HARNESSING DOGON PROVERBS AS A CULTURAL TRANSMISSION TOOL IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Aldiouma KODIO
Université Yambo OUOLOGUEM
aldioukodio1978@gmail.com

Abstract

This article explores the pedagogical use of Dogon proverbs in bilingual education in Mali, underlining their role in transmitting cultural and social values. The study aims to compile a collection of selected proverbs in Dɔgɔsɔ while demonstrating their educational and social functions. Given the lack of substantial literature on the topic, this study seeks to address the gap by highlighting the limited incorporation of traditional sayings, especially proverbs, into educational practices. The study adopted a qualitative approach. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussions in four schools of two Communes of the Municipality of Koro, Dogonland. The participants were bilingual teachers who are native Dɔgɔsɔ speakers. The results of this study serve as documentary and educational resources supporting a more inclusive, relevant, and culturally rooted bilingual education. They have also shown that integrating proverbs into the school curriculum facilitates the understanding of educational content and conveys essential values such as respect, solidarity, and responsibility.

***Keywords**: bilingual education, cultural transmission, cultural value, Dogon proverbs, moral value.*

Résumé

Cet article explore l'usage pédagogique des proverbes Dogon dans l'enseignement bilingue au Mali, en soulignant leur rôle dans la transmission des valeurs culturelles et sociales. L'étude vise à constituer une collection de proverbes sélectionnés en Dɔgɔsɔ tout en démontrant leurs fonctions éducatives et sociales. En raison du manque de littérature substantielle sur le sujet, cette étude tente de combler ce vide en mettant l'accent sur la faible intégration des dictons traditionnels, en particulier des proverbes, dans les pratiques éducatives. L'étude s'appuie sur l'approche qualitative. Les données ont été recueillies au moyen des entretiens semi-directifs, de l'observation des participants et des discussions de focus group dans quatre écoles bilingues de deux Communes du Cercle de Koro, en milieu Dogon. Les participants étaient des enseignants bilingues, locuteurs natifs du Dɔgɔsɔ. Les résultats de cette étude constituent des ressources documentaires et pédagogiques en faveur d'une éducation bilingue plus inclusive, pertinente et enracinée dans la culture locale. Ils ont également montré que l'intégration des proverbes dans le programme scolaire facilite la compréhension des contenus éducatifs et transmet des valeurs essentielles telles que le respect, la solidarité et la responsabilité.

***Mots-clés** : éducation bilingue, proverbes Dogon, transmission culturelle, valeurs culturelles, valeurs morales.*

Introduction

Proverbs are key elements of cultural heritage and popular wisdom, particularly in oral societies. Deeply rooted in discursive practices, they play a leading role in the intergenerational transmission of cultural and social norms. According to the World Bank (2000:2), African proverbs are "delicately wrought forms of expression whose meanings are intricately intertwined, creating associations between seemingly disparate domains and shedding new light on events and perceptions." In other words, they embed wisdom in discursive forms that articulate varied cultural registers and produce new interpretations of reality.

In the same perspective, Malunga (2017:3) recalls, "Proverbs constitute a core feature of African culture. They are simple statements carrying a deep meaning." That shows the significance of proverbs in the African society. Through an agricultural metaphor, he states: "Proverbs are like seeds, which come to life when they are sown" (Mulanga, 2017:4). The latter function as vectors of cultural transmission: simple in appearance, they convey deep knowledge and take on meaning when they are communicated and shared within the community.

At the lexicographic level, the *Grand Dictionnaire Larousse* (1991:981) defines the proverb as a "short statement expressing popular advice, a common-sense truth, or an empirical observation, and which has become commonly used." Such expressions gain currency because of conciseness and functional importance. Besides, Silue and Samsia (2020) take a wider perspective, demonstrating that African proverbs are not only symbols of collective awareness and the reflection of their communities' sociocultural philosophy, but also serve rhetorical, didactic, and legal functions. Also, because African proverbs are discursively open, they can be adapted to various contexts and communicative purposes.

Likewise, Cauvin (1981:12) opined on its semantic and functional dimension, asserting that a proverb "describes a situation currently experienced (usage) using words and images from another situation (origin)." In doing so, he introduces the notion of double temporal reference. This double reference gives the proverb "imaginative" dimension and polysemy allowing for multiple interpretations. Similarly, Pineaux (1979:6) makes a point of its metaphorical dimension: "A clearly

marked formula, generally in metaphorical form, by which popular wisdom expresses its experience of life." Its essence lies in the figurative characterization of a situation, an individual, or an object, the meaning of which evolves over time alongside the development of language. Therefore, the literature identifies several common characteristics: semantic wealth, the use of metaphor, social and cognitive functions, as well as adaptability to the context, which make the proverb a strategic tool of cultural foundation.

However, globalization and the growing influence of French in formal education are affecting their use, making their integration into bilingual classrooms essential to preserve this intangible heritage, contextualize learning, and strengthen the bond between school and community.

The main problem of the study is that in the Malian educational system, French remains the primary language of instruction, relegating national languages to a secondary position, despite tremendous efforts to promote bilingual education. Their transmission is in sharp decline, including in bilingual classrooms intended to promote local languages and cultures. This raises a central question: how can Dogon proverbs be effectively integrated into bilingual education in order to enrich the cultural relevance of learning, preserve the Dogon language and culture, and foster students' cognitive and identity development?

This problem is particularly relevant for several reasons. Educationally, connecting teaching to students' cultural knowledge is recognized as a key factor in academic success, especially in multilingual contexts. Culturally, Dogon proverbs play an essential role in cultural transmission, a role that may be further weakened if its use continues to decline. Cognitively, the metaphorical and symbolic wealth of proverbs constitutes a pedagogical tool that fosters learners' critical thinking, memory, and creativity. Finally, in terms of identity, their integration into bilingual classrooms would allow students to identify with the knowledge being transmitted, thereby strengthening their self-esteem and sense of belonging.

Therefore, the study is justified by the need to rethink bilingual education in the Dogonland so that it is not limited to a simple linguistic translation of content into French, but rather truly draws on local cultural resources, particularly Dogon proverbs, to promote more meaningful and inclusive learning.

This study applies a theoretical framework in bilingual classrooms, considering language as a key factor of cultural identity and community knowledge (Fishman, 1972; Hymes, 1974). Dogon proverbs, as treasures of culture, mediate cognitive development and critical thinking through the mother tongue (Vygotsky, 1978), while intercultural pedagogy acknowledges students' cultural knowledge to foster inclusion (Abdallah-Pretceille, 1999). The didactics of plurilingualism further fosters linguistic diversity, positioning proverbs as tools for social cohesion, cultural transmission, and identity construction (García & Wei, 2014; Simon, 2015).

Therefore, the theoretical framework is operationalized through a series of concrete pedagogical practices. These practices position Dogon proverbs as cognitive supports, cultural resources, and instruments for linguistic mediation. They illustrate how bilingual schools can constitute a space where both linguistic diversity and cultural heritage meet and are respected. This study examines how Dogon proverbs, as carriers of cultural, social, and moral value, can be meaningfully integrated into the content and teaching practices of bilingual classrooms. The goal is to promote contextualized and inclusive teaching, anchored in local cultural realities. In this respect, specific objectives aim to:

- identify and collect proverbial expressions used within Dogon communities;
- analyze the current use of Dogon proverbs in official programs, school textbooks and teaching practices of bilingual classes;
- show their social and educational functions.

1. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach combining ethnolinguistics and didactics to capture the cultural and pedagogical relevance of Dogon proverbs in bilingual education. The study aims to understand not only the linguistic features of the proverbs but also their use, as well as the meanings and principles they convey in a multilingual educational context.

1.1. The area of investigation

This study was carried out in four bilingual schools of two Communes of the Municipality of Koro in the Dogonland. These schools were selected because of their cultural representativeness based on their use of Dɔgɔsɔ and French as media of instruction. This dual site selection enables the researcher to compare practices and perceptions in diverse school contexts.

1.2. Participants

Participants were selected purposively and included native Dɔgɔsɔ bilingual teachers, who provided detailed accounts of the use (or not) of proverbs in teaching practices. The study also included custodians of the Dogon oral tradition because of their expertise in the cultural and linguistic dimension of the educational practices.

1.3. Data collection techniques

Data were collected in four schools of two Communes of the Municipality of Koro (Dogonland) using three complementary methods: semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussions. The interviews, designed to elicit spontaneous response while targeting specific themes, helped identify the key issues surrounding the use of proverbs in classroom teaching. Participant observation, conducted in bilingual classrooms, provided insights into the current use of proverbs in educational contexts, including their alignment with official curricula and textbooks. Such an observation focused on the moments and methods of Dogon proverbs integration, teacher-student interactions, and the reception of messages. Finally, focus group discussions with bilingual teachers and elderly custodians of the oral tradition deepened our understanding of pedagogical practices and cultural transmission mechanisms.

1.4. Data analysis method

All the data, collected in Dɔgɔsɔ, were fully transcribed and analyzed using a thematic method inspired by Braun and Clarke (2006). This analysis aimed to identify the social, cognitive, and educational functions of proverbs within the community and school contexts. In addition, it showcased current or potential pedagogical strategies for integrating

proverbs into bilingual classes and explored the barriers and levers to their promotion. This analytical approach was appropriate to articulate between theoretical frameworks and the practical realities experienced, ensuring that findings are both contextually grounded and theoretically meaningful.

2. Results and Discussion

2.1. Results

The analysis of the Dogon proverbs uncovers a worldview deeply rooted in the ethos of solidarity, respect, resilience, and a sense of community belonging. These proverbs, as discursive units of oral tradition, fulfill a dual function. They convey cultural norms while serving an educational role that both guides social behavior and fosters critical reflection. The proverbs are organized according to the themes identified in the corpus. This organization showcases their symbolic and pedagogical relevance.

2.1.1. Wisdom and Experience: Lucidity, and Discernment

Dogon proverbs promote practical intelligence born of experience, where appearances are never enough to grasp the truth of things. Thus, *Ageŋu puu ku banrun bɛɛlɛ* (Not all agamas have red heads) teaches that one should not be fooled by appearances: all that glitters is not gold. Similarly, *Bɛbɛru bɔŋɔilaa, wawage kɔnii laa* (Neither does closeness mean love, nor does distance mean hatred) proves that true friendship is proven in hardship. These proverbs advocate caution and analysis in human relationships based more on experience than immediate emotion. Wisdom, in the Dogon tradition, is a moral and spiritual pillar: it is transmitted through the memory of elders, who hold valuable social knowledge. Besides, these proverbs encourage us to reflect before acting, to discern behind appearances, and to integrate lucidity as a principle of conduct. To this end, they contribute to training individuals endowed with a sense of vigilance, perspectives and responsibility. This, in turn, strengthens the cohesion and balance of the community.

2.1.2. Respect for Elders: Moral Authority and Transmission

The proverb *Ageŋu ku juŋu, dumɔ na binɛɛlɛ* (A red-headed agama's nod does not shake the rock) brings to mind that the disgruntlement of a young person cannot shake the established symbolic order. This is

viewed as humility and respect toward elders, the custodians of collective memory. Among the Dogon, this respect structures the social hierarchy, regulates relationships, and ensures group cohesion. Proverbs make it a principle of resilience, reconciling educational modernity and cultural traditions.

2.1.3. Community Solidarity, mutual assistance, and Interdependence

Bɛrɛ bele ye kɔrɔja i-iyɛmɛbe, (The belly hides what should not be seen), *Numɔ lɛi numɔ sumɔ jɛ* (Two hands wash each other), or *Nawan sigiyaa ye guju nɛ yɛ taŋajɛ* (Where skin meets, fat follows.) signifies that man never exists alone. These proverbs convey the idea that mutual assistance benefits both sides. They reflect a profoundly relational worldview, where interdependence ensures survival and balance. In Dogon society, solidarity is a daily experience through rituals, work, and interactions, structuring behaviors and fostering reciprocity. In education, this attitude inspires participatory and cooperative methods based on living together and shared responsibility.

2.1.4. Humility and Moderation in the Face of Destiny

Certain proverbs teach the need to guard against pride and haste. "*Ama manalu pana tɔ atĩ*" (Heaven sends blessings when least expected) symbolizes a divine grace coming unannounced, while "*Kinrun baranu le pɛjɛ*" (A long life is built on careful safeguarding) expresses the importance of patience and constant preparation. These proverbs promote restraint, vigilance, and recognition of one's limits. Socially, they ease tensions and encourage measured behavior in relationships of power, success, and failure. Integrated into education, they form an ethic of self-control, essential for facing the vagaries of modern life with caution.

2.1.5. Hard Work and Perseverance: The Virtue of Effort

The proverb "*Pɛrɛ obu didimu sooriyɛlɛ*" (A gift received without merit may sustain, but brings no worth and leaves the heart wanting) or *Wala kɛbɛrɛ kɛnhi* (The sign of idleness, useful but once) illustrate implied critics for dependance. They caution about the perils of idleness: consistent effort is needed for lasting worth. These proverbs emphasize the importance of exemplary behavior, valuing hard work and

perseverance as virtues that ensure individual and collective dignity. Through effort and patience, they encourage a pedagogy of endurance and careful transmission.

2.1.6. Justice and Truth: Ethics of Responsibility

Ama liyɛ, inɛgiree liyɛ wɔlɔ (Fear God, not men) contrasts moral conscience with social pressures, while Boi *wɔlɔ ye, bɛrɛ woi baaɲu* (One man's crime must not condemn another) denounces hasty judgments and injustices. These proverbs express a quest for fairness, where everyone must be hold accountable for their deeds with transparency. They establish a moral governance based on truth and not on force or appearances. In education, they teach intellectual rigor, ethical behavior, and critical thinking, which produce responsible and upright citizens.

2.1.7. Cunning, Strategy, and Control of Speech

For the Dogon, speech is an act fraught with consequences. The proverb *Aŋa lɛu lɛu sɔɔ nɛ yoojɛ* (He who speaks too much drowns in his words) advises against excessive use of words. Modesty is manifested in mastery of oral expression: knowing when to speak, when to remain silent, and how to use cunning to preserve social balance. Cunning is not seen as negative, but as a strategic intelligence, essential for managing human interactions.

2.1.8. Child Education: Transmission and Exemplarity

Baara du nɛ baara tɛɛjɛ (Under the acacia tree, only the acacia grows). This proverbial expression demonstrates the intergenerational transmission of behaviors and characters. Indeed, this transmission may happen either positively through inheritance or tradition, or negatively through the reproduction of errors. Besides, it illustrates the educational responsibility of parents and elders, since the child is the reflection of what he or she observes. This pedagogy example promotes cultural and moral continuity. Also, children learn primarily through imitation, which implies that adults have the duty to embody the virtues they wish to transmit. Hence, education becomes a living chain where each generation shapes the next.

2.1.9. Misfortune and gluttony

Ajabalu mɔɔnu balu (Misfortune is not reserved to one person). This

expression brings to light the universality of misfortune. Indeed, it shows us that suffering is not an individual fatality, but a reality shared by all. It is an invitation to cultivate empathy and solidarity with others. Similarly, *Muŋɔ ɲu tanwan ye munrun yaajɛ / Gire taa sɛlɛ* (Not everything the eyes see is necessarily yours). This proverb provides a complementary lesson. It teaches caution and respect. In other words, it reminds us that sight does not confer a right to possess. Moreover, it signals the danger of envy and encourages moderation in desires. Finally, in the context of bilingual education, they play an essential role in social regulation, promoting self-sufficiency and harmony in collective relationships.

2.1.10. Life Cycle: Death, Lineage, and Tradition

Proverbs relating to death and lineage recall human fragility and the transition to the hereafter. *Kinrun goo kanwan kɛrɛ* (Death is bitter) expresses the unavoidable pain of loss. *Kijɛ yaa na kɛn barajɛ* (The daughter inherits from her mother; in other words, she is her image) highlights the symbolic continuity and transmission of responsibilities. Finally, *Jegejaga taru baraga nanhu, baraa ye u na yinwɛnjɛ, baraalu ye u ba yinwɛnjɛ* (The egg of the mystic bird "*Jegejaga*" is difficult to collect, if you collect it, your mother will die; if you leave it, your father will die) illustrates the tragic complexity of human choices, where every decision involves sacrifice. So, these proverbs do not reduce death to inevitability; on the contrary, they make it a moment of teaching, a space of remembrance but also a reminder of individual and collective responsibility.

2.1.11. Conflict and Tension Management

The proverb *sɔɔ, sɔɔ le dogonoŋu* (Disputes end with dialogue or at the negotiating table) illustrates the primacy of dialogue as a conflict resolution mechanism in Dogon culture. Indeed, warnings against irreversible consequences of violence underscore the gravity of armed conflicts and the importance of seeking peaceful solutions. This proverb, hence, underlines the peacemaking power of language. Besides, it promotes thoughtful and conciliatory communication as opposed to violence or impulsive reaction.

2.1.12. Individual Responsibility, Restraint, and Moral Order

Proverbs such as *Bɔjɔ u hɔjɔlu ku nɛ tɔjiyɛnai* (do not take ownership of

matters you have not dealt with) teaches, above all, self-discipline, restraint and respect for individual responsibilities. Indeed, this proverb helps avoid poking one's nose into others' business, emphasizing that self-control is a key principle for social life. This restraint, far from being a simple personal quality, presents itself as an essential moral virtue and a pillar of social peace. In a complementary manner, *Ama yɔ ye tata belu mirɛnlɛ*, (if God exists, the hyena shall not eat grass) illustrates trust in divine justice, which guarantees a higher moral order. Restraint and carefulness guide interpersonal relationships and limit excesses of pride or authoritarianism. They also promote a social balance based on mutual respect and responsibility. In short, these proverbs call attention to the importance of combining self-control and confidence in the moral order to ensure cohesion and harmony in society.

2.1.13. Hypocrisy, credibility, and self-application of one's skills.

Amakire jɔnjɔŋɔnɛ ye, ku womɔ laa jɔŋɔ (He who wishes to heal others must first heal himself). This proverb spotlights the importance of consistency and exemplarity. Before wanting to help or correct others, it is essential to know and control oneself. It calls to personal reflection and individual responsibility. It calls to mind that the effectiveness of our actions towards others depends mostly on our integrity and balance. In this way, it shows that true change always begins from within.

2.1.14. Forgiveness

Jugɔ sɛ baŋa yaabu kanranjɛ (Forgiving is not humbling oneself, it is growing) shows that forgiveness is considered as a mark of intelligence and greatness of soul, not a weakness. It is a social mechanism of reconciliation that goes beyond simple individual morality, actively participating in the restoration of order and harmony within the community.

2.1.15. Love

Love is viewed from a dual perspective, spiritual and material. *Bɛrɛ wɔlɔ ye, inɛ wɔlɔ (*No one can worship God or love their neighbor on an empty stomach) recalls that physiological needs condition emotional reactions. Moreover, the fragility of emotions is expressed by proverbs such as *Muŋɔ ɲu tanwan ye munrun yaajɛ* (Patience is a virtue, but it has its limits)

and "Kinɛ ibɛ gire iyelɛ (Love overlooks flaws, yet forewarns of the dangers of silence or misinterpretation). In other words, love among the Dogon is concrete, sometimes painful, but fundamental to social cohesion.

2.1.16. Bad Company

Proverbs about companionship, such as *Aiguru dulɔ polatin ye yɛnɛ gɔ ɛjula*, (A tailless mouse carries disgrace), alerts to the danger of harmful relationships, whether based on mockery or judgment. This caution aims to preserve personal integrity. Similarly, the recognition of human weaknesses is recognized by *Boboju suwinyɛun bɔjɔ kale woi laa* (Contraction of the anus is not the end of defecation). In an educational context, this illustrates that appearances do not reflect the entirety of a process, and that perseverance or continuity of actions is essential. This need is not limited to a single occasion, and it calls for respect for privacy and the practice of tolerance.

2.1.17. Tradition

Sɔɔ, gire iyɛ mɔ yolɛ (A word is passed down from generation to generation) explains the importance given to traditional structures as guarantors of collective wisdom. Tradition is regarded as a stabilizing framework that can resolve complex dilemmas and provide answers that go beyond individual experience. As a result, respect for elders and customs is a key to social cohesion.

2.1.18. Difficulties

In the face of adversity, the Dogon uphold resilience and adaptation. Proverbs such as *Alaagala wolaa wɛɛjɛ ye, inɛ kan ku womɔ dɛnɛjɛ* (If the sky falls everyone protects their head, save who can) or *Atɛmu dɔŋɔjɛ a aye yimɛlɛ* (Culture is thin but does not die), demonstrate a philosophy of survival where culture renews itself without denying its principles. Emphasis is placed on intelligent perseverance and the refusal to waste efforts.

2.1.19. Mistrust

Caution in human relationships is necessary, especially in complex social relationships where individuals' intentions may be ambiguous. In this regard, some traditional proverbs, such as *Aiguru lee Gama lee ku poromu*

tolo, exhorts to avoid the pitfalls of overconfidence. It teaches us that trust can never be granted blindly. So, mistrust should not be seen as a negative attitude, but rather as a thoughtful strategy aimed at preserving personal integrity and directing social interactions with caution.

2.1.20. Belief system, faith, prudence

Faith in the highest justice, as expressed in *Amadomɔ na giyɛ daalɛ*, occupies a central place in the Dogon worldview. Indeed, in this cultural perspective, belief is not reduced to a passive attitude; on the contrary, it constitutes a driving force that guides and supports both moral action and social interactions. This proverb exemplifies such a conception that supreme justice transcends human behavior and regulates the consequences of their actions. Consequently, faith and prudence must be regarded as two complementary foundations: the former encourages hope and respect for the moral order, while the latter warns against overconfidence or hasty decisions that could compromise social relations. The articulation of these foundations constitutes an essential directive, allowing both to guide individual choices and to preserve harmony within the community.

In sum, this study demonstrates that Dogon proverbs, although culturally and pedagogically rich, remain undervalued in official curricula and mostly confined to oral use, which limits their potential in bilingual education. The inventory of educational proverbs identified includes, among others, themes such as wisdom, solidarity, humility, justice, misfortune, gluttony, conflict, individual responsibility, restraint and moral order, forgiveness, love, and belief systems. The analysis underscores that these proverbs reflect social norms essential to the formation of identity in bilingual educational environment. More than just sayings, they convey moral lessons, foster critical thinking, and develop language skills while preserving cultural heritage. They also stress the importance of speech, vigilance, and resilience as tools for dealing with change and conflict. Finally, Dogon proverbs fulfill a major social function by regulating relationships and consolidating community cohesion.

2.2. Discussion

The findings of the study revealed significant cultural and pedagogical values, with language constituting both as a key marker of cultural

identity and as a reservoir of local knowledge. At school, the place chosen for their use indicates a strategic pedagogical function: teachers use proverbs to introduce a concept, clarify content, or conclude a lesson. The methods of use vary among teachers: some use proverbs as specific examples, while others use them in order to strengthen students' connection to their community, to develop a strong sense of belonging and identity, and make bilingual schooling more relevant and inclusive. Teacher-student interactions showed that the use of proverbs encourages active participation. Students are invited to interpret, reformulate, or connect the proverb to lived experiences. This interactive process transforms teaching into a space for the co-construction of meaning, where academic knowledge meets traditional knowledge. In addition, the reception of the messages resulted in a strong cultural impact: students recognized proverbs as identity markers and associated them with the words of elders. This process not only supports motivation, but also affirms the role of school as a place of cultural development, rather than disruption. The findings have shown that Dogon proverbs, as teaching tools, fulfill a dual function: they contribute to the transmission of academic knowledge while reaffirming students' cultural backgrounds and identity. They appear as a bridge between modern schooling and oral tradition, between written knowledge and collective memory.

This observation is consistent with work carried out in other African contexts. For example, in West Africa, Fulani proverbs in Senegal have also been identified as major tools for transmitting social and moral norms (Labatut, 1987). These studies confirm that proverbs, through their concise and figurative form, facilitate inclusive intercultural pedagogies, a cultural reference to strengthen learners' commitment. In addition, among the Dida of Côte d'Ivoire, the proverb functions as a powerful pedagogical tool and a social regulator, both to transmit community norms and to strengthen cohesion within society (Dago and Fanny, 2024).

Even so, in our case, the findings revealed that Dogon proverbs simultaneously serve cognitive, cultural, and identity-building functions in bilingual classrooms. Cognitively, they not only provide linguistic support but also structure thought and facilitate the understanding of abstract concepts, aligning with Vygotsky's (1978) socioconstructivist perspective. This function of linguistic mediation corroborates

Cummins' (2000) observation that the use of the mother tongue fosters learners' cognitive development in bilingual contexts.

Culturally, proverbs act as vectors for transmitting social norms and principles. Their integration into teaching practices aligns with Abdallah-Pretceille's (1999) work on intercultural pedagogy, which draws focus to how vital it is to connect schools with students' cultural experiences to enhance engagement and inclusion. These findings are further supported by Hymes (1974), who points out that language is inseparable from culture and serves as a privileged means of preserving and transmitting intangible heritage.

In terms of identity, the use of proverbs contributes to students' self-esteem and sense of belonging. García and Wei (2014) and Simon (2015) demonstrate that promoting linguistic diversity in multilingual classrooms enhances not only linguistic competence but also identity recognition and social cohesion. This effect is particularly obvious when students are encouraged to reformulate or interpret proverbs in French, thereby bridging their mother tongue with the language of schooling.

Furthermore, the findings identified concrete pedagogical challenges: teachers tend to use proverbs occasionally or intuitively, and systematic integration is constrained by institutional factors (official curricula, textbooks) and pedagogical limitations (lack of teachers' training). These observations echo Hornberger's (2003) conclusion regarding the necessity of deliberate and coherent strategies to leverage linguistic and cultural resources in bilingual classrooms. The integration of proverbs into bilingual teaching practices represents an opportunity to stimulate students' critical thinking and conceptual understanding, as also demonstrated by Maphosa's (2016) research in Southern Africa. Nevertheless, it remains essential to preserve the authenticity of proverbs when transmitting them in schools in order to protect their cultural and educational significance.

These findings call for further research on the practical ways in which proverbs are integrated into bilingual curricula by exploring participatory teaching approaches. They also pave the way for broader comparative studies in various multilingual contexts, where the promotion of local cultural resources could strengthen inclusion and educational equity.

Ultimately, active collaboration between communities, teachers and educational institutions is essential to promote proverbial expressions and build a school deeply rooted in its sociocultural realities. To that end,

official curricula should be revised and adapted to explicitly promote local knowledge by integrating these proverbs as pedagogical levers. It is essential to strengthen partnerships between schools and local communities by involving cultural stakeholders in order to ensure a lively and authentic transmission of traditional principles.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study showed that Dogon proverbs are powerful tools for transmitting cultural knowledge, moral values, and social norms. Their integration into bilingual education not only strengthens linguistic diversity but also fosters critical thinking, social cohesion, and respect for cultural heritage. The findings revealed that, despite the considerable pedagogical potential of the Dogon proverbs, their recognition and integration into bilingual school curricula remain limited. The findings identified remarkable thematic and symbolic aspects of Dogon proverbs, reflecting wisdom, respect for elders, solidarity, perseverance, and the management of emotions and conflicts. These expressions encapsulate a coherent worldview and convey moral, social, and cognitive knowledge. Even so, their presence in official curricula and textbooks remains desired, confined to oral use and teaching. Proverbs should be considered essential teaching tools for a better conceptual understanding, critical thinking, and identity building among bilingual learners. By promoting this oral resource, schools can strengthen the link between formal learning and students' cultural realities, while supporting their cognitive and moral development. Such an approach contributes to the preservation of an intangible heritage, ensuring the intergenerational transmission of cultural principles. The social significance of Dogon educational proverbs lies in their role in transmitting traditional norms within the community. They regulate behavior, strengthen social cohesion, and guide intergenerational interactions. Through their use, they also contribute to the moral and civic education of young people, anchoring learning in local culture, fostering respect for collective memory as well as providing practical benefits for teaching and social life.

Références

ABDALLAH-PRETCEILLE Micheline, 1999. *La pédagogie interculturelle*. Paris : Presses Universitaires de France (PUF).
PINEAUX André, 1979. Le proverbe dans la tradition orale. Paris : CNRS Éditions.
BANQUE MONDIALE, 2000. *Gestion participative et culture locale : Proverbes et paradigmes*. Notes sur les connaissances autochtones, n° 18.
BRAUN Virginia & CLARKE Victoria,2006). "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology : Qualitative Research in Psychology", Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis. 3(2), pp.77-101.
CAUVIN Jacques, 1981. *Comprendre les proverbes.* Versailles*:* Les Classiques africains.
DAGO Michel Gnessote & Fanny Yacouba, 2024. « Proverbes Dida et éducation : racines d'un développement endogène ». In *Revue AKIRI*. N°005. Bouaké : UAO. pp. 95-106
FISHMAN Joshua Aaron, 1972. *The Sociology of Language: An Interdisciplinary Social Science Approach to Language in Society*. Rowley, MA : Newbury House.
GARCÍA Ofelia, & WEI, Li, 2014. *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*. London : Palgrave Macmillan.
GRAND DICTIONNAIRE LAROUSSE, 1991. Paris : Larousse.
HORNBERGER Nancy Hughes, 2003. *Continua of biliteracy: An ecological framework for educational policy, research, and practice in multilingual settings*. Clevedon : UK, Multilingual Matters.
HYMES Dell, 1974. *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
CUMMINS Jim, 2000. *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Clevedon, UK, Multilingual Matters.
LABATUT Roger, 1987. « La parole à travers quelques proverbes peuls du Fouladou (Sénégal). » *Journal des Africanistes, 57*(1-2), 67–75. Retrieved on July 25, 2025 from https://www.persee.fr/doc/jafr_0399 0346_1987_num_57_1_2162
VYGOTSKY Lev Semionovitch, 1978. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press.
MALUNGA Chiku, 2017. *L'utilisation des proverbes africains dans le cadre du renforcement des capacités organisationnelles*.

INTRAC, Note Praxis n° 6. Consulté le 20 juillet 2025 sur https://www.intrac.org/app/uploads/2017/07/Praxis-Note-6-French-L%E2%80%99utilisation-des-proverbes-africains-Chiku-Malunga-Rick-James.pdf

MAPHOSA Christopher, 2016. *Oral Wisdom and Education in Zimbabwean Communities*. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.

SILUE Lefara & SAMSIA, Paul (Dirs.), 2020. Imaginaire et représentations socioculturelles dans les proverbes africains / Sociocultural imagination in African proverbs. Paris : L'Harmattan.

SIMON Diana-Lee, 2015. Didactique des langues et éducation plurilingue et interculturelle : L'Approche plurielle. Education. Université Grenoble Alpes.