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AGRICULTURE-RELATED PROVERBS IN YORUBÁ: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPRAISAL

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ABSTRACT

The study of proverbs is called paremiology. In terms of their origin within the culture of a language, proverbs come from a variety of sources, which is technically referred to in this paper as cosmologies. The focus of this paper is Yorubá proverbs whose cosmologies are directly or indirectly related to agriculture. The set of Yorubá proverbs selected for analysis in this study includes those whose cosmologies are related to animals, insects, forest, farm, farm produce, farmers, etc. Whenever proverbs are deployed in a given social context, they serve as a vehicle that conveys the people's culture and tradition. Therefore, in order to explain the socio-cultural interpretations of the selected proverbs, we have chosen sociolinguistics as a theoretical framework for our analysis, with specific focus on ethnography of communication as conceptualised by Hymes (1974) in the acronym, '**speaking**'. Based on the philosophical and pragmatic meanings of the proverbs as espoused by the culture of the Yoruba people, we observed that the cosmology from which a given Yorubá proverb originates determines the correct and appropriate deployment and interpretation of the proverb. We also observed that Yorubá

proverbs are veritable tools for carrying out social activities like educating, instructing, admonishing, etc. people on specific issues having to do with their culture and tradition. Finally, we are of the opinion that correct interpretation, understanding and deployment of Yorùbá proverbs depend on the understanding of the social contexts from which the proverbs originate and the user's familiarity with the proverbs' cosmologies.

Key words: proverbs, Yorùbá, agriculture, cosmologies, sociolinguistics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Proverbs derive their meanings from a combination of their cosmologies and the contexts where they are deployed. A proverb's cosmology is the aspect of the universe that is focused in that proverb. Hence, understanding that aspect of the universe is central to understanding the proverb as a whole. This is so because it is through its cosmology that a proverb "mirrors the life of the people, reflects what they do, what and how they think, how they live, what values they admire or abhor and what joys and sorrows they experience" (Ojoade 1980) cited in (Ọmọlòşó 6)). It is through their cosmologies that proverbs truly "represent the quintessence of a people's collective wisdom sustained and transmitted from generation to generation" (Lawal, Ajayi and Raji 635).

Proverbs vary in their cosmologies. While some centre on animals, some centre on trees, household objects, professions, religious artifacts, etc. In a nutshell, the cosmologies of proverbs cover all aspects of human experience; hence, their functional properties are as varied as their cosmologies, which are not substitutable. For example, if the cosmology of a proverb is dog, it cannot be substituted with, say, fowl. In this work, our goal is to carry out a sociolinguistic appraisal of agriculture-related Yorùbá proverbs, using as our analytical tool Hymes' (1974) ethnography of communication, as highlighted in Bauman and Sherzer (eds) (1989). Our data will, therefore, be made up of a number of selected Yorùbá proverbs that have any of the following as their

cosmologies: (a) animals, (b) insects, (c) forests, (d) farms, (e) farm produce, (f) farmers, etc.

Our preference for ethnography of communication as the analytical framework for this category of Yorùbá proverbs is informed by the fact that proverbs are philosophical in nature, where philosophy, according to Thomson in Ojoade (18), includes:

not only the developed system of western thought, but also the attempt by man to describe and understand the world in which he lives—the behaviour of his gods, the facts of life and death, the ethics of his society, the way to success and happiness, the vagaries of nature and the laws by which he must live ...

The implication of the above is that proverbs encapsulate the totality of the cultures and traditions of a people. Ethnography of communication holds that the patterning of speech goes far beyond laws of grammar to comprehend the use of language in social life. It involves the radical linking of the verbal and the socio-cultural in the conduct of speaking (Bauman and Sherzer (eds), 1989). It is, therefore, employed in this study to explore the extent to which Yorùbá customs, traditions and their world-views influence the deployment and understanding of Yorùbá agriculture-related proverbs in their day-to-day linguistic interactions. This, we believe, will further show the strong relationship between language and culture and strengthen the view that understanding a people's culture could be a step towards promoting world peace, as it will show that human beings share similar thoughts and concerns, but only differ in tongues. This underscores Ojoade's (34) statement that "whatever matter-of-fact the symbols different nations employ for dressing their proverbs, that does not detract from their internationality".

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 *The Nature of Proverbs*

In Yorùbá, as in other languages, proverbs, generally, have been studied from different perspectives, depending on the research focus of individual scholars. Philosophically, proverbs are the store-house of folk wisdom, as they "represent the quintessence of a people's collective wisdom sustained and

transmitted from generation to generation” (Lawal, Ajayi and Raji 635) and “they could be included in a class that comprises origin myths, folktales and songs, each of which is related or sung in particular situations and primarily feature in conversation between mature native adults” (Burton 84). As moral codes, proverbs are “a laconic declaration... whose intervention in a context of verbal representation condenses and radiates experience, ideas and admonitions through terse, pithy statement of a truism” (Noah, cited in Iwara (ed) (95)). From the aesthetic and literary points of view, “proverbs generally use hyperbole, rhyme, alliteration and colourful pictorial forms of expression” (The New Encyclopedia Britanica 749). In addition, proverbs also use sharp wit, sarcasm, humour, rhetoric and “all the aesthetic and poetic values of language” ((Burton, in Ọmọlòşọ (5)). To the Yoruba, proverbs are a type of speech tracer and an *agidigbo* drum that only the wise can dance to and the thoughtful can decipher; it is “the palm oil with which words are eaten” (Achebe 6). As historical and cultural artifacts, proverbs are “the experience and wisdom of several ages summed up in one expression” (Nwoga 86), and as a summary of daily life experience, “proverbs are formed from the day-to-day experience of life in the physical, social and cultural environments of language users” (Bhuvaneswar, 3). From the linguistic/structural view point, proverbs are couched in sentences of varying lengths and complexity, ranging from simple, compound, complex, to serial and, functionally, they can be declarative or interrogative and can be used to perform various pragmatic functions in discourse (Ọmọlòşọ 2006; 2007). Their deployment and interpretation in discourse are subject to different pragmatic and sociolinguistic constraints, as dictated by the particular language community.

2.2 Sociolinguistics–the ethnography of communication

Sociolinguistics studies language in relation to its context of use. It relates social structure to linguistic structure ((McGregor 155); (Gumperz, cited in Wardhaugh 10)). As pointed out by Trudgill (32), sociolinguistics looks at language as a social phenomenon since language study as an abstract form removed from its social environment robs language of its more complex and interesting aspects. According to Labov, cited in Wardhaugh (3),

the linguistic behaviour of individuals cannot be understood outside the knowledge of the communities to which they belong, as speakers know more than the formal structures of their language. Language is, therefore, not as fixed as the formal rules of linguistic analysis present it, as the social structures it mirrors are in no way fixed. Hence, apart from grammatical competence, language users also possess and show communicative competence which results from an appropriate marriage of grammatical structures with social structures. Language use varies from group to group, speaker to speaker as dictated by sociolinguistic variables like the age, gender, social status and psychological disposition etc of speakers. For example, in Yorubá, as in other cultures, proverbs are regarded as the preserve of the elders, as it is believed that only the elders qualify as the repository of folk wisdom that proverbs convey. Social structure often influences or determines linguistic structure or behaviour, just as linguistic structure may influence or determine social structure, hence, the need for an appropriate blending of both to display grammatical and communicative competence.

Depending on its context of use, the same proverb may be declarative or interrogative in structure with consequences for its pragmatic force. Therefore, as pointed out by Holmes (1), when language is studied in different social contexts, it provides a lot of information about the functions of language and the social relationships in a community and how people show their social identity through their language. In Yorubá, for example, when a young person wants to use a proverb in his discourse with an elder, he must start by first acknowledging that he is trying to foray in an area reserved for the elders by prefixing his proverb with *Èyin/Àwọn àgbà a máa pa òwe pé ...* (You/The elders do use a proverb that says...), or end the proverb with *tótó, ó se bí òwe* (my apology that it goes the way of a proverb). This shows that quite a lot of sociolinguistic considerations come into play when a Yorubá native speaker uses proverbs in her/his discourse, which makes our choice of sociolinguistics and, specifically, ethnography of communication, as our analytical framework quite appropriate. Ethnography of speaking seeks to determine for example, the means of speaking available to language users. Such means may include, according to Bauman and Sherzer (eds) (7):

- (a) the linguistic varieties and other codes and sub-codes, the use of which counts as speech within the speech community and the distribution of which constitutes the linguistic repertoires of its members;
- (b) the conventional speech acts and genres available to the members for the conduct of speaking;
- (c) the set of community norms, operating principles, strategies and values which guide the production and interpretation of speech, the community ground rules for speaking.

All these are well captured in Hymes' (1974) theory of communicative competence, which holds that the knowledge required by language users incorporates both the knowledge of grammar and rules as well as the knowledge of how to properly use the linguistic forms. He puts forward the social variables involved in appropriately using language in communication, using the acronym '*speaking*', which means: setting and scene, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms and genre.

The essence of Hymes' '*speaking*' is that for communication to achieve its goal, there must be a setting or scene for a speech event, e.g., home, market place, office, etc; there must be participants in the speech event, the speech event must have conventionally recognized results, it should be conducted in the speech repertoire of the participants, the accompanying paratones must also be conventionally recognized by the participants, it must also be in an appropriate channel, it must conform with acceptable norms of behaviour within the speech community. Finally, the speech event must be in an acceptable form.

All these conditions are met in the deployment and interpretation of proverbs in Yoruba. For example, proverbs must be used at appropriate settings. A proverb suitable in a wedding ceremony, for instance, would be out of place at a funeral ceremony. Also, an appropriate cosmology must be used in a proverb for the proverb to be interpretable and have the desired communicative effect. For example, the choice of animals, trees, insects, farms, farmers, farm produce etc. as cosmologies in our selected agriculture-related proverbs traces the origin of the

proverbs to an agrarian or rural setting. Arising from that, the understanding of the proverbs requires the understanding of the cosmologies themselves, which further shows that the audience to whom these proverbs were initially directed was agrarian or rural. This may partly explain why the comprehension of this type of proverbs is rather difficult for the current generation of Yorubá native speakers who, perhaps, may not know anything about the cosmologies of these proverbs.

With regard to participants, proverbs in Yoruba usually feature in adult discourses and their deployment is normally the preserve of the elders, who are regarded as the reservoirs of folk wisdom and history. When a proverb is used in a discourse generally, the goal is to generate particular perlocutionary effects or goals in the listener, such as warning, admonishing, eulogizing, condemning, etc; otherwise, the proverb has failed as part of a speech event. As far as the act sequence is concerned, Yoruba proverbs are generally in sentences of varying lengths and complexity, and are usually declarative or interrogative, the imperative mood being an inappropriate key, because of the fact that proverbs are indirect ways of saying things (Omoloso, 2006). Also, the fact that proverbs are considered to be the wise sayings of the elders automatically confers on them, by inference, a kind of authority and adoration. Yoruba oral discourses, particularly between the elders, are usually spiced with proverbs, but written discourses too have their own spices of proverbs, subject to the communicative competence of the writer. Both the oral and written channels are therefore appropriate for the expression of Yoruba proverbs. In fact, the data being analysed in this study are sourced from both. On the norms of interaction, though proverbs in Yoruba are reserved for the use of the elders, the youth too can use proverbs in their discourse, though it is part of communicative competence for her/him to observe some conventions before or after deploying the proverb. Proverbs constitute a genre in language use, but a genre that must function in co-operation with other genres to have expressive value.

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA PRESENTATION

3.1 Methodology

The data for this paper are sourced from Yorùbá literary texts and routine discourses in Yorùbá, corroborated by our intuition as native-speakers of the language. The data are based on Standard Yorùbá. In all, we shall present and analyze thirty selected agriculture-related proverbs. These are proverbs whose cosmologies (imageries) are agriculture-related objects like humans, animals/insects and farm produce etc. The proverbs will be classified on the basis of whether the cosmologies are humans, animals or plants. They will then be presented and their literal and idiomatic/pragmatic meanings will be given. The agriculture-related cosmologies of the proverbs will be identified and the sociolinguistic bases for deploying and interpreting the proverbs by interlocutors will be stated briefly.

3.2 Yorùbá Proverbs with agriculture-related cosmologies

Our selected proverbs for this study are categorized into different sub-headings based on their contexts of usage and cosmologies.

CATEGORY A

Agriculture-related proverbs with human cosmologies

S/N	Proverbs	Literal meaning of the proverbs	Idiomatic meanings of the proverbs	Agriculture-related cosmologies of the proverbs	Sociolinguistic background of the proverbs.
1.	Aìfinipeni, àifèniyàn pèniyàn nńí mú ará oko sán bànté wòlú.	It is lack of respect that makes a farmer come into town dressed in apron/loin cloth	It is lack of respect that makes a person look down on superiors	Ará oko (farmers or rural dwellers).	Farmers or rural dwellers are considered socially low or uncivilized in the Yorùbá community. While an apron or loin cloth may be an appropriate dress for a farmer on a farm or in a rural community, it is

					considered out of place to be worn into town where 'civilized people' live.
2.	Ìhàlẹ̀ àgbẹ̀ tí ó gbin kókò tí ó n sọdó. Ewé kii ló mọgi.	It is empty boast that makes a farmer put yam stakes on a cocoyam farm, as leaves do not need stakes as support (on the farm)	Actions/deeds should match prevailing circumstances	Àgbẹ̀ (farmer), kókò (cocoyam); Ìdó (stakes). The focused cosmology in this proverb is the farmer.	Farmers usually use stakes to support sprouting yam stems in the farm. However, stakes are incongruous on a cocoyam farm, as cocoyam does not produce stems that need stakes for support.
3.	Aṣekẹrùóbàgbẹ̀ tii ru odó iyan wòlúú.	One that frightens farmers by carrying mortar for pounded-yam on his head into town.	When preparations or actions outmatch intended events, it may create panic even in the well-prepared actor or participant in the expected event.	Aṣekẹrùóbàgbẹ̀ (one whose actions frighten farmers); odó iyan (mortar for pounded yam)	Pounded-yam is a major and highly revered food item among the Yorùbá. Farmers who cultivate yams are therefore given a pride of place in the community. Carrying mortar for pounded-yam into town on one's head is therefore enough to give farmers the jitters.
4.	Oḍẹ̀ tí ó peran tí ó sètùtù, torí èyí tí ó pa kó, torí kí ó bàà lé rómíiran pa ní.	The hunter that offers an offering after killing a game does so not because of the one he has killed but to pave the way for	If you appreciate a good deed you stand the chance of getting more. One good turn deserves another.	Oḍẹ̀; (hunter) eran (game).	The Yorùbá speech community values appreciation of a good deed, as a person who does not show gratitude over a good deed is like a thief that has stolen one's property.

		him to get another one to kill.			
5.	Kín ni àgbẹ̀ n ẹ̀ lóko tí ó n dọ̀ru?	What is a farmer doing on the farm that he is staying there till nightfall?	One should not spend more time than is required on a task.	Àgbẹ̀ (farmer); lóko (farm);	Farm work is a day-time work; hence, a farmer has no excuse for staying on his farm till night fall.
6.	Kòkòrò tí n ẹ̀fọ̀ idi ẹ̀fọ̀ ni ó wà.	The insect preying on the vegetable is right there with the vegetable	The source of one's misfortune dwells with her/him.	Kòkòrò (insect); ẹ̀fọ̀ (vegetable)	If a person is not struck by the death within the one without cannot kill her/him. A person's adversary is usually somebody close to her/him.
7.	Atàgòkẹ̀yin-àparò, ohun ojú wá ni ojú ẹ̀rì.	One who stoops on the eggs of a partridge to collect them will get what she/he deserves.	Whoever does extra-ordinary things should expect extra-ordinary consequences.	Atàgòkẹ̀yin àparò (a person who stoops on the eggs of a partridge to collect them).	The Yorùbá believe that snakes relish the eggs of the partridge and they are likely to be where such eggs are. Anyone who wants to collect the eggs should therefore exercise due care to avoid snake bite.
8.	Àgbàlagbà tí ó so yangan módií ti sọ ara rẹ̀ di aláwàdà adie.	An elder that ties corn round her/his waist has turned her-, himself into a play-mate with fowls.	forms a disrespectful If one lowers her/his dignity she/he will get disrespectful treatment.	Àgbàlagbà tí ó so yangan módií (an elder that has corn tied round her/his waist)	Corn is relished by fowls. Therefore, whoever holds corns will be followed by fowls. The sociolinguistic background emphasizes the social gap between a human being (an elder, for that matter) and an animal (a common fowl).

CATEGORY B**Agriculture-related proverbs with animal cosmologies**

S/ N	Proverbs	Literal meaning of the proverbs	Idiomatic meanings of the proverbs	Agriculture -related cosmologie s of the proverbs	Sociolinguistic background of the proverbs.
9.	Ìrómi tí n jó lórí omi onílù rẹ wà ní ìsàlẹ̀ odò.	The water bug dancing on water surface has its drummer under the water	An unusual behaviour from an unexpected source has its motivator somewhere nearby.	Ìrómi tí n jó lórí omi (a water bug dancing on the water surface).	The Yorùbá believe that every action has a cause, not least an extra- ordinary action from an unexpected source. Compare with the English proverb, "There can be no smoke without fire".
10.	Ikún n jẹpà ikún n redi. Sé ikún kò mọ pé ohun tí ó dùn ní pani?	The squirrel is eating groundnut and wagging its tail in satisfaction , does it not know that it is what is sweet that kills?	Excessive pleasure has its attendant consequences.	Ikún (a kind of squirrel) that feeds on groundnuts in the farm, èpà (groundnut).	Farmers, knowing that animals generally feed on farm crops, particularly groundnuts, often set traps on their farms. The squirrel, while savouring the taste of groundnuts on the farm, may become oblivious of the fact that it might be caught in the traps on the farm.
11.	Bí a bá ní ẹran onítete ní yóó pani, bíi tí ẹrẹ kọ.	If one would be killed by an animal that has legs, it is	There is a limit to what can bring a person down. This is used to berate an opponent or	ẹran onítete (an animal that has legs)	This arises from the Yorùbá people's knowledge of the cricket as a small insect that has legs, but not the types that can cause a human

		not the likes of the cricket.	adversary.		beings death.
12.	Aìkòwòòrìn ejò nń̀ şekú pa wòn. Bì ọkà bá síwájú, tí paramòlẹ̀ tẹ̀ lé e, tí sẹ̀bé tẹ̀ lé e, tí èjòlá nń̀ wọ̀ bọ̀ lẹ̀yìn, tani jẹ̀ ko omọ̀ ejò lójú?	It is the habit of not moving together by snakes that usually leads to their death. If the cobra is in the lead, followed by the paramòlẹ̀, then the sebe, with the python closing the rear, who would dare confront the snake?	Individualization or lack of co-operative spirit often limits a person's achievements. If human beings could co-operate with one another, they would have achieved tremendous success.	Ejò (snake)	The snake is a very dreadful and dangerous animal. But in spite of this, human beings still succeed in killing them because snakes do not move together in a group.
13.	Bì ẹ̀şẹ̀ kò bá şẹ̀ àjànàkú a kíí rí orí erin rà látẹ̀.	If a calamity has not happened to an elephant no one can find its head	Calamities often reduce a great person to the level of a commoner.	Àjànàkú (elephant)	The elephant is a very big and rare animal. Its head is therefore not a common commodity on display for sale in the open market. If you find one on display, then a great evil has befallen its

		displayed for sale in the open market.			owner.
14.	Ọdẹ tí ọ rẹ èékànná ẹkùn ló ní kí ájá maa fowó re é nímú.	It is the hunter that scrapes the claws of the tiger that turns it into the dog's play-mate.	If one is struck by a major set- back, smaller humiliations will be one's lot. This is similar, pragmatically to the one above.	ẹkùn (tiger)	The tiger is a very veracious animal that would tear a dog to pieces if it sights one. But it can only do so if its claws are intact. Without its claws, a tiger has little power over a dog, its genetic enemy.
15.	Ikú àkúpò nń mú ọyà gbórí lé itan ìgalà ní iléba.	It is mass death that gives the grass- cutter the privilege of resting its head on the thigh of the deer.	Strange circumstances breed strange occurrences. It is collective rearing that takes a goat to the stall where fowls are sold.	Ọyà (grass- cutter); àgbònrín (deer); iléba (hut).	The grass-cutter and the deer are different species of wild animals. They do not graze together, and they inhabit different areas of the forest. Their chances of sleeping in the same area are inconceivable under normal circumstances, not to talk of the grass- cutter resting its head on the thigh of the deer.
16.	Èlírí kii se omọ eku, bí iran wọn sée mọ ni.	The smallness of the ẹlírí (the smallest rat ever in the animal kingdom) is not because it is a litter	A person cannot grow above her/his limitations, no matter how hard she/he tries.	ẹlírí (the smallest rodent in the animal kingdom).	This mouse species is known to be the smallest animal in the bush. Its size has nothing to do with its age, rather, it is genetically conditioned.

		but it is a genetic issue.			
17.	Àíyá kii ya àgbàdo lóko kí á maa gbá ìbejì létí nílẹ̀.	We cannot because a monkey plucked the maize on a farm come home to slap the twins on the ears.	You should not punish a person over somebody else's offence. You do not visit the sin of the father on his son.	Àíyá (monkey); oko (farm); àgbàdo (corn/maize)	Another name given to monkeys apart from àíyá, is ẹ̀dun (colobus monkey). This species of monkeys bears two offsprings at a time (that is a set of twins). It is for this reason that the Yorubá refer to twins as ẹ̀dun. The fact that monkeys have some resemblance with humans gives this some credence. Hence, whatever is done by the monkey is believed to have been done by twins that share the same name (ẹ̀dun) with it.
18.	Àkùkọ̀ tí yóó bàá kọ̀ láyé àṣá kii gbé e lóròmọ̀dìẹ̀.	A cock that would crow in its life time would not be taken by the kite when it was a chick.	An effort that would pay off in the end would subsist no matter at what odds. Compare with: "The eyes that will serve its owners throughout her/his life time would not start oozing mucus early in her/his life.	Àkùkọ̀ tí yóó kọ̀ láyé (the cock that would crow in its life time); àṣá (kite)	The Yorubá see a link between success and long life. That is why to them, it is long life that pays for all of one's toils and sufferings.
19.	Adiẹ̀ tí ó	The fowl	One should not	Adiẹ̀ tí ó	The fowl is cooked in

	yàgbé sí ìsasùn n ba ojú oórì rẹ jẹ ni.	that defecates into a soup pot is just messing up its grave.	do anything that can jeopardize one's interest.	yàgbé sí ìsasùn (the fowl that defecates into a soup pot)	the soup pot to provide meat for its owner. So, if a fowl defecates in a soup pot, it is merely messing up where it would end its life.
20.	Ní àìkú èkùlù a kii fi awọ rẹ se gbèdu.	You don't use the skin of the deer to make the gbèdu drum while it is still alive.	You cannot inherit a person's property while they are still alive. You don't cheat people in their presence.	Èkùlù (deer)	The skin of the deer is used for making drum in Yorubá land, but that is after the deer has been killed and skinned.

CATEGORY C

Agriculture-related proverbs with plants or farm produce as cosmologies

S/ N	Proverbs	Literal meanings of the proverbs	Idiomatic meanings of the proverbs	Agriculture -related cosmologie s of the proverbs	Sociolinguistic background of the proverbs.
21.	Aré inú èkan kii se lásán. Bi nnkan kò bá maa lé èniyàn, èniyàn a sì maa lé nnkan.	Running in a rhizome- infested area must have a cause; either something is pursuing you or	One does not go through suffering without a cause; either you are forced into suffering or you choose to suffer because of the benefits there- from.	èkan (rhizome)	The rhizome is a kind of plant that sprouts from the soil; the just sprouting rhizome is like a needle and it can pierce one's feet if one walks through it barefooted.

		you are pursuing something			
22.	Bí iṣu ẹni bá funfun àá dọwọ bò ó jẹ ni.	If one's yam is white one's should eat it with one's hand covering it.	One should not brag or boast about over one's success. One should be cautious in one's dealings.	Isu funfun (white yam)	Yam was and still remains a valuable farm product among the Yorùbá. In the past, a farmer's success was measured against how large and productive his yam farm was. Yam comes in different colours, but the white one was the most admired and anyone that had this variety of yam was usually envied in the society. White yam is equated with success in the proverb.
23.	Iṣu ẹni níí múni tọwọ bọ epo.	It is one's yam that makes one dip her/his hand in palm oil	Circumstances often condition one to behave in particular ways. One's relationship with the perpetrator of an act often indirectly connects one with the act.	Iṣu ẹni (one's yam)	In the traditional Yorùbá community, yam is eaten with palm-oil and in so doing one's hand gets smeared with palm-oil. This would not have been so if one were not eating yam with palm-oil.
24.	Àmódún kò jìnnà, kí olóko má muú èbù sun jẹ.	The farmer should be patient not to eat	One should be patient and persevere over whatever she/he is doing, as	Èbù (yam set)	The period between the planting of yam sets and the time new yams will be ready for harvest used to be very hard in those

		up his yam sets as another harvest season will soon come up.	success is just around the corner.		days among the Yorùbá. It is usually a period of food scarcity and an impatient farmer may be tempted to uproot his yam set and eat them up.
25.	Ìtì ògèdè kò tò ohun àà pòn àdà sí.	The banana/plantain stem is not worth sharpening a cutlass for.	Inconsequential issues should not generate too much fuss.	Ìtì ògèdè (banana/plantain) stem; àdà (cutlass)	The banana or plantain stem is so tender that one does not need to sharpen one's cutlass to cut it.
26.	Bí erú bá pàpòjù lórùn ògèdè afẹfẹ kínúnkín nìí wó o.	If there is too much load on a banana/plantain tree, a light wind can easily fell it.	It would be easy for one to fail if one carries too much load on her/his head. An over-buddened mind will succumb to the smallest pressure.	Ògèdè (Banana/plantain tree)	The banana/plantain tree is so tender that it cannot withstand carrying too much load. If it has too heavy a bunch of bananas or plantain on it, the lightest wind can fell it.
27.	Àsèsè yò ògómò ó nì òun yóó kan òrun.	A newly sprouting palm frond boasts that it would reach up the sky.	It is faulting ambition that prompts a starter to aspire to achieve what is unachievable for him at that level of her/his development.	Ògómò (sprouting palm frond).	A sprouting palm frond is usually the tallest among the fronds on the palm. It grows pointing to the sky, overtowering the other fronds. But with time, it drops down, yielding its position to another newly sprouting frond.
28.	Bí oko kò bá jinnà, ilá kii kó.	If the farm is not too far away,	Issues get quickly and easily resolved if	Ilá (okro); oko (farm)	Okro is harvested every five days. This will be easier if the okro farm is

		okro will not over-ripe (before it is plucked).	solutions to them are right at hand.		not too far from the owner's settlement. However, if the okro farm is far from home, going there every five days may be burdensome, thus the okro will over-ripe and become stringy.
29.	Òrò kò dun gbòrò, a fẹ ẹ lówùúrò ó rú lálẹ.	The pumpkin leaf is insensitive to insults, we plucked it in the morning, and it sprouts back in the evening.	Somebody persists in doing evil in spite of people's negative comments about his actions.	Gbòrò (pumpkin leaf)	The pumpkin is reputed for rapid growth such that it is believed by the Yorùbá that if you pluck its leaves in the morning it will sprout back by the evening of the same day.
30.	Ògèdè n bàjẹ ẹ ní n pón.	The banana/plantain is getting spoilt and we say it is becoming ripe.	It is decadence we refer to as development or progress.	Ògèdè (banana/plantain)	It is ironical that the ripeness of the banana/plantain also marks the beginning of its getting spoilt, as a ripe banana cannot last more than twenty-four hours before it begins to get spoilt, unless it is specially preserved.

4. SUMMARY, SOCIOLINGUISTIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROVERBS AND CONCLUSION

Thirty agriculture-related Yorùbá proverbs have been presented, categorized, analysed and discussed in this paper. These

are proverbs whose primary imageries or cosmologies are agriculture-related. They are then sorted into three categories, viz: Category A- those with human cosmologies; Category B- those with animal cosmologies and Category C- those whose cosmologies are plants or farm produce. The sorting has enabled us to see the issues addressed by the proverb through their different cosmologies.

We discover, for instance, that all the proverbs have philosophical undertones through which they address specific issues in the society. Proverbs with human cosmologies have the goals of preaching moderation as exemplified by proverbs 1-5, showing gratitude (proverb 6), being cautious (proverb 7) and showing self-respect (proverb 8). Majority of the proverbs with insect or animal cosmologies centre on cause and effect; that is, on the fact that every action has a cause. The goal of these proverbs is that there is a reason for anything that happens and to understand whatever happens, what you need to find out is why it has happened. Thus if you are not satisfied with what has happened, what you have to do is to prevent the occurrence of what has made it happen. Proverbs 9, 12, 13, 15, 18, 19 20, 21, 23 and 28 are examples of such proverbs.

Some of the proverbs with animals and plants/farm produce as cosmologies also have social undertone. Proverb 11, for example, advocates self-confidence, proverb 16 teaches us not to look down on people, and proverbs 17, 18 and 20 preach social justice, while proverbs 19, 22 and 24 admonish us to be of good behaviour, not to be braggarts and to persevere in our endeavours, respectively. Proverb 27 cautions us not to be braggarts, 29 admonishes us to take to corrections, while 30 tells us to try and understand issues as they present themselves.

As pointed out by Oṃọlọṣọ (304), the relationship between language and culture is very powerfully articulated by proverbs. Thus an understanding of Yorùbá proverbs is inseparably tied to the understanding of the culture of the Yorùbá people. Therefore, when a particular symbol is used in a Yorùbá proverb, it has a specific cosmological implication for the interpretation of the proverb. For example, if an animal is the symbol/cosmology used in a proverb, understanding the overall

characteristics of the animal will help the understanding of the proverb and thus its interpretation.

Proverbs are an indirect way of educating, instructing, admonishing etc people on specific issues, actions and codes of behaviour. Proverbs are therefore used as a face-saving device or politeness strategy (Omoloso 299). Human beings tolerate criticisms more when they are indirectly expressed than when they are done frontally. Also, human beings learn faster when they are confronted with familiar examples. The traditional Yorùbá community which the proverbs sampled in this study initially focused was rural or agrarian, hence, using agriculture-related cosmologies in proverbs aimed at such a community made the proverbs easily comprehended because, the target audience was quite familiar with these objects. This, as earlier pointed out, could also be part of the reasons why this class of proverbs is not easily comprehended, if at all, by the young generation of Yorùbá native speakers who do not have agrarian or rural background.

4.1 Conclusion

In this paper, we carried out a sociolinguistic analysis of agriculture-related proverbs in Yorùbá. These are Yorùbá proverbs that use agriculture-related artifacts as their images or cosmologies. In all, we analysed thirty proverbs, classified on the basis of whether their images or cosmologies are humans, animals or farm produce or plants. We gave the literal and idiomatic/pragmatic meanings of the proverbs and identified the agriculture-related cosmologies in which they were used and their sociolinguistic backgrounds. We then observed that part of the reasons that made Yorùbá proverbs with agriculture-related cosmologies incomprehensible to younger generation of Yorùbá native speakers was that these proverbs originated from and were targeted at agrarian/rural communities which most of them are alien to.

In conclusion, since understanding proverbs rests squarely on understanding the culture from which the proverbs originate, the teaching of Yorùbá culture, laced with appropriate Yorùbá proverbs, should form part of the Yorùbá study curriculum at all levels of our education, i.e. primary to tertiary. Also, because understanding the cosmologies of proverbs is germane to

understanding the proverbs and using them in appropriate contexts, emphasis should be placed on the teaching of the ecology of the Yorubá land, emphasizing the flora and fauna of the area from which the cosmologies of Yorubá proverbs are generally drawn. Thus, apart from the economic benefits that children may derive from offering agricultural science as a school subject, they will also learn about the cultural contents within which farming is practiced in Yorubaland. They would also be able to appreciate the importance of agriculture-related cosmologies in deploying and deciphering Yoruba proverbs that may feature in their routine discourses.

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