

# Unveiling the Taboo of Sexual Intercourse in the Beulah Yoruba/English Bilingual Parallel Bible

by

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## Abstract

This study investigates how contextual features can be employed in the interpretation of veiled taboo of sexual intercourse in the King James version based Beulah Yoruba/English Bilingual Parallel Bible version of the Yoruba Bible. Fifteen passages which are instances of the use of veiled taboo expressions have been purposively selected and analyzed within the theoretical purview of pragmatic acts theory. The finding of the study reveals the translators of the did their translation in strict observance of the norm of language leaving veiled expressions of sexual intercourse in the Beulah Yoruba/English Bilingual Parallel Bible. Thus, to unveil the meaning of these veiled taboo expressions, a discussion is introduced relevant to contextual features such as shared religious knowledge, shared situational knowledge, shared cultural knowledge, and inference.

**Keywords:** Taboo, sexual intercourse, Beulah Yoruba/English bilingual parallel Bible, pragmatic acts theory, Yoruba culture

## Introduction

The concept of taboo is a universal concept wherein realisation varies from one language to another, one culture to another, and one speech community to another. For instance, while it might be a taboo in the Yoruba language and culture to refer literally to some private body parts, as direct reference to these sensitive body parts carries connotation of shame and embarrassment, it might not be the case in another culture. In the same vein, religions or religious organisations find certain actions or expressions taboo. Therefore, such expressions are often avoided in embrace of more sacred ones. Such is the case, for instance, where certain expressions making overt and direct reference to sexual intercourse are avoided in many Christian English Bibles in general and their Yoruba versions in particular.

In the KJV-based Beulah version of the Yoruba Bible, where excerpts have been drawn for analysis in this study, rather than make direct reference to sexual intercourse and activities, the translators have chosen to leave those expressions veiled as done in the KJV (from which it was translated). This practice is in tandem with the norms of language use in the Yoruba society. One of such norms is to avoid obscene words and expressions in open discourse. In fact, one of the many ways to demonstrate communicative competence in the Yoruba language and culture is to avoid the use of such expressions that could depict a sense of maladjustment, especially in public discourse, on the part of a language user. This is why an adage in the language says: *òrò tó bá yẹ ká sọ ní yèwù, a kílì sọ ó ní gbangba* 'it is inappropriate to discuss in public a matter meant to be discussed privately'.

In several instances in the KJV-based Beulah version of the Yoruba Bible, there are many cases of veiled taboo expressions whose interpretation largely draws on contextual variables such as shared situational knowledge (SSK), shared religious knowledge (SRK), inference (INF), etc. Although scholars have investigated the concept of taboo in the Yoruba language and culture, particularly with respect to its definition, conception and realisations, no scholarly work has attempted an examination of the concept as it relates to Biblical discourse. Our choice of a KJV-based translation in this study is predicated on our observation that the version enjoys the largest readership in the Nigerian context, considering the fact that it is the toast of quite majority of Pentecostal churches like The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC), and Winners' Chapel, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministry, to mention but a few. These Pentecostal churches, are no doubt, the fastest growing churches in the country. It is equally worthy of note, that, no known translation or version of the Yoruba Bible deviates from what we have observed in the BBPE that we have chosen for our analysis in this study.

## **The Concept of Taboo and Types**

In the opinion of Timothy (1999, p. 25), taboo language can be divided into swearing, obscenity, profanity, name calling, insulting, verbal aggression, taboo speech, ethnic-racial slurs, vulgarity, slang, and scatology. He obviously has defined taboo language from the view point of 'cursing'. Trudgill (2000, p.18) refers to taboo as something prohibited or forbidden (sic). He asserts his position further in the following statements:

[Taboo is a] behaviour that is supernaturally forbidden or regarded as immoral or improper; it deals with behaviour which is prohibited or inhibited in an apparently irrational manner (p. 18)

With respect to language, Trudgill claims taboo is associated with things which are not said, and to him, the phenomenon is a broad concept which could be divided into cursing, profanity, blasphemy, obscenity, insults, sexual harassment and any form of vulgar use of language. Speaking on the concept of taboo, Saville-Troike (2003, p. 210) submits as follows:

Attitudes toward language considered taboo in a speech community are extremely strong, and violations may be sanctioned by imputations of immorality, social ostracism, and even illness or death. No topic is universally forbidden: what cannot be said in one language can be in another and vice versa. Neither are linguistic taboos arbitrary: they relate integrally to culture-specific beliefs and practices in religion or magic, decorum, and social control.

The excerpt above affirms the assertions made in the introductory part of this work on the universality of the concept of taboo and the fact that it is culture-specific. Also, it can be deduced from Saville-Troike's (2003, p.210) submission that as members of different speech communities, our actions as well as utterances are guided by certain social rules embedded in our own cultures and communities. Violation of these social rules therefore generates negative reactions from the society to which we belong. There are taboos that relate to the way we sit, greet, eat, converse and observe our religious practices. For instance, in Yoruba culture (and many other African communities), it is a taboo to refer to the death of a king as one would refer to that of an ordinary individual (Okunola, 2005). Therefore, a Yoruba would say, concerning the death of a king, *Ọba wàjà* "the king enters or climbs the roof" and not *Ọba kú* "the king dies/died". The latter would portray the king as an ordinary mortal, just like every other "common" man, a view not in sync with Yoruba custom and tradition.

Obviously following the positions of the scholars stated above, Battistella (2005, p.38) sees taboo words as offensive language which can be variously categorised: epithets, profanity and obscenity. Just as we have taboos related to family life and activities, we have taboos for religious practices. In fact, with respect to religious taboos (which is the focus of our work here), Saville-Troike (2003, p. 210), citing the views of scholars like Frazer (1922); Leslau (1959); and Smal-Stocki (1950) posits thus:

Taboos related to religion or magic may affect a wide range of linguistic phenomena, and include animal-name avoidances in many speech communities. It may be believed that animals or spirits understand human language, and that mentioning their names would either drive them away (undesirable if one is hunting), or attract them near where they might inflict harm. Related to this belief are the restriction in the former Bangalam Upper Congo against using men's names at home while they are fishing; replacing an animal name with a semantically unrelated word which begins with the same sound (e.g., *zagwara* 'leopard' becomes *zambwara* 'disc of wood to cut bread') in Ethiopia; and the substitution of a metaphorical expression for the animal terms (e.g. calling a wolf "uncle" or "nice little dog") by peasants in the Ukraine.

In relation to the above, Nwoye (1985) comments on the concept of taboo in Igbo culture. According to him, during sacrifices in the Igbo context, the officiating priest usually orders the strict observance of silence, especially when the sacrifice has to do with diverting the attention of malevolent spirits from the carrier. If the observance of silence is violated or ignored (a rare occurrence), the sacrifice has to be repeated. The offender also has to make an additional sacrifice for atonement. Nwoye further adds that greeting is also a taboo among the Igbo people during times when there are smallpox epidemics. This is because of their belief that a disease can take human form, and to avoid the spread of the disease, therefore, a strict adherence to a "no greeting rule" has to be ensured, despite the fact that the Igbo culture is such that places premium on greetings, as under normal circumstances, no encounter or social interaction can take place without greetings.

Saville-Troike (2003) identifies three types of taboo – taboos associated with respect, taboos which relate to decorum and interlingual taboos. However, Oyetade (1994) speaks of another type of taboo among the Yoruba: that of averting ominous consequences. These types of taboo are highlighted below:

### **Taboos Which Relate to Decorum**

In the words of Saville-Troike (2003), this type of taboo has to do with avoiding terms considered obscene for moral reasons. Most words or expressions in this category refer to body parts, body functions and sex. For instance, in Yoruba, the word for penis, *okó*, is not literally and directly referred to or mentioned in public. Instead of the word *okó*, a euphemistic alternative, that is, a more acceptable expression *ǹ̀kan ọ̀mọ̀k̀̀nr̀̀n* 'that which belongs to a male or manhood' is resorted to.

In the same vein, when referring to the vagina of a woman, instead of saying *òbò* ‘vagina’, a euphemistic term, *ojú ara* ‘eye of the body’, is preferred. In the US, the word *Nigger* in reference to a Black person may be highly offensive, affectionate, affinitive, or faddish, depending on who uses it and in what context(s) (for example, following trends in rap and other popular music).

Pound (1936) examines a wide range of euphemisms in America employed to veil the negative connotations of expressions which deal with dying, death, and burial. Some of these include figurative expressions such as *out of his misery*, *climb the golden stair*, metaphors of sleep such as *cross over the great divide*, *gone to the great beyond*; metaphors of occupation, *answer the last muster*, *give up the ship*, and metaphors from sports: *run the good race*, *strike out*. In line with Pound’s observations for American English, Farghal (1995) claims that death is the most “euphemized” domain in Arabic. Hence, in Arabic, expressions such as *xubzāt-uh xilsin* “his bread ran out”, *a’tā-k umr-uh* ‘he gave you his age’ are metaphorical expressions employed as euphemisms for dying.

## **Taboos Associated With Respect**

This type of taboo includes the avoidance of direct reference to the name of a ruler, a husband, the aged, mother-in-laws, or silence in their presence (Saville-Troike, 2003). It also includes presenting the death of a loved one in a euphemistic way (Oyetade, 1994). In fact, Cohen (1956) records that total silence is observed by widows in some communities. This type of taboo is observed in Yoruba culture. For instance, for the Yoruba, it is taboo for a wife to refer to her husband by name. Doing so will be interpreted as being disrespectful. In the same vein, it is taboo for a wife to refer to the siblings, either older or younger, of her husband by name. Equally, in Yoruba culture, “the king does not die, but ascends to heaven”. Saying a king dies could be a sign of disrespect to the king, who is expected to be more powerful than death, being *Igbákejì Òrìṣà* “second in command to the gods”.

## **Interlingual Taboos**

This type of taboos, as Saville-Troike (2003) points out, occurs in multilingual contexts, where an acceptable word in one language sounds like one which is taboo in another. Haas (1957) sheds light on the dilemma of Thai students who try to avoid using words in their own language which they know sound like obscene words in English. In reverse, many students learning English as a foreign language refuse to pronounce some words “correctly” because of phonetic similarity to obscene words in their native language (e.g., Turkish speakers do not want to say English *peach*, Saville-Troike, (2003)).

In this regard, Claire (1980) compiled a list of words which English speakers consider “vulgar,” along with their meanings and appropriate euphemisms; a reverse guide to English words which are obscene in other languages is still needed, and would undoubtedly explain some resistant pronunciation “problems” in classes treating English as a foreign language. Personal names create one of the most common problems in this area, with English-speaking professors unwilling or embarrassed to call on any student named *Fucks*. The name *Jesus* is also often rechristened *Jesse* by the second week of class (Saville-Troike, 2003).

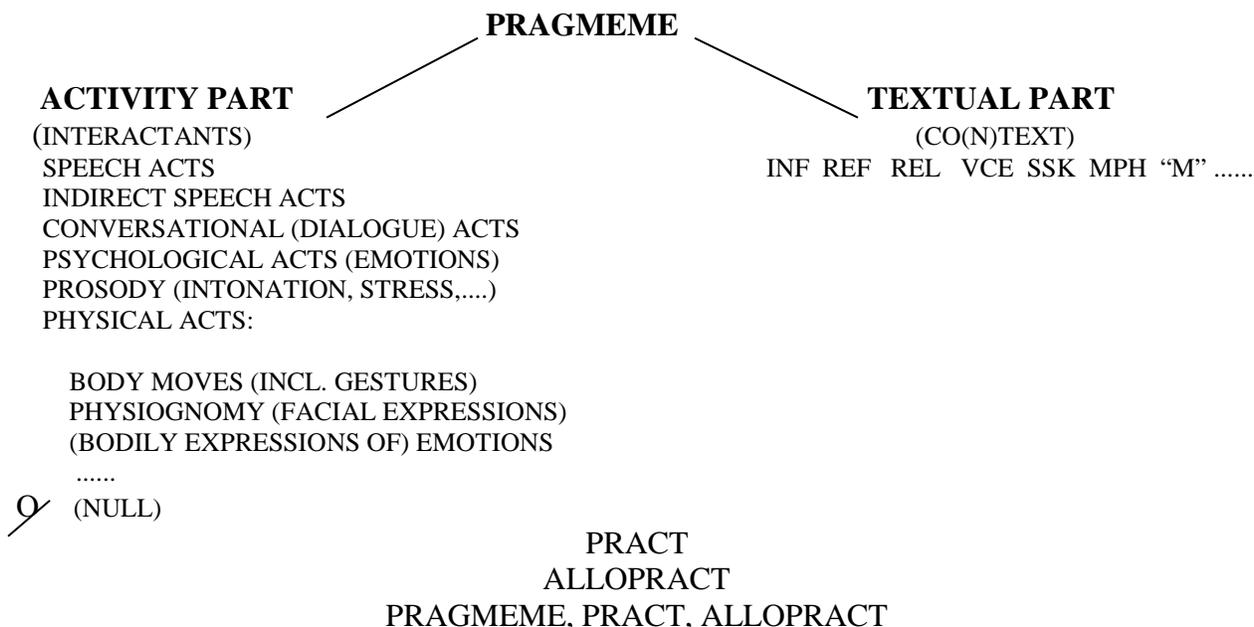
## **Taboos for Averting Ominous Consequences**

According to Oyetade (1994), taboos for averting ominous consequences have to do with avoiding expressions that could bring misfortune upon oneself. This type of taboo is predicated on the Yoruba ideological belief concerning the power of the spoken word. The Yoruba believe that one should be careful with what comes out of one’s mouth, as whatever one confesses with one’s mouth has a way of working against one. That is why, for instance, a Yoruba would not say *kò sí iyò nílé* “there is no salt at home” to express unavailability or absence of salt. Instead, they would say *iyò pò* “there is abundance of salt”. The belief behind this is simply the fact that, the proposition “there is no salt” at home implies the absence of joy or good fortune in the household of whoever makes this statement. In the same vein, the left hand is usually not referred to literally as *owó òsì* but as *owó àlááfà* “the hand of peace”, because *òsì* “left” connotes evil.

## **Theoretical Issues**

This work is situated within the context of Pragmatic Acts theory proposed by Mey (2001) which has been subjected to critical review by some African scholars (e.g Odebunmi 2006; Inya 2012, Ajayi, 2016) who have found it useful for their different language analyses. Hence, Pragmatic Acts theory was proposed to make up for the inadequacies of Speech Acts theory. In particular, Mey (2001) claims that speech act theory is non-situated, hence the need for pragmatic act theory that focuses on the analysis of a text in its context. He then comes up with the concept of Pragmeme as presented in the schema below.

Figure 1:

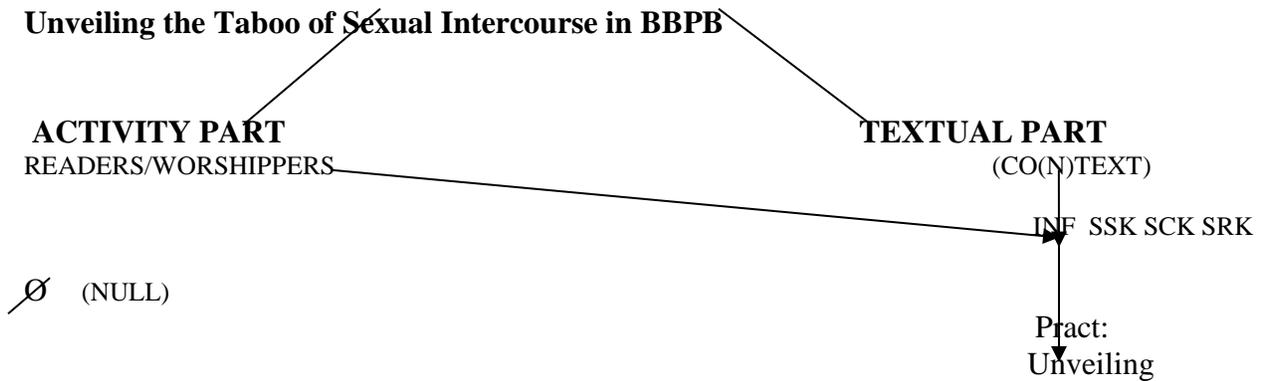


In the words of Mey (2001, p. 221), the pragmatic act theory focuses on "the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their affordances, such that the entire situation is brought to bear on what can be said in the situation, as well as what is actually being said". This view is captured as a *pragmeme*, a generalized pragmatic act regarded as the only force associated with making utterances (Odebunmi, 2008, p. 76). A pragmatic act is instantiated through an *ipra* or a *pract*, which realizes a pragmeme. In the words of Mey (2001, p. 221), a *pract* is the same as an *allopract*, that is to say a concrete instantiation of a particular pragmeme". What determines a *pract* is the participants' knowledge of the situation of interaction and the possible effect of a *pract* in a particular context. *Practing*, thus resolves the problem of distinguishing illocutionary force from perlocutionary force (Odebunmi, 2008).

In the above schema, the column to the left itemises the various choices that the [S]peaker and [H]earer have at their disposal while speaking. Thus S may choose one of the options; if all the cells are empty, the matrix goes to zero, indicating the borderline case of silence (Mey, 2001). The column to the left shows the textual part, that is, the context within which the pragmeme operates. For meaningful communication, the interactants rely on such speech act types as indirect speech acts, conversational ('dialogue') acts, psychological acts, prosodic acts and physical acts. These are engaged in contexts, which include INF representing "inference"; REF, "relevance"; VCE, "voice"; SSK, "shared situation knowledge"; MPH, "metaphor"; and M "metapragmatic joker". Thus, the interaction between the activity and textual part results in a *pract* or an *allopract*.

However, Odebunmi (2006) introduces SCK (shared cultural knowledge) to be able to adequately account for the cultural factor in the use of proverbs in “The Gods Are Not To Blame”, a novel that reflects the socio-cultural life of the Yoruba. For the purpose of this work, the pragmatic act model of Mey will be applied to the subject at hand, namely references to sexual intercourse in the context of Bible translation:

Figure 2:



In the schema above, INF stands for inference, SSK for shared situational knowledge, SCK for shared cultural knowledge, and SRK for shared religious knowledge.

## Method

Fifteen passages of the BBPB version of the Yoruba Bible have been purposively selected for analysis in this study. These passages are few of the very many instances of veiled taboo expressions, especially those that relate to sexual intercourse in the BBPB Yoruba Bible. The passages are subjected to content analysis within the analytic framework of Mey’s (2001) Pragmatic Act Theory.

## Data Presentation and Discussion

**TEXT 1:** Genesis 4: 1 (BBPB)

*Àdàmú sì **mọ** Éfà aya rẹ; ó sì lóyún, ó sì bí Káínì, ó sì wípé, mo rí òkùnrin kan gbà lówó Olúwa*

Adam **knew** Eve his wife, she then became pregnant and subsequently gave birth to Cain; and she said I received a male child from the Lord

**TEXT 2:** Genesis 4: 17 (BBPB)

*Káínì sì mọ aya rẹ; ó sì lóyún; ó sì bí Enókù: ó sì tẹ ilú kan dọ, ó sì sọ orúkọ ilí náà ní Enókù bí orúkọ omọ rẹ ọkúnrin*

Cain **knew** his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch: He then established a city and named it after his son

**TEXT 3:** 1 Samuel 1: 19 BBPB

*Nwọn sì dide ní kùtùkùtù òwúrò, wọn wólé sìn níwájú Olúwa, nwọn padà wá sí ilé wọn sí Rámà: Elkana sì mọ aya rẹ: Olúwa sì rántí rẹ*

They (Elkanah and his household) rose very early in the morning and worshipped in the presence of the Lord, after which they returned to their home in Ramah: Elkanah **knew** his wife and the Lord remembered her

**TEXT 4:** Mathew 1: 24-25 BBPB

*Nígbà tí Jóséfù dide nínú orun rẹ, ó ẹ bí àngẹlì Olúwa tí wí fun un, ó sì mú aya rẹ sí ọ̀dọ̀(24): Ọun kò sì mọ ọ́ tí tí ọ́ fí bí àkọ́bí rẹ omọkúnrin: ó sì pe orúkọ rẹ ní Jészù*

When Joseph arose from his sleep, he did as instructed by the angel of the Lord, he then took his wife to him: He did not **know** her until she gave birth to her first son; and he called his name Jesus

## **Discussion**

An indepth appraisal of the texts drawn from the BBPB Yoruba Bible and presented above reveals an extensive use of veiled taboo expressions by the translators while making reference to sexual activities (intercourse) as argued in this paper. Although it could be argued that the veiling is as done in the KJV from which the BBPB has been translated, it will not be out of place to add that the social norm(s) of language use, particularly those that forbid untoward use of language, particularly in public discourse must have played a role in the translation exercise. While the translator(s) of the BBPB employed *veiled expressions* in the captured parts of the passages to prevent vulgarity and obscenity, the reader employs such contextual features as Shared Situational Knowledge, Shared Cultural Knowledge, Shared Religious Knowledge and Inference in *unveiling* their meanings.

In Texts 1, 2, 3, and 4 for instance, the interpretation of the word *mọ* ‘know’ is dependent on these aforementioned contextual features. The word *mọ* “*know/to know*” literally means to be acquainted, associated or familiar with somebody or something. Its literal meaning becomes obvious in the excerpt below:

A: *Şé o mọ orúkọ ọkùnrin yẹn?*

*Do you know that man’s name?*

B: *Bẹ̀ni, mo mọ ọ*

*Yes, I know it*

However, to *unveil* the meaning of *mọ* “know” in the target texts, the reader draws on SCK, SRK and SSK. Through the shared cultural knowledge of the Yoruba, the reader understands that it is a taboo to make direct reference to sexual intercourse in a public discourse, and the Yoruba Bible, being a sacred book, should avoid the use of vulgar language as much as possible. Also, with the aid of the shared situational knowledge (SSK) of the events captured in the texts, the reader is able to interpret the message(s) embedded in the expressions. Outside a religious context as this, the expression such as *bá a lájọşepọ* ‘have something to do with him/her’, which is considered mild but not as mild as the one used in the Yoruba Bible, especially because of the context, is commonly found among the Yoruba.

**TEXT 5:** Gen 16: 1-4 (BBPB)

*Sáràì, aya Ábrámù, kò bí mọ fún un: şùgbón ó lí ọmọ-òdọ kan obìnrin, ará Egíbitì, orúkọ ẹ̀nitíjẹ́ Hagari. Sáràì sì wí fún Ábrámù pé, kíyèsì ì ná, Olúwa dá mi dúró láti bí mọ: èmi bè ọ, wólé tọ ọmọbìnrin òdọ mi; o lẹ şepé bóyá èmi á tipasẹ rẹ lí ọmọ. Ábrámù sì gba ohùn aya rẹ gbọ. Sáràì, aya Ábrámù, sì mú Hagari ọmọbìnrin òdọ rẹ ará Egípti náà, lẹ̀yìn ìgbà tí Ábrámù gbé ilẹ́ Kénáánì lí ọdún mẹ̀wàá, o sì fí fún Ábrámù ọkọ rẹ láti ma şe aya rẹ. Ọ̀un sì wólé tọ Hagari, ó sì lóyún: nígbà tí ó rí pé òun lóyún, olúwa rẹ obìnrin wá dí ẹ̀gàn lí ojú rẹ.*

Sarah, Abram’s wife, has not borne Abraham a child: but she has a housemaid, an Egyptian, whose name is Hagar. Sarah says to Abraham her husband, behold my lord, the Lord has caused a delay in my giving birth: I plead with you, **go in to** my housemaid; maybe by her, the Lord will answer me and give me a child.

Abram concedes to his wife's plea. Sarah, Abram's wife, then hands Hagar, her servant from Egypt, to Abram as wife. He then **went in to** Hagar, and she became pregnant: and afterwards, Hagar started treating Sarah, her Lord, with scorn.

**TEXT SEVEN:** Genesis 34: 1-2 BBPB

*Dina, omòbìnrin Lea, tí ó bí fún Jákòbù sì jáde lọ láti wo àwọn obìnrin ilú náà(1). Nígbà tí Šékémù, omọ Hamori, arà Hiffi, omọ aládé ilú náà rí i, ó mú un, ó sì wolé tò ó, ó sì bà á jé*

Dinah, Lea's daughter borne to Jacob, went out to see the maiden in the land. When Shechem, Hamor's son and prince saw her, **he went in to** her, and defiled her

**TEXT EIGHT:** 2 Samuel 11: 3-4 (BBPB)

*Dáfídì sì rán àwọn iránsé, ó sì mú un(Batsébà); ó sì wọ inú ilé tò ó lọ, òun sì bá a dàpọ: nígbà tí ó sì wẹ ara rẹ mọ tan, o sì padá sí ilé rẹ*

David sent his guards; he took her(Batsheba); he then went into her, and then **was united with her:** after having observed a bath, he returned to his house

**TEXT NINE:** Leviticus 18: 20; 22 BBPB

*Pèlúpèlú iwọ kò gbọdò bá aya enikejì dàpọ láti ba ara rẹ jé pèlu rẹ(20). Íwọ kò gbọdò bá ọkùnrin dàpọ bí obìnrin: ìrira ni(22)*

Moreover, **you must not sleep with another man's wife** to defile yourself with her. **You must not sleep with a man.** It is abomination

**TEXT TEN: 2 Samuel 12: 24 BBPB**

*Dáfidì sì sìpè fún Batsébà aya rẹ, ò sì wólé tọ ọ lọ, ọ sì ba dàpọ, òun sò bí ọmọkùnrin kan, Dáfidì sì sọ orúkọ rẹ ní Sólómónì: Olúwa sì fẹ ẹ*

David then sympathised with Batsheba her wife, **he went in** to her and **was united with her**; she gave birth a boy and David named the boy Solomon: and the Lord loved him

**TEXT 11: 2 Samuel 13: 14 BBPB**

*Sùgbón ọ(Amnoni) kọ láti gbọ ohùn rẹ; ọ sì fi agbára mú un (Tamari), ọ sì sẹgun rẹ, ọ sì bá a dàpọ*

But he refused to heed her plea, but overpowered her and **was united with her**

## **Discussion**

In **Texts 5, 6, 7, 10** the expressions *wólé tọ ọ* “went in to her”, and *ọ sì bá a dàpọ* “he then mixed/united with her” in **Texts 8, 9, 10, 11** respectively are veiled expressions for sexual intercourse. In the literal sense, *wólé tọ* “go in to” as we have in Texts 5, 6, 7, denotes ‘to go after someone’ (into a room or a house). However, in its context of use in the BBPB as translated from the KJV, it means “to have sexual intercourse” with a woman/man. In the execution of the BBPB project, the translators, while keeping strictly to the KJV as the source of their translation, could be said to equally allude to the culture of the Yoruba, hence their conscious use of a euphemistic or veiled expression to render this passage in their translation. They were not unaware of the vulgar nature of the word “*dó*” “have sex with/bang”, for instance, in the Yoruba language which, barring the norm of language use in the Yoruba culture, especially as it relates to public discourse, might have been considered an option in this context. They resorted to the use of the veiled expression captured in the text, knowing fully well the reader would draw on contextual phenomena such as SCK, SRK, and INF for proper interpretation. SCK comes in where the reader, being Yoruba, understands making direct reference to sexual activities in public discourse is a taboo; SRK comes in where the reader considers the Bible as a holy book wherein vulgar use of language should be avoided; and INF comes in where they make a general inference from the narratives where such veiled expressions are used in the Bible.

That is why in Church services or Christian gatherings, for instance, no special effort is needed to explain these expressions to faithful, as contextual features such as SCK, INF and SRK become handy tools for their meaning to be *unveiled*. Also, *ó sì bá a dàpò* “he then mixed/united with her” as we have in Texts 8, 9, 10 and 11 rely on the contextual features mentioned above for their interpretation.

**TEXT 12:** Deuteronomy 21: 14 BBPB

*Bí ó bá ẹ, tí òun kò bá wù ó, òjé kí iwọ kí ó jé kí ó ma lọ sí ibi tí ó fẹ; sùgbón iwọ kò gbọdò tà á rárá lí owó, iwọ kò lò ó bí ẹrú, **nítorí tí iwọ tí tẹ ẹ lógo***

And if it so happens that she is no longer attractive to you, then let her go wherever she wants; but do not exchange her for money or sell her off like a slave, **because you have humbled her**

**TEXT 13:** Leviticus 18: 6; 19 BBPB

*Ènikéni kò gbọdò **súnmọ** ẹnikan tí iṣe ibátan rẹ láti tù ihòhò rẹ; Èmi ni Olúwa(6). Àti pẹlú iwọ kò gbọdò **súnmọ** obìnrin kan láti tú u ní ihòhò, ní iwòn igbàtí a yà á sá pákan nítorí àìmọ rẹ(19)*

No one **should go near his/her relatives to uncover their nakedness**; I am the Lord. And moreover, you shall not go near a woman to uncover her nakedness, for as long as she is isolated for her menstrual period.

## Discussion

In **Text 12**, the expression “*tẹ ẹ lógo*” “humble her” is a direct translation from what is found in the KJV to avoid obscene use of language in the BBPB, being a sacred book. It is worthy of note here that, according to the Yoruba culture, the private part of a woman in general, and her virginity in particular are seen as her glory, and any man who succeeds in sleeping with her “humbles her glory”. From the foregoing, therefore, the expression “*tẹ ẹ lógo*” is an euphemistic or veiled expression which implies “sleep or have sexual intercourse with a woman”. The overall *unveiling* of the message in the text by the reader relies heavily on SCK, SRK and INF.

In **Text 13**, the veiled expression *súnmọ* “go near or close to” is an euphemistic expression for sexual intercourse in the passage. In the literal sense, the expression *súnmọ* “go near or close to” implies to move close to or go near a person or thing. The literal interpretation of the verb *súnmọ* is exemplified below:

**A:** *Wire yìí ló shock woman yẹn lánàá (pointing to a plugged naked wire)*

This was the wire that electrocuted that woman yesterday.

**B:** *Ká! Má à súnmo ò*

*Hey! Don't go near it*

However, the verb *súnmo* as presented in **Text 13**, is a veiled expression for “have sex with or have sexual intercourse with someone”. It takes SCK, SRK and INF to *unveil* the contextual meaning of this word as used in the passage by the reader and faithful.

**TEXT 14:** 2 Samuel 12: 11 BBPB

*Báyìí lí Olúwa wí, kíyèsì í, Èmi ó jẹ́ kí ibi kí ó dídè sí ọ láti inú ilé rẹ wá, èmi ó sì gba àwọn obìnrin rẹ lójú rẹ, èmi ó sì fì wọn fún alá dúgbò rẹ, òun ó sì bá àwọn obìrin rẹ sùn níwájú rẹ*

This is the word of the Lord, I will cause evil to rise against you from your own household, I will take your wives right in your presence and cause your neighbours **to sleep with** them

**TEXT 15:** 1 Corinthians 7:1-2 BBPB

*Ñjẹ nítí àwọn ohun tí ẹ tí kòwé: ó dára fún ọkúnrin kí ó **fì ọwọ kan** obìnrin. Sùgbón nítorí àgbèrè, kí olúkúlukù kí ó ní aya tírè, àti kí olúkúlukù kí ó sì ní aya tírè*

Now as touching those things mentioned in your letter, it is good that a man does not **touch a woman**. However, to avoid fornication/adultery, let every man has his own wife and every woman her own husband

## **Discussion**

In **Text 14**, the expression *òun ó sì bá àwọn obìnrin rẹ sùn* “*And he will sleep with your women*” is a veiled expression carefully employed by the translator(s) who kept to the norm of language use in the KJV for their translation project, to keep to the norm of language use in the Yoruba language in their translation exercise. Hence, the meaning of the expression can be *unveiled* via contextual features as SCK and INF.

The inference the reader makes of this statement, based on their Shared Cultural Knowledge is that, the Yoruba do not encourage overt reference to sexual activities, which they consider private and personal, in public discourse, including reading materials. In all the examples above, the translator(s) avoided the use of a vulgar word “*dó*” “fuck/have intercourse with”. This is in sharp contrast to what obtains in The Living Bible in English, for instance, where in most cases, direct reference is made to sexual intercourse. In Genesis 4 verse 1, for example: “Then Adam had sexual intercourse with Eve his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to a son, Cain (meaning “I have created). For, as she said, “With God’s help, I have created a man”.

In **Text 15**, the metaphorical expression *fí ọwọ́ kan* “*touch with (your) hand*” is used to veil the taboo of sexual intercourse in this passage. In the real sense, one can touch a woman, as in placing one’s hand on her without necessarily having intercourse with her. However, when the expression is contextualised in the Biblical discourse as revealed in the passage presented in Text 15, it means “to have sexual intercourse.

## Conclusion

This study has further advanced knowledge on the concept of taboo, particularly how it operates in Yoruba Biblical narratives. It has argued that, although the translators of the KJV to the BBPB kept to the norm of language use in the KJV in the translation project, norm of language use, particularly such that forbids unguided use of language in the Yoruba culture, finds express manifestation in the BBPB. While the translator(s) of the KJV-based BBPB employed the use of metaphor to *veil* the vulgarity of sexual intercourse expressions in their translation exercise, with the view to retaining the sacredness of the Holy Bible, readers draw on contextual features of Shared Situational Knowledge, Shared Cultural Knowledge, Shared Religious Knowledge, and Inference to *unveil* the meaning of the veiled taboo expressions. Further research can focus on the phenomenon of taboo in the Biblical narratives of other Nigerian languages. It will equally be interesting to see how the concept of taboo is handled in other faith-based books.

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