

## RELEVANCE OF TEXTBOOKS FOR ENHANCING MOTIVATION IN ENGLISH LEARNING: A CULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF CONGOLESE WOMEN IN NANDE PROVERBS

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**Abstract:** Motivation to learn a foreign language depends on several factors. One of them is the use of textbooks dealing with realities that match with the learners' view of life, philosophy and social values. One of the ways to know about the learners' culture is the study of proverbs. This study investigates some proverbs from Nande culture (from DR Congo) dealing with the consideration of women. The aim is to know about the outlook these people have of women in order to provide important elements that could serve as data for Congolese textbook designers. For this study, data is collected thanks to textual approach and analyzed with sociological and translation approaches. The results of the research show that the woman, from her childhood, in Nande culture is a very important and respectful person who deserves great social consideration.

**Key words:** Culture, English, motivation, Nande proverb, textbook

### LA PERTINENCE DES MANUELS POUR RENFORCER LA MOTIVATION DANS L'APPRENTISSAGE DE L'ANGLAIS : UNE REPRESENTATION CULTURELLE DES FEMMES CONGOLAISES DANS LES PROVERBES NANDE

**Résumé :** La motivation pour apprendre une langue étrangère dépend de plusieurs facteurs. L'un d'eux est l'utilisation de manuels traitant de réalités qui correspondent à la vision de la vie, à la philosophie et aux valeurs sociales des apprenants. L'un des moyens de connaître la culture des apprenants est l'étude des proverbes. Cette étude porte sur quelques proverbes de la culture Nande (RD Congo) traitant de la considération des femmes. L'objectif est de connaître les perspectives que ce peuple a de la femme afin de fournir des éléments importants qui pourraient servir de données aux concepteurs de manuels scolaires congolais. Pour réaliser cette étude, les données sont collectées grâce à l'approche textuelle et analysées avec des approches sociologiques et de traduction. Les résultats de la recherche montrent que la femme, dès son enfance, dans la culture Nande est une personne très importante et respectueuse qui mérite une grande considération sociale.

**Mots clés :** Anglais, culture, manuel scolaire, motivation, proverbe Nande,

#### Introduction

Motivation is a widely researched and studied phenomenon. It is a field that intrigues many scientists. Over the past few decades, there has been a rapid increase in research into motivation at work, motivation for sport, motivation in schools and recently motivation for learning foreign languages. Today, the importance of learning and speaking foreign

languages is increasingly emphasized. This might be the reason why motivation for foreign languages is attracting the attention of psychologists.

Many educationists over many years (e.g. Giles et al, 1942, Gardner and Lambert (1959), have identified factors that are more likely to influence foreign or second language learners' motivation to learn a new language. Among those factors there are: the learners' need, their attitude towards the foreign language native speakers and their culture and their interest to learn the new language.

In addition to the above-mentioned factors, it is worth mentioning that other scholars have discovered that motivation to learn a language also depends on ideological and socio-cultural factors. People involved in language teaching have understood that there is a relationship between motivation to learn a foreign or second language and cultural representation in the textbook used to teach those languages. They have stated that without the study and incorporation of the learners' culture in their second language learning, teaching would be incomplete. For them, language study will be less motivating if it does not match with the learners' view of life, their philosophy and social values. Most language learners, if not exposed to cultural elements of their society, may encounter significant difficulties in communicating societal meanings. It is this cultural and ideological factor to language learning motivation which is the focus of my present study.

Culture is the ways of thinking, of acting, and the material objects that form a people's way of life. It is the meaning that is shared by a group of people who hold common values and beliefs (Leonard 2002). One of the ways to understand people's culture and cultural values is the study of folklore, of which poems are a seminal element. In this study I referred to some Nande proverbs that deal with their women consideration. Nande, also known as (Oru)Ndandi and Yira, is a Bantu language spoken in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Nande trace their origins to the Ruwenzori Mountains between Congo and Uganda. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/nande\\_language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/nande_language))

This study is the first step towards the identification of Congolese worldview and cultural values. If this reality is incorporated into Congolese EFL textbooks, it will, in one way or another, positively enhance and influence Congolese pupils' motivation in the learning process of English since based upon their experience, philosophy, and moral truths. That will make the textbook not sound culturally foreign to them. The Nande culture, in this study, is simply being used as an illustration or a pretext for a national need. For a later stage the collection of proverbs could be done at a national level, and then a cross-cultural examination of Congolese values would be made. This will consist of identifying the traditional cultural values that are common to the majority of Congolese ethnic groups that textbooks designers could refer to to make culturally relevant textbooks that would be likely to enhance Congolese learners of English.

This research turns around the following questions:

- a) How are women portrayed in Nande proverbs?
- b) What kind of texts about women issues can Nande learners of English consider as culturally relevant, and which are likely to enhance their English learning motivation?

Given the function and role of African literature, this study evaluates the extent to which the knowledge of the cultural values, as portrayed through Nande proverbs, can contribute towards the adaptation of the teaching materials to Congolese English learners' cultural realities.

learners' cultural realities.

## 1. Literature review on culture in learning English as a foreign language

### 1.1 Culture

There are many definitions for culture. Kaikkonen (1994, p. 69) defines culture as "a mutual agreement between the members of certain society about the values, rules, role expectations and meanings, which direct the behavior of the members". As for Nieto (2010, p. 136), culture also includes "a shared world-view, common history, geographic location, language, social class and religion." Basing on these definitions, it can be concluded that everyone has a culture. Culture involves the implicit norms and conventions of a society and historically transmitted, but also adaptive ethos. Society constructs a set of beliefs and presuppositions that will become common sense knowledge for the members of a particular society. The culture of a group can therefore be defined as the relationship between its beliefs, values, behavior and communication.

Cultural values represent the implicitly or explicitly shared abstract ideas about what is good, right, and desirable in a society. Williams (1970) states that cultural values are the bases for the specific norms that tell people what is appropriate in various situations. The ways that societal institutions function, their goals and their modes of operation, express cultural value priorities.

One of the ways to understand people's culture and cultural values is by studying their folklore. Folklore consists of legends, music, oral history, proverbs, jokes, popular beliefs, fairy tales, stories, tall tales, and customs included in the traditions of a culture, subculture, or group. It also includes the set of practices through which those expressive genres are shared.

### 1.2. Proverbs as a reflection of people's culture

## 2. Woman in the Nande culture

### 2.1. Consideration for a young girl

In Nande communities, the consideration that people have for youngsters vary according to the sex. Young boys are considered differently from girls. From the time they are still very young, girls are treated in a more respectful and considerate way than boys. Nande people believe that girls deserve more respect and consideration because they are future mothers, life givers and its sustainers. Although motherhood is a future reality in their lives, young girls are viewed as mothers-to-be who are still in their first infancies. They are believed to have motherhood potentialities which are still dormant. This fact is shown in the following proverb:

**"Ekíseke símulí mutókoro."**

a) There is no 'mutokoro' for sugarcane.

b) Even when she is still very young, the girl is virtually a woman.

From the above proverb, a young girl is compared to a 'mutokoro', the immature top part of a sugarcane. This metaphor puts in evidence the process of growth. When sugarcane

plant is still small, its superior part is less sweet than when it has grown up. The more the plant is growing, the sweeter and more succulent the cane becomes. This is said to be the same for a young girl: A young girl is a mother in growth, the more she is growing up, the more mother-like she is becoming. Similarly, the proverb **“O’búghóle bukáminyikana o’mo bumbésa”** means: “The nobleness of a queen can already be noticed in girlhood.”

From the above proverb it is seen that in Nande’s view, it is a mistake to underestimate a young girl. She is to be respected as a mother to be.

## 2.2. *Woman as a man’s social reputation promoter*

The husband and his wife make a united couple and the acts of one can make the honor or dishonor of the other. Nande people believe that a man’s reputation and consideration depends on his wife’s conduct. A man will either be estimated or taken too lightly in his community if he has a wife who is considered either as a good or bad woman by people of her community. Her hospitality, helpfulness, gentleness and her generosity toward her hosts will bring honor, respect and admiration of her husband in the society. This is shown in the following proverb:

**“Omúkaly’oyuwéne ni mbitá yá mwirá wíwe.”**

a) A good wife is her husband’s crown.

b) A wife with good heart brings honor and glory for her husband.

The above proverb shows the importance of women in Nande societies. Women are valorized to the extent that men’s consideration in the community is said to depend on them. Nasty women are said to be their husbands’ social reputation spoilers as shown in the following proverb:

**“Omúkali múvy’ akáleká mwirá ghuw’ atakumáyíra”**

A bad woman tarnishes her husband’s reputation.

In the two above proverbs, women are reminded of their role in the edification of an honorable and respectable family.

Not only are Nande women being valued as men’s social reputation promoters, but they are also said to be their husband’s stabilizers. In Nande culture, a man is considered to be stable, balanced and trustworthy when he is married. This is shown in the following proverb

**“Omúkali ní kálíki kambála.”**

A woman is a string to be worn around one’s waist.

A woman is referred to as a waist-belt for her husband’s clothes. A belt firmly holds someone’s clothes on the body. It sustains them from falling from one’s body. In other words, it plays the role of stabilizing one’s garments on the body. When a person has fastened a belt around his waist he can be sure of not having his clothes unexpectedly fall off his body. In spite of movements one can make, one will be sure that there will not be any danger with one’s clothes since everything is being tightened and stabilized by the belt. This is what the woman is considered to be for her husband. In Nande’s view, for a man to have some financial, social and psychological stability one is to be married.

A woman intervenes as an advisor of her husband. The tradition shows that before a Mwami could have a talk with other men of the village, he had to talk first with his wife, in the bedroom. The decisions that were taken were influenced by an invisible hand of a wife.

### 2.3. *Woman as the provider and protector of life*

As it has been shown previously, in Nande traditional culture a woman has been highly valued. She has been considered as the source of people's comfort and joy as it is shown in the following proverb:

**"Omúkali yo nyumba"**

The woman is one's home

A house is not a home. A house is a structure, but a home is the people who live in the house and make it a safe and pleasant place to be. A home is where one feels happy to be. It is the place where one feels loved and welcome and a place where one wants to be for rest. The above proverb shows the consideration that Nande people have for women. It presents the woman as the one who makes life worth being lived since she is considered to have some inbuilt capacities to put people in a psychologically comfortable state. Similarly the proverb: **"Omúkali yó wabo múndu, yúká miny' obukoní akwíre"**: (It is the woman who is connected to you, she is the one who is able to diagnose your disease). From this proverb, the woman is being valued as possessing some inner capacity to identify people's problems and to provide some relief. From the above proverbs it is noticed that Nande women are considered to be the most important factors for people's survival.

The woman's importance for the survival of the whole community is shown in the position she is being given in Nande societies. She is said to be a child's both mother and father as the following proverb mentions it:

**"Omúkali n'ísé kandi nyinyá w'ómwána"**

The woman is both the mother and father of the child.

From long time ago Nande wise men acknowledged that children's education and growth mostly depended on the great contribution of the mother. They believed that children's future life was shaped by their mothers. In other words, children became what their mothers had made them to be. This fact is acknowledged in the following proverb: **"Obútsemé bwe kíró kíhuma ní bítsemé bwa kóyó waghú"** (The joy of one day is your mother's). It shows that if a person has one day been happy in his/her life it is because the mother had once made it possible. This proverb is always used as a reminder to people who seem to minimize the effort and contribution of their mothers for their present wellbeing. They are being shown that their success in life is the result of their mother's success in being able to prepare them to attain it. They are shown that it is the mother who must be honored and congratulated for the success that one has been able to achieve in life.

A Nande woman, considered as the pillar of the society and of her family, knows that people's wellbeing depends on her. She also knows that her value depends on how much sacrificial she is for the good of her family. Hence the following proverb:

**"Ékínda kyo múkali kikalw'omólí"**

- a) A woman's corpse must come from the field.
- b) A woman must die doing her work.

The role that a woman has in the society makes her become very active. She knows that her value depends on her capacity to give birth, to educate her children and to take care of her family. She is ready to make all her efforts to fulfill her role as a mother. For a Nande woman, it is a victorious death when a woman dies in the middle of fulfilling her role as a mother. A Nande woman would wish to die while delivering a baby or in the field while cultivating for the welfare of the family than to die on other circumstances which have nothing to do with her role as a mother.

#### *2.4. Woman as the unifier of families*

Marriage is defined as the union of a man and a woman, especially recognized by the law, by which they become husband and wife. Yet, Nande people believe that marriage is more than the union of a man and a woman but of their families as well.

Although the union of the two families is caused by both the man and woman's decision to become husband and wife, Nande people believe that the woman is the one who makes that union of the two families possible. Hence the following proverb:

**"Omúkali ni musángania w'ebíhanda."**

A woman is the unifier of families.

Not only are women viewed as unifiers of families but they are also considered as people's mediators. This is shown in the following proverb:

**"Omúkali ní kébo aká leaky'amalwá"**

The woman is a fufou bowl; she reconciles people in conflict.

When two people or groups of people were in conflict, in Nande societies, they were being reconciled by some wise men. One of the things that mediators did was to invite the groups in conflict for reconciliation. Each group had to be listened to. When the real cause of the conflict was discovered and the conflict resolved, the opposing groups were asked to share the meal. Generally, this consisted of fufou and goat meat. This food was to be eaten and shared by those groups to show that they had become reconciled. Sharing the fufou from the same bowl was a sign of reunion for the people who once were in conflict. In such situations, the fufou was considered as an important thing which contributed to the achievement of the reunion. It was considered as their mediator. The great value that was given to the meal in such situations and the role it played is said to be similar to the value that women are given in Nande societies.

#### *2.5. Woman as equal to man*

A woman has never been thought of to be underestimated by men. The social relationships between a man and a woman are strictly observed and respected in the Nande societies. If gender is to be taken as the relational notion of power, it will be appreciated in its just value in the Nande people. Long time ago a woman was known as not superior or inferior to a man as it is shown in the following proverb:

**"Omúkali n'omúlúme ni mangwané."**

A woman and a man are both human beings.

Women are asked to accept themselves as women and should not wish to compete with men to be equal to them since they are not said to be inferior to them. This reality is shown in the following proverb:

**“Omúkali syálísuvalá nga múlúme.”**

- a) A woman does not urinate like a man
- b) A woman is not superior or equal to a man and she must not wish it

Apparently, this proverb seems to go against the ideas presented by feminists and defenders of the emancipation of women. In reality, this is not the case. Through the above proverb, women are being asked to recognize themselves and to accept what they are. They do not need to ambition the situation of men, but they should conform themselves to their nature of women and assume the functions that are inherent to that nature. That is the reason why for example, it is not acceptable in Nande societies that women bury dead people or that they take decisions related to such specific activities. One proverb states:

**“Omúkali syálítakul’isínda.”**

- a) A woman does not dig a grave
- b) A woman is not the one to take decision

Tasks are divided according to sex and social roles. Not allowing a woman to do such or such activities has nothing to do with underestimating her. The carrying and the burying of a dead person is said to be on the responsibility of men following the importance given to dead people and according to the excessive sensitivity of women.

Considering the importance of consequences resulting from the decisions, women are not allowed to substitute themselves to men and to decide at their place. They will not be allowed to do some works that the community has assigned to men as tasks as it is shown in the following proverb:

**“Omúkali syálívana kivanza.”**

- a) A woman does not find a plot.
- b) A woman is not the one to take decisions

To find a piece of land where one is to build his house is not one of the attributes of a woman. It is the husband who takes decisions for such kind of activities.

## **2.6. *Woman as someone to be honored by continually being offered presents***

It has been mentioned in the preceding lines that from very long time ago, Nande traditional men knew that a woman is not to be underestimated but she is to be cherished. Men are asked to continually offer presents to their wives as it is shown in the following proverb:

**“Omúkali syálíhwá kw’ihemberéra.”**

A woman should continually be offered presents.

The above proverb is generally addressed to young married men as a way to show them that a woman is a ‘múghóle’ ‘a queen’ who deserves to be taken care of. They are being shown that a husband should not forget to always please his wife by regularly offering her presents.

Women are also asked to be esteemed by being given presents when one wants to get married to them. This is shown in the following proverb.

**“Avákali ní máher’ ómwami, ukátahul’ok’ ómúrtáhi íwateka itáno.”**

- a) Women are the ‘máhere’ of the king. If you cut one branch, you give five.

b) Women are compared to sacred trees planted on the king's grave. Nobody can cut down a branch for fear of being punished.

When a king dies, a tree is planted on his grave. It is strictly prohibited to cut a branch from that tree. Anybody who does so will be severely punished and taxed. The above proverb shows the unconditional, imperative, and obligatory character of the bride price. In Nande societies it was considered abnormal and great dishonor for a man to live with a woman as his wife without having given any bride price to her family.

In order to show the value that a man has for one's fiancée, he has to give ten goats as a bride-price to her parents. For them ten goats are not negligible as shown in the following proverb:

**"ákakálw' okómúkali símulí káke."**

What we give as bride price is not little.

It was not obligatory to give all the ten goats the same time taking into account the symbolic value of the bride price. But it was prohibited to take a girl as one's wife without having given any bride price. Two or three goats were enough for a girl to legally be allowed to live with her husband. The remaining part of the bride price would come later.

Considering the inestimable value given to a woman, Nande people believe that the ten goats given by the bride's family to the bridegroom's is not enough as a gift. For them, a woman is so precious that a husband is to go on giving more presents to her in-laws' even after marriage as it is stated in the following proverb:

**"Omúkali syál'ihwák'omutahío."**

One's wife bride-price is unlimited.

It is worth mentioning that in this man-dominated world, Nande people keep on believing that a woman is priceless as it shown in the following proverb: **"Omúkali ní líno lya nzóghu síryé tswerawá"**: The woman is an elephant's ivory. She is priceless.

In addition to being given continual presents, Nande women are said to deserve more tenderness from their husbands. Husbands are forbidden from whipping their wives. Instead, they are to show them a lot of affection as it is shown in the following proverb.

**"Omúka1i syálívikirana vyála akávikirawa ngómo yoko ngíngo."**

A woman is not to be slapped but to be kissed on the bed.

Not only do Nande women deserve tenderness from their husbands but also consideration and respect from people. Through Nande proverbs, it is seen that Nande people acknowledge the fact that women are emotional people, so they are not to be told things that are likely to affect them emotionally. Hence the following proverb:

**"Áhalí múkulé síhalíhulirawá wakúnda"**

a) Where there is a pregnant woman we do not talk about women who labour.

b) We do not talk about complicated birth-giving near a pregnant woman

Nande people knew the value and power of speech. It was considered clumsy to talk about complicated birth-giving near a pregnant woman. Such talks are likely to frighten and



intimate the future mother, while she is to consider her state as being normal and to face it with serenity. This proverb exhorts every person to the respect of women.

Considering the conception that Congolese have of women (as presented in their proverbs), we understand that these people will be much more motivated to read texts in which women are presented as:

- 1 People who deserve more respect and consideration, even when they are still young, because they are future mothers. They are not to be underestimated.
- 2 People who are considered with a lot of values to the extent that men's consideration in the community depends on them.
- 3 People who are considered as men's social reputation promoters.
- 4 People who intervene as advisors of their husbands.
- 5 People presented as the source of the community's comfort and joy.
- 6 People presented as the ones making life worth being lived.
- 7 People valued as possessing some inner capacity to identify other people's problems and who are able to provide some relief.
- 8 People considered to be the most important factors for the community's survival.
- 9 People considered as the pillar of the society and of family.
- 10 People viewed as unifiers of families mediators.
- 11 People known as not superior or inferior to a men.
- 12 People who are so precious and priceless that their husbands should go on giving more presents to their in-laws' even after marriage.
- 13 People who deserve more respect, consideration tenderness from their husbands. They should be accepted as emotional people who should not be told things that are likely to affect them emotionally.

## Conclusion

One of the greatest obstacles to the intercultural approach in national textbooks is the absence of the language learner's culture as a learning culture. The place of the national or local culture in intercultural education is fundamental. It is by knowing oneself well that one can better communicate with other people. The student's culture is not always explicitly presented in educational materials. Hence, the need to identify its place. Diversity is part of human nature; the recognition of one's own diversity is a condition for recognizing the diversity of others.

In the context of foreign language teaching and learning, the contribution of the textbook in terms of its cultural substance is undeniable. It is an inexhaustible source of information, as it conveys the values and cultural elements of a civilization. Learners will feel much more motivated to learn a foreign language when they are confronted with texts which, culturally speaking, are not ideologically distant from their beliefs. Hence the necessity for designing language learners' culturally-relevant textbooks.

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