Ideological Foundations of the Igbo Oral Proverbs Translations of Achebe in *TFA (Things Fall Apart)*

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Proverbs in *TFA (Things Fall Apart)* (1958) should not only be seen as unique performances, but also as specific encapsulations of ideological and sociocultural accretions of the Igbo people in Nigeria. The avalanche of proverbs in *TFA* and their representations give the novel an amazingly peculiar and attractive outlook. Those may be some of the reasons why the book has a global critical acclaim and has been translated into 36 languages with more than 80 million copies sold in 50 languages. Although the proverbs call special attention, because they constitute landmarks in the plot development of the novel, their ideological underpinnings are not readily discernible. Nevertheless, a great preponderance of works done on proverbs usually indicate the proverbs’ functions within contexts of application giving little or no attention to their ideological foundations. Therefore, beyond the functional application, this write-up uses the sociosemiotic approach to CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) and Black’s interaction view of metaphor to critically investigate the proverbs found in *TFA* with the intention to account for the imagery, unravel opaque structures, sociocultural bases, and power relations that underpin the sustenance of the proverbs or otherwise. Findings indicate that the proverbs originate from Igbo spirituality. Through the use of floral, faunal, socioeconomic, and political discourses, the life experiences of the people are summed up in the wise sayings.

*Keywords:* sociocultural accretions, CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis), power relations, Igbo spirituality, Igbo oral proverbs

**Introduction**

Proverbs are collective wisdom of a society and they contain much that must be known and constantly remembered. Implicitly, they are charged with ideologies and common sense of the sociocultural groups that own them. Proverbs constitute a major feature in oral tradition. The reason is that the chief character of oral traditions is rapid fading (Wold, 1978). Since oral sociocultures have no fixed texts in writing, they organize and transmit knowledge in ways designed to facilitate the labor of human memory. As a result of the mnemonic necessity, whatever is conceptualized tends to be institutionalized in existential terms to facilitate memory and availability. Skills and information are acquired through personal contact and exemplification. Thus, oral sociocultures like the Igbo and their discourses are traditionalist, conservative, and communal. Sequel to that, since reasoned arguments alone are seldom responsible for a permanent change in behavior, mental models are couched in

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metaphorical expressions such as proverbs to achieve the change (Woodward, 1991, p. 121).

Many authors write on proverbs on the basis of their functional applications. For example, Achebe (1958) described it as “the palm oil with which words are eaten” (p. 6). In other words, proverbs have sociocultural significance and are applicable in discourses. Oyeleye (1995, pp. 365-379) and Osundare (1995, pp. 341-363) also saw proverbs functionally from translatorial action process viewpoint and suggested that they pose a Herculean task to translators since they are socioculturally bound. Nwachukwu-Agbada (2002) contained a comprehensive investigation of Igbo proverbs. He also categorized them on the basis of their functions. By proverb functionality is meant that proverbs have sociocultural significance and are applied contextually. Adejumo (2009, pp. 451-461) demonstrated how proverbs are functionally applied in the Yoruba contemporary society in relation to power, domination, and agitation for liberty. In the TFA (Things Fall Apart) (1958), proverbs are used functionally in basically three different ways: (1) to cast light upon shades of argument which requires elucidation—Amplificatory function; (2) to suggest approaches which could be applied to recurrent social situations/problems—Authoritative function; and (3) to apply social pressure on enigmatic or deviant behaviours—Educative function. Sometimes there exist functional overlaps, whereby a proverb may perform more than one of the basic functions above. Rhetorical, image-making, and aesthetic functions underlie the three basic functions of proverbs mentioned above (cf. Nwachukwu-Agbada, 2002, pp. 93-134), because whenever a proverb is correctly applied, it is persuasive, prestigious, and ornamental. An area which is scarcely investigated in proverb functionality is its ideological base and the possible underpinnings of their existence. In this write-up, the proverbs as used contextually in the TFA will be investigated critically as they are used within the texts to unravel the imagery couched in them, their sociocultural significance and the possible foundations of their continued existence or otherwise.

Conceptual Framework

The CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) and Black’s Interaction View (1979) of metaphor will be applied. The core assumptions of CDA are that: (1) Ideologies reside in text; (2) Different linguistic usages, for example, lexical or syntactic choices encode different ideologies resulting from their situations and purposes and by this means language works as a social practice; and (3) Language is neither a transparent medium for communication about an objective world nor a reflection of a stable social structure, but it promulgates a set of version of reality and thereby works as a constantly operative part of social process. Therefore, in CDA texts are viewed from the angle of their relations to power and ideology (Fairclough, 2001, pp. 1, 28; 1995, p. 71; Locke, 2004, pp. 1-2; M. Bloor & T. Bloor, 2007, pp. 4-11; Malmkjaer, 2002, pp. 102-106; Wodak, 2001, 2007; Van Dijk, 1995, 2006, 2008, 2009). Nevertheless, Fairclough’s CDA approach, which is sociosemiotically inclined is adopted in this write-up. Critical to the core assumptions mentioned above are intertextuality of texts and implicit assumptions, which are a sine qua non to text analysis and comprehension. Next is the Black’s Interaction View of metaphor (cf. Black, 1979, pp. 28-29; Levinson, 1983, p. 148; Saeed, 2003, p. 346; Ortony, 1979, p. 187; Paivio, 1979, p. 151; Kress, 1989, p. 71). The core assumptions of the interaction view are that: (1) A metaphorical utterance has two distinct subjects, the primary (focus) and the secondary (frame); (2) The maker of a metaphorical utterance selects, emphasizes, suppresses, and organizes features of the primary subject by projecting upon it statements isomorphic with the members of the secondary subject’s implicative complex; subsequently, (3) The presence of
the primary subject invites the interlocutor to construct subject (imagery) and reciprocally induces parallel changes in the secondary subject.

**Methodology**

With the aid of Fairclough’s (1995, 2001) sociosemiotic approach to CDA and Black’s Interaction View, eight out of 31 proverbs in the novel, which directly relate to the Igbo spirituality and belief in *Ofo, Ikenga*, and God are purposively and critically investigated by way of intertextuality, decontextualization, and implicit assumptions to reveal opaque structures, account for power relations among the subjects used in the texts, and imagery, and thereby reveal power relations in the texts. That is, all the eight proverbs are interpreted and explained. The proverbs are named in accordance with the main concepts (substantives) within the proverbs.

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

**Proverbs With Amplificatory Function**

**The kola and life proverb. Context**—Event: Okoye visits Unoka, his friend to collect back his money. Unoka presents kola to him.

Participants: Okoye and Unoka.

In what relation: They are friends of unequal social status.

**Igbo oral proverb:** O wétéré oj jì wètèrè ndụ.

**Translation:** He who brings kola brings life (Achebe, 1958, p. 5).

**Interpretation:** Sense relations do not necessarily exist between *kola* and *life*. For instance, they do not belong to the same class of entity; there is neither a guarantee that eating of kola does not give life nor that abstaining from it takes away life. Rather bringing of kola to a visitor has meanings that transcend the physical entity denoted by the name kola. And that is good wishes and prayers for success in life. It is these abstract connotations that the speaker projects upon the kola, the primary subject.

**Explanation:** The concept of kola in Igbo sociocultural milieu has a strong ideological import. Kola suggests the idea of welcome and good wishes (invariably life) when offered to a visitor. In the Igbo socioculture, kola as a concept must not necessarily be a fruit from a kola tree. It can be some other edible thing or non-edible thing, for example, money, which is considered useful by the giver to the receiver (a visitor). It is used to maintain a cordial relationship and achieve peace between individuals, groups, communities, villages, and towns. It is used in social gatherings. Essentially and basically, bringing of kola suggests the invitation of the Supreme Deity—God to take control in the affairs of men. This is because kola cannot be taken or eaten without prayer said on it. The power relation between God and man is that of inequality. The belief is that the prayers made on kola (nuts) affect the lives of the consumers.

On account of the positive semantic associations projected on the concept of kola, its use is sustained and maintained in the social structures of the people.

**The eagle, kite, and wings proverb. Context**—Event: Okonkwo visits Nwakibie, a wealthy man who has three huge barns, nine wives, and 30 children. He takes a pot of palm-wine and a cock to him.

Participants: Okonkwo, Nwakibie and his two grown-up sons, and two elderly neighbors of Nwakibie.

In what relation: In unequal relation, because Okonkwo being poor has no yam seedlings to start life. He
begs Nwakibie to give him some so that he can do share cropping with him.

**Igbo oral proverb:** Égbé bèré, úgò bèré, nké s ị ibè yá é bèna, nku kàá yá.

**Translation:** Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too, if one says no to the other, let his wings break (Achebe, 1958, p. 5).

**Interpretation:** In the text, what human co-existence portends in the socioculture is allegorically couched in metaphors of birds (the primary subjects), a part of the Igbo fauna. Although the kite and the eagle are both birds of prey and belong to the same family, they are not equal in strength and rank. While the eagle represents the rich, the kite represents the poor. In other words, the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor should peacefully co-exist. “If one says no to the other” (that is, that it should not perch), by further analogy, that he should not exist in the community, “let its wings break”. By implication, any one who does not want a peaceful co-existence should die off. If a bird’s wings break, it means that the bird is demobilized consequently, the bird will die. The proverb is an encapsulation of an ideology representing the meaning of human relations in Igbo sociocultural setting. The web of imagery which the producer of the text is welding here is quite fantastic. The eagle operates usually at a very high altitude and is scarcely seen in clusters. It is seen once in a blue moon. The other birds like kites operate at a much lower attitude. So, the eagle should not abandon its much revered position and condescend to the level of frustrating the lives of the smaller birds. However, should the eagle do that, the force that sustains it would work against it and kill it. In other words, should the sociopolitically vertical begin to oppress the sociopolitically horizontal, the Supreme Being will eliminate it. This is a very strong aspect of religious belief in Igbo society.

**Explanation:** The speaker draws from the resources of his sound knowledge of the fauna of his environment. The ideology of inequality is part and parcel of the speaker’s cosmological belief in duality in existence. The negative is always necessary and present to balance out the positive. Therefore, if the rich exists, the poor should also exist. It is the presence of the other that enables one to appreciate life from a particular reference point. For example, if the poor does not exist, it would be difficult to conceptualize what the rich is. Subsequently, the belief in polar opposites is a critical necessity in the social discourse of the Igbo milieu.

**The little bird—nza, a heavy meal and challenge of his chi proverb. Context—**Event: Okonkwo is provoked to a justifiable anger by his youngest wife, Ojiugo who goes to plait her hair at her friend’s house and does not return early enough to cook the afternoon meal for her husband, Okonkwo. In his anger he forgets that it is the Week of Peace and so he beats his wife heavily. Okonkwo is sanctioned according to the custom of the land. Okonkwo though repentant of his offence does not show it. Consequently, people say he has no respect for the gods of the land; that his good fortune goes into his head.

Participants: Okonkwo, Ojiugo, his youngest wife, his two other wives, neighbors, Ezeani, the priest of earth goddess.

In what relation: Here, there are networks of unequal relations: Okonkwo and his wives are in unequal relation, Okonkwo being higher than them in the social rank. But Okonkwo and the priest of Ani the earth goddess are also in unequal relation with the priest being higher in the social rank. So while Okonkwo’s presupposition supersedes his wives’, that of Ezeani supersedes his.

**Igbo oral proverb:** Há kpọọ yà nwá nzá richáará nri chêuọ ônwé yà wèrè chééré chi yà áká-ngbá.

**Translation:** They called him the little bird *nza* who so far forgot himself after a heavy meal that he challenged his *chi* (Achebe, 1958, p. 22).
Interpretation: The proverb is better understood through intertextual investigation and decontextualization. The little bird nza has certain features which are isomorphic with the character of Okonkwo. For example, on account of nza’s big chest and heavy crop size, it is seen as well fed and by implication satisfied; it perches too close to the ground, implicitly close to humans as if it were throwing a challenge that it cannot be caught or killed (by humans). These features of the little bird nza are projected upon Okonkwo. Humans are seen as gods vis-à-vis nza, just like the spirits are visualized vis-à-vis humans. Just like it is believed that the spirits direct the affairs of man, so it is also believed that humans direct the affairs of animals, birds and determine which one that lives or dies. Invariably, for a person “to challenge his chi (spirit) to a wrestling bout” is tantamount to foolishness, because spirits are believed to be more powerful than humans. That is the meaning of the proverb which the Narrator welds in a complex, but candid imagery.

Explanation: The Narrator combines a good knowledge of the mode of life and adaptation of the little bird nza, a bird type in the fauna of the Igbo socioculture and the cosmological belief in the world of spirit to drive a message home. In the socioculture there is a very strong belief in spirits and their influence on human life. Discourses are constructed using aspects of the belief to teach lessons or to reprimand as in the case under investigation. Discourses that sustain the ethos of the socioculture such as the proverb above are sustained.

A child’s finger, mother, and pieces of hot yam proverb. Context—Event: Okonkwo queries his friend Obierika on why he failed to accompany them in the killing of Ikemefuna. Obierika answers sharply that he does not want and insists that Okonkwo’s action is the type that can cause a goddess to wipe out whole families. But Okonkwo disagrees with Obierika and maintains that the Earth cannot punish him for obeying her message.

Participants: Okonkwo and Obierika.
In what relation: They relate on equal grounds as friends.

Igbo oral proverb: Ọkụ nné gụnyère nwàtà n’ákhí á digíh è règbù yá.
Translation: A child’s fingers are not scalded by pieces of hot yam which its mother puts in its hand (Achebe, 1958, p. 47).

Interpretation: One can come to grips with the meaning of the proverb through intertextual investigation and decontextualization. Okonkwo, the speaker sees himself as “a child’s finger” which cannot be scalded by the responsibility of the killing of Ikemefuna visualized as “pieces of hot yam” given to him by the gods visualized as “his mother”. It is easy to conceptualize the meaning of the proverb in this way, because both the secondary and the primary subjects in the proverb share isomorphic features. For example, the protective belief features of the gods such as guarding a person, leading a person to fortunes, keeping a person in sound health and so on are projected upon “its mother” who is seen as giving her child “hot pieces of yam”. Okonkwo being “a child’s finger” is conceptualized as unhurt being protected by the gods. That is the meaning of the proverb.

Explanation: The proverb draws on a lot of resources in the Igbo socioculture. The resources are the cosmic world of the spirits (as in mother/God), the flora (as in pieces of hot yam/tubers), and fauna (human resource as in a child’s finger/Okonkwo). These resources constitute integral parts of the Igbo socioculture and therefore constitute ingenuous sources of discourses in the socioculture. The discourse of belief in God is a common sense in the socioculture.

The tortoise in relation to trouble proverb. Context—Event: In the solid massiveness of the night, Ekwefi tells her daughter a story in her hut. An oil lamp burns to produce yellow-half light with which they see.
The story is about how tortoise beguiled the birds into allowing him to lead them to a feast in the sky. In the story, birds and tortoise speak as though they were humans.

Participants: Ekwefi and Ezinma, her daughter.

In what relation: In a mother-daughter relationship.

**Igbo oral proverb:** O méré mmádụ, mèrè onwe ya.

**Proverb:** I have learnt that a man who makes troubles for others is also making it for himself (Achebe, 1958, p. 68).

**Interpretation:** Here again intertextuality and decontextualization is required to come to proper grips with abstract imagery being welded by the speaker, the Tortoise. In the socioculture, tortoise is often treated in association with wily, crafty, and trickery behaviors which many a time lead to troubles. The imagery which the tortoise is used to generate in the Igbo socioculture often becomes consummated in folkloric dramatic ironies. In the context, tortoise having beguiled the birds into lending him wings to lead them to a celestial party, disappoints them by consuming all the food items given to “All of them” (a name he claims is his) in the sky. The birds, in their exasperation withdraw their wings from him. He comes crashing down terribly from the sky. His beguilement falls back on him. Dramatic ironies require distance to succeed. Implicitly, for one to give another worry or even to deceive another, one would have deceived oneself. That is the meaning of the proverb.

**Explanation:** The proverb stems from the Igbo sociocultural moral values and philosophy. Here again a part of the fauna is used to project the values and the philosophy of the people, in this case love of one’s neighbor and peaceful coexistence. Different sociocultures have different or similar ways of intergenerationally transmitting or sustaining their moral ethos and philosophy of life (Ukaegbu, 2006, pp. 164-167). In some sociocultures “dog” is used (for example French), in some the “hare” or “the fox” and so on.

**Proverbs With Educative Function**

**Being at peace with gods and ancestors proverb.**

**Context**—Event: Unoka consults Agbala, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves to find out why he always had a miserable harvest.

Participants: Unoka and Chika, the priestess of Agbala.

In what relation: Unoka and Chika relate at unequal basis. The moment Chika operates as the priestess of Agbala, she ceases to be a mere mortal, but stands tall as the representative of the God. Thus she interrupts Unoka’s inquiry: “Hold your peace!” screamed the priestess. (Achebe, 1958, p. 13)

**Igbo oral proverb:** Mgbè nwóké nà chí yá nà ndị ịchịè dị n’nmá, ọwúwè-ihé-úbí yá gà-àdị úkwú mọbụ npé sịté n’etú úgbó yá hà.

**Translation:** When a man is at peace with his gods and his ancestors his harvest will be good or bad according to the strength of his arm (Achebe, 1958, p. 13).

**Interpretation:** The resources the priestess is drawing upon here are quite complex. It is better understood through intertextuality and decontextualization. The resources indicate the Igbo cosmological and extraterrestrial features just like the dual personality of the priestess would suggest. Through this medium an individual automatically has the advantage of both divinity and mortality—a dual personality. This idea of man transcending his inelastic limits is deeply rooted in Igbo metaphysical institution. A man being at peace with his gods and ancestors has avalanche of meaning associations such as absence of violence and squabbles in a man’s
life, inner serenity, soundness of health, spiritual strength and vigour, ingenuity, and resourcefulness, all for positive productive purposes. However, the positive productivity is dependent on the strength of the man’s arm. Here the priestess draws upon the sociocultural resources of Ofo—the embodiment of the symbolic link between the living, the dead and the unborn, and Ikenga—the Igbo symbolic force of adventurism. It is the goal-getter spirit of the Igbo associated with good fortune, personal ability, war, and general success in life. It is ideologically associated with a man’s right hand. Since a man’s right hand in Igbo cosmology symbolizes positivism, his ability to utilize it most effectively for a considered goal puts him on the saddle of success and recognition. A man’s basic strength among the Igbo is therefore to be found in his right hand. Ikenga is described as the cult of the right hand with which a man hacks his way through the jungles of sweat and bitter experiences known as life. The Ikenga is symbolized structurally by a carved wooden ram-headed human figure with two horns, a machete on the right hand, and a human head representing the booty on the left. It conceptualizes and visualizes man’s strength in his head through his ideas and thoughts in the same way the strength of the ram is found in its head, but unlike the ram, uses his right hand to execute the plans of his brains (Nwaezeigwe, 2007, pp. 13-14). These meaning associations or implicative complexes are projected upon Unoka’s situation in the text. His problems are neither caused by the gods nor the ancestors, which are forces greater than him. Rather his arm is weak. Thus, the priestess tells him: “You, Unoka, are known in all the clan for the weakness of your machete and your hoe…” She makes another proverb and finally asks Unoka to “go home and work like a man” (Achebe, 1958, p. 13).

**Explanation:** In the Igbo-socioculture while age is mostly respected, a man’s achievements based on his personal enterprises are revered. To the Igbo, whose culture is portrayed in the novel, a man’s worth is not measured by his inheritance, but by his personal enterprising efforts. Therefore, in the Igbo-milieu the discourse of enterprise is rigidly engraved in the sociocultural institutions as is evident in the cult of Ikenga. It is a common sense in the Igbo-socioculture.

**The cracking of palm-kernels and a benevolent spirit proverb. Context**—Event: During the meeting of Okonkwo’s kindred to discuss the next ancestral feast, a man contradicts Okonkwo. Without looking at the man Okonkwo says: “This meeting is for men”. The man who contradicts him has no titles. That is why Okonkwo calls him a woman. The utterance kills the man’s spirit. Everybody in the kindred meeting takes side with the man, Osugo when Okonkwo calls him a woman.

Participants: Okonkwo, Osugo, the Oldest Man present and the rest of the kindred.

In what relation: The participants are in a hierarchical network of relations. Amongst them are the rich, the poor, the young, the old, the titled elders, and the untitled ones. The rich and the titled elders for example influence their counter parts to their own advantage.

Igbo oral proverb: Ndị chi ọmá tịrị ǎkị ẹ kwésighị i chèzọ ị dị ụmé ǎlà.

Translation: Those whose palm-kernels were cracked by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble (Achebe, 1958, p. 19).

Interpretation: The ideational meaning of the text can be grasped through intertextual investigation of the ideologically used lexical items and through decontextualization. In the traditional Igbo-socioculture, the palm-kernel has a great deal of applications. First of all, the palm-kernels are manually broken in large quantities to extract the useful nuts. The breakage of the kernels is a very tedious and tiring job that may take days or weeks.
Any one who gets a helping hand from a friend/s or neighbor/s can consider oneself fortunate and should be grateful for that. The nuts extracted from the kernel are sold to make money for survival. In the proverb, the breakage of the palm-kernels is associated with the grim struggle involved in survival. By bringing in the picture of a benevolent spirit helping to alleviate a person’s suffering, the Igbo cosmological belief in the Supreme-Being, Chukwu and his emissaries are brought into the limelight. The Supreme-Being is seen in the traditional African belief (particularly in that of the Igbo) as the determiner and sustainer of the people’s destiny in life (Ifesieh, 1983, p. 115; Iwuagwu, 1998, p. 96; Ubrurhe, 2003, p. 24). Therefore, in the grim struggle to survive in life, if one makes it, one should be grateful to the Supreme-Deity, for he is the one that sustains and helps to achieve breakthroughs in life. Okonkwo’s behavior suggests that he forgets that it is not just through personal struggle that one rises to fame. That is why the Oldest Man in the gathering calls him back to order by making the proverb.

**Explanation:** The traditional religious belief of the Igbo people is indigenous. It is not only natural to them; it is also ancestral and oriented towards personal and community development. In other words the religious belief permeates every aspect of their sociocultural life. The Igbo perceive the universe as having two worlds—the visible and the super sensible worlds—which can further be divided into four, namely, the world of God, the world of spirits, the world of nature, for example Ala (earth) (cf. Anedo, 2008, pp. 65-71; Okeke, 2008, pp. 112-119), and the world of man (Ezikeojiaku, 2008, p. 40). In the text, the speaker makes reference to the world of spirits. It is believed, that the spirits are appointed by Chiukwu (God) to help him in the onerous task of administering and supervising both the visible and the invisible worlds which he created. The Igbo derive their traditional religion, ritual, and sacrifices from this conceptualization of many gods. In this world view, the world of spirits is not only recognized but revered, too. For it is believed that if such reverence is not accorded the actors in the world of spirits, such actors would bring bad omen into the worlds of nature and man. That is why Okonkwo quickly says that he is sorry for what he does and the meeting continues. Invariably, metaphors speak for memory availability, because it creates vivid imageries in the mind’s eye of the audience.

**Proverbs With Amplificatory/Authoritative Function**

**Context**—Event: The Narrator eulogizes Okonkwo’s grim struggle against poverty and his eventual victory. At early age he achieves fame as the greatest wrestler in the land. He insists that Okonkwo is not lucky, that at best one can say that his personal god or chi is good. To the Narrator, Okonkwo says “yes” to success and his chi agrees. And not only his chi, but his clan, too, because it judges a man by the works of his hand.

Participant: The Narrator.

Igbo oral proverb: Ónyé kwé, chí yá è kwé.

Translation: When a man says “yes” his chi says “yes” also (Achebe, 1958, p. 19).

Interpretation: What does a man say “yes” to? Why must his chi say “yes” also? By one saying “yes” is meant that one is determined to achieve a breakthrough in life. One’s chi says “yes” compulsorily because in behaviorism which is the ideology behind the belief in personal god or chi, it is believed that each man determines the shape of his life. By making reference to chi, the speaker alludes to the world of man in Igbo cosmology. A man who has chi does not fear a fellow human being. Such a man is daring and adventurous, because he has his Ikenga—the cult of right arm (cf. Achebe, 1974, pp. 24-25). With his Ikenga he hacks his way through the thick and bitter experiences called life. Thus there is an imagery of a man’s chi—God’s emissary standing in affirmation beside the man and his actions.
Invariably, the proverb means that fortune is apt to favor the man who keeps his nerve. In the proverb the implicatures of behaviorism and the world of man in Igbo cosmology are projected upon “yes”.

**Explanation:** Success in adventures and enterprise is highly regarded in the Igbo-socioculture. Therefore, discourses that encourage or extol a breakthrough and raise the people’s achievement motivation are sustained in the Igbo-socioculture.

**Discussion of Findings**

Translationally, Achebe adopts a domesticating strategy in the translatorial action of the Igbo oral proverbs. This is evident in the choice of lexical items used in the renditions. A good investigation of the proverbs indicates that in cadence, thought processes and concepts, the renditions though English represents the views of the source culture (Igbo) beliefs, mores, philosophies, aspirations and expectations. For example, a competent Igbo-English bilingual reading the novel sees his/her ethos recaptured in a language that reads like Igbo, yet not Igbo in linguistic representation. However, two exceptions can be seen in (1) section “The tortoise in relation to trouble proverb”: Igbo oral proverb: *O méré mmádụ, mèrè onwe ya*; translation: I have learnt that a man who makes troubles for others is also making it for himself (Achebe, 1958, p. 68); and (2) section “A child’s finger, mother and pieces of hot yam proverb”: Igbo oral proverb: *Ọkụ nne gụnyɛrɛ n’ọkà ɗ diği ɗ règbu yà.* Translation: A child’s fingers are not scalded by pieces of hot yam which its mother puts in its hand (Achebe, 1958, p. 47). In those two instances, Achebe uses a foreignising strategy, because an attempt to use the domesticating approach would semantically dislocate the ideational meanings of the proverbs (cf. Oyetade & Ifesieh, 2013). Thus, the target audience would be misinformed. Said differently, the two proverbs contain pragmatic use variations. Therefore, they require a communicative approach (foreignising strategy), which enables the translator to build in sufficient redundancies that take care of unpredictabilities of the text (cf. Shannon & Weaver, 1998).

Ideologically, the proverbs stem from the core beliefs of the Igbo in industry, cordial human relations, extra mundane—(belief in the cult of ancestors, who invisibly interacts with the living and the unborn, that is, *Ofo*), *Ikenga*—(belief in the cult of the right Arm), the Supreme Being and socioeconomic and political experiences of life, whereby the presuppositions of the elders supersede the ones of the young. Belief in extraterrestrial forces underlies all the proverbs. Evidently, the traditional Igbo society is deeply religious and egalitarian. From the interpretations and explanations of the proverbs, it can be generally gathered that no meaningful discourse can be engaged on in the traditional Igbo society without reference to their religious beliefs. From the proverbs, it can also be derived that the Igbo cosmology is a composite one; there is an organic and unbroken relationship between the natural and the super sensible worlds. Within the bond of the composite world, sacredness of life, respect for spiritual nature of creation and of human person are suffused in the meaning of family, community, socioeconomic life, and human relations in general.

**Conclusions**

Finally, the proverbs in *TFA* form the threads upon which the core ideologies of the Igbo people are represented in the plot of the novel. The avalanche of them in the novel is deliberate and they are used imaginatively to transmit the emotions, hurts, expectations, and aspirations of the Igbo people of Umuofia, the fictitious setting in the south-east of Nigeria.
References


