation into Ekegusii. There was a close examination of the renderings to determine whether they are culturally functional in communicating the same essence as intended in the ST to the target audience to establish the specific challenges the translator came across in an effort to render proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii.

The adaptability of the renditions to fit in the Ekegusii socio-cultural setting was therefore assessed from the perspective of the target audience.

## **2.7 Theoretical Framework**

This section focuses on the application of Skopos theory in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii. Skopos theory was developed by Hans Vermeer in 1978 and it represents a paradigm shift from equivalence-based theories in translation studies. The theory emphasises the primacy of the target text's function over strict source-text fidelity (Vermeer, 1978). It asserts that translation strategies should be determined by the intended purpose (Skopos) of the target text. Reiss (1984) developed a text typology approach that classified texts as informative, expressive or operative, which later influenced Vermeer's (1978) functionalist perspective. Holz-Mänttari (1984) introduced the theory of translational action, which emphasised on Vermeer's idea of translation as a communicative process involving multiple stakeholders. Christiane Nord further refined Skopos Theory by introducing the "loyalty principle". This principle ensures that translators balance the needs of the target audience while respecting the original texts intent (Nord, 1997).

Unlike Nida's (1964) formal equivalence model which prioritises linguistic correspondence, Skopos theory offers a flexible and context-sensitive approach that considers the cultural and communicative needs of the target audience. Formal

equivalence overlooks cultural and pragmatic aspects. Consequently, translations of proverbs may be formally accurate but lack meaningful context in the target language. Formal equivalence seeks to maintain the structure and meaning of the source text (Nida, 1964). However, this approach falls short when translating proverbs, as they do not allow for sufficient flexibility to convey cultural subtleties effectively (Baker, 2011).

Venuti (1995) observes that equivalence-based approaches struggle with translation of proverbs because they rely heavily on word-for-word. Nord (2018) asserts that Skopos theory enables translators to prioritise communicative function over formal fidelity, thereby allowing them to adapt proverbs in a way that ensures their meaning and effect resonate with the target audience. These constraints indicate that equivalence-based theories are inadequate for proverb translation. This makes Skopos theory a superior alternative.

The principal tenets of Skopos theory include teleological orientation, which governs the translation process based on the function of the target text (Vermeer, 1978). To achieve this purpose, it often necessitates structural, lexical or cultural modifications to arrive at a contextually relevant meaning in the target text (Schäffner, 1998). Second is the tenet of audience-centric approach which ensures that the cultural and linguistic expectations of the target audience influence translation choices. This requires a dynamic and adaptive methodology to realise functional translations in the target text (Nord, 2018). As Shi and Li (2023) contend, Skopos theory improves the translation of news content by prioritising communicative intent and audience expectations. Kang (2023) also discusses the applicability of Skopos theory in museum translation, and emphasises on its role in making cultural content more accessible to international visitors. The last tenet of Skopos theory is its view of the translator as a cultural

mediator. The theory views the translator as an active agent shaping the translation process by making strategic decisions to achieve the intended communicative effect in the target language (Munday, 2016).

Skopos theory enables strategic decisions, ensuring cultural resonance and pragmatic effectiveness of proverbs in the target cultural set-up. Baker (2011) observes that proverbs often carry metaphorical meanings, cultural allusions and implicit wisdom that may not have direct equivalents in the target language.

Reiss and Vermeer (1984) assert that Skopos theory permits adaptation and reformulation to preserve the intended function of the translations in the new linguistic and cultural setting. According to Hatim and Mason (1997), a translation requires an approach that prioritises the communicative function of the text to ensure that the intended effect is retained in the new linguistic and cultural environment. Their argument is supported by Nine and Selougha (2025) who assert that Skopos theory provides a functional approach to ensuring clarity and coherence in texts, particularly for non-expert audiences. Skopos theory provides the required flexibility for this adaptation. Ma et al. (2023) state that Skopos theory is effective in facilitating the translation of local cultural elements. In their study of Mo Yan's novels, they concluded that Skopos theory plays a crucial role in adaptation of proverbs. Similarly, Chirig et al. (2023) argue that Skopos theory enhances the effectiveness of translation by allowing for necessary cultural modifications to engage target audiences more successfully. This flexibility allows the translator to choose between domestication and foreignisation strategies based on the desired outcome (Venuti, 1995).

Christiane Nord's concept of "function plus loyalty" within functionalist translation approaches strengthens the suitability of Skopos theory for translating proverbs across

cultures. While Skopos theory allows for necessary adaptation, the principle of loyalty ensures that the translator remains faithful to the communicative intent and socio-cultural significance of the source text (Nord, 1997). This balance is essential in proverb translation, where meaning depends on both linguistic structure and cultural context. Similarly, Boase-Beier (2006) posits that style in translation should be viewed from the perspective of the source text's effect on the reader and the target text's expression of the translator's choices. In this regard, the functionality of the renditions in *Binto Mbisebererekani* is an illustration of the strategies settled on by the translator in order to make the original proverbs functional within the Ekegusii cultural context.

Boase-Beier's dual focus is crucial in evaluating how well the proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* and their intended functions are captured in *Binto Mbisebererekani* upon translation.

Cultural equivalence and non-equivalence are central concerns since proverbs are deeply rooted in their cultural contexts. Their translation may require either an equivalent expression in the target language or a strategic adaptation to maintain relevance (Baker, 2011). Additionally, cultural functionality is a key consideration in the translation of proverbs since they serve didactic and socio-cultural functions. Their translation should preserve or adapt these functions to ensure cultural resonance in the target language (Baker, 2011). Finally, strategic adaptation in proverb translation involves domestication (cultural adaptation) or foreignisation (retention of source cultural elements). However, as Venuti (1995) asserts, the choice depends on the intended communicative purpose of the translation.

Skopos theory's emphasis on purpose-driven and audience-oriented translation provides a robust theoretical framework for analysing the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii. These tenets were used in the evaluation of how translated proverbs operate within the socio-cultural context of Ekegusii, and whether they retain their functionality. Furthermore, they offered a structured rationale for the translation choices made in rendering proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii.

## **2.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has discussed the problems associated with translating proverbs primarily due to cultural and linguistic non-equivalence. The chapter has also explained the role of Ekegusii proverbs in preserving the Gusii people's cultural identity. While reviewing previous studies, gaps to be filled by the current study have been identified.

Finally, the chapter has reviewed Skopos theory and its prioritisation of the purpose and cultural functionality of the translation in the target language and culture. The research methodology is discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides the research methodology that was used to analyse cultural equivalence and non-equivalence in the rendering of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii. The chapter outlines the research design, population of the study, sampling techniques, data collection and analysis methods that shall be employed. The analysis was carried out through the lens of Skopos theory to evaluate the translation purpose and examine the preservation or loss of functionality of the proverbs. Finally, the ethical considerations of the study are highlighted.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The study employed a qualitative descriptive exploratory design to analyse equivalence and non-equivalence in the cross-cultural translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii. According to Creswell (2013), a descriptive research design is used to systematically collect data and account for a given phenomenon, situation or population under study. The research design is suitable as it facilitated an in-depth examination of the translation of proverbs across two linguistic and cultural contexts without manipulating the data. Through the design, translation strategies were identified to serve as a structured framework for analysing cultural equivalence and non-equivalence in the translation of the proverbs. Furthermore, descriptive research was instrumental in determining whether the translated proverbs retained or lost their cultural functionality in Ekegusii cultural context. This was achieved by assessing the extent to which the translated proverbs fulfilled their intended communicative and cultural functions within the Ekegusii linguistic context. Ultimately, the analysis

facilitated an evaluation of whether the translator's choices aligned with the principles of Skopos theory.

### **3.3 Population of the Study**

The study population consisted of two main categories: linguistic and human population. The linguistic population included all twenty-eight proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* and their corresponding translations in *Binto Mbisebererekani*. The human population comprised native speakers of Ekegusii, who were considered essential for evaluating the cultural and linguistic appropriateness of the translated proverbs. According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, the Gusii ethnic community has a total population of 2,205,669 people. This demographic provided a broad linguistic and cultural base from which respondents were selected for the study.

### **3.4 Study Area**

The study was conducted in Bomachoge Chache Sub-County of Kisii County. The area was considered suitable because it represents a linguistically and culturally vibrant section of the Gusii community where traditional forms of expression remain actively used in social interaction. Moreover, Bomachoge Chache provides a balanced blend of rural and semi-urban populations, allowing the study to capture both traditional and contemporary nuances of proverb use. This diversity offered an ideal context for evaluating the effectiveness of translation strategies in bridging cultural worldviews between the Igbo and the Gusii people. According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, Bomachoge Chache covers approximately 106 square kilometers. The area has a population of about 99,530 people according to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2019). The constituency is administratively divided into three wards: Majoge Bassi, Boochi Tendere and Bosoti Sengera, which

are further subdivided into sub-locations. The area is predominantly inhabited by native Ekegusii speakers, making it linguistically suitable for a study focused on the Ekegusii translation of proverbs under study.

The community maintains a strong oral tradition and cultural consciousness, which provided a rich environment for exploring how proverbs are understood, interpreted and culturally situated within the local context.

### **3.5 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size**

This study did not employ a sampling technique on proverbs because the population of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* was manageable in size. As such, a census approach was adopted, whereby all the 28 proverbs were studied. According to Kothari (2004) and Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), studying the entire population is appropriate when the number of items is small and accessible as this approach eliminates sampling error and increases the accuracy of the findings. Similarly, Creswell (2014) argues that in qualitative studies, researchers often study the entire population when the number of cases is limited, as it allows for detailed analysis.

The study engaged 30 native Ekegusii speakers, comprising 15 males and 15 females. The participants were selected through snowball sampling, guided by the criteria of age, linguistic competence and in-depth knowledge of Ekegusii oral traditions. The snowball technique enabled the identification of additional participants through referrals from initial respondents who met the selection criteria. Community elders and local leaders played a key role in identifying individuals with demonstrable expertise in proverbial usage and cultural practices. To qualify for inclusion, participants possessed at least ten years of experience in Ekegusii oral storytelling and were recognised by community elders for their proficiency and cultural authority. The

sample size was determined by the principle of saturation, whereby data collection continued until no new relevant information emerged.

### **3.5.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

All participants were multilingual since they were able to speak Ekegusii, English and other languages as well. Their age ranged between 60 and 70 years. In Kenya, individuals aged 60 years and above are officially recognised as older persons (Parliament of Kenya, 2024). The majority of the participants were literate, having received formal education up to O level. However, they did not possess formal background in translation or linguistics. Their extensive lived experience with the Ekegusii language and culture made them valuable sources for evaluating the naturalness, acceptability and cultural relevance of the translated proverbs. They also had intuitive understanding of traditional Ekegusii proverbs and expressions which enabled them offer critical insights into whether the translated versions achieved cultural equivalence or not. Gender was not anticipated to influence the outcomes because the nature of the data did not involve gender-sensitive content.

### **3.6 Data Collection Methods**

Marshall (2015) identifies four data collection techniques in qualitative researches: participating in the setting, observing directly, interviewing in depth and finally analysis of documents. Primary data was collected through Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). As such, twenty discussants participated in FGDs while 5 respondents were interviewed. The data collection process involved identification of proverbs and extracting them both from the ST and their translations in the TT. The criteria for identifying proverbs were based on their characteristics as fixed and memorable expressions that often use metaphors or imagery. Proverbs also

convey a moral or philosophical lesson, traditions and reflect the cultural values of a community. Then a compilation of a comprehensive dataset that included the identified proverbs in both the ST and the TT were made. Secondary data was collected from the ST and TT.

### **3.6.1 Key Informant Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five native Ekegusii speakers (see Appendix 5) guided by three questions in line with the study's objective. Two weeks prior to the interviews, the respondents were given the source and target texts to read and note the translation of the proverbs. The interviews lasted approximately 50 minutes each and were carried out over a ten-day period. Milroy and Gordon (2003) assert that valuable insights can be elicited within 30 minutes of interview engagement. All participants opted to respond in Ekegusii and selected their preferred interview locations: three at their workplaces and two at their homes. This ensured both privacy and convenience. Participants were anonymised as Respondents 1, Respondent 2, Respondents 3, Respondent 4 and Respondent 5. The respondents gave views on the extent to which the translated proverbs fulfilled their intended communicative purpose for Ekegusii-speaking audiences. They considered whether the translations were culturally relevant, clear and purposeful within Ekegusii context. The adoption of interviews was informed by Seliger and Shohamy's (1986) view that this method enables in-depth data collection and unrestricted responses, which are unattainable through other means. The information gathered was instrumental in assessing the application of Skopos Theory in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii. It also supported the interpretation, reporting and discussion of findings.

### **3.6.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

According to Krueger (1988), Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a qualitative method of collecting data from individuals with shared backgrounds and experiences through facilitated dialogue on a specific topic. In this study, FGDs were employed to explore the discussants' perspectives on the equivalence of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* translated into Ekegusii in *Binto Mbisebererekani*.

Similarly, the discussants were given two weeks prior to the focus groups discussions, to read and note how the proverbs had been translated into Ekegusii. A total of four FGDs, each comprising five participants, were conducted. These were labeled FGD 1 to FGD 4. The discussions were guided by a structured interview protocol (see Appendix 5), which allowed for flexibility and open-ended responses. FGDs were particularly suited to this study as they enabled the collection of rich and contextual insights into the cultural functionality of the translated proverbs within the Ekegusii sociocultural framework. Most of the discussions were conducted in Ekegusii as preferred by the participants. This ensured clarity and depth of expression. The data obtained from the FGDs complemented that from the Key Informant Interviews by offering broader communal interpretations and addressing areas that may not have been fully captured through individual interviews.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

The data was analysed using the content analysis method. For the first objective, the researcher categorised the collected proverbs and their translations based on cultural equivalence, and the translation strategies used in their rendering (oblique and direct translation strategies). Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model for translating cultural expressions was applied to analyse the translation strategies used. Data was presented in comparative tables accompanied by descriptive narration. The narration explains

the observed translation patterns by providing examples to illustrate how cultural meaning is preserved, adapted or lost.

For the second objective, the study examined whether the translated proverbs retained their intended functions (rhetoric, sociolinguistic or aesthetic) within the Ekegusii cultural context. A comparative analysis was made to determine functional retention or loss. Guided by insights from discussants and tenets of Skopos theory, the researcher made an assessment whether the translations resonate naturally in Ekegusii linguistic context. Data was presented in functional classification tables. The tables included explanations of how the translated proverbs function in Ekegusii culture compared to their original use in English. This is followed by a descriptive narration on the findings.

For the last objective, Skopos Theory was applied to interpret the findings. The researcher evaluated how translation choices resonated with the Ekegusii audience and Ekegusii cultural context. The data was presented through categorisation tables. The tables showed whether each proverb's translation aligns with a source-oriented (literal) or target-oriented (culturally adapted) approach. A comparative analysis table summarises the translation strategies used and link them to the principles of Skopos theory. The discussion integrates qualitative explanations while providing examples of how translation choices reflect target language audience expectations and cultural context.

### **3.8 Validity and Reliability**

In developing the research instruments, careful attention was given to ensuring their validity. The study focused on face validity, which concerns the extent to which an instrument appears to measure the intended content (Kothari, 2004). To achieve this,

the researcher ensured that both the tools and data collection methods were in line with the principles of Skopos Theory, which guided the translation procedures. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a research instrument is deemed reliable if it produces consistent results when applied under similar conditions. In this study, the instruments were pilot-tested two months prior to the main data collection to confirm their reliability in eliciting accurate responses. The interview schedule was tried out on two native Ekegusii speakers, while the FGD guide was tested with a small group of four participants.

The process followed Creswell's (2013) recommendation that reliability can be determined through the test–retest method at different time intervals. Furthermore, the researcher clarified the study's key concepts and variables to enhance consistency in interpretation. Where notable variations in responses occurred, measures were taken to align the data with the study objectives. The use of multiple data collection instruments also enhanced confirmability, ensuring that similar findings could be corroborated from different sources. Additionally, the research assistants received training on the proper administration of the tools to minimise potential bias during data collection.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

The researcher adhered to ethical principles throughout the research process by ensuring compliance with established ethical standards. Ethical considerations were observed in accordance with Babbie (2010), who emphasises that ethical concerns are an integral component of the research process. The researcher obtained formal authorisation from the School of Graduate Studies at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. Subsequently, a research permit was secured from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). All audio

recordings were securely stored on encrypted drives to ensure data protection and confidentiality. Each participant was assigned a unique numeric identification code, and all transcripts were thoroughly de-identified to remove any personal or traceable information. This was necessary so as to safeguard participants' privacy. All the participants of the interviews and FGDs signed a consent form before participating in the study. Furthermore, the researcher upheld academic integrity by adhering to the citation and referencing guidelines outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2020). This was necessary to ensure respect for intellectual property rights and scholarly conventions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents, analyses and discusses the findings of the study on the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii in *Binto Mbisebererekani*. The findings and their analyses are structured according to the objectives of the study. The translation strategies applied in rendering the proverbs from English to Ekegusii were examined using Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model to find out whether the translated versions led to cultural equivalence or non-equivalence in Ekegusii. The model suggests seven translation procedures, broadly categorised into two: direct procedures (literal translation, borrowing and calque) and oblique (transposition, equivalence, modulation and adaptation) techniques.

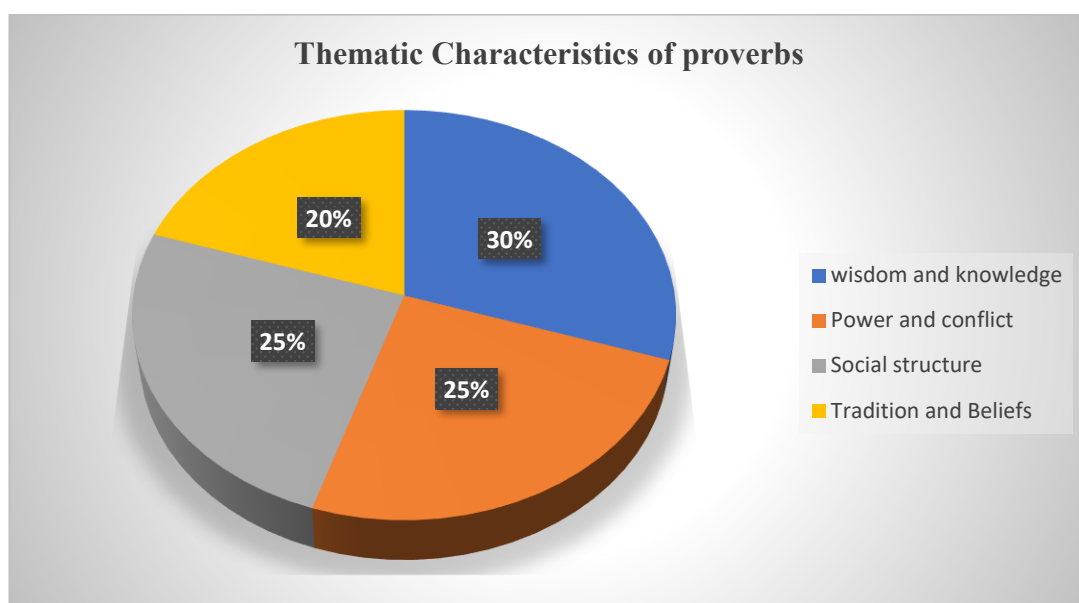
The cultural functionality of the translated proverbs is analysed to determine whether they effectively convey the socio-cultural values and worldview embedded in the original Igbo expressions in the Ekegusii language context. An evaluation was also made on the purpose of the translation based on Vermeer's (1978) Skopos theory, and the decisions made to fulfill this purpose. The analysis presented in this chapter is based on data extracted from the selected texts: *Things Fall Apart* and *Binto Mbisebererekani*. The two texts serve as the primary sources for this study.

#### 4.2 Characteristics of Linguistic Items Analysed

The study sample consisted of proverbs extracted from *Things Fall Apart* and their corresponding translations in *Binto Mbisebererekani*. Proverbs were selected based on

their cultural and functional significance in the source text. A total of 28 proverbs were linguistically analysed.

The proverbs had different thematic characteristics. Of the total, 9 proverbs centered on wisdom and knowledge, 7 proverbs engage with power and conflict, 7 proverbs illustrate aspects of social structure while 5 proverbs reflect tradition and beliefs. This distribution is represented in the pie chart below:



**Figure 4.1: Thematic Characteristics of the analysed proverbs**

### **4.3 Cultural Equivalence in Translation of Proverbs into Ekegusii**

The first objective was to analyse cultural equivalence and non-equivalence in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii. Cultural equivalence refers to the extent to which a translated expression conveys the same cultural meaning and impact in the target language as it does in the source language (Baker, 2011). In translation, achieving cultural equivalence requires that the translated text resonates with the target audience in a way that reflects the original cultural values and social context, even if the exact words or images are different. To analyse the objective, Vinay

and Darbelnet's (1995) model of translation was used to analyse whether the TT versions are culturally equivalent to the ST proverbs.

From the analysed data, it was revealed that cultural equivalence was attained in instances where ST proverbs were rendered using the translation strategies of adaptation and modulation as shown in Table 4.1:

**Table 4.1: Oblique Translation Strategies**

<b>Proverb in the SL</b>	<b>Translation in TL</b>	<b>Vinay &amp; Darbelnet's Strategy used</b>
He who brings kola brings life.	<i>Oyoko enana enkara oenanire obogima</i> 'He who gives fermented flour lumps has given life'	Adaptation
If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings.	<i>Omwana karasibie amoboko aye nabo akoragera n'abaruoti n'abagaka</i> 'If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings and elders'	Modulation
The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did.	<i>Ensagara yacharogete korwa omokabiri igoro goika inse eyateebete buna nigo egoetogia enyene onye onde takoyetogia</i> 'The lizard that jumped from the Silk oak to the ground said it would praise itself if no one else did'	Adaptation
Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching.	<i>Enyoni onchimbo nigo ekobora ng'a ase engencho mwanyabanto aegeire korasa atari komocha, yaegeire koiruruka etari kogwa aande</i> 'The woodpecker says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, it has learned to fly without perching anywhere'	Modulation
You can tell a ripe corn by its look	<i>Nabo okorora egetuma giakongire ase okororekana kwaye</i> 'You can see a ripe corn by its look'	Modulation
If one finger brought oil it soiled the others.	<i>Onye ekiara ekemo kegokuna amaguta, nigo kegoaka ebinde bionsi</i> 'If one finger touches oil it soils the others'	Modulation
A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to	<i>Omonto okorangeria abaamate n'abairi ase omoyega tari gokora bo erio kobatoria gokwa enchara</i> 'A man who	Modulation

save them from starving.	calls his kinsmen and relatives to a feast does not do so to save them from starving'
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**Source: Field observation (2025)**

The following section offers a critical discussion of each of the strategies identified in Table 1. It also provides a description of their application and interrogates how these strategies shape the translator's negotiation between linguistic fidelity and cultural resonance. It further reveals points of convergence and divergence with findings from previous studies while underscoring the implications of these strategies for literary translation theory and practice.

### **4.3.1 Adaptation**

Adaptation is a translation strategy in which elements of the source text are modified or replaced to make them more culturally relevant and understandable to the target audience. It is often used when a literal translation would fail to convey the intended meaning, effect or function. The following analysis is on specific cases where adaptation was used, and the extent to which it achieved cultural equivalence:

1. SL: He who brings kola brings life. (pg. 5)

TL: *Oyokoenana enkara oenanire obogima.* (pg. 4)

'He who gives fermented flour lumps has given life'

When Okoye visited Unoka to request for the repayment of his debt, Unoka offered him a kola nut (pg. 5). The conversation that followed about who should break the kola is ceremonial and rooted in custom. In the traditional Igbo culture, kola nuts symbolised peace, respect and friendship. Presenting kola nuts was a customary practice during important social interactions, such as welcoming guests, resolving disputes or initiating communal discussions.

In the target text (TT), the translator replaced the image of the kola nut with *enkara* ‘fermented flour lumps’ a culturally salient item in Ekegusii. While the kola nut in Igbo culture symbolises hospitality and social cohesion, *enkara* is used in the preparation of a local brew that plays a comparable role among the Gusii. The brew is central to social gatherings and ceremonies, where it embodies hospitality, unity and communal fellowship. In this way, the substitution preserves the symbolic function of the kola nut and ensures that the proverb resonates with the target audience. Adaptation involves replacing a cultural element from the source text with one that is more familiar or acceptable in the target culture (Baker, 2011).

Evidence from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) confirmed the success of this strategy, underscoring the translator’s effectiveness in adapting Igbo cultural elements into meaningful equivalents within the Ekegusii context. Fermented flour lumps are used to prepare traditional brew drunk in gatherings such as marriage, child naming and burial ceremonies. They symbolised hospitality, unity and bonding among the Gusii people. The translator’s choice of substituting kola nuts with ‘fermented flour’ lumps in the Ekegusii reflects a deliberate cultural adaptation aimed at preserving the meaning and social function of the original proverb.

A similar study by Niyadullayeva (2025) emphasised that among the various strategies used in translating proverbs, adaptation yielded the most natural and culturally appropriate results. Her comparative analysis of English, Russian and Uzbek proverbs showed that adaptation enables translators to negotiate cultural gaps without losing the proverb’s communicative intent. According to Baker (2011), unfamiliar items in the source language should be replaced with culturally equivalent concepts in the target audience. Similarly, these findings are supported by Vermeer’s (1978) who emphasises that translation should fulfill its intended purpose in the target culture.

The findings in the present study revealed that adaptation is not just a strategy but a necessity in proverb translation, since it ensures both cultural relevance and communicative effectiveness. The findings revealed that cultural equivalence in literary translation should be measured not only in semantic terms but also in how effectively the translation preserves the pragmatic and symbolic impact of the original within the target community.

The consistency of this strategy is further demonstrated in example 2 below:

2. SL:           The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did. (pg. 21)

TL:               *Ensagara yacharogete korwa omokabiri igoro goika inse eyateebete buna nigo egoetogia enyene onye onde takoyetogia.* (pg. 18)

‘The lizard that jumped from the Silk oak to the ground said it would praise itself if no one else did’

In the extract above, Okonkwo visited a wealthy man named Nwakibie to ask for yam seeds, so he can start his own farm. Okonkwo, though young, is determined to build his fortune and prove himself. Because asking for yams is a huge favour like that of asking for capital, he must persuade Nwakibie that he is trustworthy and hardworking (pg. 21). This proverb in the ST has a meaning that if a person achieves something but receives no external recognition, they should praise themselves. Responses from the discussants indicated that the meaning of the proverb was understandable within Ekegusii language context.

The symbol of *iroko tree*, is a significant cultural and ecological symbol in West Africa. *Iroko* trees are known for their tall heights, as they are one of the tallest hardwood trees in West Africa. However, they are unfamiliar to Ekegusii language and culture. The

translator adapted *iroko* tree to *omokabiri* ‘Silk oak’, a tree that is native to Gusiiland. Silk oaks are known in Gusiiland for their tall heights, hence their selection by the translator to substitute the *iroko* tree. The pride of jumping from such long distance is therefore conveyed in the translation. This strategic modification ensured that Ekegusii audience effectively relate with the message of doing something great as conveyed in the ST.

The adaptation ensured that the intended meaning of praising oneself if nobody does in the SL was retained in the TL. Adaptation facilitated the selection of culturally relevant Ekegusii equivalents that maintained their functional intent in the TT. This made them more relatable and understandable without altering their core meanings.

The use of culturally relevant Gusii elements, the translator ensured that the proverbs remained meaningful and relatable, successfully bridging the cultural gap between Igbo and Gusii societies. Similarly, Ghufon et al. (2023) found that cultural adaptation, through substituting proverbs with culturally equivalent expressions, was crucial in preserving both meaning and pragmatic function. For example, Arabic proverbs were effectively rendered into Indonesian through substitution with familiar idioms such as *sedia payung sebelum hujan* ‘prepare an umbrella before it rains’ ensuring resonance with the target audience. Findings from the current study revealed that adaptation is central to proverb translation, particularly when the source and target languages are culturally distant.

The findings resonate with Nida’s (1964) principle of dynamic equivalence, which prioritises meaning and effect over literal translation. Translation by adaptation is used where a source language item that has no direct equivalent in the target culture, and is replaced with a culturally relevant alternative (Baker, 2011). Furthermore, Skopos

theory posits that a translation be made with consideration of the target audience; adapting unfamiliar concepts to the target language prioritises them (Vermeer, 1978). Translators of culturally rich texts cannot therefore, rely solely on linguistic transfer; instead, they must engage in interpretive decision-making that acknowledges the target community's worldview.

### 4.3.2 Modulation

Modulation is a translation strategy where the translator changes the form of expression or point of view of the source text while maintaining the same meaning. It is used when a direct translation would sound unnatural or fail to convey the intended sense in the target language.

The following examples demonstrate specific instances where modulation was employed, and assesses how effectively this strategy contributed to cultural equivalence:

3. SL: You can tell a ripe corn by its look. (pg.21)

TL: *Nabo okorora egetuma giakongire ase okororekana kwaye.* (pg. 19)  
'You can see a ripe corn by its look'

In the above extract, Okonkwo went to borrow yams but Nwakibie was reluctant to offer him any. The wealthy man insinuated that young men were lazy, and that Okonkwo was unlikely to return them if he gave him any. However, he changed his mind, expressing hope in Okonkwo's hard work and imminent success. This change of heart prompted him to utter the proverb (pg. 21). In the ST it means that something good is always noticeable from its appearance. However, in the context of Ekegusii, a discussant confirmed that the proverb was understandable and meaningful.

In the above example, the word ‘tell’ in the ST was substituted with *okorora* ‘see’ in the TT. The translator shifted the point of view from verbal expression ‘tell’ to perception ‘see’. Consequently, a semantic shift was made, while ensuring that the intended meaning in the ST remained intact in Ekegusii. This was an obligatory shift from a neutral verb ‘tell’ to one implying purposeful action ‘see’ enhanced the proverb’s emotional and cultural resonance, hence making it to sound more natural and familiar to Ekegusii audience. If a direct translation were used, the resulting expression could be awkward and meaningless.

Newmark (1988) identifies modulation as a necessary procedure when literal translation would obscure the intended meaning or feel natural in the target language. Similarly, House (1997) emphasises that cultural filtering may involve shifts in meaning or perspective to make a text more accessible and in the target language.

In the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii in *Binto Mbisebererekani*, modulation was used to shift expressions in a way that reflected the linguistic and cultural logic of Ekegusii.

4. SL: If one finger brought oil it soiled the others. (pg. 118)

SL: *Onye ekiara ekemo kegokuna amaguta, nigo kegoaka ebinde bionsi.*  
(pg. 123)

‘If one finger touches oil it soils the others’

Okonkwo accidentally killed a clansman when his gun exploded. Though it was clearly an accident and not a deliberate act, killing a clansman was considered a serious offence against the Earth goddess in Igbo cosmology (pg. 117). As a result, the clan must act to avoid collective punishment from the goddess. Okonkwo is exiled for seven years to his motherland, as a form of cleansing and atonement. This punishment

reflects the Igbo society's belief in communal responsibility and the need to preserve harmony with the spiritual world (pg. 118). The proverb has a figurative meaning that the wrongdoing of one individual can negatively impact the entire group they are associated with.

In the TT, the phrase 'brought oil' was translated as *kegokuna amaguta* 'touches oil'. The Ekegusii version created a conceptual shift that emphasises on the act of contact, which leads to the spreading effect. This change ensured that the proverb was expressed in a more natural way in Ekegusii, while preserving the cause-and-effect relationship. The phrase 'soiled the others' was also rendered as *kegoaka* 'it spreads to all the others.' The translator employed modulation to shift the passive connotation of 'soiling' which implies 'contamination or staining' to a more neutral verb *kegoaka* 'to spread'. This subtle shift ensured that the proverb is more natural in Ekegusii by preserving the proverbial message of collective consequences that results from an individual's actions.

Modulation enabled shifts in expression and perspectives without distorting the intended meaning. This ensured that the meaning of the proverbs was conveyed in a naturally acceptable manner within the context of Ekegusii language. The findings imply that the translator is an active cultural negotiator of meaning rather than a mechanical reproducer of words. Similarly, Yunusova (2025) found that in the translation of idioms and proverbs across cultures, modulation enabled translators to reframe culturally specific metaphors into forms that resonated naturally with the target audience while maintaining semantic equivalence.

These findings are further supported by Alshahrani et al. (2023), who analysed the Arabic translation of *Fight Club* and found that modulation was employed strategically to address cultural and idiomatic challenges. While not the primary strategy, modulation was essential when literal translation risked distorting the intended meaning or sounding unnatural in Arabic. These findings are similar to those of Zahra et al. (2023) who found that modulation was used as part of a broader set of oblique translation strategies to convey meaning effectively in the Urdu translation of *Honour*. Modulation helped adjust culturally specific or idiomatic content where literal translation was inadequate. This shift in perspective is consistent with Vermeer's (1978) Skopos theory, which prioritises the function and purpose of the translation over literal equivalence. The modification of the proverbs to the communicative and cultural context of the Ekegusii audience ensured that the translation fulfilled its intended role.

Some proverbs were translated by use of modulation effected by amplification, where the translator altered the original structure or point of view and added lexical material in Ekegusii to preserve meaning and achieve cultural acceptability. This was applied when a direct translation would result in unnatural expressions.

Modulation involves a shift in perspective, category of thought or expression in the target language while maintaining the intended meaning of the source text (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995). The following are illustrative examples in which the addition of words facilitated modulation and played a crucial role in achieving cultural equivalence in translation:

5. SL: If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings. (pg. 8)

TL: *Omwana karasibie amoboko aye nabo akoragera n'abaruoti n'abagaka.* (pg.6)

‘If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings and elders’

Though Okonkwo came from a humble background, he distinguished himself through personal effort and achievement. He became a respected warrior, farmer and leader. Achebe uses the proverb to illustrate Okonkwo’s social mobility: he had metaphorically ‘washed his hands’ by ridding himself of his father’s disgrace and made a name for himself. Consequently, he was welcomed and honoured among men of high status (pg. 8).

The word ‘kings’ in the ST was translated into ‘kings and elders’ in the Ekegusii version. The translator used amplification by deliberately adding the word *n’abagaka* ‘and elders’ in the TT to reinforce the cultural significance of elders as figures of wisdom and authority in the Gusii community. This deliberate addition represents more than just amplification; it also constitutes a shift in the cognitive category from a concept of monarchical authority, which is foreign to the Gusii community, to gerontocratic authority, which is culturally familiar. The translator used modulation to change the category of thought to suit the Ekegusii audience’s worldview. Thus, amplification led to modulation, ensuring that the proverb conveyed a culturally equivalent meaning in the target text.

The findings reveal that the use of modulation to include ‘elders’ made the proverb more understandable to the target audience since they could easily relate with the concept. Pym (2005) notes that modulation is used when a word in the source language with a general meaning is rendered in the target language using a term with a more precise or narrower meaning. In the process of modulation, the translator may introduce amplification, to expand the expression and convey the message more

naturally and effectively within the linguistic and cultural norms of the target audience (Molina & Albir, 2002).

Ghufron et al. (2024) also reported that although modulation was less frequent than literal or borrowing strategies, it played a crucial role in rendering culturally bound expressions, especially in educational and literary contexts where perspective shifts were necessary to achieve naturalness and clarity. The findings of the current study point out that for literary translation; modulation allows proverbs to be rendered in a way that preserves both cultural relevance and stylistic impact in the target text.

6. SL: Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching. (pg. 21)

TL: *Enyoni onchimbo nigo ekobora ng'a ase engencho mwanabanto aegeire korasa atari komocha, yaegeire koiruruka etari kogwa aande.* (pg. 19)

‘The woodpecker says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, it has learned to fly without perching anywhere’

This proverb was said by Nwakibie when Okonkwo went to borrow his yams for planting. He said that young men are lazy, and when he denied them support, they could think he is hard-hearted. As a result, Nwakibie had learnt to be stingy with his yams. (pg. 19).

The proverb holds a cultural meaning of adaptation for survival. That since young men cannot return what they borrowed, the only way to avoid conflict with them is denying them when they come to borrow.

In the Gusii community, woodpeckers are culturally recognised for their characteristic undulating flight patterns. These patterns render their movements unpredictable and help them evade predators. This perception imbues the bird with connotations of

agility and wisdom. In the translation of the phrase ‘without perching’ in ST into Ekegusii, the translator rendered it as *etari kogwa aande*, literally ‘without perching anywhere’. The addition of *aande* ‘anywhere’, which does not appear in the ST, constitutes a case of amplification.

The amplification exemplifies modulation, which entails a shift in perspective or cognitive category in TL to maintain the communicative effect (Newmark, 1988). The making of the woodpecker’s continuous motion more explicit, the translator ensured that the proverb’s metaphorical implication of elusiveness is more readily grasped by the Ekegusii audience. Since the woodpecker is a culturally salient figure within the Gusii context, the adaptation enhanced cultural equivalence, enabling the proverb to retain its figurative weight and pragmatic function within the TT. According to Nord (2018), use of cultural equivalence strategies underscores the translator’s sensitivity to both linguistic and cultural semiotics. The present findings underscore that achieving equivalence often requires shifts in perspective rather than direct lexical substitution.

Table 4.2 shows a summary of the strategies that resulted in cultural equivalence:

*Table 4.2: Strategies that Yielded Cultural Equivalence*

<b>Translation Strategy</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Adaptation	2	33.3%
Modulation	4	66.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Field observation (2025)**

In the table above, a total of seven instances were identified where the translation strategy used led to cultural equivalence. Modulation was the most frequently employed strategy in 5 instances, accounting for 66.7% of the culturally equivalent translations. This suggests that the translator often opted to shift the semantic or

perspective level of the source proverb in order to maintain its meaning in Ekegusii culture. The prevalence of modulation indicates its effectiveness in bridging conceptual and cultural gaps between English and Ekegusii. Adaptation was used in 2 cases, accounting for 33.3% of the cases. Adaptation remains significant, as it demonstrates the translator's effort to ensure that the proverbs are not only understood but also resonate with the Ekegusii audience. The next section contains analysis of cultural non-equivalence of the translated proverbs

#### **4.4 Cultural Non-equivalence in Translating Proverbs into Ekegusii**

Cultural non-equivalence occurs when the meaning and cultural resonance of a source text element is not preserved in the target language. Table 3 presents the translation strategies that resulted in cultural non-equivalence in the target text:

*Table 4.3: Direct Translation Strategies*

<b>Proverb in SL</b>	<b>Translation in TL</b>	<b>Vinay &amp; Darbelnet's strategy used</b>
The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them.	<i>Risase nigo rikomorekera ritang'ani baria bateneine nyuma ritaramorekera baria batugaima.</i> 'The sun shines first for those who are standing before it shines for those kneeling down'	Literal translation
An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb	<i>Omong'ina omogotu nigo akoondoka ekeru amauga amomo agoatorwa ase omobayeno</i> 'An old woman becomes uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb'	Literal translation
Looking at a king's mouth, one would think he never sucked at his mother's breast.	<i>Ase okorigereria omonwa bwo'moruoti, omonto nigo arakage ng'a tagongete robere rwa ng'ina.</i> 'By looking at the king's mouth, a person may think that he did not suck his mother's breast'	Literal translation
A chick that will grow into a cock can be spotted the very day it hatches.	<i>Egechuchu kerakine kebe etwoni nabo gekororekana rituko riria giaturagigwa</i> 'A chick that might grow to be a cock can be seen the day it is hatched'	Literal translation
Whenever you see a toad jumping in broad daylight, then know that something is after its life.	<i>Ekeru okorora egioto kegocharokacharoka mobaso igoro, manya ng'a egento nkere gekorigia obogima bwaye</i> 'When you see toad hopping repeatedly during the day, just know that there is something looking for its life'	Literal translation
If one finger brought oil it soiled the others.	<i>Onye ekiara ekemo kegokuna amaguta, nigo kegoaka ebinde bionsi</i> 'If one finger touches oil, it spreads to all the others'	Calque
Living fire begets cold, impotent ash.	<i>Omorero ogwoka inkoibora ore obokendu, ribu riteba</i> 'Fire that is burning gives birth to cold, ash that cannot give birth'	Calque

**Source: Field observation (2025)**

The following section presents an analysis of the translation choices that resulted in cultural non-equivalence. Specific examples from the text are examined, followed by detailed analysis and discussion of their implications.

#### 4.4.1 Literal translation

Literal translation involves translating the text word-for-word, preserving the original structure and lexical choices of the source language. The following examples illustrate how literal translations of proverbs limited preservation of cultural equivalence:

8. SL: An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb.  
(pg. 20)

TL: *Omong'ina omogotu nigo akoondoka ekero amauga amomo agoatorwa ase omobayeno.* (pg. 18)

‘An old woman becomes uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb’

In his conversation with Okonkwo and his company during the yam-borrowing event, Nwakibie talked about Obiako, the palm-wine tapper who had consulted the Oracle about his dead father. The Oracle had asked him to sacrifice a goat for him. Obiako was furious as his father did not own even a fowl in his lifetime. That hit Okonkwo hard, as his father, Unoka, had also died poor. (pg. 20). The proverb expresses the discomfort that people experience when a situation or conversation reminds them of their weaknesses or tormenting past experiences.

In the target text, the translator employed literal translation, without adapting the proverb to reflect the cultural background of the Gusii society. Consequently, the Ekegusii rendition failed to convey the intended figurative meaning present in the source text. This led to cultural non-equivalence. The translated proverb lacks semantic depth and is ineffective beyond its surface-level, literal interpretation. This inadequacy

is partly attributed to the translator's limited cultural and linguistic competence. The translator's reliance on literal translation without accounting for the cultural and figurative dimensions of the source text undermines the communicative intent and aesthetic value of the proverb. According to Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), literal translation fails when structural and cultural disparities between languages lead to a distortion or loss of meaning.

Similarly, Vermeer's (1989) Skopos theory emphasises that translation should be guided by the function of the target text within its cultural context, rather than by strict adherence to source-text forms. These findings are supported by Vula and Tyfekci (2024), who emphasise that literal translation often overlooks the cultural and contextual subtleties embedded in figurative language. Their study demonstrated that a strict word-for-word translation frequently resulted in semantic distortion in idiomatic expressions leading to confusion or a complete loss of intended meaning in the target language.

9. SL: Looking at a king's mouth, one would think he never sucked at his mother's breast. (pg.25)

TL: *Ase okorigereria omonwa bwo'moruoti, omonto nigo arakage ng'a tagongete robere rwa ng'ina.* (pg. 23)

'By looking at the mouth of a king, a person can think that he did not suck his mother's breast'

During a meeting with clansmen, an old man said the proverb in reference to Okonkwo's rise from grass to grace; he was a successful young man. (pg. 25). Okonkwo had grown from a poor family since his father, Unoka, owned nothing in his lifetime (pg. 20). This proverb is used in the ST to reflect on the character of Okonkwo, who had risen from poverty to become one of the most respected men in his clan.

The proverb draws attention to the tendency of powerful or successful individuals to forget their humble beginnings. It implies that when people attain high status, they often adopt an air of superiority and behave as though they were never dependent. The proverb rebukes arrogance and pride while encouraging humility and empathy. The translator rendered the ST word-for-word in the target text. The resulting translation could not resonate with the target audience beyond the surface meaning.

Traditionally, Gusii people did not have kings in their leadership hierarchy, and therefore the idea about the power of kings is not immediately understandable in Ekegusii. Consequently, it led to non-equivalence as the original meaning was lost in translation. These findings are supported by Mudogo (2017) who found that literal translation often failed to convey the metaphorical meanings embedded in culturally loaded expressions. As a result, a literal translation leads to misinterpretation or a complete loss of meaning. Baker (2011) states that the fundamental principle of translation is equivalence. These findings revealed that literary translation is not just linguistic transfer but also cultural negotiation, where failure to bridge cultural gaps can diminish the text's impact of the proverbs on the target audience.

10. SL: Whenever you see a toad jumping in broad daylight, then know that something is after its life. (pg. 192)

TL: *Ekerokorora egioto kegocharokacharoka mobaso igoro, manya ng'a egento nkere gekorigia obogima bwaye.* (pg. 198)

'When you see a toad hopping at daytime, know that there is something looking for its life'

Okika employed the proverb during a pivotal clan assembly convened in the aftermath of a grave act of sacrilege. The incident involved the unmasking of an *egwugwu*, a revered ancestral spirit. This act was culturally tantamount to its death. This

transgression destabilised the spiritual and social order of the clan and plunged the community into profound confusion (pg. 176). Moreover, the crisis was compounded by the arrest and public humiliation of the clan leaders at the hands of the colonial authorities and Christian missionaries. These actions intensified the disintegration of indigenous authority and tradition in the clan of Umuofia.

Okika used the proverb to point out that people do not gather so early in the morning, leaving their daily work and duties, unless something deeply troubling or dangerous is threatening their community. Just like a toad, which is normally hidden during the day, only comes out in daylight when it's desperate or in danger, the people have gathered because their very way of life is under threat. (pg. 192). The proverb helps to emphasise the gravity of the colonial disruption, the sacrilege against their gods and traditions, and the emotional and spiritual pain felt by the clan and their ancestors.

In the TL version, the image of a jumping toad is rendered directly into Ekegusii. The Ekegusii audience does not resonate with the image of a toad jumping during the day in a manner that the source-text audience do. Evidently, there is a cultural mismatch between Igbo and Gusii cultural representation of danger and unusual behaviour in the society. These findings are supported by Nyakundi (2010) who examined the translation strategies employed in rendering figurative expressions from the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible into Ekegusii. His findings revealed that literal translations frequently failed to convey the intended figurative meanings of the source text and resulted in a diminished message in the target text.

Masika et al. (2023) found that cultural and linguistic disparities between English and Lubukusu result in unavoidable meaning loss during medical interpretation. This was particularly the case when there are no direct equivalents for English scientific terms

in Lubukusu. They describe this as inevitable loss, which is caused by divergent linguistic and cultural systems that hinder the interpreter from achieving semantic equivalence. According to Vermeer's (1978) Skopos theory, the success of a translation is measured by how well it fulfils its intended purpose in the target culture rather than by formal equivalence to the source.

Consequently, literary translation must account for cultural symbolism, since direct transfer of images can lead to non-equivalence and diminish the intended literary effect. Translators therefore need to employ strategies that preserve both meaning and impact for the target audience.

11. SL: The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them. (pg. 7)

TL: *Risase nigo rikomorekera ritang'ani baria bateneine nyuma ritaramorekera baria batugaime.* (pg. 5)

'The sun shines first on those standing before shining on those kneeling down'

Unoka was speaking to Okoye, who had gone to collect his debt. Unoka explained that he owed many people, and although he did intend to repay all his debts, he must first pay the bigger ones, just like the sun must first shine on those standing before it reaches those who kneel below them (pg. 7). The proverb served as a justification for delaying the repayment, suggesting that more pressing matters must be handled before lesser ones.

In the literal translation, the imagery of the sun shining first on those standing to represent addressing urgent or more serious matters, was lost in word-for-word translation of the proverb. Ekegusii language does not communicate the intended urgency with the image of the shining sun, hence a cultural mismatch. Despite

retaining the wording, the result is a statement without any Ekegusii culturally relevant imagery. This diminished the proverb's communicative effectiveness as Ekegusii readers cannot readily comprehend it.

The findings from the discussants revealed that literal translation led to awkward or unnatural expressions in Ekegusii that hindered the clarity or cultural resonance of the proverbs. These findings are consistent with Newmark (1988). Literal translation of culturally specific items often results in distorted expressions in the target language (Newmark, 1988).

According to Itieba et al. (2023), cultural equivalence in translation is often compromised due to linguistic and cultural asymmetry between the source and target languages. The researchers argue that contextual meaning loss or gain is attributed to the different cultures of the ST and the TT, and that the greater the cultural differences, the higher the translation skills needed to produce an acceptable and relevant translation for the target readers (Itieba et al. 2023:134).

In Vermeer's (1978) Skopos theory, the primary goal of translation is to achieve the intended function in the target culture rather than maintain strict literal equivalence. Therefore, retaining the original wording without cultural adaptation fails to fulfil the communicative purpose for Ekegusii readers. The findings of the current study indicate that literal translation in literary texts can compromise both clarity and cultural resonance, weakening the text's intended impact. Further, it underscores the necessity of culturally sensitive strategies that preserve the meaning and communicative function of proverbs, ensuring that target readers can engage with the text as effectively as the source audience.

#### 4.4.2 Calque

Calque, also known as loan translation, involves the literal translation of individual components of a phrase or expression from the source language into the target language. The illustrations below discuss cases where calque was used and analyses its effectiveness in preserving cultural equivalence:

12. SL: If one finger brought oil it soiled the others. (pg. 118)

TL: *Onye ekiara ekemo kegokuna amaguta, nigo kegoaka ebinde bionsi.* (pg. 123)

‘If one finger touches oil, it spreads to all the others’

Achebe used this proverb in reference to the collective responsibility the clan holds when it comes to offences against the Earth goddess, who is deeply revered. (pg.118). In traditional Igbo, the elders believed that if someone committed a serious crime and the clan failed to punish it, the entire community would suffer divine punishment. The proverb uses a vivid metaphor: oil on one finger easily spreads to the others if not cleaned. In the same way, the sin or guilt of one person can spread and affect everyone unless proper action is taken.

The ST proverb was translated by use of calque, leading to loss of the intended cultural meaning. The word ‘soiled’ was used figuratively in the ST to mean ‘to stain or contaminate’. This was not captured in the TL version as the translator directly translated the word as *kegoaka* “it spreads”. The proverb is unnatural within the Ekegusii cultural context.

Sewell (2001) observed that calques frequently occur in student translations, often reflecting the influence of the source language on the target text, which can lead to both creative linguistic solutions and occasional unnatural phrasing. Similarly, Al-

Athwary and Ali (2024) found that loan translation serves as a productive method for creating neologisms in Arabic, particularly in technical domains, allowing translators to introduce new concepts while maintaining linguistic transparency and intelligibility for the target audience.

However, the present study found that calques often resulted in awkward expressions that were not readily sensible to the Ekegusii audience. Baker (2011) argues that literal translations for figurative expressions results in culturally meaningless expressions in the target language. Moreover, Vermeer (1978) posits that a translation should prioritise its target audience and should therefore be translated in a manner that is comprehensible in the TL. This finding suggests that calque-based translation can compromise readability and cultural resonance of proverbs in literary texts. Translators must therefore adapt expressions to reflect the target audience's linguistic and cultural norms to preserve both meaning and aesthetic impact.

13. SL: Living fire begets cold, impotent ash. (pg. 145)

TL: *Omorero ogwoka inkoibora ore obokendu, ribu riteba.* (pg. 150)

‘Living fire can give birth to cold ash that cannot give birth’

Okonkwo was reflecting on his nickname, the ‘Roaring Flame’, which symbolised his power and warrior spirit. But when he thought about his son, Nwoye, who had turned away from traditional Igbo masculinity and joined the Christian missionaries, Okonkwo felt a mix of shame and anger. (pg. 145). He couldn't understand how someone like him could have produced a son so unlike himself. The proverb conveys the idea that a strong or vibrant entity can produce something weak and ineffective. The imagery of fire contrasts with the product it makes, potent ash.

The translator, using calque, directly translated ‘begets’ as *inkoibora* ‘gives birth to’ instead of ‘bring forth’. The translation only succeeded in retaining the structure of the ST. The phrase ‘impotent ash’ was rendered as *ribu riteba* ‘ash that cannot give birth’. This phrase is both awkward and nonsensical in Ekegusii language, as it is practically impossible for it to happen. The translation therefore led to cultural non-equivalence as the translator failed to bridge the cultural gap between Igbo and Gusii societies.

From the above findings, the use of calque led to awkward and unnatural renditions of proverbs in Ekegusii. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) observes that calque is useful in maintaining the lexical structure of a phrase but produces translations that are linguistically unnatural and culturally unacceptable. The findings of this study reveal that calque resulted in translations that were either unintelligible or conveyed meanings significantly different from those in the Igbo context.

As a result, the failure to adapt proverbs using culturally sensitive strategies contributed to cultural non-equivalence in the translation. These findings are supported by Shormani (2020) who examined how calque affects the accuracy and cultural equivalence of Arabic translations of English proverbs. The study concluded that calque often results in partial or zero equivalence unless supported by cultural competence. Pym’s (2010) Cultural Translation theory emphasises that translation must account for the cultural gap between the source and target languages. Accordingly, the translator’s task is not just to transfer language, but to bridge cultural differences. Table 4 shows a summary of the strategies that yielded cultural non-equivalence:

*Table 4.4: Strategies that Yielded Cultural Non-equivalence*

<b>Translation Strategy</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Literal Translation	6	75%
Calque	2	25%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Field observation (2025)**

The data revealed that literal translation was the most frequently used strategy for rendering culturally non-equivalent proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii, accounting for 75% (6 out of 8) of the identified cases. This heavy reliance on literal translation suggests that the translator prioritised structural accuracy over cultural and contextual adaptation. However, as Newmark (1988) argue, literal translation of culturally bound expressions like proverbs often results in unnatural expressions in the target language. The calque strategy accounted for 25% (2 out of 8). It involved borrowing in which every part of the proverbs was translated word-for-word into Ekegusii.

The predominance of literal translation highlights a tendency toward formal equivalence, which resulted in cultural non-equivalence, limiting Ekegusii audience's full appreciation of the proverbial meaning as it exists in the source culture. The following section examines the cultural functionality of the translated proverbs, highlighting how they convey meaning and resonate within the target cultural context.

#### **4.5 Cultural Functionality of Translated Proverbs in Ekegusii Context**

The second objective was to examine the cultural functionality of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* within the context of Ekegusii upon translation. The functions were broadly categorised into: rhetoric function, sociolinguistic function and aesthetic function as shown in Table 4.5:

*Table 4. 5: Categorisation of Proverbs by Function*

Proverb in SL	Proverb in TL	Cultural Functionality
Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break.	<i>Tiga ekebaki kegwe omote igoro nabo igo ensoti egwe omote igoro. Onye eyemo yabo egokania eyende, tiga orobaba rwaye robonchoke</i> ‘Leave the kite perch and the eagle also perch. If one of them refuses the other, let its wing break’	Rhetoric
Those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble	<i>Baria baateretwe chinyeke chi’emekendo na baria be’emeika emiya tibabaisa koeba koba abakanyeku</i> ‘Those whose seeds for the palm were broken by good spirits should not forget to be calm’	Rhetoric
If one finger brought oil it soiled the others	<i>Onye ekiara ekemo kegokuna amaguta, nigo kegoaka ebinde bionsi</i> ‘If one finger touches oil it soils the others’	Rhetoric
He who brings kola brings life.	<i>Oyokoenana enkara oenanire obogima</i> ‘He who gives fermented flour lumps has given life’	Sociolinguistic
If a child washed his hands, he could eat with kings.	<i>Omwana karasibie amoboko aye nabo akoragera n’abaruoti n’abagaka</i> ‘If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings and elders’	Sociolinguistic
When mother-cow is chewing grass, its young ones watch its mouth.	<i>Ekeru eng’ombe eng’ina egotakuna obonyansi chimori chiaye nigo chigotengera omonwa oye</i> ‘When mother-cow is chewing grass, her calves wait in anticipation’	Sociolinguistic
Eneke the bird says since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching.	<i>Enyoni onchimbo nigo ekobora ng’a ase engencho mwanyabanto aegeire korasa atari komocha, yaegeire koiruruka etari kogwa aande</i> ‘The woodpecker says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, it has learned to fly without perching anywhere’	Aesthetic
Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten.	<i>Emebayeno nero amaguta y’emekendo aria amang’ana akorierwa</i> ‘Proverbs are the oil of the palm that words are eaten with’	Aesthetic

**Source: Field observation (2025)**

The table above presents the cultural functionality of the extracted proverbs. The following section provides an analysis of each proverb, including specific examples from the texts, followed by a narrative discussion of their implications.

#### 4.5.1 Rhetoric Function

This section explores how proverbs are used for persuasion in communication. The following examples illustrate how the rhetoric functions of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* were handled in translation:

14. SL: Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break (pg.19)

TL: *Tiga ekebaki kegwe omote igoro nabo igo ensoti egwe omote igoro. Onye eyemo yabo egokania eyende, tiga orobaba rwaye robonchoke* (pg. 16)

‘Leave the kite perch and the eagle also perch. If one of them refuses the other, let its wing break’

Okonkwo visits Nwakibie, a wealthy man in the clan, to ask him for yam seeds so he can start his own farm. During their conversation, Nwakibie acknowledges that many young men request yams but end up wasting them because of laziness (pg. 19). It serves a rhetorical function by using figurative language to persuade and reinforce social values.

The expression that each person will have what is good for themselves, Nwakibie appeals to shared communal ideals of mutual respect and peaceful co-existence. The proverb functions as a rhetorical tool to caution against intolerance and to promote harmony within a socially diverse community. The persuasive tone and moral authority in it strengthen the message that those who disrupt peace will ultimately face

consequences, thereby reinforcing social cohesion through culturally grounded wisdom.

While the proverb grammatically makes sense in Ekegusii, it does not carry with it the rhetorical function it serves in the ST into the target text. In Gusii culture, people do not associate the kite and the eagle with peace or conflict resolution as it is the case in the ST. The findings revealed that the cultural misalignment between the Igbo and Gusii societies facilitated the loss of the cultural functionality of the proverb. The rhetoric function is therefore unsuccessfully conveyed in the target text.

The findings are supported by Al-zzam (2018) who studied the problem in translating Jordanian proverbs into English. The study reported that the major issue in proverb translation is the loss of cultural functionality. Jordanian proverbs are deeply rooted in the socio-cultural and historical experiences of the people, shaped by specific events or traditional values. When these proverbs are translated literally into English, much of their embedded cultural meaning and contextual relevance are lost. The present study concluded that literal translation alone cannot guarantee the transfer of rhetorical or cultural functions. Literary translators must consider culturally specific symbolism and adapt or substitute elements to ensure that the intended meaning, persuasive force and cultural resonance are preserved for the target audience. This is consistent with Vermeer's (1978) Skopos theory which posits that the translation should prioritise fulfilling its intended function in the target culture.

15. SL: Those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble. (pg.23)

TL: *Baria baateretwe chinyeke chi'emekendo na baria be'emeika emiya tibabaisa koeba koba abakanyeku.* (pg. 25)

‘Those whose seeds for the palm were broken by good spirits should not forget to be calm’

Okonkwo publicly insulted Osugo, a clansman who had not yet taken any titles, by dismissively referring to him as a woman. Within the patriarchal framework of Igbo society, masculinity was closely tied to social status marked by the attainment of titles. Such a remark therefore constituted a grave affront. To equate a man with a woman in this context implied social inferiority and a failure to embody the ideals of manhood. The others at the meeting, including the oldest man present, disapproved of Okonkwo’s harsh words. The old man used this proverb to rebuke Okonkwo, reminding him that his success was not entirely his own doing, that perhaps he had been helped by fate, the gods or other people as well. Cracking palm-kernels is a very difficult task, and anyone who does it could be proud of their efforts. The old man believed that Okonkwo’s arrogance towards others stemmed from his success, and reminded him to be humble (pg. 23).

The proverb serves to warn those who are proud in the society for having achieved something of value. The proverb reminds them to stay humble, their success notwithstanding. The proverb, having been directly translated, the resulting expression was awkward and did not make sense in the target language. The Ekegusii audience did not resonate with the symbol of the cracking the palm-kernels since they are absent among the Gusii people. Consequently, the cautionary function is lost in translation due to the use of literal translation by the translator. The Gusii people have different ways of cautioning against arrogance among its population.

The Ekegusii proverb *Borema igoro bore* ‘don’t mock the weak, misfortune grows slowly’ could have retained the cautionary role that the ST played. The study concluded that literary translators must consider culturally equivalent symbols or

proverbs that perform the same communicative role in the target culture to preserve meaning and impact.

From a standpoint of Vermeer's (1978) Skopos theory, the translation's purpose is to convey the intended function effectively to the target audience. Since the literal rendering fails to caution the Ekegusii readers, employing culturally relevant equivalents reflects the translation with its intended communicative goal. These findings are supported by Mwiti (2015) who studied the translation of Kimeru proverbs into English. The researcher found out that the literal translation of Kimeru proverbs frequently resulted in lexical and cultural distortion, as many of the proverbs contained culturally specific references that lost meaning when rendered directly into English. Nord (2018) posits that even as the translator is loyal to the source-text form, they should always ensure that the function of the translation is attained in the target text.

16. SL: If one finger brought oil it soiled the others. (pg. 118)

TL: *Onye ekiara ekemo kekokuna amaguta, nigo kegoaka ebinde bionsi.*  
(pg. 123)

'If one finger touches oil it soils the others'

Achebe had referred to this proverb to emphasize the wrath of the great goddess. The goddess had demanded that justice be executed after the accidental killing of a clansman by Okonkwo. That was considered a serious offence against the Earth goddess. If men had failed to carry out the necessary ritual punishment, the goddess had threatened to unleash her anger upon the entire land, not just the individual offender (pg. 118). The proverb functions as a warning for cautioning that the failure to address individual wrongdoing can lead to collective suffering.

It also emphasises the idea that neglecting justice not only harms moral order but also invites consequences that affect the entire community.

The proverb in the source text has a form unfamiliar to the Ekegusii audience. However, its modification through shifting the expression from *brought* to *kegoaka* ‘spreads’ enhanced its rhetorical function in the Ekegusii language. This change in perspective allowed the proverb to sound natural and persuasive within the Ekegusii cultural context. The translated version aligns with the Ekegusii audience’s linguistic patterns, and retains the ability to caution and influence behaviour, just as in the source text. The adaptation ensured that the proverb continues to function as a rhetorical device, effectively conveying its cautionary message and reinforcing social norms in a culturally resonant way. This study reports that by modifying culturally unfamiliar expressions, translators can preserve the communicative intent and ensure that the text resonates naturally with the target audience. As Vermeer’s (1978) theory posits, the translator’s purpose is to achieve the intended effect in the target culture. Similar to the findings of this study, Hasibuan and Nuraini (2022) found that modulation was used as a translation technique to adapt the meaning of Mandailing proverbs into English and helped retain the emotional and cultural functions even when literal translation was not possible.

#### **4.5.2 Aesthetic Function**

The aesthetic function of proverbs refers to their ability to beautify language, enhance oral artistry and contribute to the poetic and expressive quality of speech. The following examples illustrate how the aesthetic function of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* has been handled in translation:

17. SL: Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten. (pg. 7)

TL: *Emebayeno nero amaguta y'emekendo aria amang'ana akorierwa.* (pg. 5)

‘Proverbs are the oil of the palm that words are eaten with’

Achebe indicates that in the Igbo society, the art of conversation is highly regarded. The proverbs are used to embellish the conversation (pg. 7). The proverb underscores the importance of proverbs in conversations. This aesthetic dimension reflects the traditional Igbo view that eloquence is not only functional but also artistic. Achebe likened them with palm oil, which is a precious commodity for enhancing food among the Igbo people. The function of this proverb is aesthetic and preserves cultural belief about the value of language and oral tradition in Igbo society. It reflects the belief that effective communication is not just about speaking plainly, but about speaking wisely and artfully. The proverb reinforces the tradition of using language not only to convey meaning but also to uphold the cultural identity and values of the community.

The proverb was translated directly, yet the symbol of palm oil is unfamiliar among the Gusii people. The Gusii audience cannot resonate with the imagery of the palm oil as the source-text audience do. The findings of this study show that the cultural function of expressing the tradition of using proverbs in conversations among the Igbo is lost in translation due to cultural misalignment. These findings are supported by Fatuase (2017) who reported that over 47% of proverbs in translated novels of Daniel Olorunfemi Fagunwa (D.O. Fagunwa) lost their stylistic and cultural functionality due to the use of literal strategies which failed to preserve their original communicative purpose. To address these issues, scholars recommend the use of adaptive strategies, such as paraphrasing, functional equivalence and cultural substitution, which allow

translators to maintain the intended meaning and function of proverbs in the target language (Mwiti, 2015; Orago, 2013; Fatuase, 2017).

18. SL: Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching (pg. 21)

TL: *Enyoni onchimbo nigo ekobora ng'a ase engencho mwanyabanto aegeire korasa atari komocha, yaegeire koiruruka etari kogwa aande.* (pg. 19)

‘The woodpecker says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, it has learned to fly without perching anywhere’

This proverb was spoken by Nwakibie when Okonkwo approached him to request yam seeds for planting. He remarked that many young men lacked diligence, and when he refused to help them, they might perceive him as unkind. Consequently, he had learned to be cautious and reserved with his resources (pg. 19). The proverb is aesthetic because it uses vivid imagery and metaphor to express adaptability in the face of danger. Besides capturing a deeper truth in a graceful and memorable way, the proverb presents a response to threat in a poetic and balanced structure. This was made possible through personifying the bird. Its rhythm elevates it beyond mere advice and makes it a stylistically rich expression. The proverb encourages individuals to learn from their experiences and adjust their behaviour to fit in the new realities around them. In doing so, it emphasises the importance of discernment, self-preservation and the ability to change one’s approach in response to shifting conditions.

The addition of *aande* ‘anywhere’ to the phrase ‘without perching’ in the TT constitutes a deliberate case of amplification that served to preserve the aesthetic function of the proverb. While the ST simply states, ‘without perching’, the TT extends this to *etari kogwa aande* ‘without perching anywhere’. This addition enhanced the musicality, rhythm and imagery of the expression in Ekegusii. In Gusii oral tradition, proverbs are

not only valued for their wisdom but also for their stylistic beauty. The rhythm introduced by *aande* creates a smoother and more lyrical flow, which reflects the oral performance culture of the Ekegusii community. Aesthetically, this extended form mirrors the intensity and continuity of the action described (landing), drawing the listener deeper into the imagery of something that is in constant motion and never settling. Moreover, the use of *aande* introduces a heightened sense of openness and expansiveness, strengthening the visual metaphor and allowing the audience to imagine a broader and more poetic scene.

This reinforces the figurative power of the proverb, ensuring it maintains not only its meaning but also its evocative and stylistic force. The study concluded that purposeful amplification in translation can safeguard and even enrich the aesthetic qualities of literary expressions. The incorporation of culturally meaningful elements by translators can preserve the musicality, imagery and oral performance aspects of proverbs. This ensures that the target audience appreciates both the meaning and stylistic beauty. These findings are similar to those of Lubis (2018) who found out that in cases where direct translation could distort meaning of Indonesian proverbs when translated into English, adaptation played a crucial role in maintaining the functionality of the proverbs. Skopos theory stresses that translation is determined by its function in the target context (Vermeer, 1978).

#### **4.5.3 Sociolinguistic Function**

Proverbs are a key component of oral literature that encode social wisdom and regulate behaviour within traditional societies. The findings below draw on responses obtained from FGDs conducted by the researcher. Presented below are specific examples from the texts:

19. SL: He who brings kola brings life. (pg. 5)

TL: *Oyokoenana enkara oenanire obogima.* (pg. 4)  
'He who gives fermented flour lumps gives life'

Unoka's declaration that he had a kola nut signified a gesture of kindness and openness, prompting Okoye to respond with the proverb (pg. 5). In Igbo tradition, the kola nut represented harmony, honor, and friendship. Its presentation was a ritual observed during key social occasions, such as receiving visitors, mediating conflicts or beginning community dialogues. The function of this proverb is to express and reinforce cultural beliefs and traditions.

It highlights the symbolic role of the kola nut in Igbo society, where its presentation is more than a social courtesy. It reflects the deeply rooted values of respect, unity and hospitality. Through the proverb, traditional practices are affirmed and passed down, preserving communal identity and cultural continuity. Furthermore, it serves as a reminder of the importance of honouring customs that strengthen social bonds and maintain harmony within the Igbo community.

The original proverb uses the symbol of a kola nut to convey the message of generosity and hospitality. The translator successfully managed to adapt the symbol of a kola, that is absent among the Gusii people, to *fermented flour lumps*. Traditional brew is made from the fermented flour lumps and serves the same cultural significance within the Gusii ceremonies and bonding activities. The cultural functionality of the proverb was successfully retained in the Ekegusii cultural context.

The findings of the current study demonstrate that effective cultural substitution can preserve both the meaning and function of a proverb in translation. By replacing unfamiliar symbols with culturally relevant ones, translators ensure that the text continues to convey its intended message and resonate with the target audience. The

adaptation should reflect the translator's alignment with the purpose of the translation (Vermeer, 1978). These findings are consistent with Reiss and Vermeer's (1984) Skopos theory, which emphasises that translation should achieve the intended function within the target culture, even if it requires adaptation. Similarly, Nida's (1964) principle of dynamic equivalence supports the idea that translations should evoke a similar response in the target audience as in the source audience

20. SL: When mother-cow is chewing grass its young ones watch its mouth.  
(pg. 66)

TL: *Ekeru eng'ombe eng'ina egotakuna obonyansi chimori chiaye nigo chigotengera omonwa oye* (pg. 67)

'When mother-cow is chewing grass, her calves wait in anticipation'

When Obierika sent his son, Maduka, to bring kola nuts, he vanished at once to bring them. Obierika's eldest brother likened Maduka's sharpness to Obierika at his young age as well. (pg. 66). The proverb teaches that children often mirror their parents' behaviour and are influenced by their backgrounds. The proverb underscores how the values and actions of parents shape the way children develop and behave in the society. In other words, children are likely to reflect the traits and habits they observe within their social environment and examples set by their parents.

In Gusii culture, the concept of children learning from parents or adults is expressed differently; with different imagery. The proverb *Nyang'era ndotungi Na mori yaye ndotungi* 'A young one of a buffalo is like the buffalo itself' holds the same sociolinguistic function of teaching about the similarity of children's traits with their parents. The findings reveal that the cultural function of the ST proverb was lost since the imagery in the source text was not readily relatable to the Ekegusii audience.

Similarly, Orago (2013) observed that Dholuo proverbs lost their rhetorical and contextual impact when translated word-for-word, emphasising that cultural values inherent in the source language were not adequately conveyed.

From the above illustrations, it emerged that the translation of Igbo proverbs using strategies that do not preserve the context and figurative meaning in the ST resulted in them losing their cultural functionality. Nida (1964) observes that cultural meanings may not be conveyed to target languages in literal translations. Similarly, Newmark (1988) states that when translators focus solely on linguistic equivalence without considering the cultural context, the proverbial wisdom embedded in the source text may be lost. Additionally, Toury (1995) emphasises that context is crucial in rendering function, without which the translation risks distorting the cultural identity of the original text.

Vermeer's Skopos theory (1989) affirms that translation must be guided by its intended purpose in the target culture rather than by literal equivalence. By prioritising functional adequacy, Skopos theory underscores the need for translators to preserve the communicative and cultural role of proverbs, ensuring that their figurative and rhetorical impact is maintained for the target audience.

The table below shows a summary of the categorisation of proverbs by the functions they serve in the source text:

*Table 4.6: Summary of Proverbs Studied on Cultural Functionality*

<b>Cultural Function</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Functionality Preserved</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Functionality Lost</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Rhetoric	3	1	33.3%	2	66.7%
Aesthetic	2	1	50%	1	50%
Sociolinguistic	3	1	33.3%	2	66.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>5</b>	

**Source: Field observation (2025)**

From Table 4.6, 4.8 proverbs were analysed across three cultural functions (rhetoric, aesthetic and sociolinguistic). Functionality was preserved in only 3 cases, representing 37.5% and lost in 5 cases, accounting for 62.5%. The rhetorical function showed the greatest loss, with 66.7 of the rhetorical proverbs losing their intended effect in translation. This suggests that the persuasive force of these proverbs did not effectively carry over into Ekegusii. This was attributed to cultural incongruities and translation choices that prioritised literal equivalence over functional equivalence. Similarly, for sociolinguistic functions, 66.7% of the proverbs also lost their functionality.

This reflects challenges in preserving the social roles, relationships or community values embedded in the Igbo proverbs when rendered into the Ekegusii. On the other hand, aesthetic functions had a more balanced outcome: 50% of the aesthetic elements were preserved, while the other 50% were lost. This indicates a moderate success in retaining the stylistic and artistic qualities of the original proverbs in translation. Generally, the findings point to a notable functional loss, particularly in rhetorical and sociolinguistic areas. This highlights the complexities involved in cross-cultural proverb translation. These findings support the argument that form-based strategies may not adequately capture the communicative intent and cultural depth of proverbial expressions. This further emphasises the need for function-oriented translation

strategies. The following section examines the applicability of Skopos theory in the translation of proverbs from *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii, highlighting how functional considerations guided the translator's choices.

#### **4.6 The Applicability of Skopos Theory in Translation of Proverbs**

The third objective was to evaluate how Skopos theory accounts for the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii in *Binto Mbisebererekani*. The table below shows a summary of data extracted from the primary texts on the tenets applied in the translation of specific proverbs:

*Table 4.7: Tenets of Skopos Theory Applied in Translation of Proverbs*

Proverb in SL	Translation in TL	Tenet Applied
He who brings kola brings life.	<i>Oyokoenana enkara oenanire obogima</i> ‘He who gives fermented flour lumps gives brings life’	Skopos rule of purpose
Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching.	<i>Enyoni onchimbo nigo ekobora ng’a ase engencho mwanyabanto aegeire korasa atari komocha, yaegeire koiruruka etari kogwa aande</i> ‘Woodpecker says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching anywhere’	Skopos rule of purpose
Living fire begets cold, impotent ash.	<i>Omorero ogwoka inkoibora ore obokendu, ribu riteba</i> ‘Burning fire gives birth to cold ash that does not give birth’	Fidelity to source text
The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them.	<i>Risase nigo rikomorekera ritang’ani baria bateneine nyuma ritaramorekera baria batugaima</i> ‘The sun shines first on those standing before shining on those kneeling down’	Fidelity to source text
If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings.	<i>Omwana karasibie amoboko aye nabo akoragera n’abaruoti n’abagaka</i> ‘If a child washes his hands he could eat with kings and elders’	Audience-oriented coherence
A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving.	<i>Omonto okorangeria abaamate n’abairi ase omoyega tari gokora bo erio kobatoria gokwa enchara</i> ‘A man who calls his kinsmen and relatives to a feast does not do so to save them from starving’	Audience-oriented coherence
You can tell a ripe corn by its look	<i>Nabo okorora egetuma giakongire ase okororekana kwaye</i> ‘You can see a ripe corn by its look’	Translator as a cultural mediator
If one finger brought oil it soiled the others.	<i>Onye ekiara ekemo kegokuna amaguta, nigo kegoaka ebinde bionsi.</i> ‘If one finger touches oil it soils the others’	Translator as a cultural mediator

**Source: Field observation (2025)**

The table above outlines the different tenets of Skopos theory applied by the translator in rendering the proverbs into Ekegusii. The following section illustrates specific examples, providing analysis and a discussion of whether the translator successfully made the proverbs relatable to the Ekegusii audience.

#### **4.6.1 Translation Purpose**

This subsection examines whether the proverbs in the Ekegusii translation of *Things Fall Apart* serve the same cultural and communicative functions as they do in the original English text. The focus is on whether the translated proverbs reflect contextually appropriate meanings, by ensuring Ekegusii speakers to relate with them as natural and functional within their cultural framework. The following analysis draws on selected proverbs and feedback from respondents to evaluate if the translation was guided by the intended function of the text in the Ekegusii context:

21. SL: He who brings kola brings life. (pg. 5)

TL: *Oyokoenana enkara oenanire obogima.* (pg. 4)

‘He who gives fermented flour lumps gives brings life’

In order to evaluate the translation purpose and cultural functionality of the translated proverbs, respondents were asked the question:

#### **Q1**

Which purpose do you think the translated proverb in Ekegusii serve?

Unoka’s announcement that he had a kola signified an expression of goodwill and hospitality, prompting Okoye to respond with the proverb (pg. 5). In traditional Igbo culture, the kola nut is a powerful symbol of peace, respect and friendship. Its

presentation was a customary ritual during significant social occasions like welcoming visitors, settling conflicts and initiating communal dialogues.

From the respondents' feedback, the translated Ekegusii proverb effectively fulfills the skopos of the SL proverb by conveying the intended message of generosity and social cohesion in a culturally meaningful way.

The use of fermented flour lumps associated with traditional brew for communal gatherings made the proverb feel natural and culturally resonant. This cultural grounding enhanced the proverb's functionality within the Ekegusii context and ensured that its lesson is both understood and valued by the Ekegusii audience. The findings of this study reveal that translation decisions are purpose-driven and audience-oriented. The current study concluded that literary translation requires sensitivity to cultural symbols and adaptation strategies that reflect the target audience's worldview, ensuring that the proverb not only communicates meaning but also retains its social and rhetorical impact.

These findings are supported by Kuang (2023) who found that the translation of English film titles varied across Chinese regions due to different cultural and linguistic preferences. The researcher argued that translators in Mainland China often opted for direct translations while those in Hong Kong and Taiwan favour more localised and creative renderings. According to Vermeer's (1978) skopos theory, a translation should not aim for literal equivalence but instead prioritise functional appropriateness in the receiving culture.

22. SL: Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching. (pg. 21)

TL: *Enyoni onchimbo nigo ekobora ng'a ase engencho  
mwanabantu ayegeire korasa atari komocha, yaeyeire  
koiruruka etari kogwa aande.* (pg. 19)

‘Woodpecker says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching anywhere’

## Q2

Do you feel that this Ekegusii proverb delivers the same message and meaning as it would in our culture? Does it sound natural to you, and does it teach the lesson in a way our people can understand and relate to?

Nwakibie said this proverb when Okonkwo went to borrow yams for planting from him. He expressed that young men tend to be lazy. If he refused to help them, they might see him as cold-hearted. Because of this, he had learned to be careful and stingy with how he lent out his yams. (pg. 19). He uses the image of a bird learning to fly without perching to symbolise caution and cleverness in response to danger. The Ekegusii translation retained this core message by using a bird familiar to the local audience (the woodpecker), expressing the idea in a culturally resonant language. This makes the proverb not only understandable but also meaningful within the Ekegusii worldview.

From the respondents' perspectives, the Ekegusii proverb works effectively because it speaks to values deeply rooted in Gusii culture; resilience, alertness and adaptability. The translated proverb teaches the same lesson as the original in a way that sounds natural and is easy to relate to. Accordingly, the translation met its Skopos of conveying the intended message clearly and meaningfully to the Ekegusii audience. Moreover, by using familiar imagery and expressions, the translation achieved cultural functionality: it fits smoothly into Ekegusii oral traditions and wisdom, ensuring the proverb's lesson remains impactful. This study concluded translation should prioritise

the intended communicative purpose over strict linguistic equivalence. The findings underscore that applying Skopos theory enables translators to produce proverbs that are not only linguistically accurate but also functionally effective in cross-cultural communication.

These findings are similar to those of Shi and Li (2023) who explored translation strategies for English news articles through the lens of Vermeer's (1978) Skopos Theory.

#### **4.6.2 Audience-Oriented Coherence in Ekegusii**

Achieving coherence in the target text is a crucial marker of functional and culturally appropriate translation. The following examples illustrate how the translator rendered the proverbs in a manner that fostered cultural and communicative clarity to the Ekegusii audience:

23. SL: If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings. (pg. 8)

TL: *Omwana karasibie amoboko aye nabo akoragera n'abaruoti n'abagaka.* (pg.6)

'If a child washes his hands he could eat with kings and elders'

Respondents were asked for their views in the above translation by means of the following question:

#### **Q3**

What do you think about the inclusion of elders in the translation? Does this way of saying it reflect how people in the Gusii community understand respect and success?

In Igbo culture, while age commanded respect, personal achievement was held in even higher esteem (Achebe, 1958). Okonkwo, having accomplished much at a young age, had earned the honour of dining with kings (pg. 8). The proverb is invoked in reference

to Okonkwo, underscoring the high value placed on individual success and merit within Igbo society.

However, kings are absent in the traditional Gusii leadership, necessitating incorporation of elders in the translated version. In Gusii culture, elders are not only authoritative figures but also occupy a revered position in communal leadership and decision making.

The deliberate incorporation of *elders* by the translator domesticated the proverb with the Ekegusii culture's value system and enhanced its interpretability and relevance. The findings revealed that domesticating culture-specific references can enhance the interpretability and relevance of proverbs in the target context. The substitution the unfamiliar symbols by the translator ensured that the proverb remained meaningful and functionally effective for the Ekegusii audience, thereby preserving both its cultural and rhetorical impact.

According to Nord (2018), audience-oriented coherence is the extent to which a target text is interpretable by its intended readers based on their cultural knowledge, expectations and textual competence. This enabled the proverb to reflect the worldview of the Ekegusii audience. As Hatim and Mason (1997) assert, coherence in translation is shaped by the interaction between textual features and reader expectations in a specific sociocultural context. The translation thus succeeded in facilitating audience understanding and interpretation of the proverb. Similarly, Lou and Niehues (2023) reported that incorporating audience-specific explanations into machine translation enhanced the understanding of culturally bound terms. The items were unfamiliar to target audiences despite accurate literal translations. Their findings suggest that audience-coherence approach is both effective and robust across multiple

languages, and a provides a sure way of improving cross-cultural communication in machine translation.

24. SL: A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. (pg. 157)

TL: *Omonto okorangeria abaamate n'abairi ase omoyega tari gokora bo erio kobatoria gokwa enchara.* (pg. 163)

'A man who calls his kinsmen and relatives to a feast does not do so to save them from starving'

#### Q4

In the Ekegusii version of this proverb, the translator mentions both neighbours and relatives. What do you think about this choice? Does it reflect how Gusii people understand gatherings or feasts?

During the feast hosted by Okonkwo, the eldest member of the clan stood to express gratitude for his generosity and hospitality through the use of a proverb (pg. 157). This proverb conveys the idea that communal feasts and acts of generosity serve not just to meet basic needs, but also to reinforce social bonds and promote unity within the community.

The participants' feedback revealed that the translation was meaningful, relevant and culturally appropriate for Ekegusii audience. The choice by the translator to render "kinsmen" in the source text as *abaamate n'abairi* "relatives and neighbours" in the Ekegusii version demonstrates an effort to localise the proverb in a way that resonates with the socio-cultural expectations of the Gusii community. From the responses, this translation choice is seen as accurate and reflective of the Gusii worldview, where communal gatherings such as feasts are not limited to immediate kin but also involve neighbours and extended family members. Similarly, Salih (2023) found that

prioritising communicative purpose in the translation of Arabic tourist texts into English improved their effectiveness and clarity for international readers. The study emphasises that audience-oriented coherence is essential in tourism translation to ensure that translated texts are not only linguistically accurate but also accessible to the intended readership.

#### 4.6.3 Maintaining Intertextual Links with the Source Text

The concept of loyalty emphasises the ethical responsibility of the translator to both the source text and its author. The following examples illustrate translations that maintained direct structural correspondence with the source text:

25. SL:       The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them. (pg. 7)

TL:                 *Risase nigo rikomorekera ritang'ani baria bateneine nyuma ritaramorekera baria batugaima.* (pg. 5)

‘The sun shines first on those standing before shining on those kneeling down’

#### Q5.

How do you understand this Ekegusii proverb? Does it sound like a typical Ekegusii proverb to you? Please explain.

Unoka, was addressing Okoye, who had come to demand repayment of a debt. In response, Unoka explained that he was indebted to many people and, while he intended to settle all his obligations, he prioritised repaying the larger debts first. He compared this to the sun shining first on those who stand before reaching those who kneel (pg. 7). The proverb functions as a rationale for postponing repayment, implying that more urgent responsibilities must take precedence over less critical ones.

The findings of this study reveal that the respondents found the translated version unnatural, structurally unfamiliar and lacking the clarity and brevity that is typical of Ekegusii proverbs. The abstract imagery and literal rendering confused the audience and failed to convey the intended moral lesson. This is suggestive of a breakdown in communicative equivalence. This indicated that the translator prioritised formal fidelity over functional effectiveness, leading to a culturally ineffective translation. However, this allowed the Gusii audience to gain understanding of Igbo ways of life and values. The study concluded underscored the tension between preserving cultural authenticity and ensuring functional resonance, suggesting that translators must carefully balance these two aims depending on the Skopos of the translation.

Similarly, Sheng et al. (2019) examined how the fidelity rule operates in subtitle translation. The study focused on the balance between staying true to the source text and adapting to the target audience's cultural context. The researchers concluded that while fidelity is important, it is subordinate to the skopos (purpose) and coherence rules. Furthermore, Nida (1964) observes that foreignisation strategies can serve as educational tools for target audiences, and promote cultural understanding across linguistic boundaries. Nord's (2018) principle of function plus loyalty emphasises that a translator's loyalty is not only to the target audience but also to the source text and its author.

26. SL: Living fire begets cold, impotent ash. (pg. 145)

TL: *Omorero ogwoka inkoibora ore obokendu, ribu riteba.* (pg. 150)

(Burning fire gives birth to cold ash that does not give birth)

## Q6.

Do you think the translator tried to stay very close to the original English wording or meaning in this Ekegusii translation? If so, does this help or make it harder for you to understand the proverb?

Okonkwo contemplated his nickname, the ‘Roaring Flame’, which represented his strength and warrior spirit. However, when he considers his son Nwoye, who has rejected traditional Igbo masculinity to join the Christian missionaries, Okonkwo experienced a blend of shame and anger. (pg. 145). He struggled to comprehend how someone like himself could father a son so different. This proverb expresses the notion that a powerful or vigorous being can give rise to something weak and ineffectual.

From the respondents’ feedback, the translated proverb sounds awkward, unnatural and semantically incoherent within Ekegusii language context. The direct replication of the source text’s word order, without any linguistic or cultural adaptation compromised the proverb’s meaning. Consequently, the translation failed to achieve communicative effectiveness or cultural resonance in the target context. Nord (2018) argues that translators must consider the expectations of both the source and target audiences, ensuring “function plus loyalty.” However, the translation of this proverb does not adhere to the functionality aspect of the tenet, resulting to an expression that is awkward and meaningless in Ekegusii. This study found that contextual cultural modifications were necessary if the meaning must be retained.

Similarly, Ali (2023) studied the translation of Abdullah Al Faisal’s poem *Revolution of Doubts* found that while the fidelity rule was moderately maintained, some interpretative adaptations were necessary to resonate with the English-speaking audience. This approach demonstrated how translators can effectively navigate

between staying true to the source and adapting for cultural and linguistic relevance. Vermeer (1989) argues that the skopos of a translation governs the methods and strategies a translator employs. In this case, the translator prioritised a documentary translation skopos. She aimed at informing the target audience about the form and content of the source culture, rather than employing functional equivalence in Ekegusii culture. The current study's findings underscore the necessity of adapting linguistic form and cultural references to ensure communicative effectiveness and preserve the aesthetic and rhetorical power of proverbs in the target context.

#### **4.6.4 Translator as a Cultural Mediator**

In order to translate culturally embedded texts into another language, the translator must assume not only be a linguistics converter but a cultural mediator as well. The following are specific examples from the primary texts that demonstrate the efforts of the translator in mediating the cultural differences:

27. SL:           You can tell a ripe corn by its look. (pg.21)

TL:               *Nabo okorora egetuma giakongire ase okororekana kwaye.* (pg. 19)  
(You can see a ripe corn by its look.)

#### **Q7.**

How does the translator's choice of words in the Ekegusii version of the proverb reflect an understanding of the target culture? In what ways does this choice help bridge cultural meaning between the source and target audiences?

When Okonkwo approached Nwakibie to borrow yams, Nwakibie initially hesitated, expressing doubt about the reliability of young men, whom he viewed as generally indolent and unlikely to repay. However, recognising Okonkwo's evident determination and industriousness, he reconsidered and decided to assist him, leading

him to invoke the proverb (pg. 21). In the ST, this proverb conveys the notion that the potential for goodness or success is often evident from outward signs.

The Ekegusii version of demonstrates the translator's effective use of culturally familiar language to convey the intended message. The respondents were able to interpret the proverb correctly and effortlessly. Their comments suggested that the phrase reflects everyday Ekegusii expressions and reflects the way knowledge is typically communicated in the Gusii community; through observation and direct experience. The consistent reference to the visibility of ripeness among the respondents indicates that the metaphor used in the translation resonates naturally with their agricultural worldview. In Ekegusii culture, being able to 'see' when something is ready, whether a crop or a person's maturity, is a commonly understood concept. Thus, by choosing a perspective rooted in the Ekegusii culture's logic, the translator preserved the proverb's didactic purpose while enhancing its accessibility and relevance to the audience. From the findings, the study concluded that employing culturally familiar metaphors enhances both accessibility and relevance of translated proverbs, allowing the target audience to grasp the intended meaning with ease.

Similarly, Zhang (2020) found that effective cultural translation requires translators to act as cultural mediators who not only transfer linguistic content but also faithfully convey cultural subtleties embedded in the source text. She introduced the concept of 'cultural fax' which maintained that successful translation integrates faithfulness and expressiveness. This enables the translated text to resonate with the target audience while preserving the integrity of the source culture. According to Nord (2018), Skopos theory extends beyond the general principle of purpose and provides practical guidelines for achieving functional equivalence, such as analysing the target audience, context, and communicative function before making translation decisions.

28. SL: If one finger brought oil it soiled the others. (pg. 118)

TL: *Onye ekiara ekemo kegokuna amaguta, nigo kegoaka ebinde bionsi.* (pg. 123)

‘If one finger touches oil it spreads to the others’

**Q8.**

How well does the Ekegusii version of the proverb convey the meaning of the SL proverb, and in what ways do the words or expressions used make it easier for you to understand the message?

Achebe cites this proverb to underscore the severity of the great goddess’s retribution. The goddess emphasised that if justice is not administered by men, she will direct her wrath toward the entire land rather than solely the transgressor (pg. 118). In the ST, figuratively, the proverb conveys the idea that the misconduct of an individual can have far-reaching consequences, adversely affecting the broader community to which they belong.

The respondents’ unanimous recognition of the proverb’s meaning underscores the translator’s effective mediation between cultures. The use of the term *kegoaka* ‘spreads’ instead of a literal translation *kegotiringa* ‘soils’ that could imply impurity, the translator ensured the message remained culturally resonant and avoided unintended connotations.

From the above findings, it was revealed that careful lexical choice can preserve the figurative meaning of a proverb while avoiding unintended negative connotations in the target culture. This highlights the importance of sensitive mediation between languages to maintain rhetorical force while adapting to cultural norms.

In another study, Katan (2014) asserts that translators must navigate cultural subtleties to convey accurate meanings. Liddicoat (2016) discussed the concept of intercultural

mediation in translation and the translator's role as a cultural mediator. He argued that translation is not merely a linguistic task but an interpretive act that involves conveying meanings constructed within one language and culture to an audience that does not share that context. The researcher concluded that this process requires the translator to navigate cultural differences and rearticulate meanings to ensure effective communication. Wang and Zhou (2023) found that the application of Skopos Theory significantly enhanced the effectiveness of English-Chinese translation by employing techniques with the intended purpose of the translation.

Their study emphasised that strategies such as addition, omission, conversion, restructuring and shifts in voice are not arbitrary but must be selected based on the function the translation is meant to fulfill. The adherence to the three core rules; the Skopos rule, the coherence rule and the fidelity rule, translators are better equipped to produce contextually appropriate and culturally resonant translations. According to the duo, this approach leads to clearer communication and greater audience engagement in cross-cultural settings. Table 8 provides a summary of the Skopos Theory tenets that were applied in the translation of the proverbs:

*Table 4.8: Proverbs Analysed for Skopos Theory Tenets*

<b>Translation Strategy</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Skopos rule of Purpose	2	16%
Audience-oriented	3	23%
Coherence		
Fidelity to source Text	5	38%
Translator as Cultural Mediator	3	23%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Field observation (2025)**

In the table above, a total of 13 instances were categorised according to four core strategies: adherence to the Skopos rule of purpose, audience-oriented coherence, fidelity to the source text and the translator's role as a cultural mediator. The most frequently applied strategy was fidelity to the source text, accounting for 38%. This suggests that the translator often prioritised maintaining semantic and structural faithfulness to the original English version of the proverbs. While this approach ensured lexical and syntactic accuracy, it also resulted in a loss of cultural and contextual appropriateness when transferred to the Ekegusii audience.

This was especially the case where direct equivalents did not exist. Both audience-oriented coherence and translator as cultural mediator were used in 3 instances each (23% respectively). These strategies reflect a functional and adaptive orientation, where the translator sought to make the proverbs meaningful and culturally relevant to Ekegusii audience. The equal frequency of these two strategies demonstrates a moderate effort to bridge cultural gaps and to ensure that the translation resonates with Ekegusii-speaking readers. It is consistent with the Skopos Theory's emphasis on the communicative purpose and contextual suitability of the translated text.

The Skopos rule of purpose, which forms the theoretical backbone of Skopos Theory, was observed in only 2 cases (16%). This relatively low frequency indicate that the overarching translation purpose was not consistently prioritised in the rendering of proverbs. The predominance of source-text fidelity over functionally oriented strategies such as audience coherence and cultural mediation suggests a partial adherence to Skopos Theory in practice. Although some proverbs were adapted to suit the target culture, the translator's reliance on literal translation had limited achievement of full cultural equivalence, especially in contexts where functional or cultural adaptation was necessary for effective communication.

#### **4.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented, analysed and discussed the research data. In line with the study's objectives, the analysis primarily focused on examining cultural equivalence and non-equivalence in cross-cultural translation, examining the cultural functionality of the translated proverbs within Ekegusii language context and evaluating the application of Skopos Theory in the translation of proverbs into Ekegusii. Data was systematically extracted and the corresponding findings were critically discussed. The next chapter provides a summary of the study, followed by conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This study analysed the cultural equivalence and non-equivalence in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii in *Binto Mbisebererekani*. This was crucial in examining the cultural functionality of the translated versions of proverbs within the Ekegusii context. The evaluation was conducted from the perspective of the tenets of Skopos theory as postulated by Vermeer (1978). This chapter presents a summary of the research findings, along with the conclusions and recommendations derived from them. It also outlines suggested areas for further research. The summary of the findings is organised according to the study's objectives.

#### 5.2 Summary of Findings

The study aimed to examine aspects of cultural equivalence and non-equivalence in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii in *Binto Mbisebererekani*. To achieve this, specific research objectives and questions were formulated. The analysis was primarily guided by the objectives of the study, ensuring coherence between the research questions and the interpretation of results. The presentation of the findings was done thematically in line with the objectives of the study as follows:

The first objective was to analyse cultural equivalence in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii in *Binto Mbisebererekani*. The findings revealed that the strategies of adaptation and modulation modified the proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* to reflect the sociocultural norms of Ekegusii audience. The use of adaptation and modulation enabled contextual and semantic shifts that preserved cultural relevance of

the proverbs within Ekegusii context. Consequently, the use of these two strategies resulted in culturally equivalent proverbs in the Ekegusii version. This study established that modulation was the most frequently employed strategy for retaining cultural equivalence in the translated proverbs, as observed in 5 out of the 7 proverbs sampled and analysed by the researcher. This was followed by adaptation which was identified in 2 cases.

The first objective was also to analyse cultural non-equivalence in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii in *Binto Mbisebererekani*. The study established that literal translation was the most dominant strategy that resulted in cultural non-equivalence in the translation of proverbs into Ekegusii, as observed in 6 cases. This was followed by calque, which resulted in cultural non-equivalence in 2 cases. This implied that majority of the proverbs were translated literally and their underlying cultural meanings were lost. The translations maintained the word order of the source text while disregarding the Ekegusii audience. Consequently, the proverbs sounded like common sentences that short of deep cultural meanings in Ekegusii. Although the Ekegusii readers could not immediately resonate with the cultural meanings of the proverbs, the Igbo culture is made accessible to them. The use of calque resulted in awkward expressions that were not meaningful within the Ekegusii language context. This is because the translator did not translate the idiomatic meanings, instead she directly translated the individual words forming the expressions.

The second objective was to examine the cultural functionality of the translated proverbs from *Things Fall Apart* within the context of Ekegusii language. With regard to this objective, eight proverbs serving rhetoric, aesthetic and sociolinguistic functions in the source text were purposively sampled and systematically analysed.

Three proverbs (37.5%) retained their cultural functionality in translation while 5 (62.5%) lost their intended cultural functions when rendered into Ekegusii. This loss was primarily attributed to fundamental differences in the cultural contexts of the Igbo and Gusii societies. This underscores the limitations of utilitarian translation strategies and emphasise the importance of culturally informed approaches that preserve the embedded meanings and functions of source texts.

The preservation of cultural functionality in the translated proverbs was observed in a few instances. In these cases, the translator employed adaptation and modulation to retain the intended cultural functions of the source text proverbs within the Ekegusii cultural context. These strategies enabled the translation to convey not only the literal meaning but also the socio-cultural significance embedded in the original proverbs.

The last objective sought to evaluate how Skopos theory accounts for translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii in *Binto Mbisebererekani*. Eight proverbs were purposively sampled and analysed to determine whether their translations conformed with the tenets of Vermeer's (1978) Skopos theory. The findings revealed that the majority of the translated proverbs did not conform to the principles of Skopos theory. This is because they were rendered through direct translation into Ekegusii. This approach undermined the core tenets of translation purpose and cultural functionality, resulting in a loss of the proverbs' intended meaning. However, in some cases adherence to the loyalty principle was observed.

The renderings observed fidelity to the source text thereby making aspects of Igbo culture accessible to the Ekegusii audience. Additionally, a number of proverbs were translated in a way that enhanced their intelligibility in the Ekegusii language, reflecting the principle of audience-oriented coherence.

The role of the translator as a cultural mediator was evident in two instances where the Igbo cultural context was localised to preserve the proverbs' original intent and communicative function. From the analysed data, it was evident that there was application of Skopos theory in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii in *Binto Mbisebererekani*.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The study concluded that cultural non-equivalence was predominant in the translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii. Literal translation emerged as the most frequently used strategy, resulting in the loss of the proverbs' intended cultural meanings and communicative intent. There was a general failure in achieving cultural equivalence since the translator prioritised surface-level lexical correspondence over the preservation of cultural meanings.

The analysis revealed that while literal translation and calque dominated the translator's approach, these strategies often led to a breakdown in cultural functionality. However, in a few instances, the translator employed adaptation and modulation to preserve the proverbs' functions within the Ekegusii context. These strategies proved more effective in maintaining the socio-cultural significance of the source proverbs. This underscores the importance of culturally sensitive translation choices.

The study found partial adherence to the principles of Skopos Theory. Most translations did not conform with the principles of translation purpose and cultural functionality due to the overuse of literal strategies. However, there was evidence of conformity to the loyalty principle, as the translations preserved the source culture. This made Igbo worldviews accessible to the Ekegusii audience.

In a few cases, translations demonstrated audience-oriented coherence and portrayed the translator as a cultural mediator, particularly where cultural adaptation was applied to retain the intended meaning.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

- i. Translators should adopt culturally sensitive strategies that preserve the communicative and cultural functionality of proverbs to ensure that translations convey both the intended meaning and the cultural depth embedded in the source text.
- ii. Translation researchers and practitioners should develop a checklist of cultural markers such as food, kinship terms and ritual practices to guide translators working between African languages and cultures.
- iii. Language policymakers and cultural institutions should fund and promote the production of bilingual editions of classic African literature in order to preserve indigenous expressions while fostering intercultural understanding and appreciation of Africa's diverse linguistic heritage.

#### **5.5 Suggestions for Further Research**

Further research should investigate the translation of metaphors and idioms, which like proverbs, carry deep cultural meanings that are not easily transferred through literal translation. Using a cognitive linguistic approach, future studies should explore how translators deal with differences in how concepts are understood across African cultures.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Proverbs Identification and Extraction Tool

This appendix includes a list of proverbs extracted from *Things Fall Apart* along with their corresponding translations in *Binto Mbisebererekani* for analysis.

S/L	SL Proverb	TL Proverb	Thematic Category
1	He who brings kola brings life. (Pg. 5)	<i>Oyokoenana enkara oenanire obogima.</i> (Pg. 4)	tradition and beliefs
2	Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten. (pg. 7)	<i>Emebayeno nero amaguta y'emekendo aria amang'ana akorierwa.</i> (pg.5)	Social structure
3	The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them. (pg. 7)	<i>Risase nigo rikomorekera ritang'ani baria bateneine nyuma ritaramorekera baria batugaime.</i> (pg. 5)	wisdom and knowledge
4	If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings. (pg. 8)	<i>Omwana karasibie amoboko aye nabo akoragera n'abaruoti n'abagaka.</i> (pg. 6)	wisdom and knowledge
5	When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk. (pg. 10)	<i>Ekeru omotienyi okomoreka ekerema nigo gekoba n'erang'o y'ogotara.</i> (pg. 7)	wisdom and knowledge
6	Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break. (pg. 19)	<i>Tiga ekebaki kegwe omote igoro nabo igo ensoti egwe omote igoro. Onye eyemo yabo egokania eyende, tiga orobaba rwaye robonchoke.</i> (pg. 16)	Social structure
7	A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness. (pg. 19)	<i>Omonto ogosika abanto b'esiko nigo akoroisia enchera yaye yokonyora obonene.</i> (pg. 16)	Wisdom and knowledge
8	A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing. (pg. 20)	<i>Gioto tikeri gocharokacharoka mobaso bosa igo.</i> (pg. 17)	Wisdom and knowledge

9	An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb. (pg. 20)	<i>Omong'ina omogotu nigo akoondoka ekeru amauga amomo agoatorwa ase omobayeno.</i> (pg. 18)	Power and conflict
10	The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did. (pg. 21)	<i>Ensagara yacharogete korwa omokabiri igoro goika inse eyateebete buna nigo egoetogia enyene onye onde takoyetogia.</i> (pg. 19)	Power and conflict
11	Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching. (pg. 21)	<i>Enyoni onchimbo nigo ekobora ng'a ase engencho mwanyabanto aegeire korasa atari komocha, yaegeire koiruruka etari kogwa aande.</i> (pg. 19)	Wisdom and knowledge
12	You can tell a ripe corn by its look. (pg. 21)	<i>Nabo okorora egetuma giakongire ase okororekana kwaye.</i> (pg. 19)	Wisdom and knowledge
13	Looking at a king's mouth, one would think he never sucked at his mother's breast. (pg. 25)	<i>Ase okorigereria omonwa bwo'moruoti, omonto nigo arakage ng'a tagongete robere rwa ng'ina.</i> (pg. 23)	Social structure
14	Those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble. (pg. 25)	<i>Baria baateretwe chinyeke chi'emekendo na baria be'emeika emiya tibabaisa koeba koba abakanyeku.</i> (pg. 23)	Social structure
15	When a man says yes, his chi says yes also. (pg. 26)	<i>Ekeru Omonto agoteeba ee enyasae yaye n'ero nigo egoteeba ee.</i> (pg. 24)	Tradition and beliefs
16	A chick that will grow into a cock can be spotted the very day it hatches. (pg. 62)	<i>Egechuchu kerakine kebe etwoni nabo gekororekana rituko riria giaturagigwa.</i> (pg. 62)	Wisdom and knowledge
17	A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm. (pg. 63)	<i>Ebiara bi'omwana tibiri gosambwa ne'bitari bi'enduma egosamba ebiong'ina amobekeire koboko kwaye.</i> (pg. 63)	Wisdom and knowledge

18	When mother-cow is chewing grass, its young ones watch its mouth. (pg. 66)	<i>Ekeru eng'ombe eng'ina egotakuna obonyansi chimori chiaye nigo chigotengera omonwa oye.</i> (pg. 67)	Wisdom and knowledge
19	A man who makes trouble for others is also making it for himself. (pg. 92)	<i>Omonto okoretera abande emechando nemechando boigo nere akoeretera.</i> (pg. 95)	Social structure
20	A baby on its mother's back does not know that the way is long. (pg. 96)	<i>Omwana ore mogongo o ng'ina tari komanya ng'a enchera nentambe.</i> (pg. 100)	Wisdom and knowledge
21	If one finger brought oil it soiled the others. (pg. 118)	<i>Onye ekiara ekemo kegokuna amaguta, nigo kegoaka ebinde bionsi.</i> (pg. 123)	wisdom and knowledge
22	Never kill a man who says nothing. (pg. 131)	<i>Tobaisa goita monto otari gokwana kende.</i> (pg. 137)	Social structure
23	There is nothing to fear from someone who shouts. (pg. 132)	<i>Kende tikeri tokwoboa korwa ase omonto ogotuora.</i> (pg. 137)	Power and conflict
24	Living fire begets cold, impotent ash. (pg. 145)	<i>Omorero ogwoka inkoibora ore obokendu, ribu riteba.</i> (pg. 150)	Social structure
25	An animal rubs its aching flank against a tree; a man asks his kinsman to scratch him. (pg. 156)	<i>Eng'iti nigo ekoageria omogongo oye bwe'biagaso ase omote korende omonto nigo akoboria oyomwabo amoagie.</i> (pg. 162)	Social structure
26	A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. (pg. 157)	<i>Omonto okorangeria abaamate n'abairi ase omoyega tari gokora bo erio kobatoria gokwa enchara.</i> (pg. 163)	Social structure
27	As a man danced so the drums were beaten for him. (pg. 175)	<i>Buna omonto agotenga nabo igo agwakerwa chikonu.</i> (pg. 181)	Tradition and beliefs
28	Whenever you see a toad jumping in broad daylight, then know that something is after its life. (pg. 192)	<i>Ekeru okorora egioto kegocharokacharoka mobaso igoro, manya ng'a egento nkere gekorigia obogima bwaye.</i> (pg. 198)	Wisdom and knowledge

## Appendix 2: Proverbs Functionality Comparison Tool

This framework guides the analysis of proverbs from the source text and their corresponding Ekegusii translations. The framework includes functional consideration for each proverb translation.

S / L	SL Proverb	Functionality in Igbo context	TL Proverb	Back translation	Comments
1	Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break (pg.19)	Rhetoric	<i>Tiga ekebaki kegwe omote igoro nabo igo ensoti egwe omote igoro. Onye eyemo yabo egokania eyende, tiga orobaba rwaye robonchoke</i>	Leave the kite perch and the eagle also perch. If one of them refuses the other, let its wing break	Lost functionality
2	Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten. (pg. 7)	Aesthetic	<i>Emebayeno nero amaguta y'emekendo aria amang'ana akorierwa. (pg. 5)</i>	Proverbs are the oil of the palm that words are eaten with	Lost functionality
3	He who brings kola brings life. (pg. 5)	Sociolinguistic	<i>Oyokoenana enkara oenanire obogima. (pg. 4)</i>	He who gives fermented flour lumps gives life)	Preserved functionality

### Appendix 3: Conformity with Skopos Theory tenets

This guide details various translation strategies used in rendering proverbs from Igbo to Ekegusii. Each strategy includes definitions, examples and rationales based on Skopos theory.

S/L	SL Proverb	TL proverb	Back translation	Translation Strategy Used	Comments
1	Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching. (pg. 21)	<i>Enyoni onchimbo nigo ekobora ng'a ase engencho mwanyabanto aegeire korasa atari komocha, yaegeire koiruruka etari kogwa aande.</i> (pg. 19)	Woodpecker says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching anywhere)	Adaptation	Skopos rule of translation used successfully

## **Appendix 4: Focus Group Discussions Guide**

### **Introduction**

Good evening and a warm welcome to this focus group discussion. Thank you all sincerely for taking the time to join us today. My name is Robert Makori Onditi, a postgraduate student at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, currently undertaking a research study titled “A Cross-cultural translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* from English into Ekegusii in *Binto Mbisebererekani*”. The purpose of this discussion is to gather your views on the extent to which the translated proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* are meaningful and culturally relevant within the Ekegusii context. Your input is highly valued because you are native Ekegusii speakers with a rich understanding of Gusii oral traditions. Kindly note that your perspectives will significantly contribute to the depth and authenticity of this study. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers in this session. What matters most are your honest opinions and lived experiences. Feel free to express yourself openly, even if your view differs from that of others. To begin, let us take a moment to introduce ourselves. Kindly tell us your name and where you come from.

### **Questions on Cultural Equivalence and Non-equivalence of Proverbs**

1. In your view, are the proverbs in the Ekegusii translation (*Binto Mbisebererekani*) similar in meaning to those in the English version of *Things Fall Apart*?
2. Do you find any Ekegusii proverbs in the translation that seem confusing or different from your understanding of Ekegusii culture?

### **Questions on Cultural Functionality in Ekegusii Context**

1. Do the proverbs in the Ekegusii translation reflect the values, beliefs and traditions of the Abagusii people?
2. Are the proverbs used in ways that make sense in everyday Ekegusii life and communication?
3. In your opinion, does the Ekegusii version teach moral lessons or cultural wisdom in the same way that Ekegusii elders traditionally use proverbs?

## **Appendix 5: Interviews Schedules Guide**

### **Introduction**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is Robert Makori Onditi, a postgraduate student at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, currently undertaking a research project entitled “A Cross-cultural translation of proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* from English into Ekegusii in *Binto Mbisebererekani*.” The primary objective of this interview is to elicit in-depth insights and clarification regarding specific aspects of the translation of proverbs from English into Ekegusii. As a native speaker of Ekegusii, proficient in both Ekegusii and English, and with a rich understanding of Gusii oral traditions, your contributions are considered critical to the depth and credibility of this study. Kindly note that your participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and any information you provide will be handled with strict confidentiality. Your responses will be anonymised to ensure your identity remains protected. The questions outlined below are intended to guide our discussion, and you are encouraged to respond as candidly and reflectively as possible, drawing on your linguistic knowledge and cultural experiences.

### **Questions on Applicability of Skopos Theory in Translation of Proverbs**

1. Which purpose do you think the translated proverb in Ekegusii serve?
2. Do you feel that this Ekegusii proverb delivers the same message and meaning as it would in our culture? Does it sound natural to you, and does it teach the lesson in a way our people can understand and relate to?
3. What do you think about the inclusion of elders in the translation? Does this way of saying it reflect how people in the Gusii community understand respect and success?
4. In the Ekegusii version of this proverb, the translator mentions both neighbours and relatives. What do you think about this choice? Does it reflect how Gusii people understand gatherings or feasts?
5. How do you understand this Ekegusii proverb? Does it sound like a typical Ekegusii proverb to you? Please explain.
6. Do you think the translator tried to stay very close to the original English wording or meaning in this Ekegusii translation? If so, does this help or make it harder for you to understand the message?
7. How does the translator’s choice of words in the Ekegusii version of the proverb reflect an understanding of the target culture? In what ways does this choice help bridge cultural meaning between the source and target audiences?

8. How well does the Ekegusii version of the proverb convey the meaning of the SL proverb, and in what ways do the words or expressions used make it easier for you to understand the message?

## Appendix 6: Sample Respondents' Responses

### Introduction

The following excerpts are responses from participants who provided insights into the cultural interpretation of the translated proverbs. All respondents were anonymised. The responses illustrate variations in meaning, cultural context and interpretive challenges encountered during translation.

1. SL: He who brings kola brings life. (pg. 5)

TL: *Oyokoenana enkara oenanire obogima.* (pg. 4)

'He who gives fermented flour lumps has given life.'

A discussant noted the following on the meaning of the Ekegusii version of the proverb:

*...omobayeno oyuo nanyoigure buya, nigo ogokwanera obuya bwe'busa eyuo ekoroisigwa korwa ase chinkara. Nigo yare konywegwa chingaki chi'emesangererekano buno chinyuomo, ogosonsorana ne'meyega yokoroka abana amarieta*

"...the proverb is understandable to me, it talks about the importance of traditional brew made from fermented flour lumps which is important especially during gatherings like marriage negotiations, reconciliations or celebrating newborns ..."

Another discussant noted the following:

*Nanyoigure omobayeno oyuo. Nigo okong'inyoria buna abagaka bare gotumeka ebusa buna ekiorokererio ki'obomo na obuya. Tari marwa bosaigo, korende nokoreta omorembe ase abanto abamo*

"I understand the proverb. It reminds me of how elders used traditional brew as a symbol of unity and goodwill. It's more than a drink; it represents peace and agreement in our community"

2. SL: The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did. (pg. 21)

TL: *Ensagara yacharogete korwa omokabiri igoro goika inse eyateebete buna nigo egoetogia enyene onye onde takoyetogia.* (pg. 18)

'The lizard that jumped from the Silk oak to the ground said it would praise itself if no one else did'

When asked on the meaning of the Ekegusii proverb, a discussant stated as follows:

*...Nanyoigure omobayeno oyuo buya sana. Nigo obwate eng'encho ing'a ekero ogokora egento ekenene buna gocharoka korwa omokabiri omotambe igoro otabunegeti, etogie aye omonyene neba onde taiyo oragotogie. Ekiagere banto bange mbagocharoka korwa mote motambe igoro.*

“...I understand the proverb well. It means that doing something big like jumping from those tall silk oaks does not need anyone to thank you, just thank yourself. You’re a hero already because most people cannot dare jump from those very tall trees”

Another discussant noted:

*Ee, nigo obwate eng’encho yaye ing’a ekeru gwakorire egento egekong’u kiaganetie oboremu, tebetereheti banto bagotogie, ekiagera aye gwakorire egento abanto abange batakore*

“Yes, it means when you do something very difficult or brave, you don’t need to wait for others to thank you, you’ve already done something most people wouldn’t dare”

3. SL: You can tell a ripe corn by its look. (pg.21)

TL: *Nabo okorora egetuma giakongire ase okororekana kwaye.* (pg. 19)

‘You can see a ripe corn by its look’

In the understanding of the proverb in the Ekegusii context, a discussant made the following remarks:

*...omobayeno oyuo nkoigwekana ore. Eng’encho yaye egento ekiya nigo gekomanyekana ase okororekana kwaye, tigeconomyaya kwebisa korwa ase’amaiso.*

“...the proverb is understandable to me. It means that something nice is always recognisable by just seeing it, it cannot hide or escape the eye”

Another discussant stated that:

*Eng’encho yaye nanyeigure, kende gionsi kere ekieng’encho gose gekogokia nigo botambe gokororekana, tebetereheti koonigwa*

“The meaning is clear to me. Anything that is truly valuable or attractive will always catch attention. You don’t need to advertise it”

4. SL: If one finger brought oil it soiled the others. (pg. 118)

TL: *Onye ekiara ekemo kegokuna amaguta, nigo kegoaka ebinde bionsi.* (pg. 123)

‘If one finger touches oil it soils the others’

A discussant said the following on the meaning of the translated version of the proverb:

*Inche indoche omobayeno oyuo ngoigwekana ore. Eng’encho yeye ekeru egento ekebe giakorekanire, nigo gekoburuakani baria bonsi bare ange abuo. Nabo enga ritunda rigundo riakunire ayare amaya; aria amaya nigo agosarigwa na riria rigundo*

“To me the proverb is very sensible. It means that if something bad happens, it affects all those that are around it. It is like a rotten fruit that is in contact with fresh fruits; the good ones will also go bad.”

Another discussant stated as follows:

*Omobayeno oyuo ngoigwekana ore buya. Onye egento ekemo ekebe kere ase ebinto ebiya, nabo gekobisari, buna embu embe okwambokera ase obwango*

“I understand the proverb well. It shows that when one bad thing is present among good ones, it can spoil all of them, just like bad influence spreads quickly”

5. SL: If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings. (pg. 8)

TL: *Omwana karasibie amoboko aye nabo akoragera n'abaruoti n'abagaka.* (pg.6)

‘If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings and elders’

On the meaning of the Ekegusii translation, a discussant noted as follows:

*...eng'encho yaime yo'mobayeno oyuo nero buya mono. Abana nigo bakoinya kobera are korwa ase abagaka ase ekemira gaito. Korende onye omwana kare omong'aini ase emiaka yaye, nabo akobera ase abagaka. Omobayeno oyo nigo ogosegeta abanto koba no'mokia erio nario barabere ase abagaka be'gesaku. Nonya naboigo, into buna Abagusii titwabwate baruoti ase borai bwaito, ensemu eyuo ndindanyebuata buya*

“I understand the cultural meaning of that proverb very well. Children normally stay away from elders in our culture. However, if a child is wiser than their age, they can always be engaged by elders. That proverb encourages people to be successful so that they can attract the attention of the elders. However, in our culture we did not have kings, so I don't understand that part”

Another discussant observed that:

*Ee nanyoigure. Eng'encho yaye ekero omonto omoke akoorokia chisemi goetania emiaka yaye, nabo agoikaransa ase abagaka Nonya naboigo, into buna Abagusii titwabwate baruoti ase borai bwaito, ensemu eyuo ndindanyebuata buya*

“Yes, I relate to it. It means that if a young person shows wisdom or success beyond their age, they can sit among respected elders. The idea is clear, though I also find the mention of kings unusual in our culture”

6. SL: Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching. (pg. 21)

TL: *Enyoni onchimbo nigo ekobora ng'a ase engencho mwanyabanto aegeire korasa atari komocha, yaegeire koiruruka etari kogwa aande.* (pg. 19)

‘The woodpecker says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, it has learned to fly without perching anywhere’

Below is a response from one of the discussants regarding his understanding of the TL version:

*Omobayeno oyuo nkoigwekana ore. Enyoni onchimbo nigo ere enyoni eng'aini, nigo eanchante kebacha kero ekobekerwa emetego.*

*Eng'encho yaimo nigo emineti omonto goika abe omong'aini erio amanye buna akwwebachere emechando. Ekeru ebinto biaonchokire, nere goika amanye buna akomenya erio tabaisa kwenyora ase emechando.*

'That proverb is understandable to me. The woodpecker is a very sharp bird, always careful and dodgy when evading traps. The deep meaning simply means that one must be wise to avoid being caught in problems. You learn to navigate and dodge like the woodpecker'

Another discussant stated as follows:

*Omobayeno oyuo nkoigwekana ore. Enyoni onchimbo nigo etenenerete omonto okorengereria motu naende ore maiso. Nigo ogosomia obong'aini ase ogoetanga korwa ase emechando*

'The meaning is clear to me. The woodpecker represents someone who thinks ahead and is always alert. It teaches that with intelligence and awareness; you can escape danger'

8. SL: An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb. (pg. 20)

TL: *Omong'ina omogotu nigo akoondoka ekero amauga amomo agoatorwa ase omobayeno.* (pg. 18)

'An old woman becomes uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb'

A discussant was asked for their understanding of the Ekegusii proverb and make the following remarks:

*Nabo nyiguete amangana ayuo korende ntinkagereti oyuo no'mobayeno. Nigo agokwanera omong'ina omogotu otatageti amauga aye akwaneru. Korende kera omonto nabwate amauga, igo tindochi iki amauga akoora*

"I understand the words but I don't think they sound like a proverb. Only that it talks about an old woman who does not want her bones talked about. But everybody has bones, and it should not be an issue anyway."

Another discussant said:

*Ase inche, ayuo nigo anga amang'ana a'botambe. Oyuo tari mobayeno Nigo ogokwanera igoro y'omonto okoemurungania ase amauga aye ogwatorwa.*

"To me, it just sounds like an ordinary sentence. It's just someone complaining about her dry bones being mentioned. I wouldn't count it as a proper proverb"

9. SL: Looking at a king's mouth, one would think he never sucked at his mother's breast. (pg.25)

TL: *Ase okorigereria omonwa bwo'moruoti, omonto nigo arakage ng'a tagongete robere rwa ng'ina.* (pg. 23)

'By looking at the mouth of a king, a person can think that he did not suck his mother's breast'

One of the discussants noted the following on the meaning of the Ekegusii version of the proverb:

*Inche ntindochi gose oyuo no'mobayeno. Nigo agwatoka buna amang'ana a'botambe igoro yo'omnwa bwo'moruoti otari kororekana buna nogongete orobere rwa ng'ina. Timanya ng'a inki atare kogongera.*

'For me, it does not sound like a proverb. It sounds like an ordinary sentence talking about a king's mouth that does not appear to have sucked his mother's breasts. I don't know why he couldn't though

The second discussant stated as follows:

*Inche ntindochi gose oyuo no'mobayeno. Oyuo n'amang'ana akare yogokumia igor y'omoruoti n'ang'ina. Tindochi bosemi egokwanera.*

"I don't really see it as a proverb. It just seems like a strange statement about a king and his mother, and I'm not sure what message it's supposed to pass"

10. SL: Whenever you see a toad jumping in broad daylight, then know that something is after its life. (pg. 192)

TL: *Ekerokorora egioto kegocharokacharoka mobaso igoro, manya ng'a egento nkere gekorigia obogima bwaye.* (pg. 198)

'When you see a toad hopping at daytime, know that there is something looking for its life'

One of the discussants gave the following remarks on the meaning of the translated proverb:

*Inche ndoche mobayeno oyuo tobwaati ng'encho ende yonsi. Omanyete emebayeno ye'kegusii nigo ebwate ching'encho ibere: eyaisiko ne'yaimo. Abuo bono ne'yaisiko yoka eroo igoro ye'gioto kegocharokacharoka.*

"For me, that proverb does not make sense. You know Ekegusii proverbs have two meanings: the surface and the deep one. I can only understand the surface one about the toad jumping."

Another discussant stated that:

*Naancheranire, nigo amang'ana ayuo agwatoka buna aya botambe kobua omobayeno. Emebayeno ye'kegusii nigo ere nobo'ng'aini ase amang'ana aye. Korende, abuo kende tikeiyo, egioto kegocharoka bosaigo.*

"I agree, it sounds more like a simple saying than a real proverb. Ekegusii proverbs usually have wisdom beneath the words, but this one seems plain, just about a toad jumping"

11. SL: The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them.  
(pg. 7)

TL: *Risase nigo rikomorekera ritang'ani baria bateneine nyuma ritaramorekera baria batugaima.* (pg. 5)

'The sun shines first on those standing before shining on those kneeling down'

A discussant remarked the following on the cultural meaning of the Ekegusii proverb:

*Inche tindabwata mobayeno oyuo. Nigo naigwa ogwatoka buna amang'ana a'botambe igoro yo'mogaso komorekera baria bateneine ritang'ani. Nigo oatoka buna eng'encho yaime teiyo.*

"For me, I don't really understand that proverb. It sounds just like any other sentence talking about the sun shining on those who are standing first. It sounds like some depth in meaning is missing"

The second discussant said:

*Nigo nasinyiru kobwata omobayeno oyuo. Nigo ogwatoka buna aman'ana a'botambe. Nigo ogokwanera risase amo na'banto bateneine, korende timanyeti inki ogotema gokwaanera.*

"I find it hard to understand. It feels more like a normal sentence than a proverb. It talks about the sun and people standing, but I don't get what lesson it's trying to teach"

12. SL: If one finger brought oil it soiled the others. (pg. 118)

TL: *Onye ekiara ekemo kegokuna amaguta, nigo kegoaka ebinde bionsi.* (pg. 123)

'If one finger touches oil, it spreads to all the others'

A discussant said the following when asked to culturally interpret the Ekegusii version:

*Amang'ana ayuo nkoigwekana are buya. Nobomaene ng'a amaguta are ase ekiara ekemo nigo akogenda ase ebiara binde. Tinkagereti gose ng'encho yende nero.*

"That sentence makes sense. It is true that oil in one finger spreads to other fingers. I don't think there is any other meaning apart from that. It is just a straightforward sentence"

The second discussant stated that:

*Ee, nigo ere aororo koigwekana. Amaguta nigo akweyaka gochia ase ebiara binde. Ase igo, amang'ana ayuo nigo agokwana obomaene. Ng'encho yende teiyo as omobayeno oyuo.*

"Yes, it's easy to understand. Oil naturally spreads to other fingers, so the sentence is just expressing a fact. I don't see any hidden message in it"

13. SL: Living fire begets cold, impotent ash. (pg. 145)

TL: *Omorero ogwoka inkoibora ore obokendu, ribu riteba.* (pg. 150)

‘Living fire can give birth to cold ash that cannot give birth’

A discussant gave the following remarks on the interpretation of the Ekegusii proverb:

*... amang’ana ayuo igoro yo’morero oraibore ribu riteba tebwati ng’encho ende yonsi ase Ekegusii, omonto nigo oraseke.*

“...that sentence about fire that can give birth to ash can’t give birth just sounds odd, even laughable. It doesn’t make any sense in our language”

Another discussant said:

*Nasinyiru kobwata amang’ana ayuo. Omorero koibora ribu ritari koibora nogokumia. Oyuo tari mobayeno togotumeka ase Ekegusii.*

“I don’t understand it. The idea of fire giving birth to ash that doesn’t give birth sounds strange. It doesn’t sound like a proverb we would use in our language”

14. SL: Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let  
his wing  
break (pg.19)

TL: *Tiga ekebaki kegwe omote igoro nabo igo ensoti egwe omote igoro. Onye eyemo yabo egokania eyende, tiga orobaba rwaye robonchoke* (pg. 16)

‘Leave the kite perch and the eagle also perch. If one of them refuses the other, let its wing break’

When asked about the function of the translated proverb, a discussant stated the following:

*Amang’ana ayuo nabo aigwekanete korende tari watoka buna mo’bayeno. Nigo indoche enga korwa ribaga ase ekebaki ne’nsoti chigwe omote igoro. Nigo enga omogano bwe’chinyoni. Meremo yende ya’ mang’ana ayuo teiyo.*

“The words make sense, but they don’t really sound like a proverb. I think it is just giving permission to advice the kite and eagle to perch. It sounds like a story about birds. There isn’t really another function out of that sentence”

Another discussant said:

*Nigo amang’ana ayuo ogwatoka bun nigo are igoro ye’chinyoni chiikaransete asegete. Tindochi bong’aini gose obosemia bwaime buna emebayeno yende.*

‘It sounds like someone is just talking about birds sitting somewhere. I don’t see any wisdom teaching like in real proverbs’

15. SL: Those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble. (pg.23)

TL: *Baria baateretwe chinyeke chi'emekendo na baria be'emeika emiya tibabaisa koeba koba abakanyeku.* (pg. 25)

'Those whose seeds for the palm were broken by good spirits should not forget to be calm'

The following remarks are from a discussant on the cultural functionality of the Ekegusii proverb:

*...Mobayeno oyuo tori koigwekana nonya nakeigo. Nigo ore bwo'gokumia ase eng'encho ntobwati chinyeke chi'emekendo Gusii yaito. Abuo nasinyiru komanya pi...*

"...I don't really understand that proverb at all. It sounds so strange because we do not have palm-kernels in our culture. For that one, it just confuses me a lot..."

Another discussant noted that:

*Oyuo onkong'eire konyobwata buya, naanya koroka nyeke chia emekendo Gusii, abuo natantanire ake*

"That one is hard for me to understand. I've never seen palm-kernels in our community, so the meaning gets lost. It's not part of our traditions"

16. SL: If one finger brought oil it soiled the others. (pg. 118)

TL: *Onye ekiara ekemo kegokuna amaguta, nigo kegoaka ebinde bionsi.* (pg. 123)

'If one finger touches oil it soils the others'

One of the discussants stated the following on the functionality of the Ekegusii proverb:

*Omobayeno oyuo nigo obwate eng'encho ing'a omento obwate Chimbu chimbe nigo akwambokeria baria bare ang'e nere. Igo goika atiganwe onye totageti naye otware embu embe.*

"That proverb means that a person with bad character can be contagious to those around him. So, he must be avoided, otherwise you will also have the bad character."

Another discussant said:

*Ase inche, eng'encho yaye ngoigwekana ere. Onye gokobera nomonto obwate chimbwa chimbe, nabo ogokorera koba buna barabwo. Omobayeno oyuo nigo ogotototobia tochoire abanto tokobera nabwo ase obong'aini*

"To me, the meaning is clear. If you keep close to someone with bad habits, you might end up like them. The proverb warns us to choose our company wisely"

17. SL: Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten. (pg. 7)

TL: *Emebayeno nero amaguta y'emekendo aria amang'ana akorierwa.* (pg. 5)

'Proverbs are the oil of the palm that words are eaten with'

A discussant said the following on the function of the proverb in Ekegusii:

*...tindabwata buya buna amaguta ye'mekendo eratumeke koria amang'ana. Mang'ana ayuo tabwati ng'encho ende yonsi. Ribaga erio nigo akombukurania.*

"...I don't really understand how the palm oil is used to eat words. That sentence does not really make sense. It confuses me instead."

The second discussant stated that:

*"Inche natantanigwe na'mang'ana ayuo. Nasinyiru komanya buna amaguta ye'mekendo agotumeka amo na'mangana. Ndindochi gose oyuo no'mobayeno"*

'I'm also confused by that sentence. I don't understand how palm oil and words go together. It doesn't sound like a proverb to me'

18. SL: Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching (pg. 21)

TL: *Enyoni onchimbo nigo ekobora ng'a ase engencho mwanyabanto aegeire korasa atari komocha, yaegeire koiruruka etari kogwa aande.* (pg. 19)

'The woodpecker says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, it has learned to fly without perching anywhere'

One of the discussants stated the following on her understanding of the function of the Ekegusii version:

*Omobayeno oyuo nigo obwate ekiorokererio ase okobwekania obong'aini kwa enyoni onchimbo amo na mwanyabanto ase okoebachera emechando. Nigo oguonchora obosemia obuo koba ase enchera engiya yokogokia*

"That proverb is rich in imagery. Comparing human adaptability to a woodpecker that never lands creates a powerful and graceful picture. It turns a survival lesson into something poetic, reminding us that wisdom can be both practical and beautifully said"

Another discussant said:

*Omobayeno oyuo nigo orosiri ase enchera yokoreta omong'uso. Ebicha y'enyoni onchimbo nigo ekoreta ebirengererio bia obong'aini ase orogendo rwaye. Nigo ogotumeka enyoni gokwaanera obong'aini bwa mwanyabanto ase enchera ya bobisi*

"That proverb is beautifully crafted. The image of the woodpecker flying without landing paints a vivid picture of cleverness and movement. It uses

nature to express human wisdom in such a graceful way, with a lesson hidden inside”

19. SL: He who brings kola brings life. (pg. 5)

TL: *Oyokoenana enkara oenanire obogima.* (pg. 4)

‘He who gives fermented flour lumps gives life’

A discussant remarked as follows regarding the functionality of the Ekegusii proverb:

*Chinkara nigo chigotumeka koroisia amarwa ye’busa. Moyega onde bwensi bwo’morembe nigo ore gochengerwa ase okonywa ebusa. Nigo ekoreta obomo egati yaito twamenya buna abanto abamo...*

“Fermented flour lumps are used for making traditional brew. Any peaceful gathering is celebrated by drinking the brew. It unites us and helps us co-exist as one people...”

Another discussant stated as follows:

*Ebusa nigo ere eyemo ase biria bikoreta ogochengerwa obomo. Nigo abanto bagochicha amo na konywa ebusa. Nigo ekoreta abanto amo chingaki chi’emesangererekano buna chinyuomo amo nogosonsorana*

“Traditional brew is part of our way of celebrating harmony. It brings people together during events like marriages or reconciliations”

20. SL: When mother-cow is chewing grass its young ones watch its mouth. (pg. 66)

TL: *Ekeru eng’ombe eng’ina egotakuna obonyansi chimori chiaye nigo chigotengera omonwa oye* (pg. 67)

Below is a response from a discussant on the functionality of the Ekegusii proverb:

*“Mang’ana ayuo tari gwatoka buna omobayeno. Nigo agwatoka ase enchera yogosekia ng’a chimori nigo chigotengera omonwa o’ng’ina ekeru egotakuna obonyansi. Aseki chigotengera omonwa o’ng’ina nakio getari koigwekana buya”*

‘That one does not sound like a proverb. It sounds funny that the calves are staring at their mother’s mouth when eating. Why they are staring is not coming out clearly’

Another discussant said:

*Tinkagereti gose oyuo n’omobayeno. Oku nokorora kwa botambe buna chimori chikorigereria eng’ina. Tindoch bosemia bonde igabu*

“I don’t think it’s a proverb. It just sounds like an ordinary observation about calves looking at their mother. I don’t see what lesson it’s trying to give”

21. SL: He who brings kola brings life. (pg. 5)

TL: *Oyokoenana enkara oenanire obogima.* (pg. 4)

‘He who gives fermented flour lumps gives brings life’

In order to evaluate the translation purpose and cultural functionality of the translated proverbs, respondents were asked the question:

### Q1

Which purpose do you think the translated proverb in Ekegusii serve?

Respondent 1: *Omobayeno oyo nigo ogokwanera obuya bwokorwa na kwarigania. Ase ekemira giaito, gosanga ebusa eroisirie ne'chinkara nabo enga koreta obogima. Nigo egotoreta amo.* 'This proverb in Ekegusii speaks to the value we place on generosity and hospitality. In our culture, sharing of local brew made of fermented flour lumps is seen as a life-giving act. It binds us together during celebrations'

Respondent 2: *Egokwanera ing'a okoenana nigo gokoreta obuya. Oyo no'mobayeno ogokwanera obong'aini bwa'bakoro.* 'It communicates that offering something of value brings goodwill. The proverb fits into our traditional wisdom'

Respondent 3: *Amang'ana aya ngoigwekana are buya. Nigo akoinyoria abanto ing'a okoenana nigo gokoigora ebisio na gokongia obosani. Ekeru ogokwanera chinkara nigo nkorengereria obomo bwo'gocha amo na kwegokia.* 'The message is clear and powerful. It reminds people that giving opens doors and fosters relationships. When talking of fermented flour lumps makes me think of the unity of gathering together and making merry'

22. SL: Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching. (pg. 21)

TL: *Enyoni onchimbo nigo ekobora ng'a ase engencho mwanabanto aegeire korasa atari komocha, yaegeire koiruruka etari kogwa aande.* (pg. 19)

'Woodpecker says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching anywhere'

### Q2

Do you feel that this Ekegusii proverb delivers the same message and meaning as it would in our culture? Does it sound natural to you, and does it teach the lesson in a way our people can understand and relate to?

Respondent 1: *Nigo ekoageria buya. Enyoni onchimbo nigo ere eng'aini ase okwebachera emetego. Nigo okwegeria buna tobwenerete gwonchoreria ekeru obogima bwakong'ire.* 'It passes the lesson well in a way that we understand. The woodpecker is very smart in dodging traps. It teaches us how to adjust when life becomes difficult'

Respondent 2: *Nigo okobwateka bwororo, gwonchoreria ne'chingaki no'bosemia bore ase emebayeno yaito. Amang'ana ayuo mbuya agokwaneka.* 'It's easy to follow, and the idea that you must

change with the times is something we say even in our own sayings. So, the message has been shared well’

Respondent 3: *Nigo okoegeria ng’a goika omento abe omong’aini ekeru ebinto bikoba ebikong’u. Nabo abagaka bagatotebirie botambe. Nigo omobayeno oyuo oonchoirwe buya.* ‘It teaches that you have to be sharp when things get tough. That’s something our elders always told us. So yes, the way it’s been translated works well for us, it teaches the same lesson in a way we can relate to’.

23. SL: If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings. (pg. 8)

TL: *Omwana karasibie amoboko aye nabo akoragera n’abaruoti n’abagaka.* (pg.6)

‘If a child washes his hands he could eat with kings and elders’

Respondents were asked for their views in the above translation by means of the following question:

### Q3

What do you think about the inclusion of elders in the translation? Does this way of saying it reflect how people in the Gusii community understand respect and success?

Respondent 1: *Ase ekemira gaito, abagaka nabuo bagotoorokia enchera. Omento omoke obwate amasikani nabo agoikaransa na’bagaka agambe nabwo.* ‘In our culture, elders are the ones we look up to. A young person who is disciplined and respectful can sit with elders and even give ideas’

Respondent 2: *Ngokwana tore emebayeno buna eye botambe. Omanyete abagaka baito mbare nobong’aini botambe.*

*Omobayeno oyuo mbuyore ekiagera nabo togokwana igo.* ‘We say these kinds of proverbs often. We know our elders are the ones with wisdom here. That proverb is correct in our way of speaking’

Respondent 3: *Omwana okoorokia chimbu chingiya nabo agwancheru goikaransa na’bagaka. Nabo tomanyete obonene igo; koegenwa na’bagaka.* ‘A child who behaves well is allowed into the circles of respected people like elders. That’s how we understand success; being trusted by elders’

Respondent 4: *Abana baito ebagokina bakoigwa amang’ana anga buna ayuo. Nigo akobasomia ng’a konye bagotwara chimbu chingiya nigo barasikwe amo na abanto abanene kegima. Eyuo nero enchera yaito yokwegeria obong’aini.* ‘Our children grow up hearing such words. It teaches them that with good manners, they will be respected even by the most senior people. It is our way of passing wisdom’

24. SL: A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. (pg. 157)

TL: *Omonto okorangeria abaamate n'abairi ase omoyega tari gokora bo erio kobatoria gokwa enchara.* (pg. 163)

'A man who calls his kinsmen and relatives to a feast does not do so to save them from starving'

#### Q4

In the Ekegusii version of this proverb, the translator mentions both neighbours and relatives. What do you think about this choice? Does it reflect how Gusii people understand gatherings or feasts?

Respondent 1: *Nigo ere buya ekeri omoonchoria atebete abaamate n'abairi. Ase ekemira kia Omogusii, ekeri omonto agochika abanto gocha omoyega, tari baamate boka bagochikwa korende abairi nabarabwo mbatakeire* 'It is good that the translator said both neighbours and relatives. In our culture, when someone invites people to a feast, it's not just neighbours but also blood relatives are expected'

Respondent 2: *Konye ndiri ateba abaamate booka nigo yare gochicha koburukania onde bwensi. Korende ase okomenta n'abairi, nigo egotoinyoria okobwatana kwo'gochicha amo ekiagera ebigeni binga buna ebio tari igoro ya nchara korende obomo* 'Saying only kinsmen would have sounded too general. But by adding relatives, it reminds us that the bond of blood is strong, and such invitations are not just about hunger, but about togetherness'

Respondent 3: *Nagokeire enchera omobayeno oyuo obekire. Nigo okworokia ing'a ekeri okoroiseri abande endagera, nigo ogokora igo ase obwanchani no'bokoreri ase abaamate na'bairi.* 'I like how the proverb is said here. It shows that when you prepare food for others, you do it out of love and duty to family and neighbours.'

25. SL: The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them. (pg. 7)

TL: *Risase nigo rikomorekera ritang'ani baria bateneine nyuma ritaramorekera baria batugaime.* (pg. 5)

'The sun shines first on those standing before shining on those kneeling down'

### Q5.

How do you understand this Ekegusii proverb? Does it sound like a typical Ekegusii proverb to you? Please explain.

Respondent 1: *Gwaatoire omobayeno oyuo gatato korende nasinyiru komanya eng'encho yaye. Tori gwatoka buna mang'ana togokwana ase kera rituko. Nonya nomoroberio oye nigo otari obotambe naboigo ekere ogokuanera nkeri koigwekana buya.* 'You've said it thrice but I don't understand what the proverb is trying to say. It doesn't sound like anything we use in our speech. The structure feels strange, and the message is unclear'

Respondent 2: *Ase omonwa oito, emebayeno nigo ekoinya koba emieng'e. Nasinyiru kobwata Aseki abande bagotugama inse ya'bande.* 'In Ekegusii, our proverbs are usually short and to the point. I don't understand why others are kneeling under others'

Respondent 3: *Natantanire. Omobayeno oyo tori gokwaanera kende. Ebicha ya abanto batugaima na gotenena ase risase teri kobwateka buya.* 'I'm confused. This one is too abstract, and the image of people kneeling and standing before the sun isn't understandable'

26. SL: Living fire begets cold, impotent ash. (pg. 145)

TL: *Omorero ogwoka inkoibora ore obokendu, ribu riteba.* (pg. 150)

(Burning fire gives birth to cold ash that does not give birth)

### Q6.

Do you think the translator tried to stay very close to the original English wording or meaning in this Ekegusii translation? If so, does this help or make it harder for you to understand the message?

Respondent 1: *Oyo tori gwatoka buna mebayeno yende. Nigure amang'ana korende tindochi bosemi bonde bwensi. Omorero koibora ribu riteba? Ng'encho yaye teiyo.* (This one doesn't speak like our proverbs do. I understand the words, but I don't see what lesson it is trying to give. A fire giving birth to ash that cannot give birth? It simply doesn't make sense).

Respondent 2: *Oyuo no'moyabeno bwo'gokumia naende omokongu kobwata. Omonto aise koyokwana, goika motenenie moborie ekere amineti. Omoroberio bwa'mang'ana ayuo tabwati ng'encho.* (It sounds strange and hard to follow.

If someone said this to me in a conversation, I would have to stop them and ask what they mean. The structure is off and there is no clear message).

Respondent 3: *Neba amang'ana ayuo kare ye'kegusii, nigo akoigwekana amageni. Amang'ana nabo nyaigwete korende eng'encho yaye teri koigwekana.* (Even though it's in Ekegusii, it feels strange. The words are understandable but the meaning is not clear).

27. SL: You can tell a ripe corn by its look. (pg.21)

TL: *Nabo okorora egetuma giakongire ase okororekana kwaye.* (pg. 19)

‘You can see a ripe corn by its look’

### Q7.

How does the translator’s choice of words in the Ekegusii version of the proverb reflect an understanding of the target culture? In what ways does this choice help bridge cultural meaning between the source and target audiences?

Respondent 1: *Omobayeno oyuo nkoigwekana ore buya ekiagera ekeru egetuma giakong’ire nabo gekororekana. Omonto omuya nabo nere akororekana ase chimbwa chiaye.* ‘The proverb makes sense because when maize is ripe, you can truly see it. A good person is identified by their traits’

Respondent 2: *Nigo botambe tokorora ekeru egento kiabeire tayare. Nabuatire oboyabeno oyuo kegima.* ‘we usually say you see when something is ready. I understood it immediately’

Respondent 3: *Ekeru naigu omobayeno oyuo, nigo narengereria buna togochora omonto obwate chimbwa chingiya na komoa oborai.* ‘When I heard that proverb, I thought of how we identify a person of good character and give them leadership roles in our community’

28. SL: If one finger brought oil it soiled the others. (pg. 118)

TL: *Onye ekiara ekemo kegokuna amaguta, nigo kegoaka ebinde bionsi.* (pg. 123)

‘If one finger touches oil it spreads to the others’

### Q8.

How well does the Ekegusii version of the proverb convey the meaning of the SL proverb, and in what ways do the words or expressions used make it easier for you to understand the message?

Respondent 1: *Omobayeno oyuo n’bomaene ogokwana ekiagera ekeru ekiara ekemo giakunire amaguta, ebinde nabirabio nigo bigwakwa amaguata. Ase obogima, ekeru omonto akorire egento ekebe, abande nabarabuo goika banyore egesusuro.* ‘That proverb is true because if one finger touches oil, the others will also get oily. In life, when one person does something bad, others can be affected’

Respondent 2: *Ekeru nkoigwa omobayeno oyuo, nigo nkorengereria buna emechando gose etabi y’omonto oyomo ekoreterera enyomba gose ekeoombe ekegima.* ‘When I hear that proverb, I think of how problems or behaviour from one person can influence the whole family or group’

Respondent 3: *Konye ekiara ekemo kegokuna amaguta, ebinde bionsi nigo bikonyora amaguta ayio. Omobayeno oyo nigo ogosomia ing’a ebikoro bia omonto nabo bikoreterera abande.* ‘If one finger

has oil, the rest will also get it. The proverb teaches that one person's actions can affect others'

Respondent 4:

*Amaguta goaka ebiara binde korwa ase ekiara ekemo negento kegokorekana kera rituko. Nigo kere ekiorokererio ekiya ing'a buna egento ekebe gekwambokera abanto bande.* 'Oil spreading from one finger to others is something we know happens in real life, so it's a good example of how one issue can spread among people'

## **Appendix 7: Research Participant Consent Form**

Title of the Study: **A Cross-cultural Translation of Proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* from English into Ekegusii in *Binto Mbisebererekani***

**Researcher:** Robert Makori Onditi

Department of Languages and Literature Education, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

Email: [onditirobert2@gmail.com](mailto:onditirobert2@gmail.com)

Phone: +254726116977

### **Introduction**

You are invited to take part in a research study that explores how proverbs in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* have been translated into Ekegusii. This study aims to examine how cultural meanings are preserved or altered through translation.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The research aims to analyse the cultural equivalence and non-equivalence in the translation of English proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* into Ekegusii. Your feedback will help assess how well these translations capture cultural meaning.

If you agree to participate:

- i. You will be asked to take part in an interview lasting about (40-60 minutes).
- ii. You may be asked to interpret or comment on selected Ekegusii translations of proverbs.
- iii. With your permission, the session may be audio-recorded for accuracy.
- iv. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.
- v. All data collected from respondents will be securely stored for a period of five years after completion of the study, after which all identifiable data will be permanently deleted.

### **Confidentiality**

All the information you provide will be kept confidential. Your name will not be mentioned in the final report. Data will be stored securely and used for academic purposes only.

### **Risks and Benefits**

There are no anticipated risks. The main benefit is contributing to linguistic and cultural research which may support future language preservation and translation work.

### **Consent Statement**

I have read the information above. I have understood the purpose of this study and what is expected of me. I have freely agreed to participate.

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 8: Approval letter



MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (MMUST)

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### Directorate of Postgraduate Studies

Ref: MMU/COR: 509099

29<sup>th</sup> May, 2025

Robert Makori Onditi  
LAL/G/01-70339/2023  
P.O. Box 190-50100,  
KAKAMEGA.

Dear Mr. Onditi

#### RE: APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL

I am pleased to inform you that the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies has considered and approved your Masters proposal entitled “**Cross-Cultural Translation of Proverbs in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* from English into Ekegusii**” and appointed the following as supervisors:

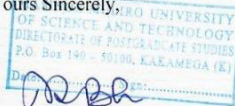
1. **Dr. Benard Mudogo** -MMUST
2. **Dr. David Barasa** -MMUST

You are required to submit through your supervisor(s) progress reports every three months to the Director Postgraduate Studies. Such reports should be copied to the following: Chairman, School of Arts and Social Sciences Graduate Studies Committee and Chairman, Language and Literature Education Department. Kindly adhere to research ethics consideration in conducting research.

It is the policy and regulations of the University that you observe a deadline of **two years** from the date of registration to complete your Masters thesis. Do not hesitate to consult this office in case of any problem encountered in the course of your work.

We wish you the best in your research and hope the study will make original contribution to knowledge.

Yours Sincerely,



Prof. Kennedy Bota, PhD  
Ag. DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

