

TRANSLATING THE GENERIC ‘MAN’: A CASE STUDY OF THE TWO GERMAN TRANSLATIONS OF PROVERBS IN ACHEBE’S *NO LONGER AT EASE*

TRADUZINDO O *GENERIC* “MAN”: UM ESTUDO DE CASO DAS DUAS TRADUÇÕES ALEMÃS DOS PROVÉRBIOS EM *NO LONGER AT EASE*, DE ACHEBE



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Abstract: Previous research on translation of proverbs have dealt with techniques and strategies of proverb translation and other issues, like culture and orature. However, very little has been done on the question of gender-linked translation in African proverbs and the implication of this in their transfer into another language, particularly German. This study aims at examining selected proverbs found in Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease* (1960) with the intent of showing how the use of the word ‘man’ in these proverbs has led to a gender-biased translation of the word in the two German target texts. The conceptual approach used is Sapir-Whorf’s theory of linguistic relativity. It was discovered that the generic word ‘man’ used by the author in the proverbs is replaced in the two target texts in German with the gender-specific word ‘ein Mann’, which makes women less visible as referents.

Keywords: generic man; translation; German; proverbs; *No Longer at Ease*.

Resumo: Pesquisas realizadas anteriormente sobre a tradução de provérbios têm abordado técnicas e estratégias de tradução de provérbios e outras temáticas, como cultura e literatura oral. No entanto, muito pouco foi feito sobre o tema da tradução relacionada a questões de gênero nos provérbios africanos e as implicações disso em transferências para outro idioma, especialmente para o alemão. O presente estudo visa examinar alguns provérbios encontrados em *No Longer at Ease* (1960), de Chinua Achebe, com o objetivo de mostrar como o uso da palavra “man” [“homem”] nesses provérbios levou a uma tradução com viés de gênero da palavra nos dois textos que tiveram o alemão como língua-alvo. A abordagem conceitual usada é a hipótese da relatividade linguística de Sapir-Whorf. Descobriu-se que a palavra genérica “man”, usada pelo autor nos provérbios, é traduzida, nos dois textos-alvo em alemão, pela palavra específica relacionada ao gênero masculino, “ein Mann”, o que torna as mulheres menos visíveis como referentes.

Palavras-chave: homem genérico; tradução; alemão; provérbios; *No Longer at Ease*.



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Introduction

Extant studies in the field of feminist linguistics have established the fact that women are less visible in cognitive representation when masculine generics such as ‘man’ (representing human beings) or ‘he’ (masculine pronoun) are used. This invisibility of women shows a kind of bias towards men in language. It has been argued that the reason for this is that the same masculine form used to represent the generic form is also used to represent a specific sex-linked form (the male) without any rule that can be used to recognize whether it is a masculine form being represented or a generic form (cf. Stahlberg & Sczesny, 2001). In other words, it is difficult to know whether it is about men alone or whether men and women are being referred to when words like ‘man’ or ‘he’ are being used in the generic form. As a matter of fact, the generic forms ‘man’ or ‘he’ are the options chosen when the sex of someone is unknown. In this way, they equate maleness with humanness. Thus, male generics show a gender bias in language.

2 Scholars like Moulton et al. (1978), Mackay & Fulkerson (1979), Hyde (1984), and Hamilton et al. (1992) have carried out empirical studies on the interpretation of the generic masculine, and their findings point to the same direction. The results of their findings show that the generic masculine form predominantly triggers associations with males. To establish this, the methods employed by the scholars include having a group of people read texts written in the generic masculine form. Then, the participants were to give names to the person described in the text, draw a picture of the person, or answer questions about whether they could relate the personality in the text to a woman. Also, another group received a text, and instead of the generic masculine, the pair form, ‘he or she’, and the plural form, ‘they’, were used. The second group had to do the same assignments as the first. It was noted that even though the alternative forms ‘he or she’ and ‘they’ did not always trigger a neutral gender representation from the participants, they showed that a woman could at least be represented in cognition with their usage.

Considering the fact that English and German are gender-sensitive languages and they both use generic masculine forms like some other European languages, such as French, one could expect that the same findings by the scholars of English language on the interpretation and cognitive representation of the generic masculine as ‘males alone’ would be existent in German.

Although there are similarities between the two languages, which makes the hypothesis true, it should be noted that while English has a natural gender, German has a grammatical

gender. That is, in English, the gender forms are related to the sex of the person, and inanimate objects rarely have gender forms associated with them. In English, the pronouns of the person reveal his or her gender. Thus, a man is regarded as ‘he’, a woman as ‘she’, and a table as ‘it’. Whereas, in German, there is grammatical gender, not only for human beings but for all nouns. And the gender forms are not just two (i.e., masculine and feminine), but three, which are masculine, feminine, and neutral. Also, it is not only the pronouns that give information about the gender of a noun but also the articles, adjectives, and end declinations of the noun. As such, every noun belongs to a particular gender, and the generic masculine concerns more classes of words and grammatical forms. Since the masculine markings are more widely spread in German, the frequency of such markings can intensify male associations and show a stronger male bias in German than in English (cf. Stahlberg & Sczesny, 2001).

The objective of this study is to demonstrate that the generic masculine word ‘man’ in English affects the perception of German translators, which makes them interpret it as ‘ein Mann’ instead of ‘man’ in German. In German, both words ‘ein Mann’ and ‘man’ exist: while ‘man’ is a generic form, ‘ein Mann’ is not, as it refers to a male person. In establishing the main objective of this study, the reason why the generic ‘man’ in English affects the perception of the German translators will be based on the discussion in the conceptual approach.

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The novels to be used for the study are Chinua Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and its two German translations: *Obi. Ein afrikanischer Roman* (1963) and *Heimkehr in fremdes Land* (2002). The first translation was done by Josef Tichy, before the German reunification, while the second one was done by Susanne Koehler in 2002, the year Achebe got the German prestigious Peace Prize for Literature. The data used for the study are selected proverbs from the novel where the author, Achebe, uses the generic ‘man’ in his writing. As a conceptual approach, the Sapir-Whorf theory on language and thought processes will be used. The relevance of this conceptual approach will be to give a better explanation in one of the subsequent sections of the study.

It could be assumed that the cultural context of the source text probably suggested to the translators that the masculine form is referred to. Consequently, the translators made attempts to make the androcentric context in the proverbs, which is ‘implicit’, more explicit in their translations. However, this assumption is invalidated on two premises. First, Uwasomba (2007), in his criticism of Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958), established that it is a misreading of Achebe for critics to think that the novelist is “quite contented” with the inequality between the sexes. Furthermore, he opined that

anyone who understands the Igbo philosophy and the nuances of *Things Fall Apart* will realise that Achebe demonstrates convincingly that women are considered very important in the affairs of the society he portrays in spite of the patriarchal subjection of women by the like of Okonkwo (Uwasomba, 2007, p. 25).

Secondly, studies in Igbo linguistics show that pronouns, adjectives, and determiners in Igbo do not indicate gender in any form as in French, German, and Latin (Ikegwuonu, 2019). According to Ikegwuonu (2019, p. 246),

obviously, in Igbo language, nouns do not inflect at all for gender, and agreement or concord. This implies that agreement does not exist in noun's gender. Gender in Igbo is based on natural gender (that is maleness and femaleness) rather than grammar (that is, morphology).

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Against this background, I would like to mention that if the author, Chinua Achebe, had written in Igbo, it would have been clearer to the German translators that the cultural context where the Igbo proverbs emanated from is not patriarchal but gender equal. Thus, writing in English made the author opt for the gendering system available in English and this, by extension, is also responsible for the decisions of the translators in the transfer of the proverbs.

To achieve the aim of this work, previous research on gender-fair language and gender-biased language and their uses in society will be reviewed. Although there exist several works on the topic, very little has been done on the perception of gender-fair or gender-biased language in translation. Therefore, this study intends to fill this lacuna by examining the transfer of gender-biased language stemming out of the transfer of male generics in English into German. The effects of the transfer of male generics as a form of gender bias for the target readers will also be discussed. As mentioned earlier, the proverbs with the use of generic 'man' and their translations into German will serve as data for the study.

Studies on Gender-Fair Language

Stahlberg and Sczesny (2007) posit that masculine generics occur in all language types. That is, languages with grammatical and natural gender systems and genderless languages. The manifestations of the masculine generics occur in different ways and with different frequencies

in these languages. Unlike English or German, which are gender-sensitive, Turkish was cited as a genderless language which uses the word ‘adam’ to mean both ‘man’ and ‘human being’. The findings of Stahlberg and Sczesny (2007) for and against male generics use in language show that the way sexes are represented in language affects their visibility. Therefore, they suggest that gender stereotypes can be strengthened or reduced by the use of sexist versus gender-fair language.

Garnham et al. (2012), in their study on gender representation in different languages and grammatical marking on pronouns, reveal that readers form a mental gender-based representation on grammatical gender in French and German. Considering the generic forms ‘they’ in English (neutral), ‘ils’ in French (masculine), and ‘sie’ in German (morphologically feminine), they indicate that subtle morphological relations between forms used in a sentence have an immediate impact on language processing. They concluded that in gender-marked languages like German, subtle aspects of their morphology, such as the identity of the plural and the feminine singular, modify the gender representation of the antecedents of pronouns when they are added.

Formanowicz et al. (2013) considered the side effects of gender-fair languages by examining how feminine job titles influence the evaluation of female applicants. Their findings show that female applicants with a feminine job title were evaluated less favorably than both male and female applicants with a masculine job title, although this effect was independent of the gender stereotypicality of the occupation. Therefore, they concluded that, although feminization has been used as a strategy to make language more gender-fair, since the masculine generics exhibit a male bias, this is not always an advantage. Thus, the success of language fairness through feminization has its limits.

The studies reviewed above demonstrate the effects of male generics and gender-fair language use. However, none of these studies have focused on literary translation. The present study intends to contribute to knowledge by examining the notion of the male generic ‘man’ and its transfer into German in Achebe’s novel, *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and its two German versions.

Conceptual Approach

The conceptual approach used in this study is based on the Sapir-Whorf theory of linguistic relativity (1956), a theory of the relationship between language and thought, also known as theory of linguistic determinism. This approach states that human beings view the

world by their native language, and human knowledge arises only in relation to the semantic and structural possibilities of natural languages (cf. Mahadi & Jafari, 2012). The study rests on linguistic relativity, revealing that languages which are completely different in their vocabulary and structure put across and convey different cultural significances and meanings. This therefore means (according to what can be deduced from the above), that languages which are similar in structure and vocabulary convey similar cultural significances and meanings.

Considering English and German — which are the source and target languages in this study —, it will be discussed below that similarities exist between the two languages, particularly in the gender-based bias of the use of ‘man’ as a generic word for human beings. Also, in the view of linguistic relativity, it is maintained that the way people view the world is determined wholly or partly by their native language structure. Against this background, this study postulates that the way the two aforementioned translators transferred the proverbs into German is determined partly by the structure of the target language — in this case, German. Therefore, the theory of linguistic relativity used in this study tries to describe a situation where similarities between English and German influence the thought processes of the translators and result into gender-linked bias in the target texts. This is in line with the proclamations of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which states that language influences thought and perception. This study will show that the perceptions of the translators were influenced through language, particularly asymmetrical gender usage in the source language.

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The use of Sapir-Whorf hypothesis for this study does not undermine the fact that it has its shortcomings. Consequently, some of the criticisms of the theory will be considered as a matter of necessity. A first critical point on the issue of Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is that language is context-dependent.

Iwamoto (2005) expresses that the Sapir-Whorf theory fails to recognize that language is used within context. Iwamoto claims that the theory’s purely decontextualized textual analysis of language is too one-dimensional and doesn’t consider how people actually use language:

Whorf’s “neat and simplistic” linguistic relativism presupposes the idea that an entire language or entire societies or cultures are categorizable or typable in a straightforward, discrete, and total manner, ignoring other variables such as contextual and semantic factors. (Iwamoto, 2005, p. 95)

Another criticism of the theory is that Sapir-Whorf hypothesis cannot be transferred or applied to all languages, that is, it is not universally applicable. It is difficult to cite empirical studies confirming that other cultures do not also have similarities in the way concepts are perceived through their language — even if they don't possess a similar word/expression for a particular concept that is expressed.

On the third note, it has been established that thoughts can be independent of language. Stephen Pinker (1995), one of Sapir and Whorf's (1956) most emphatic critics, argued that language is not intrinsic to our thoughts, and is not a cultural invention that creates perceptions; it is, in his opinion, a part of human biology (Meier & Pinker, 1995). He suggests that the acquisition and development of sign language shows that languages are instinctual, therefore biological; he even goes so far as to say that “all speech is an illusion” (Meier & Pinker, 1995, p. 613). Despite these criticisms, this approach is found to be very much valid for the analysis of the translations of proverbs in this study.

Proverbs in *No Longer at Ease* and their German translations

No Longer at Ease is a 1960 novel by Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian professor, poet, and literary critic. It is the sequel to *Things Fall Apart* (1958), which is widely considered the most eminent work in modern African literature. The story relates how Obi Okonkwo, a member of the Igbo ethnic group, leaves his home in southeastern Nigeria to follow his dream of going to school in Britain. Thereafter, he works in Nigeria's civil service, a colonial institution, and is forced to reflect on the fraught relationship between the Western world and the many African cultures that it has systematically subjugated. The novel details the course of events that led to Obi accepting a bribe. The work's title is a reference to the poem “The Journey of the Magi” by British modernist writer T. S. Eliot, in which the speaker laments: “We returned to our places, these kingdoms, / But no longer at ease here” (Achebe 1960; 2008 p. ix).

Achebe writes that, among the Igbo, “the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten”. One of the first things readers may notice in *No Longer at Ease* (1960), just as in Achebe's first novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), is the sheer number of proverbial expressions. To the Igbos, proverbs are an important means of passing on culture and wisdom through the generations. The author of the novel uses proverbs frequently, especially in conversations among the characters. This shows how important proverbs are in the art of conversation among the Igbo. Proverbs function as cultural artefacts in this text.

The two translators of the novel are Germans. One is a man named Josef Tichy, and the other is a woman named Susanne Koehler. The first translation was published in 1963 in West Germany and is titled *Obi. Ein afrikanischer Roman*. This title suggests that the translation is influenced by the individualistic ideology prevalent in Western culture and also in West Germany at that time. The second translation is titled *Heimkehr in fremdes Land*. This translation was published in 2002, after Achebe, the author, received the German Peace Prize for Literature. The choice of this title in a way suggests that the translator endeavored to translate the novel by paying close attention to the linguistic features of the original. In other words, one can simply assume that the translation strategies employed by both translators were different. While the first translator was probably influenced by the Western ideology which is individualistic, the second translator was more formal in her translation. Therefore, one could expect that the corresponding choices of Josef Tichy, the first translator, were free as he transferred the text into German, while Susanne Koehler was closer to the source text in her translation.

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This conclusion can be buttressed by the study made by Fakayode (2012) on ideology in two translated German versions of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). She discovered that the first two German translations of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) differed based on the East and West ideologies prevalent in Germany at the time. Another study by Fakayode, in 2021, showed that many African, particularly Nigerian novels were influenced by individualism in translation. This is consequent upon the prevailing ideology in Germany at that moment. Also, Fakayode (2019), in her study *Translating Black Feminism: The Case of the East and West German Versions of Buchi Emecheta's The Joys of Motherhood* also buttresses this fact. Therefore, it can be safe to assume that the strategies used by the two German translators of Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) were quite different. While one is adjudged to be freer, the other is less free and more formal.

Discussions of the semantics and pragmatics of proverbs in German based on the assumption that the translators' procedures are grounded in an attempt to emulate the semantics and syntax of German proverbs, which might have influenced the translators' choices, are not in line with the gender-bias-hypothesis in this study. As a matter of fact, what actually influenced the German translations of the proverbs of the source text is not the target text norms found in the semantics and pragmatics of German proverbs, but that of the English source text, and this is the basis on which the present study stands.

In the following analysis, only fifteen proverbs selected from the source text will be analyzed. The selected proverbs for the work are the ones considered relevant because of the use of the generic word ‘man’ in them. Against this background, it is pertinent to give a brief background on the use of the generic ‘man’ in English and the words ‘man’ and ‘ein Mann’ in German. While only one word exists in English for ‘man’, two separate words exist in German, which are ‘man’ and ‘ein Mann’.

‘Man’ in English and ‘man’ and ‘ein Mann’ in German

Scholars like Malamud (2012), Truan (2018), and Gast et al. (2012) have worked extensively on the use of ‘man’ as an impersonal pronoun in German and in English. However, only the relevant aspects of their works will be considered in this study since the focus of this work is quite different from theirs.

According to Gast et al. (2012, p. 1), the pronoun ‘man’ derives from the homophonous noun meaning ‘man’. While English used to have such a pronoun for impersonal reference before, German still has it. Therefore, while the ‘you’ strategy is used in modern English, German uses ‘man’. While the word ‘man’ in English refers to a male personality or human being in some cases, the word ‘man’ in German is different from ‘Mann’ because they are pronounced in different ways. While ‘Mann’ is a noun, ‘man’ is not (in German). ‘Mann’ means a male person or husband. And just like every other noun, it has a gender definition which is ‘der’ or ‘ein’ (masculine). It also starts with a capital letter as all nouns in German. On the other hand, ‘man’ is a pronoun — an impersonal pronoun. It does not come with any gender definition and it is not capitalized. It can be translated as one (someone), e.g. ‘one should not do that’ [*man darf das nicht tun*]. It is generic in nature.

From the foregoing, the difference between ‘man’ in English and in German has been explained and the difference between ‘man’ and ‘Mann’ in German has also been described. How ‘man’ and ‘Mann’ in German have been used to translate ‘man’ in the proverbs of the source text in English shall be observed in their back translation in the following tables.

There are fifteen proverbs and their German versions with their back translations in the tables below. The proverbs are grouped according to the occurrence of the equivalents ‘man’ or ‘ein Mann’ in them. In the first group, there are three proverbs. The back translations show that the two translators used gender-linked translation ‘ein Mann’ in the target texts where the author used the generic ‘man’ in English.

‘Mensch’ and ‘Jemand’ in German

There is an underlying link between ‘Mensch’ and ‘Mann’ which indicates the premise of male-as-norm and its impact on imagination in the use of the word ‘Mensch’. In the etymology of West Germanic languages, ‘man’ and ‘male’ have been interlinked, and this is reflected in today’s primary understanding of the term as ‘an adult human male’. However, the conceptual link between ‘man’ and ‘male’ was not without its consequences. According to Dennis Baron’s *Grammar and Gender* (1986), it led in “all the Germanic languages except English” to the transference of “the original, generic sense of man to a new derivative word, that is, ‘mensch’ in German and Dutch” (Baron, 1986, p. 138). This can be traced in the German noun ‘Mann’, which is today defined as an adult person of male sex only, while ‘Mensch’ means highly advanced being, equipped with the capacity for logical thought and language, moral decision, and recognition of good and evil; human being, individual (Duden, n.d.).

10 But while a new term might exist in German, ‘Mensch’, as a derivative word, as indicated above, it is not entirely neutral. The online Duden shows that the term’s etymology, “*mannisco, eigentlich = der Männliche*” (Duden, n.d.) [actually = the male], essentially leads back to ‘Mann’. Friedrich Kluge’s 1883 *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* seconds this interrelation and describes ‘Mensch’ as a noun of a related adjective to ‘man’ in the old understanding of ‘human’. Additionally, Wilhelm Hoffmann’s 1871 *Vollständiges Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* argues that the term is contracted from man and the syllable ‘isch’. Consequently, the German ‘Mensch’ is as linked to ‘male’ as ‘man’. This is further illustrated by Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm in their 1878 *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. According to the authors, the Old High German ‘Mensch’, ‘mannisko, mennisko’ is in all cases male only. And while the term underwent a shift in Middle High German from specific to generic — to ‘Mensch’ in the general sense — it often remained restricted to the adult human male, where the female is explicitly referred to by another noun or pronoun.

In essence, it has been established that, in German, if there is a person unknown, you have to use the masculine. As a result, there are indefinite pronouns in German similar to those in English. For example, in English, ‘one’ is an *indefinite pronoun* but ‘one’ is *gender-neutral*. In German however, we have that ‘man’ is used in the place of ‘one’ in English. When it is used, the male gender system is followed. Therefore, one has to be congruent in its use in every case. For example: “*Jemand hat seine Tasche vergessen*” (somebody forgot *his* bag). In English you have ‘someone’, it’s gender-neutral, but in German, you start with ‘jemand’, so

you have ‘*man*’ in this indefinite pronoun, and you have the possessive pronoun ‘*his*’, which is masculine.

In English one can get around this issue. There are the indefinite pronouns such as ‘*one*’ or ‘*someone*’ which can be used with the personal pronouns ‘*they*’ and/or ‘*them*’ to remain gender-neutral. Whereas in German one can only use the masculine pronoun with ‘*jemand*’. That is, for example, “*jemand hat seine Tasche vergessen*”. The use of the masculine pronoun ‘*seine*’, regardless of the actual gender of the person, shows that the word ‘*jemand*’ is also not free of the masculine gender bias as conceived in this study.

Also, considering the recent language reform, one can say in English: “someone forgot their bag”, and use the plural word ‘*their*’ to refer to a single person. This is not really possible in German. Thus, in German, there are the so-called indefinite pronouns, but they are not indefinite. They are definite masculine. But they have the semantic value of being indefinite. To buttress this, the declination of ‘*jemand*’ as ‘*jemanden*’ and ‘*jemandem*’, respectively in the accusative and dative cases, demonstrate that they follow the masculine forms. Consequently, they can be conceived in relation to the ‘male’ or masculine generics.

In the following analysis, the first German translation *Obi. Ein afrikanischer Roman* (1963) is referred to as Target Text I, while the second German translation, *Heimkehr in fremdes Land* (2002) is referred to as Target Text II. Back translations are also provided for each of the translations used for the analysis. These back translations are literal, which makes them ungrammatical in certain cases. The purpose is to show how the proverbs are said literarily when translated back into English. This, in turn, will throw more light on the actual meaning of the German translations in English.

Table 1: Both translators used ‘*ein Mann*’ and not generic ‘*man*’

	Source Text	Target Text I	Target Text II
1.	Our people say that if you pay homage to the man on top, others will pay homage to you when it’s your turn to be on top (p. 19).	Bei uns sagt man: Wer dem Mann an der Spitze huldigt, dem werden, wenn er selber an die Spitze kommt andere huldigen (p. 31).	Unsere Leute sagen, ehrst du den Mann an der Spitze, so werden andere dich ehren, wenn du an der Reihe bist, oben zu sitzen (p. 29).
Back Translation		In our place one says: Whoever pays homage to the man at the top, he is the one who others will pay homage to when he himself comes to the top.	Our people say, if you honour the man on the top, so will others honour you, when it is your turn to sit at the top.

	Source Text	Target Text I	Target Text II
2.	In our folk stories a man gets to the land of the spirits when he has passed seven rivers, seven forests and seven hills (p. 46).	In unseren Sagen kommt ein Mann, nachdem er sieben Flüsse, sieben Wälder und sieben Gebirge gequert hat, in das Land der Geister (p. 67).	In den Geschichten unseres Volkes erzählt man sich, ein Mann käme ins Land der Geister, wenn er sieben Flüsse ueberquert, sieben Wälder durchwandert und sieben Hügel erstiegen hätte (p. 63).
	Back Translation	In our sayings, a man comes to the land of the spirits after he has crossed seven rivers, seven forests and seven mountains.	In the stories of our people, it is told that a man would come to the land of the spirits if he would have crossed seven rivers, passed through seven forests and climbed seven mountains.
3.	Did not the elders say, a man's in-law was his chi, his personal god? (p. 42)	Sagten nicht die Alten, der Schwiegervater eines Mannes ist sein Tshi, sein persönlicher Schutzgeist? (p. 62)	Sagten nicht die Alten Maenner, ein angeheirateter Verwandter sei das Chi eines Mannes – sein persönlicher Schutzgott? (p. 58)
	Back Translation	Did not the elders say, the father-in-law of a man is his Chi, his personal guardian spirit?	Did not the old men say, a married relation is the Chi of a man – his personal patron god?

It should be noted that in the third example above (Table 1) while the first translator used the gender-specific word ‘ein Mann’, the second translator used an adjective declination in her translation. Therefore, instead of using the word ‘a man’, she uses ‘a married relative’ which is declined in the masculine form. In the Table 2, the examples show that only one of the translators — that is, the second translator, Susanne Koehler (Target Text II) — used the gender-specific word ‘ein Mann’, while the first translator, Josef Tichy, used the generic to translate the word in question ‘man’.

Table 2: Only one translator used gender-specific words and not generic

	Source Text	Target Text I	Target Text II
4.	A man who lived on the banks of the Niger should not wash his hands with spittle (p. 9).	Wenn man am Ufer des Niger wohnt, braucht man sich die Hände mit Spucke zu waschen? (p. 18)	Ein Mann, der an den Ufern des Niger wohne, dürfe seine Hände nicht mit Spucke waschen (p. 17).
	Back Translation	If one lives on the bank of the Niger, does one	A man who lives at the bank of the Niger

	Source Text	Target Text I	Target Text II
		need to wash his hands with spit?	should not wash his hands with spit.
5.	And I can tell you that a man does not challenge his chi to a wrestling match (p. 37).	Und ich kann dir sagen, dass man nicht seinen Tschi zu einem Ringskampf herausfordern darf (p. 55).	Lass dir eines sagen – ein Mann fordert seinen eigenen Schutzgott, seinen Chi nicht zu einem Ringskampf heraus (p. 51).
	Back Translation	And I can tell you that man should not challenge his Chi to a ring fight.	Let me say something to you – a man does not challenge his own patron god, his Chi to a ring fight.
6.	If a man returns from a long journey and no one says “nno” to him, he feels like one who has not arrived (p. 74).	Wenn man von einer lange Reise heimkommt und es sagt niemand “nno” zu einem, so hat man nicht das Gefuehl zu Hause zu sein (p. 102).	Kehrt ein Mann von einer langen Reise zurueck, und keiner ist da, der “ndo”, “Wilkommen”, zu ihm sagt, dann ist ihm, als sei er nie angekommen (p. 96).
	Back Translation	If one comes back home from a long journey and nobody says “nno” to one, then one does not have the feeling of being at home.	If a man returns back from a long journey and no one is there who says “ndo”, “welcome” to him, then it will be to him as if he has never arrived.
7.	For it was true that the Ibos say that when a coward sees a man he can beat he becomes hungry for a fight (p. 124).	Wenn ein Feigling jemanden sieht, den er unterkriegen kann, bekommt er Lust zum Kampf (p. 169).	Sieht ein Feigling einen Mann, den er besiegen kann, bekommt er Appetit auf einen Streit (p. 157).
	Back Translation	If a coward sees someone that he can overcome, he will have the desire to fight.	If a coward sees a man who he can overcome, he will have the appetite to fight.
8.	Was it not a common saying among his people that a man should not out of pride and etiquette swallow his phlegm? (p. 141)	Gab es nicht ein landläufiges Sprichwort, man solle nicht aus Hochmut oder Wohlerzogenheit den ausgehusteten Schleim hinunterschlucken (p. 189).	Gab es in seinem Volk nicht ein wohlbekanntes Sprichwort, in dem es hiess, ein Mann duerfe niemals aus Stolz oder Vornehmheit den Schleim hinunterschlucken, der ihm im Hals steckt? (p. 178)
	Back Translation	Is there no common proverb, one should not swallow the coughed	Is there not a well known proverb among his people that says a man should never

Source Text	Target Text I	Target Text II
	up phlegm out of pride and good education?	swallow the phlegm that sticks him in the neck out of pride or refinement?

Examples where 'einer' is used

In example 9 below (Table 3), the word 'einer' is used instead of 'man' by the two translators, but in different cases. However, a brief explanation of the relevance of 'einer' is pertinent. Gast et al. (2012, p. 26) noted that 'einer' is one of the seven impersonal pronouns in German and its use is more complicated than that of the others. Although 'einen' and 'einem' are its corresponding accusative and dative forms, 'einen' and 'einem' can be used as the suppletive elements of a man-paradigm.

However, when 'einer' is not used for exclusive singular reference, its correspondences in accusative and dative forms are 'jemanden' and 'jemandem' respectively (please see discussion under '*Mensch*' and '*Jemand*' in *German* for more clarifications). The usage of 'jemanden' and 'jemandem' can also be found in the translation of proverbs 6 above (Table 2) and 10 below (Table 3). This usage shows a generic usage of 'man' in the oblique form. If the 'man' generic usage for 'einer' was employed, the correspondences in German would have been 'einen', as the case may be, and it would have shown a non-generic usage referring to an exclusive singular reference. Beyond this, it must be noted that the word 'einer' is a generic masculine form that is used in German. There are feminine and neutral forms for this word ('eine' and 'ein') but it is the masculine form 'einer' that is used to refer to somebody in a generic way.

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Table 3: 'Einer' is used by both translators at different times

	Source Text	Target Text I	Target Text II
9.	Like a man whose palm-wine has gone into his nose (p. 47).	Wie einer, dem der Palmwein zu Kopf gestiegen ist (p. 67).	Wie ein Mann, dem der Palmwein durch die Nase in den Kopf gestiegen ist (p. 64).
	Back Translation	Like one that the palm wine has gone up into his head.	Like a man, who the palm wine has gone up in his head through the nose.
10.	If any man seeks to hurt us may he break his neck (p. 7).	Wenn aber jemand uns Übles tun will, möge er sich den Hals brechen (p. 13).	Trachtet jedoch einer danach uns etwas zuleide zu tun, so möge er sich den Hals brechen (p. 13).

	Source Text	Target Text I	Target Text II
Back Translation		But if someone wants to do us evil, may he break his neck.	Does one however strive after doing something to make us sorry, may he break his neck.

The next set of examples (Table 4) shows that both translators did not use the generic ‘man’ in German to translate the generic ‘man’ used in the source text. However, their resolutions to use ‘Menschen’ and the masculine declinations of the respective adjectives as nouns are not also free of male gender bias as explained under the section ‘*Mensch*’ and ‘*Jemand*’ in German above.

Table 4: *The two translators did not use the generic ‘man’*

	Source Text	Target Text I	Target Text II
11.	Put such abominable thought into men’s stomachs (p. 44).	Den Menschen so abscheuliche Gedanken eingeben (p. 64).	Den Menschen derart schandbare Gedanken in den Kopf setzen (p. 60).
Back Translation		Put such hideous thoughts into human beings.	Put that kind of shameful thoughts into the head of human beings.
12.	When a new saying gets to the land of empty men, they lose their heads over it (p. 44).	Wenn neue Kunde in das Land der Hohlköpfe dringt, verlieren Sie den Kopf darüber (p. 64).	Wenn ein neues Sprichwort ins Land der Dummen kommt, verlieren sie den Kopf darüber (p. 60).
Back Translation		If new sayings penetrate the land of hollow heads, they lose their heads on it.	If a new saying comes into the land of the stupid, they lose their head on it.
13.	What comfort did a dead man derive from the knowledge that his murderer was in sackcloth and ashes? (p. 142)	Welchen Trost konnte einem Toten die Kunde bereiten, dass sein Mörder in Sack und Asche ging? (p. 191)	Welchen Trost hat ein Toter von dem Wissen, dass sein Mörder sich in Sack und Asche hüllt? (p. 179)
Back Translation		What comfort can a dead be given in that his murderer goes about in sacks and ashes?	What comfort does a dead have from the knowledge that his murderer covers himself in sacks and ashes?

The last group of examples (Table 5) shows a more interesting situation. Here, the author of the source text did not use the generic ‘man’ but both translators transferred the

proverbs into German using the gender-specific word ‘ein Mann’. While the second translator did this in example 14, the first translator did in example 15.

Table 5: Author did not use gender-specific word, but the translators did

	Source Text	Target Text I	Target Text II
14.	It was putting one’s head into a cooking-pot (p. 44).	Hieße den Kopf in einen Kochkessel stecken (p. 64).	Der gleiche dem Mann, der den eigenen Kopf in den Kochtopf steckt (p. 60).
Back Translation		Saying sticking the head into a cooking pot.	It is like the man, who sticks his own head into the cooking pot.
15.	You know the proverb about digging a new pit to fill up an old one? (p. 98)	Du kennst doch das Sprichwort von dem Mann, der eine neue Grube gräbt, um eine alte auszufüllen, nicht wahr? (p. 135)	Du kennst doch das Sprichwort von der neuen Grube, die man gräbt, um die alte aufzufüllen? (p. 126)
Back Translation		But you know the proverb of the man who digs a new hole in order to fill up an old one, not so?	But you know the proverb about the new hole that one digs in order to fill up the old one?

Discussion and conclusion

Fifteen proverbs from the novel *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and their German translations were selected for examination by considering the use of the word ‘man’ as a generic form. The analysis aimed at showing how the generic word ‘man’ in English was translated into German. The observations reveal that the generic word ‘man’ was translated as ‘man’ in German (also a generic form), ‘ein Mann (a gender-specific form), and ‘einer’ (a generic form used in place of man for exclusive singular reference in German). In some cases, both translators did not use the generic correspondence in German to translate the word ‘man’ in English (examples 1–3, as shown in Table 1), while in some others, only one of the translators did (examples 4–8, as demonstrated in Table 2). In examples 9–10 (Table 3), the word ‘einer’, another type of impersonal pronoun in German, was used by the translators on different occasions to translate the word ‘man’. In examples 11–13 (Table 4), both translators used the word ‘Mensch’ and the masculine declination for adjectives changed into nouns to transfer the English generic into German. This usage is also not free of gender bias as discussed above. However, it is worthy of note that there were occasions where the translators used the

gender-specific word ‘Mann’ as referring to a particular person in a proverb where the author does not use the generic version in English. This appears in examples 14–15 (Table 5).

In all, it can be noted that the translators, particularly Susanne Koehler, tended towards a gender-linked bias towards the males in transferring the proverbs of the source text into German. The reason for this can be explained against the background that the word ‘man’ in English can be confused for the word ‘Mann’ in German. Sapir-Whorf’s theory of linguistic relativity, where similarities between languages (in this case, English and German) propel and/or convey similar significances and meanings can serve as a basic explanation for this. While the word ‘man’ exists in German as well, its use as an impersonal pronoun is different from ‘Mann’, which is a noun. Therefore, while the word ‘man’ as a generic form in German can be used as a corresponding word for ‘man’ in English, the use of ‘Mann’ depicts a sexist bias towards males in the translation of proverbs in the target text. And this is more obvious in the second German version, *Heimkehr in fremdes Land* (2002), done by Susanne Koehler. In conclusion, the cognitive inclusion or representation of women in the translations, particularly in the second target text, is downplayed in the transfer of the proverbs into German of the book *No Longer at Ease* (1960) by Chinua Achebe.

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