

# African Proverbs as Pedagogical mechanisms of Social Regulation in Anglophone Literature: A Sociolinguistic and Pragmatic Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

Stylish fashion of language handling greases suavity in human communication, lubricates interpersonal relations, and fosters education. Building on the postulation that this allegation remains valid in African Anglophone literature, the present study aims to demonstrate the pedagogical centrality of proverbial language in developing communicative competence for negotiation, bridging social clashes or dissensions, and rescuing humanity from rampant moral corrosion. To address this problem-solving purpose, the work draws on both sociopragmatics and pragmasemantics to demonstrate the importance of proverbial language in diffusing social conflicts, softening human interactions, and controlling immoral impulses. Findings show that proverbial language can help reduce interpersonal misunderstandings and societal problems, while promoting community harmony and social wisdom. Overall, the results affirm the practical and educational significance of proverbial language in Anglophone literature for supporting communal well-being in Africa. Overall, the findings attest to the utilitarian and pedagogical stakes of proverbial language in Anglophone literature, in support of the consolidation of communal welfare in Africa.

**Keywords:** African proverbs, Communicative competence, Problem-solving, Sociolinguistics, Pragmatics.

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Date of Submission: 01-01-2026

Date of acceptance: 08-01-2026

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## I. Introduction

“As common and effortless as it is to talk, *using language successfully is a very complex enterprise*,” claim Akmajian et al. (2001:263), highlighting the sensitiveness of appropriateness in conversational language within the human community. From an African angle, Achebe (1958/2017:6) also contends that: “*Among the Ibo, the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten*.” Such claims are compelling substantiations of the conversational and societal stakes of knowledgeable language use, nay, communicative competence (Stockwell, 2007). In support of this claim also falls Holmes and Wilson’s (2017:463) concept of sociolinguistic competence, defined as “*the knowledge which underlies people’s ability to use language appropriately*” or “*Knowing how to use language for different functions, such as getting things done in different contexts*” (p.466). In the very vein, they affirm that “*Language constructs social reality*” (p.467).

By the way, the stylish fashion of language handling greases suavity in human communication, lubricates interpersonal relations, and fosters education. Building on the postulation that this allegation remains valid in African Anglophone literature, the present study sets out its background in the lived centrality of proverbial language to everyday negotiation, to the bridging of social clashes or dissensions, and to rescuing humanity from rampant moral corrosion. The research problem pivots on how, in Anglophone African texts, proverbs function as context-attuned instruments that defeat bombs of social turmoil, soften human relations, and tame immoral impulses, yet remain under-described in terms of their sociopragmatic and pragmasemantic workings. The rationale is to bring to light these operative workings so that the utilitarian stakes of proverbial language may be better harnessed for communal welfare consolidation.

The general objective is to demonstrate the pedagogical centrality of African proverbs as mechanisms of social regulation in Anglophone literature. Specifically, the study aims:

- to identify the presuppositions and implicatures through which proverbs oil communal harmony and foster social wisdom;
- to relate these devices to communicative competence and sociolinguistic competence as theorised in linguistics and discourse studies (Stockwell, 2007; Traugott & Pratt, 1980);
- and to show how such devices can be mobilised for conflict diffusion and moral guidance in community life.

The research questions that guide the study are:

1. *How do African proverbs, as deployed in Anglophone literature, function as pedagogical mechanisms for social regulation, negotiation, and dissension-bridging?*
2. *Which sociopragmatic and pragmasemantic strategies, particularly presupposition and implicature, most saliently mediate the reduction of interpersonal misunderstandings and the promotion of community harmony and social wisdom?*

The significance of the study lies in articulating the practical and educational relevance of proverbial language to sustaining communicative competence, tempering social clashes, and consolidating communal welfare in Africa, thereby advancing the understanding that *language constructs social reality* (Holmes & Wilson, 2017) and that *a speaker's competence entails knowing how, when, where, and by whom illocutionary acts are performed* (Traugott & Pratt, 1980:230). The scope attends to Anglophone African literature as a privileged locus for the circulation and recontextualization of proverbs; the limitations are interpretive, with possible shading due to translation and decontextualization, and without claiming exhaustivity across Africa's vast proverbial archives.

The structure of the study unfolds as follows. First, an overview of language, literature, and community life in Africa introduces para-textual factors and the multilingual, multicultural context. Second, the conceptual and methodological background presents sociopragmatics and pragmasemantics as operative lenses. Third, the classificatory presentation, analysis, and interpretation of selected proverb data are offered. Fourth, trans-textual comments discuss the findings. Fifth, overall suggestions are articulated, and the conclusion synthesises the utilitarian stakes of proverbial language in Anglophone literature for consolidating communal welfare.

## **I. Literature Review: Language, Literature and Community Life in Africa**

Though commonly admitted to be a means of communication, making and understanding meaning in daily conversational language is no such open-sky venture. More typically, proverbial language in African literature requires taking into consideration para-textual factors of discourse, namely situational and cultural attributes. In highlighting the correlation holding between literature and social life, Demeterio (2001:11) states that: "Literature is a social institution: it is created by the writer who is a member of the society. Its medium is language, which is a social creation. It represents life, which is a social reality. It is addressed to men, who form a social body." Thus arises the need to explore how it goes when we have to negotiate meaning in Anglophone African proverbial language, be it of oral or written type. The same goes with Ngara's (1982: 8) contention that: "African literature issues from and reflects conditions which are particular to Africa", also falling in line with Pewissi's (2012:146) contention that: "Criticism is not devoid of social preoccupation; and so, writing cannot eschew the articulation of this existing menu because both writers and critics are humans and ambassadors of social and cultural *doxa* and desiderata of their people." As such, having a good command of proverbs proves quite essential to developing communicative competence grounded in African cultures. For Stockwell (2007:43), "Communicative competence is the ability to use language appropriately in social situations". The very idea is also corroborated by Traugott & Pratt (1980: 230) as follows: "A speaker's communicative competence is not just knowledge of what illocutionary acts can be performed in the language, but also how, when, where, and by whom they can be performed". These claims entail that for interactional language use to prove successful, there are other challenges to satisfy that rank far above linguistic competence for cohesive configurations. Situational and cultural parameters stand crucial factors to ad hoc meaning negotiation in language at work. Their significance to the issue turns much more striking when we have to negotiate meaning from proverbial language, typical in the African multilingual and multicultural context (Bedu, 2024).

In Manser's (2002/2007:ix) terms: "A proverb is a saying, usually short, that expresses a general truth about life. Proverbs give advice, make an observation, or present a teaching in a succinct and memorable way." As for the Comboni Missionaries (2019:4): "Proverbs are a mirror in which a community can look at itself and reveal itself to others. They highlight the values, the aspirations, the worries, the behaviour of people and the angle from which they see and appreciate their reality, and their response." In talking of the centrality of proverbs to conversational ventures in Africa, these Missionaries also argue that: "The proverb intervenes in discourse to air a thought, to sum up public opinion, to clarify a point, to spur a debate or to bring humour to serious matters. African wisdom has been handed down from generation to generation through proverbs." (p.5)

In claiming that Black populace humour blossoms in proverbsto vivify social conversation, Mané (2015:110) considers the latter as an essential condiment of speech, a major form of collective consciousness through African communicative ideas and opinions. Besides, he also argues that if jesting is witty and human beings are the sole creatures endowed with such wittiness, they are the unique beings that laugh. Pending from this is the inference that laughing is a characteristic human attribute thatproverbs can offer resources to ignite in mankind. Indeed, fun-making bears both therapeutical and pedagogical potential. As such, humorous proverbs would help to ease social tension and soothe people's minds. As such, while causing hilarity, proverbs bear the potential to foster wisdom and morality in people and guide their daily social interactions. For Dei (2014:48), "African proverbs are about relations between individuals and their communities, an understanding of the complex nexus of society, culture and Nature, as well as the interconnectedness of body, mind, soul and spirit." This implies that learning about the proverbs community amounts to knowing about both her cultural attributes, minds and educational setups. Isioma and Osaat (2023) labouron the developmental potential of African proverbs, with a typical focus on their contributions to mitigating moral deviances in Nigeria. As for Assante, Ababio& Boadu (2017) as well as Ajani, Mgbenka& Okere (2013), they highlight environmental stakes of traditional beliefs and practices at large – including proverbs – through their contributions to forest preservation and climatic hazard mitigation.

Overall, existing literature proves that proverbs bring crucial contributions to humanity, more typically in Africa. For its practical dimension, the current study builds on exploring selected African proverbs through toolkits inherent in both systemic linguistics and pragmatics.

## **II. Conceptual and methodological background of the study**

This section centres onoperative concepts supporting the study as well as the research methodology.

### **2.1 Conceptual background of the study**

Operatives adopted in this study are all inherent to sociopragmatics, and pragmasemantics are planned to be addressed in relation to sociolinguistics (Holmes&Wilson, 2017). With both being under the aggregate cover of pragmatics (Mey, 1993/2001; Leech, 1983) as the user-oriented study of language, the first relates to the study of context-nurtured meaning in human language, while the second relates to language form. The interactions between social context and language cover several subareas, including politeness theory relating to face or self-image management, politeness strategies, Speech Acts, power and solidarity, etc. As for pragmasemantics, it is an interdisciplinary field blending pragmatics (language use in context) and semantics (study of meaning in language). It fuses the study of what is said (semantics) with how and to whom it is said (pragmatics). As such, it labours on how meaning in linguistic expressions is jointly shaped by their literal content and their context of use to produce a more comprehensive or further elaborated meaning. Both sub-branches call for the study of meaning in terms of Presupposition and Implicature. The first is about assumptions that the speaker takes for granted, while the second refers to the context-aided inference drawn out by the listener. In relation to studying African proverbs, these pragmaticssub-branchesare instrumental to demonstrating their potential contributions to societal moral enhancement and human welfare consolidation.

### **2.2 Research methodology**

Foci considered in this section are twofold, revolving around theselection and classification method of corpus data with their backdrop rationale. Selected operative toolkitsare also presented. First, to bestow workability on the conveyance of this study, just a few toolkits have been considered, namely Presupposition and Implicature, in support of highlighting self-image preservation and human virtue consolidation. Besides, thirty corpusproverbshave been collected from various sources, including predominantly two novels by Achebe – *Things Fall Apart* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, and an Africanproverb collection book published by theComboni Missionaries in 2019. Subsidiarily, our corpus data also include a few other proverbs maintained fromother sources. Most proverbs are associated with the user's ethnic community, whenever available. This diversification adheres to the rationale of appraising, at times, their trans-ethnicresemblances and dissimilarities. Besides, the study is universalism oriented. It aims to depersonalise and decontextualise the selected proverbs and gauge their universal merits in the African vicinity. As is contended by Achebe (1987) in his *Anthills of the Savannah*: "The world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well, you do not stay in one place" (*Anthills of the Savannah*). So, analysingethnically diversified data can help drive out comparative inferences for the sake of bestowing enhanced objectivism on the findings. In terms of methodical configuration, theproverb-set is thematically shared equally into five tables, each labelled from A through E, bearing numerical indexes from 1 through 6 fortheir internal components. This classification aims toenable cross-comments and interpretations of data.

### III. Classificatory Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Selected Data

#### 3.1 African proverbs for unity consolidation in community life

##### 3.1.1 Table A: Data Presentation and Implicature Identification

N°	Proverbs	Sources	Implicatures
A <sub>1</sub>	We are people because of our people (Sotho, Lesotho).	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.2)	Preaching for gregarious mind
A <sub>2</sub>	A tree cannot make a forest (Yoruba, Nigeria)	Achebe, C. (1958/2017). <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , p.23	No loneliness can favour great achievement
A <sub>3</sub>	It takes a village to raise a child (Yoruba, Nigeria)	Achebe, C. (2017) <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , p.23	
A <sub>4</sub>	If a tree does not have branches, it does not have shade. (Sukuma, Tanzania)	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.37	
A <sub>5</sub>	Birds which fly without co-ordination, beat each other's wings. (Baganda, Uganda)	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.6)	A call for synergy of minds and actions in human communities
A <sub>6</sub>	Where there is negotiation, there is hope for agreement. (Somali, Somalia)	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.7	Dialogue is essential to solving misunderstanding

The proverbs above testify to the importance that African communality places on unity. They imply that one's personhood and success are based on collective efforts (A<sub>1</sub>), that one cannot achieve anything in isolation (A<sub>2</sub>–A<sub>4</sub>), and that they call for coordinated actions (A<sub>5</sub>) and dialogue (A<sub>6</sub>) as the best means of conflict resolution and peace-building. All these implicatures take together illustrate the pragmatic role of proverbs in promoting togetherness, mutual support, and social cohesion among members of a community.

##### 3.2.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Proverbs maintained in Table A are classified into three inference groups or Implicatures, all relating to unity in community life. They cover ethnical diversities throughout Lesotho, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Somalia. A<sub>1</sub> celebrates togetherness or a gregarious mind. The causality function in “We are people because of our people” is intended to highlight how the necessary gadgets that shape our personality are tributary to the community in which we evolve.

A<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>3</sub> and A<sub>4</sub> condemn loneliness. In “A tree cannot make a forest (A<sub>2</sub>), the negative modal does express an emphatical impossibility. Between the uniqueness of a tree and the manifold of it required to build up a forest, there is no logical match, all the more so as numerically no single one can stand for many. “It takes a village to raise a child” (A<sub>3</sub>) points to the cooperative fashion of child education in traditional Africa. It insinuates that parental education alone does not suffice to shape all desirable features in children and channel them into responsible citizens or community members. Even in the modern context, various entities such as families, neighbourhoods, schools, as well as streets and the media influence the becoming of a child. In “If a tree does not have branches, it does not have shade” (A<sub>4</sub>), the conditional phrase stands for an axiomatic appendage, but for which the result part would be a mere hallucination. It is a polysemic allegorical imagism. When applied to family life, for example, it may mean that a childless man or woman has no peace, no social worth and earns no respect. Taken in the sense of leadership, it insinuates that a chief with no committed and trustworthy collaborators is worthless. The same applies to a general with no troops in the field.

Besides, A<sub>5</sub> calls for synergy of minds and actions in human communities. It points to the necessity for coordinated effort in building true and sustainable success. Actually, no scattered endeavours can favour goal achievement in any business organisation. If the union is taken for granted as a source of strength, the symphony of thoughts and the synergy of actions within that unity prove more essential. Rather than just co-existing in some opportunistic come-together, it is better to collaborate in actuality, keeping methodically attuned and working for collective success. A<sub>6</sub> relates to promoting social dialogue for solving interpersonal misunderstandings or dissensions in aid of oiling mutual comprehension and harmony among mankind.

#### 3.2 Table B: African proverbs for wisdom securing in human actions

##### 3.2.1 Table B: Data Presentation and Implicature Identification

N°	Proverbs	Sources	Implicatures
B <sub>1</sub>	Do not separate your mind from your tongue. (Ancient Egyptian Saying)	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.22)	Think hard and mind the impacts of your words before letting them out.
B <sub>2</sub>	Little and lasting is better than much and passing. (Berber, Morocco)	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.7)	Greed in any enjoyment is poisonous
B <sub>3</sub>	Work on your reputation until it is established; then it will work for you. (Arabic, Tunisia)	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.9)	Established fame builds up lasting prestige
B <sub>4</sub>	Wisdom is like a baobab tree: a single person's arms cannot embrace it. (Akan,	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.20.	Wisdom is a fruit of collective action. It is no one-man job.



	Ghana)		
B <sub>5</sub>	A dirty tongue litters its owner. (Rundi, Rwanda)	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.30	Gossiping pays no good service to its author
B <sub>6</sub>	A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness. (Yoruba, Nigeria)	Achebe, C. (1958/2017). <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , p.26)	Respect for seniority is a path to self-greatness

The proverbs in this cluster emphasise wisdom, good speech, and social responsibility. They stress communication (B1) and moderation in desires (B2), while also highlighting the lasting impact of reputation (B3). B4 points out that wisdom is a group effort rather than an individual one, while B5 sees gossip as self-destructive behaviour. Finally, B6 encourages respect for elders as a means to personal advancement. Taken together, these sayings advocate prudence, humility, and cooperative learning as the foundations of social harmony.

### 3.2.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data in this table labour on fostering wisdom in mankind. They are selected from diverse ethnical groups throughout Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Ghana, Rwanda and Nigeria. “Do not separate your mind from your tongue” (B<sub>1</sub>) is a recommendation correlation psyche (“mind”) with physiology (“tongue”). Thence, it is recommendable that the first precede and guide all pronouncements by the second. We should not speak haphazardly just because we are blessed with a tongue. There is a requisite need to quibble over what we want to say before it gets uttered, a need for mature thought or meditation over any action before its achievement. B<sub>2</sub> stands against greedy or gargantuan impulses in taking advantage of assets. B<sub>3</sub> is an invitation to building up a strong wealth of reputation that can return long-lasting resonance to self-image. Building up a bank of good deeds offers sustainable credits to one’s social reputation. B<sub>4</sub> alludes to the import of collective action in building up and maintaining both individual and communal wisdom. As for B<sub>5</sub>, it points to the boomerang effect of gossiping or blackmailing as self-harming. In “A dirty tongue litters its owner.” The nominal phrase “dirty tongue” perfectly falls into the same semantic field as the material verb “litters” to form a logical self-negativization, with the doer and the victim cumulating into the same person. It means evil befalls its doer. There is no gain, no actual benefit in preoccupying oneself with verbally destroying one’s fellows. Conversely, B<sub>6</sub> celebrates the positive return of good deeds. It points to how much instrumental respect for seniority proves to be in building up one’s future greatness. At large, the you do good, the more positive returns you can benefit. In promoting such a cyclic correlation between youth and elderhood, social harmony can but be perpetuated with all its consequential socioeconomic benefits for the good of humanity.

## 3.3 African proverbs for moral and ethics maintenance in mankind

### 3.3.1 Table C: Data Presentation and Implicature Identification

N <sup>o</sup>	Proverbs	Sources	Implicatures
C <sub>1</sub>	No sensible man spits out a morsal of sugar that God places in their mouth.	Achebe, C. (1958/2017) <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , p.21	Differentiating tipping from bribing and valuing thank-giving
C <sub>2</sub>	If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings.	<i>Things Fall Apart</i> , Achebe, p.6	A call on youth to show respect to seniority
C <sub>3</sub>	The word of the elders becomes sweet the day after	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.14)	Youth lags at understanding the stakes in the advice of elders.
C <sub>4</sub>	Nobody is born with teeth. (Logbara, Uganda)	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.17	Prestige, strength, glory or wealth is built up little by little.
C <sub>5</sub>	“A man does not hold a cutlass with the intention to pound yam”	(Ahmed Yerima’s <i>The Liman and Ade Ire</i> , 2004:79)	Intentions and actions should be dovetailed to sire sensible outcomes
C <sub>6</sub>	The one who asks is not poisoned by mushrooms. (Mandigo, Guinea)	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.14	Asking is the lone key to caution

The proverbs in this collection place a high value on moral integrity, respect, and caution in social interactions. C1 praises the virtue of gratitude and the ability to tell right from wrong, helping one to see the difference between true appreciation and corrupt practices. C2 and C3 focus on respect across generations by encouraging young people to cherish the advice of their elders, even if its value becomes clear only later. C4 emphasises patience and slow, steady work as the foundation for achieving success, while C5 highlights the importance of aligning one's intentions with one's actions. Lastly, C6 raises questioning to a high level by presenting it as a protection against both ignorance and danger. These sayings together serve as practical instruments for fostering moral conduct and maintaining social order.

### 3.3.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Quite close to Table B, the data in Table C relate to moral and ethics maintenance in mankind. C<sub>1</sub> is semantically double-barrelled. While it insinuates a call for modesty to accept tips, it also bears a backdrop of damnation of bribery. The phrase “that God places in their mouth” implies that gifting is no forced event, but should come in naturally and freely. In such a logic, rejection would prove nonsensical and frustrating; therefore, not sensible. C<sub>2</sub> is an invitation on youth to show good morality to cooperate their elders. In “If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings”, the conditional section lays the bed for a good inter-generational collaboration. Here, hand washing symbolically alludes to behavioural correctness as the lone tribute youth have to pay for their admission to collaborate with elders. C<sub>3</sub> warns youth against resisting the advice of their elders. It insinuates that it takes youth too much time to grab the stake in the advice from their seniors. C<sub>4</sub> is a call to modesty and patience. It means that no rush is necessary to build up actual prestige and no true glory is spontaneous. It requires gradual steps to climb. C<sub>5</sub> is about the need to dovetail thought or intention with action to attain sensible outcomes. Intention and deed should match up in harmony. A possible reverse meaning of this proverb is that it stands for an allegorical language using inanimate entities (cutlass & yams) while referring by analogy to animate ones, namely humans in their daily activities. It is meant to feature and condemn behavioural anachronisms hampering actual development in human communities. In this lens, such misbehaviours as nepotism, corruption, and electoral fraud are evident; in a word, behavioural deviances of any type that are poisonous to the preservation of communal welfare. As for C<sub>6</sub>, it highlights the need for questioning for elicitation to elude regrettable strokes or castigation of ignorance.

### 3.4 African proverbs for self-esteem, motivation and humility enhancement

#### 3.4.1 Table D: Data Presentation and Implicature Identification

N°	Proverbs	Sources	Implicatures
D <sub>1</sub>	The toad does not run in the daytime for nothing (Hausa, Nigeria)	Achebe, C. (2017). <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , Achebe p.98	Valuable assets/ strengths are not displayed for trivial issues.
D <sub>2</sub>	A proud heart can survive a general failure because such failure does not prick its pride. (Hausa, Nigeria)	Achebe, C. (2017) <i>Things Fall Apart</i> , pp.24-25	Strong self-confidence helps withstand general failure.
D <sub>3</sub>	“He who has never left his village believes that no one can prepare porridge better than his mother” (Ewé, Togo).	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.4)	Alternative options are necessary for comparison in order to afford progress.
D <sub>4</sub>	“The farmer who has never left his field thinks that his farming system is the best” (Hausa, Nigeria)	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.4	
D <sub>5</sub>	“One way only is no way” (Malinké, Mali).	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.5)	
D <sub>6</sub>	“The world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well, you do not stay in one place” (Hausa, Nigeria)	Achebe, C. (Anthills of the Savannah, 1987)	

The proverbs in this collection emphasise self-worth, perseverance, and openness to different perspectives. D<sub>1</sub> and D<sub>2</sub> highlight confidence and the judicious display of strength, suggesting that inner worth and pride can help withstand adversity. D<sub>3</sub> through D<sub>5</sub> caution against narrow-mindedness, advocating exposure to alternative experiences and collaborative approaches for progress. Finally, D<sub>6</sub> employs a vivid metaphor to stress adaptability and continuous learning in a dynamic world. Collectively, these sayings encourage humility, flexibility, and self-assurance as essential traits for personal growth and communal advancement.

### 3.4.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Stakes about self-esteem, motivation and humility that are encapsulated in proverbs found in Table D permeate the ethnic communities of Nigeria, Mali and Togo. D<sub>1</sub> is an admonition against fanciful exhibition. D<sub>2</sub> brings out the potentiality of strong self-confidence to withstand the shocks of collective ordeals or general failure. In D<sub>3</sub> through D<sub>6</sub>, all four proverbs relate to combating self-bragging or glorification. In calling for more modesty in human behaviour, they insinuate that too much pride over one’s positive attributes or skills is poisonous or noxious to progress. The *never*-adverbial in both D<sub>3</sub> and D<sub>4</sub> is allusive of monotony in life experience, which is quite likely to prevent people from having alternative cases with which to make sensible comparisons; hence, for not knowing about other experiences, one may be erroneously locked up in self-glorification, thinking he/she is the best on earth.

In “One way only is no way” (D<sub>5</sub>), just as a one-way road leads absolutely to a deadlock, it means that no single mind can build big and praiseworthy results. Only the coalition of diverse forces can favour great attainments of any type. It matters then for community members to husband and marshal their endeavours and resources for collective praiseworthy achievements. D<sub>6</sub> is a powerful metaphor assimilating the world to the earth as a perpetually rotating globe in comparison to a mask dancing as an ever-changing artistic event. Accordingly,

no static position can allow a good appreciation of such a dance. In plainer terms, these proverbs point to the constant dynamic of the current world requiring on both individuals and communities to transcend their ego and learn from learn from each other. Developing such a collaborative mind is rather the best way to enhance knowledge scope, kicking back barriers of ignorance and facing more effectively modern challenges confronting humanity.

### 3.5 African proverbs forcaution and precaution in socioeconomic prestige Consolidation

**3.5.1 Table D: Data Presentation and Implicature Identification**

Nº	Proverbs	Sources	Implicatures
E <sub>1</sub>	It is better to be poor in youth than in old age. (Venda, Zimbabwe)	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.31.	The quality of elderlihood is the consequential fruit of youth type
E <sub>2</sub>	No one tests the depth of a river with both feet (Ashanti, Ghana)	John S. Mbiti (1997). <i>The African Proverbs: A Guide to Understanding African Cultures</i> , p.56	It is a bad beaviour to risk all one means at an unknown venture
E <sub>3</sub>	Whoever ate the foofoo, let him mop up the soup as well. (Yoruba, Nigeria)	Achebe, C. (1987). <i>Anthills of the Savannah</i> , p.227	Accountability: people should bearconsequences of their actions
E <sub>4</sub>	The one who does not dig does not eat. (Logbara, Uganda)	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.20.	Endeavour is the lone key to enjoyment
E <sub>5</sub>	If you do not gather firewood, you cannot keep warm. (Ovambo, Angola)	Comboni Missionaries (2019). <i>African Proverbs – Wisdom of a People</i> , p.25)	One has to spare their means/resources to grow strong at anything
E <sub>6</sub>	You can't open up to every sweet tongue that comes singing at your doorstep. (Yoruba, Nigeria)	Achebe, C. (1987). <i>Anthills of the Savannah</i> , p.227	We must be cautious with whom to trust

The proverbs in this cluster call for prudence, foresight, and accountability in socioeconomic life. E<sub>1</sub> speaks of planning in youth for a comfortable old age. E<sub>2</sub> speaks against taking foolish risks. E<sub>3</sub> speaks about personal responsibility for one's actions. E<sub>4</sub> and E<sub>5</sub> talk about hard work and managing one's resources as prerequisites to being comfortable and successful. Finally, E<sub>6</sub> warns against blind trust by advising people to be discerning about whom they choose to trust. Together, these sayings foreground vigilance, responsibility, and strategic effort as foundational values for sustained well-being.

### 3.5.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

In Table E, the data maintained are all symbolical of either caution or precaution for building socioeconomic prestige. They are selected across diverse ethnical communities involving Zimbabwe, Ghana, Cameroon, Nigeria, Uganda and Angola. E<sub>1</sub> means that a glorious average or poor future is the consequential outcome of today's devotion to hard work or idleness. The comparative of superiority in "It is better to be poor in youth than in old age" as well as the visible semantic antagonism between "youth" and "old age" function to infuse caution in the reader or hearer's psyche, caution against poverty in old age. It is a call on youth to work hard and not to squander their incomes so as to prepare a glowing or satisfactory elderhood. E<sub>2</sub> warns against any reckless risk-taking by ingesting all one's resources in a try, an amateurish venture. E<sub>3</sub> is symbolical of accountability. It insinuates that people should prepare to bear the consequences of their own deeds. It is a damnation of impunity; and reversely, a plea for authorship identification for mischief castigation. E<sub>4</sub> implies that only devotion to hard work can secure the right to enjoyment. Accordingly, he or she who works hard can legitimately merit food; that is, but for work, there is no food. Ranking above alimetary sufficiency, E<sub>5</sub> is about growing an economy for developmental purposes. The causal relation in "If you do not gather firewood, you cannot keep warm" is meant to express a warning against both idleness and resource squandering. It is about working hard as well as harnessing one's resources to build up wealth. E<sub>6</sub>, contrariwise, is a call to caution so as not to let oneself easily ensnared by witty and evil companionships. In "You can't open up to every sweet tongue that comes singing at your doorstep" (E<sub>6</sub>), the negative *can't*-modal functions do not show impossibility, but instead express a warning. This serves good supporting evidence to what Akmajian et al. (2001:381) call "indirect communication." Thus, only context-attuned calculation can afford to negotiate the ad hoc conversation value of so common a modal. Besides, the phrase "every sweet tongue" points to merry-makers, adding up to the verbal form *singing* meant for lullabying and lulling for ensnaring. Therefore, we must beware of whom to trust, even though people seemingly prove nice and affable to us. As the common saying goes, "All that glitters is not gold" and "caution is the mother of safety."

## IV. Trans-textual Comments on, and interpretation of, the findings

This study has explored a set of thirty African proverbs documented from a trans-ethnical perspective. Overall, it permeates ethnical diversities twelve African nations, which are: Lesotho, Nigeria, Tanzania,

Uganda, Somalia, Egypt, Morocco, Guinea, Mali, Togo, Ghana and Angola. This multi-ethnic selection covers several African regions. Though hailing from variegated geographical sources, these proverbs display many common points regarding their essence in the service of communal welfare building and maintenance. As can be seen in their classificatory thematic tabulation, each of the five resulted tables encapsulates proverbs from diverse ethnical horizons but visibly sharing an internal common essence supporting their thematic clustering.

Viewed from a transversal or cross-thematic perspective, common points among them still abound. Indeed, cross-insights into the tables reveal several explanatory or causal relations among the selected proverbs. This interdependence shows in many ways. For instance, as A<sub>1</sub> showcases the stakes of social gadgets to personality building, it is backed by B<sub>4</sub>, holding that wisdom consolidation is no one-man job. In the same vein falls D<sub>5</sub>, whose essence stands against the one-way approach to doing anything and rather advocates for plurality. Diversified contributions are necessary to build up social life and shape personality in people. Meanwhile, E<sub>6</sub> warns against trusting everybody and anybody haphazardly. Even more, as appearance is misleading, caution requires us to be selective in making friends so as not to let ourselves be drained by the evil of a weevil friend, wittily prepared to bore in you whenever the occasion arises. We should not be open to every offer of friendship. Some, though initially appealing, might be risky and fatal.

Besides, “We are people because of our people” (A<sub>1</sub>) is a good match to B<sub>4</sub>, claiming that “Wisdom is like a baobab tree: a single person’s arms cannot embrace it.” They both culminate in the point that what we are depends on the community we live in. At large, this study has yielded outcomes worth synthesising for a synoptic appraisal to enable conclusive suggestions.

## **V. Overall Suggestions of the Study**

Proverbs under consideration in this study – like many others indeed – are rich with multifarious developmental stakes. For instance, the ones advocating for unity in community life are allusive to the gregarious mind advocated in Blackmon’s (2008) womanism as “I am because we are” as well as the South African Ubuntu philosophy of togetherness (Collins-Warfield, 2008).

Indeed, joint endeavours inherent in facing modern challenges require interpersonal relations to grow so much enmeshed that today, “distances separate bodies, not people” [in Keorapetse Kgositse’s “Mandela’s Sermon”, see *Poems of Black Africa* (Soyinka, 1975: 204)]. For the development of Africa people need to build a borderless trust in one another to marshal their capabilities and harness their endeavours for the attainment of the salutary goal of fighting back poverty.

## **Conclusion**

The research reveals that linguistic devices utilized within African proverbs are instrumental in assisting people to communicate with one another and minimize miscommunication between them while concurrently strengthening their relationships within society; therefore, the results of this study evidence how proverbs serve as valid vehicles through which to promote both community togetherness and moral integrity in Anglophone African literature, based on how they are used as inclusive rhetorical devices across culture. By adopting a decontextualised interpretive lens, the selected proverbs have been rendered neutral and open to recalibration in tune with ad hoc discourse contexts, thus proving their adaptability beyond ethnical confines. As Yule (1996:147) rightly claims, “Our understanding of what we read does not directly come from what words and sentences are on the page, but from the interpretation we create, in our minds, of what we read.” In the same vein, Akmajian et al. (2001:263) remind us that “More goes into using a language besides knowing it and being able to produce and recognise sentences in it.” Proverbs epitomise this truth, for they are not mere linguistic ornaments but condensed repositories of cultural wisdom, pragmatic insight, and ethical guidance. Indeed, African communities are endowed with a wealth of proverbs bearing multifarious developmental functions. As the Comboni Missionaries (2019:3) contend, “Proverbs are a mine of wisdom from which we can learn or reaffirm certain realities such as peace, social harmony, love for life, respect for the person and for property.” They mirror the human heart and the social fabric, offering both therapeutic and pedagogical resources for guiding daily interactions. Accordingly, it matters that decision-makers, educators, and cultural custodians in Africa value their indigenous languages, more typically their proverbs, to harness their potential contributions to oiling morality, galvanising ethical setups, and soothing social relations for communal welfare enhancement. As Mieder (2004:xi) aptly asserts, “The wisdom of proverbs has guided people in their social interactions for thousands of years throughout the world.” That wisdom remains a timeless compass for navigating the complexities of modern African societies.

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