

A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED IGBO PROVERBS

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BENIN CITY.

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS,
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APPROVAL PAGE

1, **Obiageli Precious ONYEKACHI**, a student in the Department of Linguistics Studies, University of Benin, Benin City with Matriculation Number **ART2100834** have completed the requirements for the coursework for the Bachelor of Arts degree of the University of Benin. The work embodied in this project is original and has not been submitted in part or whole to any other University or Institution.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty for his continuous and unfailing love, grace and support to me throughout my years in this journey. Truly, without Him by my side, none of these would have been made possible. And to my wonderful family for their unending support and prayers.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to examine selected Igbo proverbs with a view to understanding how cultural and thematic meanings are embedded within them. The objective of the study is to identify common themes in Igbo proverbs, and explore the cultural messages they convey. Using semiotics and ethnography of communication approaches, the data for this study were collected by oral interviews with native Igbo speakers. The findings of the study reveal that Igbo proverbs are rich in cultural values, moral teachings, and traditional wisdom. The study shows that the themes embedded in the proverbs reflect societal beliefs on truth, social control, wisdom, hospitality and patience. It concludes that Igbo proverbs serve as linguistic tools for preserving culture and transmitting moral values across generations. Most of the proverbs carry deep meaning that comes from the Igbo culture and are used in everyday interactions to teach, correct, and advise, thereby reflecting the worldview of the Igbo people.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in human interaction, serving not just as a channel for sharing information but also as a mirror of people's beliefs, culture, and way of life (Crystal, 2003). Every language has its own unique approach to expressing thoughts, feelings, traditions, and values. Among these expressive tools, proverbs stand out as a key feature. These are wise, concise sayings that have been passed down through generations, often used to communicate truth, offer guidance, or teach life lessons using indirect and symbolic language. In many African societies, especially among the Igbo of Nigeria, proverbs are a fundamental aspect of everyday speech. They are commonly used in both formal events and casual interactions, contributing meaningfully to how ideas and morals are conveyed (IK-Iloanusi & Mbagwu, 2025).

The Igbo people, one of Nigeria's major ethnic groups, are especially known for their rich oral tradition. Proverbs are held in high regard and are often referred to as the "palm oil with which words are eaten," a popular phrase from Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. This saying emphasizes the importance of proverbs in Igbo communication. Far beyond decorative expressions, proverbs are carriers of deep cultural meaning, ethical values, and societal teachings. They are often used to resolve disagreements, offer counsel, correct bad behavior, guide the youth, and uphold community values. Through them, even complex ideas are expressed clearly and memorably.

Although modern influences like technology and globalization have introduced more direct communication styles, especially through Western education and digital tools, proverbs still remain a strong part of Igbo identity. They continue to serve as an important means of preserving traditional knowledge and expressing cultural heritage.

Knowledge is passed down, collective wisdom shared, and social values reinforced through Igbo proverbs. The themes found in these proverbs reflect key aspects of Igbo life, including respect for elders, community living, hard work, patience, humility, and wisdom. Each proverb serves not just as a linguistic tool but also as a cultural symbol representing a broader worldview.

1.1. Methodology

This research used a qualitative approach to collect and analyze data. The main method was oral interviews with five native Igbo speakers selected based on age, gender, and educational background to ensure diverse perspectives. The study was conducted in Anambra State, Nigeria, where the researcher had close access to informants. The informants included two males and three females: a 43-year-old female graduate of Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education (AOCOED) who is an English and Igbo language teacher in a private school; an octogenarian female with O'level qualification; a male advanced elder in his 60s, with Junior Secondary School (JSS3) education; another male in his 50s who completed Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE); and a female who stopped at JSS3. The informants were assigned themes relevant to the study

based on cultural roles and backgrounds. One male contributed proverbs on the theme of truth and sincerity, while the other focused on the theme of conflict resolution, reflecting men's traditional role as mediators. The octogenarian female provided proverbs on the theme of wisdom and knowledge, and on the theme of patience. The AOCOED graduate contributed proverbs on the theme of social control and theme of hospitality, and the last female informant handled proverbs on the theme of cultural symbolism.

Interviews were conducted in conversational Igbo and English to allow participants to freely express the meaning and context of the proverbs they provided for easy understanding, with detailed notes taken during sessions. The proverbs shared were transcribed and translated for thematic analysis. This method ensured the data reflected authentic cultural usage within the Igbo community and aligned with the study's focus on communicative and cultural significance.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Although proverbs play a significant role in African languages like Igbo, their use and understanding are decreasing among younger generations. Many young Igbo speakers either do not comprehend most proverbs or lack the skill to use them properly in conversations. This decline threatens the preservation and transmission of cultural values and indigenous knowledge embedded in these sayings. While some scholars have studied proverbs broadly, very little thematic analysis has been done to demonstrate how these proverbs reveal culture, ideas, and social realities within Igbo communities. Therefore,

there is a need for a thorough study that examines the themes present in Igbo proverbs and how they encourage communication and cultural understanding. This research seeks to fill that gap by focusing on the meanings and functions of selected Igbo proverbs.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The primary goal of this study is to explore the thematic roles that Igbo proverbs play in conveying meaning and promoting cultural values.

The specific objectives include:

- To identify and analyze selected Igbo proverbs as they appear in different contexts during conversations and social interactions.
- To explore the major themes reflected in these selected Igbo proverbs.
- To examine how the selected Igbo proverbs, promote effective communication among Igbo speakers.
- To show the role of proverbs in preserving and transmitting Igbo cultural values.

1.4. Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the common themes found in Igbo proverbs?
2. In what ways do these proverbs help to preserve and promote Igbo cultural values?

3. How are Igbo proverbs used in everyday communication?

4. How can one identify and analyze selected Igbo proverbs during conversations and interactions?

1.5. Significance of the Study

This research is important because it sheds light on the cultural, communicative, and educational roles proverbs play in Igbo society. It helps to promote a deeper understanding of how language reflects cultural values and how traditional knowledge is passed down through generations.

The study is especially relevant now because many young Igbo speakers are losing connection with their native language, customs, and figurative expressions found in proverbs. By examining the meanings and functions of proverbs, the research contributes to revitalizing interest in Igbo language and culture, particularly among the youth.

This study aims to help both young Igbo speakers and non-speakers appreciate the richness of Igbo wisdom and traditional knowledge. It will also contribute to the existing body of knowledge in African linguistics, oral literature, and cultural studies. Additionally, it can serve as a valuable resource for teachers, students, researchers, and anyone interested in language and culture.

Proverbs in Igbo society represent more than just clever sayings; they carry cultural values, moral lessons, and social norms. By conducting a thematic analysis, this research will uncover how these proverbs function beyond linguistic expressions, revealing patterns of meaning within a selected collection of Igbo proverbs. The study will explore how these proverbs promote effective communication, foster cultural understanding, and encourage mutual respect among speakers.

Furthermore, the research will emphasize the importance of proverbs as a tool for maintaining language vitality and enhancing ethnolinguistic identity in a rapidly changing world.

1.6. Scope of the Study

This research focuses on selected Igbo proverbs gathered from oral sources. The study involves a thematic analysis aimed at identifying and discussing the major themes found within these proverbs. Rather than focusing on phonological, grammatical, or syntactic aspects, the emphasis will be on the meanings, functions, and cultural messages conveyed by the proverbs.

Although the Igbo language is spoken in various dialects across southeastern Nigeria, this study will concentrate on the standard or central Igbo to ensure consistency and better understanding. Proverbs that reflect common Igbo values and beliefs will be selected for analysis.

1.7. Limitations of the Study

Like most research, this study has some limitations. They include:

1. **Scope of Proverbs:** The study focuses on a limited selection of proverbs rather than covering all Igbo proverbs. Therefore, the results might not fully capture the entire richness of Igbo proverbial expressions.
2. **Regional and Dialect Differences:** The Igbo language has multiple dialects, and proverbs can vary slightly in meaning and use across different regions. Since this study concentrates on a specific variety, it may not reflect all regional variations.
3. **Interpretation Challenges:** Proverbs often contain layered meanings that depend heavily on context. Interpretations can vary and may differ from those given by other cultural or academic sources. This study reflects the researcher's perspective, which might differ from others.
4. **Time and Resource Constraints:** Due to limited time and resources, the study could not engage in broader fieldwork or collect more extensive data, which restricts the depth of findings.
5. **Cultural Specificity:** Igbo proverbs are deeply connected to Igbo culture, which makes it difficult to apply the findings directly to other languages or cultures where proverbs might serve different roles.

1.8. Definition of Key Terms

Igbo: One of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria, mainly located in the South Eastern part of the country, known for a rich language and cultural heritage.

Proverb: A brief, widely recognized saying that conveys a general truth or advice, often based on experience or common sense.

Cultural Values: The shared beliefs, customs, and traditions that shape how a people live and interact.

Theme: The main idea or message that is conveyed in a proverb.

Thematic Analysis: A research method used to identify and examine recurring patterns or themes in data, such as in the case of proverbs.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0. Introduction

This chapter presents a review of relevant works on "Thematic Analysis of selected Igbo proverbs. It is organized into conceptual review which maps the key ideas and discuss the concept of Proverbs, Igbo proverbs, Symbolism, Culture, etc, an empirical review which combined methods and findings from relevant past studies and shows where the present study contributes something new. These reviews serve as the bases on which this study is anchored.

2.1. The Concept of Proverbs

Proverbs are short, wise sayings that convey deep meaning. They often reflect common truths, moral lessons, and shared experiences passed down through generations. Across cultures, people use proverbs to advise, warn, correct, or guide others. This makes them an important tool in both casual and formal communication.

Scholars have offered different definitions to help explain what proverbs are. According to Finnegan (1970), a proverb is a short, sharp saying that is easy to remember and full of meaning. She emphasizes that proverbs are not just decorations in speech; they express ideas shaped by years of lived experiences. Similarly, Mieder (2004) defines a proverb as a well-known folk saying that carries truth, wisdom, and moral lessons in a

simple and memorable form. This means that proverbs help preserve a community's beliefs and values in a way that is easy to recall and repeat.

Nwachukwu-Agbada (1994) points out that proverbs are powerful communication tools. In traditional African settings, especially in Igbo society, proverbs express thoughts without sounding harsh or disrespectful. They help resolve disputes, advise the youth, and remind people of their responsibilities in a respectful way.

Although proverbs exist in almost every culture, their true meanings often depend on the culture from which they come. For example, a proverb that uses the lion as a symbol might represent courage in one culture but indicate danger in another. This is why Yankah (1989) argues that to understand any proverb well, one must consider who is speaking, where they are speaking, and the cultural background behind the words. Proverbs also contain metaphors and cultural symbols. These meanings can easily be lost if taken literally or translated directly. This shows that while proverbs may seem short and simple, they carry a depth of cultural experience and thought.

Proverbs are more than just common sayings. They reflect a community's knowledge, customs, and traditions. They help preserve and pass on cultural values from one generation to the next. By studying proverbs, we gain a better understanding of how people see life, interact with each other, and understand their surroundings. They also play an important role in shaping attitudes, building identity, and maintaining the moral and social fabric of society.

2.2. The Concept of Igbo Proverbs

Proverbs are wise sayings that require careful thought to understand. They nourish the Igbo language. They help make words and sayings more appreciated. Proverbs add flavor to speech and resonate well with listeners. They express basic truths that can apply to everyday situations. Given this, Ngoesi (2000) described proverbs as short, clever sayings filled with wisdom. They reflect the thoughts and beliefs of the Igbo, especially their lifestyle, behavior, and relationships. Therefore, proverbs guide conduct and behavior. They play an essential role in shaping character, and the Igbo people hold proverbs in high regard.

Discussing values, Okoye (2009) states that "values are the greatest single factor that would shape character, conduct, culture, and worldview and are central in the life of any people." Igbo proverbs are crucial in every aspect of an Igbo person's life since they are deeply embedded in their values.

Kanu (2015) notes that Igbo proverbs "are the wisdom and experience of a people, usually from several generations, gathered and summed up in one expression." He adds that proverbs originate from the people, representing their voice and reflecting their beliefs and life principles. They convey the moral attitudes of the Igbo, highlighting their hopes, achievements, and challenges. Igbo proverbs encompass their entire worldview, belief system, culture, and traditions. The way they live their lives can be captured through proverbs, and the knowledge shared through them is vast.

Mbiti (1981) confirms that "in proverbs, there is a rich deposit of the wisdom of many generations." Proverbs are regarded as powerful tools in communication. They help speakers explain themselves clearly and are often used to measure how skillful or persuasive someone is in speech. In Igbo culture, eloquent speakers and orators are known for their fluent use of proverbs, which shows wisdom and keeps understanding of tradition. The Igbo refer to proverbs as "**mmanu e ji eri okwu**," which literally translates to the palm oil with which words are eaten. Someone who speaks with proverbs is considered wise and in touch with their ancestors, possessing a deep understanding of tradition. Kanu (2015) observes that "a good speaker has to use proverbs in appropriate contexts because context plays a major role in their correct interpretation." Igbo proverbs offer insight into the Igbo people's view on life and their values. These sayings reflect their understanding of the world, moral values, and cultural priorities. Through proverbs, we see that the Igbo emphasize respect for elders, wisdom, community unity, truthfulness, hard work, and good behavior.

The Igbo aim to live a balanced life that honors both the spiritual and social order. Many proverbs express their beliefs about destiny, ancestors, and the unseen forces that influence life. Sayings related to gods or ancestral voices highlight how deeply the Igbo connect their actions to spiritual significance. Proverbs also serve to guide behavior in a respectful manner. Rather than correcting someone explicitly, elders often use proverbs to convey their message, allowing the listener to reflect and learn. This approach fosters

good character and maintains social harmony. In all, Igbo proverbs are more than just words. They carry generations of knowledge, beliefs, and cultural practices. They help preserve the Igbo way of life and provide deep insight into how the people think, relate to one another, and understand their world.

2.3. Communication:

A vital component of human interaction and existence is communication. It is the process by which individuals communicate verbally or nonverbally their thoughts, ideas, feelings, intentions, and cultural values. It is the cornerstone of cooperation, understanding, and social cohesiveness. The transmission and exchange of messages between individuals or groups with the aim of mutual understanding is a fundamental concept that has been defined in a variety of ways by scholars. Fiske (1990) defined communication as "social interaction through messages." This suggests that communication entails interpreting signs, symbols, and shared meanings within a cultural framework and goes beyond simple speaking and writing. Beyond spoken language, communication in African societies particularly among the Igbo involves the use of proverbs, idioms, gestures and other traditional forms.

In Igbo culture, proverbs are among the best means of communication. In both formal and informal contexts, they are used to reflect the collective worldview of the populace, offer advice, resolve conflicts, express wisdom, and issue warnings. Using proverbs is considered a sign of maturity, intelligence, and cultural knowledge in Igbo

traditional society. Proverbs convey complicated concepts in brief, culturally charged statements that the community can understand. Therefore, it's critical to view communication as a culturally informed practice as well as a linguistic activity when studying Igbo proverbs. Proverbs are a potent means of communication because of their symbolic nature, particularly when it comes to passing down moral, philosophical, and social values from one generation to the next.

2.4. Language:

One of the most important means of human communication is language. People can relate to one another, share ideas, and express their thoughts and feelings through this system of symbols, which can be written, spoken, or signed. Language not only facilitates communication but also conveys culture, identity, values, and customs. It plays a crucial part in socialization and the dissemination of knowledge and reflects the worldview of its speakers. Language is "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols," according to Edward Sapir (1921). This emphasizes how language is structured and purposeful. Every community creates a language system that fits with its environment, beliefs, customs, and way of life.

Language and culture are closely related in Africa, particularly in Igbo society. Social norms are transmitted, rituals are carried out, and elders offer advice through language. As a unique linguistic characteristic, proverbs serve as an excellent illustration

of how language captures philosophical ideas and cultural wisdom. They are succinct but profound statements that convey profound meanings that the speech community understands. Like other native African languages, Igbo serves as a cultural archive in addition to a means of communication. It keeps the people's history, culture, and worldview safe. Igbo proverbs serve as an example of how language can be used in culturally acceptable ways to instruct, caution, uplift, critique, and persuade. Thus in analyzing Igbo proverbs, it is essential to recognize the unique role language plays. It does not only shape the meaning of these expressions but also determines how and when they are used within specific social or cultural contexts.

2.5. Meaning:

In all forms of communication, meaning is essential. It describes how words, symbols, gestures, or actions are interpreted or understood in a specific context. Meaning is the essence of language; without it, communication would be imprecise, lacking, or misinterpreted. Generally speaking, meaning has two dimensions: "denotative" and "connotative". A word or expression's denotative meaning is its dictionary definition, whereas its connotative meaning encompasses any cultural, emotional, or symbolic connotations. Connotative meaning is a major component of proverbs. It frequently takes common cultural knowledge to decipher their true meaning, which is hidden beneath the words' surface structure. Additionally, meaning is "context-dependent", particularly in oral traditions such as the Igbo. When, how, and to whom a proverb is uttered can all

affect its meaning. In this sense, meaning is influenced by social, cultural, and contextual elements rather than being fixed. Proverbs frequently have symbolic and metaphorical meanings in the Igbo worldview. It is expected of a listener to "unpack" a proverb by connecting it to personal experiences or cultural wisdom. A non-Igbo speaker might not understand a proverb like “Okwu adighi n’ onu mgbagbu” (Words are not found in the mouth of a coward) unless they are aware of the cultural expectation of boldness and assertiveness.

Theories such as "semiotics" aid in the explanation of how signs and symbols are used to create meaning, particularly in proverbs where deeper truths are represented by actions, animals, or the natural world. In a similar vein, the "ethnography of communication" highlights that meaning encompasses not only what is said but also how, when, and where it is said. In conclusion, Igbo proverbs have multi-layered, symbolic, and frequently indirect meaning. To understand the intended message, one needs contextual awareness and cultural competency. This is one of the reasons proverbs are such powerful instruments for cultural transmission and communication.

2.6. Symbolism:

When abstract ideas or concepts are represented by objects, animals, colors, actions, or events, this is known as symbolism. Symbolism is essential for communicating meaning that goes beyond literal interpretation, particularly in African oral traditions like the Igbo. Symbols are frequently rooted in culture, and their meanings are interpreted in light of

common values, traditions, and beliefs. One of the main linguistic and cultural devices in Igbo proverbs is symbolism. Proverbs frequently use symbolic allusions to convey moral lessons, wisdom, caution, or social expectations. In particular, animals are commonly used to symbolize human characteristics. For example, the "lion (Odum)" may represent power or authority, while the "tortoise (Mbe)" is frequently used to represent guile or ingenuity. The "lizard (Ngwele)" is one example of a natural object that can be used to convey concepts of pride, perseverance, or independence. In the Igbo worldview, colors also have symbolic meaning. Colors can still symbolize feelings or spiritual significance, even though they are not as commonly highlighted in proverbs as animals or actions. For instance, "red" might represent strength, danger, or spiritual energy, while "white" might represent purity or tranquility. Igbo proverbial symbolism is intentional rather than haphazard. It enables the speaker to subtly and culturally effectively communicate difficult concepts. The symbols make the proverbs memorable, relatable, and useful for teaching or persuasion because they are connected to Igbo cosmology and lived experience.

Also, proverbs are more beautiful when they use symbolism. Instead of saying things directly, using metaphorical symbols makes people think and interpret what they mean, which fits with the deeper, philosophical nature of African proverbs. This indirect way of communicating encourages people to be thoughtful and careful when they talk to each other. In short, Igbo proverbs use symbols to communicate and to express their

culture. It helps encode messages in forms that are familiar and important to the culture, which makes the proverbs full of meaning and useful as guides for moral, social, and philosophical issues.

2.7. Culture

Culture is the set of beliefs, customs, values, norms, language, and practices that a group of people has in common. It is the complete way of life that is passed down from generation to generation, and it is used to understand the world and direct people's actions. Culture is a big part of how people talk to each other, get along, and act in public in African societies, especially among the Igbo people. Igbo culture is rich, always changing, and based on oral tradition. Proverbs are an important part of this tradition because they are ways for people to share their cultural knowledge, values, and social norms. Proverbs are not just words; they show how people see the world. They are a representation of the Igbo's morals, ethics, beliefs, and shared knowledge of the Igbo community. In Igbo culture, for instance, hard work, respect for elders, living together, and fairness are all very important. Different proverbs that people use in everyday conversation show these ideas. Children learn how to act in society, what is right and wrong, and what happens when they don't follow the rules through proverbs. In this way, proverbs are like informal teaching tools that help people remember what their culture expects of them. Igbo proverbs also show cultural things like traditional religion, family ties, gender roles, and

seasonal activities like farming. These cultural references give the proverbs a cultural basis and make sense to people who speak them.

Proverb interpretation is also influenced by culture. Knowing the cultural context in which proverbs are used is essential to fully comprehending them because many of them are context-based. For a native speaker who shares the cultural background, something that might seem unclear to an outsider frequently has profound meaning.

2.8. Previous Studies

This section examines earlier research on this subject. We can better understand what has already been found, the approaches taken, and any gaps or issues that still need to be resolved by reviewing previous research. We can more clearly explain the significance of this study and how it advances the field by drawing on earlier research.

Kanu, (2014) conducted a study titled “Igbo Proverbs as Depositum of Igbo-African Philosophy”, published in the "International Journal of Humanities and Social Science". The objective of his research was to explore the philosophical and cultural significance embedded in Igbo proverbs. The method of data collection involved textual analysis of selected Igbo proverbs, focusing on their linguistic and philosophical content. The study was guided by an Afrocentric philosophical framework, emphasizing indigenous knowledge systems and African metaphysical thought.

In order to show how each proverb conveys moral principles, collective values, and the Igbo worldview, Kanu interpreted them both literally and philosophically in his analysis. Proverbs like “It is from the ground that one climbs to the top of the tree,” for instance, emphasize steady advancement and fundamental knowledge. According to the study's findings, Igbo proverbs reinforce ideas like moral instruction, cosmic balance, and collective responsibility, making them a rich source of African philosophy. According to Kanu's work, Igbo proverbs are essential repositories of indigenous epistemology and ethical reasoning, not just linguistic expressions.

Also, Ogbalu, (1965) focused on preserving and promoting the Igbo language by collecting and documenting over 5,000 Igbo proverbs. His work, “Ilu Igbo: Book of Igbo Proverbs”, uses standard Igbo spelling to make these proverbs accessible for education and cultural preservation. While his study does not explicitly apply a formal academic theory, it is grounded in the understanding that language is an important carrier of culture. Using a descriptive method, he gathered proverbs from various Igbo communities, organizing them by themes like wisdom and truth. Ogbalu’s work provides valuable insight into the role of proverbs in Igbo society and serves as an important source for understanding Igbo oral tradition. He concluded that proverbs are essential tools for communication, teaching, and preserving cultural values, reflecting the rich wisdom and social functions embedded in Igbo culture.

2.9. Concerns of the Present Study

After reviewing relevant literature on Igbo proverbs, it is clear that scholars have worked hard to examine their philosophical, moral, and communicative importance within the Igbo culture. However, most of these studies either give broad overviews of proverbs as cultural artifacts or focus on specific parts, such as moral lessons, rhetorical usage, or language structure. While these studies have value, there is still a noticeable gap in research that deeply explores the thematic analysis of Igbo proverbs, particularly through the lens of cultural symbolism, virtues, social relationships, and values as separate thematic categories.

This study aims to address a gap by offering a thematic breakdown and interpretation of Igbo proverbs. It examines how these themes reflect the Igbo worldview, societal structure, and value system. The research focuses on how proverbs communicate ideas such as truth, patience, hospitality, wisdom, conflict resolution, and cultural identity through symbolic references to animals, colors, and nature. This approach goes beyond simply defining or listing proverbs; it interprets their philosophical meanings and practical implications in Igbo life.

Additionally, this study acknowledges the changing nature of language and culture. It seeks to understand how Igbo proverbs still function in a rapidly evolving society. The reviewed studies focus mainly on traditional settings and do not connect them to modern usage or current relevance. This study establishes a link between traditional wisdom and its importance to modern Igbo society. It especially highlights the

roles of preserving indigenous knowledge, promoting cultural pride, and guiding moral behavior.

Another major concern of this study is to present a systematic thematic framework, supported by relevant theories such as semiotics, ethnography of communication. This theoretical approach helps the study interpret proverbs not just as isolated sayings but as semiotic expressions of cultural experience.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0. Introduction

This study adopts the theories proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure (1916), a Swiss linguist, and Dell Hymes (1960). These theories cover ideas relevant to this research, including cultural symbolism, the use of colors, social control, context, contact relations, hospitality, and more.

3.1. Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of signs, symbols, and how meaning is created and communicated. The theory is based on the works of Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist, and Charles Sanders Peirce, an American philosopher, both active in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Saussure (1916, *Course in General Linguistics*) pointed out that language is a system of signs. Each sign consists of a signifier (the form, such as a sound or written word) and a signified (the concept it represents).

Peirce (1839–1914) expanded the idea by proposing three types of signs: icons (which resemble what they signify, like a picture), indexes (which have a direct connection to what they signify, such as smoke indicating fire), and symbols (which are arbitrary but socially accepted, like words and proverbs). Together, these perspectives

form the basis of semiotic theory, which seeks to explain how meaning is formed beyond the literal and how culture shapes the interpretation of symbols and language.

Semiotics rests on several foundational ideas about how meaning is communicated through signs and symbols. First it assumes that all communication is based on signs as humans depend on signs and symbols to convey meaning. Second, meaning is shaped by society. A proverb, for instance, holds significance not only because of its literal words but also because of the cultural context where it is used. Third, signs are relational, not fixed - the meaning of a sign relies on its relationship to other signs within a cultural system. Lastly, interpretation is fluid, as different contexts, different speakers, and cultural backgrounds can lead to varying interpretations of signs.

Igbo proverbs are rich semiotic tools. Each proverb not only conveys literal words but also carries deep symbolic meaning rooted in the Igbo worldview. For instance, “Egbe bere, ugo bere nke siri ibe ya ebena nku kwa ya ” (“Let the kite perch, let the eagle perch whichever says the other should not perch, let it's wings break ”) is about more than birds; it symbolizes justice, fairness, and coexistence.

Semiotics clarifies how these proverbs serve as symbols within Igbo culture, with meanings that the community agrees upon. It also illustrates how proverbs act as cultural codes, embodying the wisdom, morals, and worldview of the Igbo people.

Application to the Present Study

In the thematic analysis of Igbo proverbs, semiotic theory helps to:

Show how meaning is created through the relationship between the literal image and the cultural concept it represents. For example, the proverb “Aka nri kw aka ekpe, aka ekpe akwo aka nri” (“The right hand washes the left hand, the left hand washes the right hand”) illustrates this perfectly. The literal image of two hands washing each other is an "icon" because it resembles the physical action. This action also serves as an "index", pointing directly to the idea of cooperation and mutual support in society. Together, the icon and index create a symbol that conveys the Igbo cultural value of interdependence.

3.2. Ethnography of Communication

The Ethnography of Communication was developed by Dell Hymes in the 1960s. Hymes criticized earlier linguistic models, like Chomsky's, for focusing narrowly on grammar. He argued that these models ignored how language is used in social and cultural contexts. Hymes aimed to create a framework for understanding communication within specific cultural settings. He introduced the idea of communicative competence, which includes knowing when, where, and how to use language appropriately, in addition to knowing grammar.

Ethnography of Communication assumes that language is a cultural practice as it must be studied within the community that uses it. Secondly, meaning depends on

context- who is speaking, to whom, where, and for what purpose all shape meaning. Thirdly, speech events and genres matter. Proverbs, greetings, prayers, and storytelling are recognized as distinct communicative events with their own rules. Lastly, competence is more than grammar- true communicative competence includes knowledge of cultural norms and symbolic meanings.

Proverbs are a key aspect of Igbo communication, especially valued in formal and informal settings like family discussions, village meetings, conflict resolution, and storytelling.

Ethnography of communication offers tools, like Hymes' SPEAKING model (Setting, Participants, Ends, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, Genre), to analyze how, when, and why proverbs are used. For example, a proverb shared by an elder in a council carries more weight than if it were spoken by a child because the cultural context influences its reception.

Application to the Present Study

This theory allows the study to explore the cultural functions and contexts of the proverbs rather than just their words. It helps identify themes based not only on literal meanings but also on their use in social practices such as conflict resolution. One relevant example under the theme of conflict resolution is n'ógè ọkọchị, ọkùkò à naghị mátà onye gà éfò ya òdù n'údu mmiri " (during dry season, the hen does not know who will remove her

feather in the rainy season). This proverb speaks to the unpredictability of the future and the importance of maintaining peaceful coexistence. For an effective flight or a hen during the rainy season, a portion of the feather ought to be removed. When humans are likened to this situation, it predicts the fact that those in conflict do not know who would save or help the other in the future time when uncertainty befalls the individual or group. The message emphasizes that no one is self-sufficient and that today's opponent may be tomorrow's lifeline.

Application of the SPEAKING model

Proverb: "N'ógè ọkọchị, ọkùkọ à naghị mátà onye gà éfò ya òdù n'údu mmiri

S – Setting/Scene:

A family meeting, village square, or communal gathering where conflict is being resolved.

P – Participants:

Elders or community leaders (speakers), and the disputing parties (listeners).

E – Ends (Goals):

To promote peace, discourage hostility, and restore harmony through a culturally rooted message.

A – Act Sequence:

The elder speaks, shares the proverb during mediation, and follows it with an interpretation to guide the disputants toward reconciliation.

K – Key (Tone):

Reflective, advisory, calm — often serious but non-aggressive.

I – Instrumentalities:

Spoken Igbo language, often with a respectful or persuasive tone.

N – Norms:

Only elders or respected figures are permitted to use proverbs in this setting, and it is expected that the listeners show respect and consider the message.

G – Genre:

Proverb used in conflict mediation — a recognized genre within Igbo oral tradition.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes selected Igbo proverbs based on the thematic framework discussed in the earlier chapters. The goal is to explore the cultural meanings found in the proverbs and to show how they reflect and support key values in Igbo society. By grouping the proverbs by relevant themes, the study aims to reveal the messages and societal roles they express.

The themes chosen for this study include social control, hospitality, truth and sincerity, conflict resolution, knowledge and wisdom, patience, and cultural symbolism related to animals and colors. These themes were selected due to their frequency and importance in the collected proverbs, as well as their significance in Igbo cultural expressions.

Each theme will be introduced briefly to provide context and remind the reader of its cultural relevance before presenting the proverbs that exemplify it. For instance, the theme of social control includes proverbs that promote acceptable behavior and maintain social order. Hospitality highlights the cultural focus on generosity and welcoming guests. Truth and sincerity center on honesty as a moral value, while conflict resolution shows how disputes are settled peacefully through traditional wisdom. Similarly, knowledge and

wisdom celebrate intellectual insight and experience; patience reflects endurance and self-control, and cultural symbolism examines how animals and colors hold metaphorical meanings in Igbo thought.

The proverbs under each theme will be examined to uncover their deeper meanings, functions, and implications for the Igbo worldview and social life. This thematic arrangement allows for a systematic and organized study of the data, providing clarity and focus to the findings.

By the end of this chapter, it will be clear how Igbo proverbs serve not only as artistic expressions but also as essential tools for education, social regulation, and cultural preservation.

4.1. Data Presentation

This section presents a collection of Igbo proverbs obtained directly from five native speakers of the Igbo language. The choice of five informants was made to provide a balanced representation of gender, age, and educational backgrounds, ensuring a broader and culturally grounded interpretation of the proverbs used. The informants include two males and three females, selected purposively for their fluency, cultural knowledge, and consistent use of proverbs in daily interaction. Among the female informants is a 43-year-old graduate of Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education (AOCOED), who currently works as the Administrator of a private school where she teaches English Language at the

Junior Secondary level and Igbo Language from Junior to Senior Secondary levels. Her academic and practical experience in both languages made her contributions particularly valuable. Another female informant is an elderly woman in her eighties with an O'level qualification, whose knowledge of Igbo proverbs is drawn from deep traditional roots and experience. The third female informant, who stopped schooling at JSS3, shared insights based on her exposure to oral traditions in both family and social settings. The male informants include an elderly man in his late 60s, regarded as a custodian of traditional knowledge, who completed education up to JSS3. His understanding of the cultural and symbolic meanings of proverbs added authenticity to the data. The second male, in his mid-fifties, holds an SSCE certificate and contributed examples and interpretations based on everyday usage and real-life application of proverbs in community interactions.

The proverbs were carefully selected and sorted by key cultural and communicative themes relevant to the study. These themes include social control, hospitality, truth and sincerity, wisdom and knowledge, patience, and conflict resolution. Each proverb reflects the values, beliefs, and traditional practices of the Igbo people. They provide insight into how proverbs act as tools for communication and cultural transmission. The proverbs are grouped by the themes they best represent, laying the groundwork for the following analysis.

4.1.1. Theme of Social Control

1. Ànụ̀ bù ụ̀zò na-àńụ̀ mmị̀rị́ ọ́ma

Bird is first that-drinks water good

The early bird catches the fattest worm.

2. Nwátà na-àtá àkàrà na-àtá égo ya

Child who eats bean cake also-eats money his

One who is reckless in spending loses a lot of money.

3. Gìdì-gìdì bù ùgwù eze

Unity is honour king

Unity is strength.

4. Agwò emeghì nke ò jì burù agwò, ụmụákà á chiri ya hiè nkù

Snake does-not-do what it uses-to be snake, children will tie it firewood

If a snake doesn't act like a snake, children will use it to tie firewood.

5. Ụbọchi ogù abughì ụbọchi ikpe

Day war is-not day judgment

The day of war is not the day of judgment.

6. Onye kòrò óka n'úgbò, bịa burù ùkpà jí lètà, kwesiri ka umunna ya juò ya ajùjù

Person planted corn in-farm, comes carry basket yam return, should that kinsmen his ask him question

If someone plants corn and returns with yam, his kinsmen should ask him questions.

7. Onye fee eze, eze rùò ya aka

One serves king, king will-reward him hand

He who serves the king will have his reward.

8. Égbè bèlú, ùgò bèlú, nke siri ibe ya èbèna nkù, kwa ya

Kite perch, eagle perch, the-one that-says its-mate should-not-perch wood, break-it

Let the kite perch, let the eagle perch; whichever says the other should not perch, let its wing break.

9. Òmùmù ójọò na-efòghari n'èlù onye mere ya

Evil deed hovers over person did-it

An evil act hovers over the one who committed it.

10. Onye na-akpà àgwà ójọò apùghì iguzo n'ihù ndi mmadu ruò ogologo oge

One who-has behavior bad cannot stand before people for long time

A person of bad behavior cannot stand before people for long

4.1.2. Theme of Hospitality

1. À naghị àgbà àkà á hụ nwátà kịrị ézè.

One does not go empty-handed to greet a child who became king.

One does not go to an occasion with an empty hand.

2. Égbè bèlú, Ùgò bèlú, nke sịrì íbé ya ebéná, nkù kwá ya.

kite perch, eagle perch, the one that tells its mate don't perch, wing break.

Let the kite perch, let the eagle perch; whichever says the other should not perch, let its wings break.

3. À naghị eji mma egbu onye ọbiá.

One does not use knife to kill a visitor.

One does not use a knife to kill a visitor.

4. Onye óbùla nā-anàbàtà onye ọbiá n'úlọ ya, nā-ngozi.

Whoever that welcomes a visitor into their home receives blessings.

Whoever receives a visitor receives blessings.

5. Ụlọ ewùrù n'amaghị onye ọbiá, ezùghị ezú.

House built that does not know a visitor is not complete.

A home built without knowing visitors is not complete.

6. Ụlọ kacha életà bụ nke nàbàtàrà ndị ọbiá nke ọma.

House that looks more is the one that receives guests very well

The most visited home is the one that welcomed guests well.

7. Ézì nri nā-ewètà ndị ọbiá.

Good food brings visitors.

Good food brings visitors.

8. Ákà nā-enye, nā-anọ n'èlú mgbe niile.

Hand that gives stays on top all the time.

The hand that gives is always on top.

9. Ó bụ sīté n'èlètà ọma kà mmádụ mārà ézì mmádụ.

It is through looking after good that one knows a good person.

It is by a good visit that one knows a good person.

10. Onye wètàrà òjì, nwètàrà ndú.

Who brings kolanut brings life.

He who brings kolanut brings life.

4.1.3. Theme of Truth and Sincerity

1. Éwu nwurụ n'ọbà jí abùghị àgụ gbùrù ya.

Goat died in a yam barn is not hunger that killed it.

A goat that dies in a barn was never killed by hunger.

2. Ó mè ihe, jìde òfò.

Doing something , hold truth.

Whatever a person does, such person should always stand on truth.

(Note: Òfò is a traditional Igbo symbol of truth and justice.)

3. Ó jì òfò gà-àná.

Holding, truth will succeed.

One who stands on truth will always be victorious.

4. Onye kwè, chí ya èkwè.

Who agrees, god his agrees.

If one agrees, his personal god agrees.

5. Onye nà-èfè òfò, chí ya nà-èfè ya.

Who serves truth, his god also serves him.

He who serves justice is supported by his god.

6. Onye nà-ekwu éziokwu à dāghị echeta ihe ò kwùrù.

Who is saying truth does not remember what he said.

He who speaks the truth does not need to remember what he said.

7. Éziokwu n'èmè kà mmadụ mārà mma.

Truth makes a person appear beautiful.

Truth makes a person beautiful.

8. Éziokwu à naghị àgbà mgba.

Truth does not engage in wrestling.

Truth does not wrestle.

9. Nwókè nà-ekwu éziokwu, chí ya nà-eche ya.

Man who speaks truth, his god protects him.

A man who speaks the truth is protected by his god.

10. Éziokwu bú ndú.

Truth is life.

Truth is life.

4.1.4. Theme of Conflict Resolution

1. Íwé nwanne à naghị eru n'òkpukpù

Anger sibling does not reach to-the bone

A brother's anger does not get to the bone. (Family conflicts do not last forever.)

2. Íkwú na-amaghị íbé, ézí ya.

Kinsman who does not know, others teach him

When a kinsman does not know, his relatives will teach him. (Disagreements are resolved through guidance and correction.)

3. Ó jí onye ìrò n'álà jíkwa onwe ya.

He-holds person enemy on-ground also-holds self

He who holds the enemy on the ground is also holding himself. (Holding grudges traps both parties.)

4. Ótù mkpịsị àkà rụtà mmànù, yá èzùó òhá.

One finger touch oil it affect others

When one finger gets oil, it touches others. (One person's action affects the community.)

5. Nwanne na nwanne bí n'údò bú élètà àghàrà.

Sibling and sibling live in-peace is tolerance

Peace between siblings is based on forbearance.(Harmony comes from overlooking faults.)

6. Bíli kà m bíli mèrè na Ùwà na-agá nke ọma.

Live so I live make world go well

“Live and let live” is the reason why life goes forward. (Mutual tolerance makes life better.)

7. N'ógè ọkọchị, ọkùkọ à naghị mátà onye gà éfò ya òdù n'òdu mmiri.

In-time dry-season hen does not know who will pluck its feather in rainy season

During dry season, the hen does not know who will pluck her feathers in the rainy season.

(Do not fight those who may help you tomorrow.)

8. Wèrè èhíhé chụọ éwu ojii tupu o rùé àbáli, mgbe ọchịchịrị na éwu ojii gà-àbụ òtù.

Use afternoon look-for goat black before it reaches night when darkness and goat black will-be same

Look for the black goat during the day before night comes, when the black goat and night would look alike. (Resolve issues before it's too late.)

9. Mgbe mmadụ abụọ kwụsiri igba òsò, hà na-amalite íkwú okwu.

When people two stop running they begin to talk

When two people stop running, they begin to talk. (Dialogue follows after tension calms down.)

10. Ó kà mma kà ísì nà-ehulàtà kárià kà ébèpù ya.

It is better for head to bend than to cut it off

It is better for the head to bend than to be cut off. (It is wiser to humble oneself than to destroy oneself in pride.)

4.1.5. Theme: Wisdom and Knowledge

1. À naghị àgba àkà azụ àná.

One does not go empty handed to buy land

One does not go to war without a weapon.

2. Á chọọ àjà mà ahúghị ụdèlè, á màrà na ihe mèrè n'ụlọ ndị mmụọ.

If perform sacrifice but does not see vulture, then they know that something happened in house of spirits

If the vulture fails to hover at the end of a sacrifice, then you know something happened in the land of the spirits.

3. Onye hàpụrụ ọnụ ya, ụgụrụ àràchá ya.

One who leaves his mouth, harmattan will lick it

If one fails to lick his lips, the harmattan will do it.

4. À tọọrọ ọmàrà, ọmàrà; à tọọrọ ọfeke, ọ fénýé ísì n'ọhịa.

Tell wise, he understands; tell fool, he runs with his head in the bush

Tell a wise person and he understands; tell a fool, and he runs into the bush.

5. Ébé àkà nùrụ nwáanyị, kà ụzọ-átùkpàsa dí ya.

Where hand reach woman, is where she place her husband.

Do things according to your capacity.

6. Onye ùbiàm àdìghị áza “òmèokàchìe.”

Who is poor does not answer òmèokàchìe

An indigent does not take the title *Òmèokàchìe* (one who completes what he begins).

7. Nwátà mà nna ya, àmà lụgọ ndí íchiè.

Child who knows his father, has known the ancestors

A child who knows his father has already known his ancestors.

8. Àjughị àjụ, éri n’á kpatà, àrịághị àrịá ànwú.

Not asking question before eating will cause , destruction

Failure to seek guidance or ask questions before action can lead to destruction.

9. Ùzù na-amaghị àkpú òghènè ya, na-é gbé ànyá n’òdù.

Blacksmith that does not know how to forge his metal keeps staring at the tail.

A blacksmith who does not know how to forge his metal keeps staring at the anvil.

10. Nwáanyị mụtà íte òfè mmírí mmírí, dì ya àmụtà ípì ùtàrà àkà wéré sùrù òfè.

Woman learns to make soup water water, her husband will learn to mould garri with hand to take soup

If a woman makes watery soup, the husband will learn to dent the garri before dipping it.

4.1.6. Theme of Patience

1. Onyé ndídí n'èrì àzù ụkpò.

Person patient eats fish big.

One who's patient gains a lot in life.

2. Kà ànyị na-àgà n'òbì kà jí na-ákà.

As we going in heart, so yam ripens.

Having patience and hoping for good things to happen in our lives

3. Ọ na-àbụ à sị nwátà wúbà áhụ, ọ sàbá àfọ́ ya.

When one tells child to bathe, he washes his belly.

Impatience or lack of seriousness leads to incomplete results.

4. Onyé bùrù chì ya ụzọ, ọ gbàgbùó onwe ya n'ọsọ.

Who first his chi on the road, he keeps running himself.

He who runs ahead of his guardian spirit stumbles.(moving faster than destiny leads to downfall).

5. Òké òsìmiri ànòkataghị rié onyé óbùla nke ò hụrụ úkwù ya ànyá.

Big river does not swallow anyone it did not see their feet.

Danger only comes to those who have walked into it.

6. Ụkwá rùó ògé ya, ọ dàá.

Breadfruit reaches its time, it falls.

Everything happens at the right time (God's time is best).

7. Ébé onyé òsò rùrù, ka onyé ìje gà-erùkwa.

Where runner reaches, walker will also reach.

With patience, you will still achieve your goals.

8. Ndidí bù ụzọ́ ísì nwee ihe ómà.

Patience is the road to have good things.

Patience is the key to obtaining good things

9. Ùgò nke n'àchá ntà na-échèrị ànyị oríri ya.

Eagle that hunts waits for its prey.

The eagle that hunts waits for its prey. Patience is necessary for success or reward.

10. À naghị àgba ọsọ itù àjà.

One does not run to offer sacrifice.

Important things require patience and care.

4.1.7. Theme of Cultural Symbolism

A. Use of Animals

1. Ngwéré sị n'èlú dàá, màdụ e tó ya, ó tó onwe ya.

Lizard says from up fell, person not praise it, it praises itself.

When the lizard falls from a high place and no one praises it, it praises itself.

2. Mbé na-aga nwayọ nwayọ, mà ọ na-ekwu na ọ kárlí ndí ọzọ.

Tortoise moves slowly slowly, yet it says that it pass others.

The tortoise walks slowly, yet it claims to have outpaced others.

3. Ọdum àdighị àgba ọsọ n'efu, mà ọ bùrù na ọ na-agba ọsọ, ọ na-égbu ànù.

Lion does not run in vain, but if it runs, it kills meat.

The lion doesn't run aimlessly; if it does, it makes a kill.

B. Use of Colour

4. Mgbe ọjị juru àfọ, òsị na ọ hụghị ọchá.

When black fills stomach, it says it did not see white.

When the stomach is full with black, it says it hasn't seen white yet.

5. Ó bù na-áchà ọchá ka a na-efe chí.

It is with white that they worships god.

2z White (symbol of purity) is used to worship the gods.

4.2 Data Analysis

This section provides a thematic analysis of the proverbs mentioned earlier. The proverbs are examined through key cultural and communicative themes like social control, hospitality, truth and sincerity, conflict resolution, wisdom and knowledge, patience, and cultural symbolism. Each theme is explored by interpreting both the literal and contextual meanings of the related proverbs. This shows how they reflect the values, beliefs, and worldview of the Igbo people.

4.2.1 Theme: Social Control in Igbo Proverbs

Social control in Igbo society refers to how the community maintains order, discipline, and harmony among its members. Proverbs act as strong tools for moral instruction,

guiding behavior, discouraging wrongdoing, and promoting values like honesty, hard work, justice, and respect for authority. The following Igbo proverbs illustrate how wisdom regulates human behavior and keeps societal balance.

1. Ànù bù ụzò na-anụ mmiri óma-The early bird catches the fattest worm.

This proverb highlights discipline and punctuality. The people of Igbo society value hard work, and this saying encourages diligence and discourages laziness. By rising early or acting quickly, a person is more likely to succeed. In terms of social control, this proverb teaches that procrastination often leads to loss, while timely action brings rewards.

2. Nwátà na-àtà àkàrà na-àtà égo ya- One who is reckless in spending loses his money.

This proverb warns against wastefulness. It controls careless spending, especially among youth, by teaching financial discipline. In Igbo beliefs, wealth is meant not just for the individual but also for family and community well-being. Thus, being careless with money is condemned as it threatens both personal survival and communal responsibility.

3. Gidi-gidi bù ùgwù eze - Unity is strength.

This proverb emphasizes communal living, an important part of Igbo culture. It acts as social control by discouraging division and conflict. When community members come together, they can achieve greatness and face challenges better. Disunity, on the other

hand, weakens the community. This proverb is often used during disputes, reminding everyone that collective strength is greater than individual power.

4. Agwò emeghì nke ò jì burù agwò, ụmụákà á chiri ya hiè nkù - If a snake does not show its venom, children will use it to tie firewood.

This proverb encourages respect and caution. It teaches that gentleness should not be seen as weakness. In the Igbo worldview, one must sometimes show strength to avoid being taken advantage of. As a form of social control, it limits oppression and reminds individuals that even the gentle can defend themselves when pushed too far.

5. Ụbọchi ogù abughị ụbọchi ikpe - The day of war is not the day of judgment.

This saying teaches that actions have consequences, even if they are not immediate. A wrongdoer may seem to avoid punishment for a time, but eventually justice will find them. It acts as social control by instilling the fear of retribution and discouraging wrongdoing in society.

6. Onye kòrò ọka n'ụgbò, bịa burù ụkpà jí lètà, kwesiri ka ụmụnna ya juò ya ajùjù - If a person plants corn in his farm but comes home with a basket of yam, his kinsmen must question him.

This proverb promotes accountability and denounces corruption. It warns against dishonesty, especially regarding wealth. In the Igbo social system, a person's wealth or

success must be justified. This proverb encourages communal responsibility to question and expose wrongdoing whenever it arises.

7. Onye fee eze, eze rùò ya aka - He who serves the king will have his reward.

This proverb highlights loyalty and obedience to authority. In Igbo society, respect for leadership is highly valued. By serving well, a person ensures honor and blessings. As a form of social control, it discourages rebellion, encourages service, and assures people that obedience brings rewards.

8. Égbè bèlú, ùgò bèlú, nke sirì ibe ya ẹ̀bèna nkù, kwò ya - Let the kite perch, let the eagle perch; whichever says the other should not perch, may its wings break.

This proverb promotes tolerance and coexistence. It condemns jealousy, oppression, and unhealthy competition. In terms of social control, it encourages fairness and justice, ensuring that everyone has the space to thrive. Those who try to deny others their rights will eventually face consequences

9. Ọ̀mụ̀mụ̀ ọ̀jọ̀ na-efògharị n'èlù onye mere ya - An evil act hovers over the one who committed it.

This proverb teaches that evil deeds are never forgotten. Guilt follows the wrongdoer like a shadow, even when no one else is aware of the act. In the context of social control, this serves as a moral reminder that one cannot evade the consequences of wrongdoing, whether by social judgment or divine justice.

10. Onye na-akpà àgwà ójọ̀ apùghị iguzo n'ihù ndị mmadụ ruò ogologo oge- A person of bad behavior cannot stand before people for long.

This proverb highlights the importance of character. In Igbo society, reputation holds great significance. A person with bad behavior may pretend for a time, but eventually, their true character will show. As social control, this proverb reminds individuals to develop good behavior to gain respect and acceptance in society.

The chosen proverbs clearly reflect the Igbo belief that society should be guided by moral order. Social control ensures that individuals do not behave in ways that threaten communal harmony. Through proverbs, the Igbo people enforce discipline (Proverbs 1 & 2), emphasize unity (Proverb 3), promote accountability (Proverb 6), and support tolerance (Proverb 8). They also warn against evil deeds (Proverbs 5, 9, 10) and stress respect for authority (Proverb 7).

In Igbo philosophy, social control is not just about punishing wrongs but about instilling values that sustain community life. Proverbs serve both preventive and corrective roles: they prevent individuals from going astray, and they correct those who may already be deviating. In this way, Igbo proverbs act as a cultural compass that guides behavior, upholds justice, and maintains order in society.

Ethnographic Application of Dell Hymes' SPEAKING Model

To further interpret the communicative functions of proverbs under the theme of social control, Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model is applied. This model provides a framework for understanding how language use is shaped by context. The acronym SPEAKING stands for: Setting/Scene, Participants, Ends, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre.

The proverb chosen for this analysis is:

“Égbè bèlú, ùgò bèlú, nke sịrị ibe ya ẹbèna nkù, kwò ya.”

Let the kite perch, let the eagle perch; whichever says the other should not perch, let its wing break.

This proverb advocates fairness, equality, and peaceful coexistence — a strong tool of social control used to discourage oppression or dominance in communal relationships.

Application of the SPEAKING model:

S (Setting/Scene): This proverb is commonly used in communal gatherings, family meetings, or conflict mediation settings in Igbo society.

P (Participants): The speaker is usually an elder or someone in a position of moral authority, while the audience includes disputing parties or the general community.

E (Ends): The purpose is to promote fairness and equality, urging each party to allow others their rightful place or freedom.

A (Act Sequence):The proverb is introduced as a caution or reminder during dialogue or judgment. It often appears after heated argument or just before resolution.

K (Key): The tone is proverbial, firm, and morally charged. It may be accompanied by gestural emphasis.

-I (Instrumentalities):It is delivered orally, sometimes with non-verbal reinforcement, in the Igbo language.

N (Norms):The norm encourages peaceful coexistence, discourages envy or suppression, and values communal balance.

G (Genre): It is a proverb — a culturally embedded oral form of communication that carries collective wisdom.

Through this analysis, the proverb illustrates how the Igbo community uses language not only to communicate but also to shape values and behavior.

Application of Semiotics Theory

Semiotics, the study of signs, helps us decode how meaning is communicated through cultural symbols, icons, and indices. Charles Sanders Peirce's model categorizes signs into three types:

- Icon: A sign that physically resembles what it represents.

- Index: A sign that shows evidence of what is being represented (cause/effect or direct connection).

- Symbol: A sign that gains meaning through cultural convention or agreement.

In the Igbo proverb:

“Agwọ emeghị nke ọ jì buru ágbọ, ụmụákà á chírị ya hiè nkù.”

If a snake does not behave like a snake, children will use it to tie firewood.

Proverb Explanation Using Semiotics:

The snake (Agwọ) serves as a symbol, representing danger, caution, or natural order in Igbo culture. It stands for entities or people who have a specific expected behavior based on their nature or role. The snake's behavior is the index — it indicates or signals whether it lives up to its expected role. If it doesn't behave accordingly, it loses its power or respect. The children using the snake to tie firewood act as an icon for the consequence of losing respect or power, literally binding something dangerous and rendering it harmless.

In this way, the proverb uses the signs (snake, its behavior, children tying it) to communicate social control: those who don't act according to their nature lose authority and become vulnerable to ridicule or harm. This layered system of signs reflects how

Igbo proverbs use culturally loaded symbols and signs to teach moral lessons and regulate behavior in society.

4.2.2. Theme of Hospitality

1. À naghị àgbà àkà á hụ nwátà kịrị ézè- One does not go to an occasion with an empty hand.

This proverb highlights the Igbo value of reciprocity. A visitor should never show up empty-handed, no matter how small the gift. In Igbo culture, bringing kola nut, palm wine, or even garden produce when visiting shows respect and goodwill. It reinforces the idea that hospitality is a two-way relationship where both the host and the guest share responsibility.

2. Égbè bèlú, Ùgò bèlú, nke siri íbé ya ebéná, nkù kpúá ya. - Let the kite perch, let the eagle perch; whichever says the other should not perch, let its wings break.

Often used in conflict resolution this proverb also emphasizes tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Hospitality involves not just food but also creating a space where everyone feels welcome. A society that allows all to “perch” thrives better than one that excludes.

3. À naghị eji mma egbu onye ọbíá - One does not use a knife to kill a visitor.

Guests are sacred in Igbo culture. A visitor, whether expected or unexpected, must be treated with kindness and protection. Harming a guest is considered an abomination (nso

ala). This proverb highlights that hospitality is about providing food and drink while safeguarding the dignity and safety of those invited.

4. Onye óbùla nā-anàbàtà onye ọbíá n'úlo ya, nā-ngozi.- Whoever receives a visitor into his home receives blessings.

In Igbo thought, hospitality is linked to blessings. Visitors are often seen as channels of good fortune, and welcoming them opens the door to prosperity. Elders often say that a man's greatness is measured by how many people eat from his hearth.

5. Úlo ewùrù n'amaghị onye ọbíá, ezùghị ezú. - A home built without knowing a visitor is incomplete.

A house becomes complete when it hosts others. For the Igbo, isolation is not strengthrelationships complete life. This proverb teaches that hospitality transforms a house into a home, highlighting the importance of social interaction in Igbo communal life.

6. Úlò kacha élètà bụ nke nàbàtàrà ndị ọbíá nke ọma.- The most visited home is the one that welcomed guests well.

Reputation is built through hospitality. A family that receives guests warmly gains honor and is remembered. This proverb shows that hospitality creates social bonds that ensure lasting respect and friendships across generations.

7. Ézì nri nā-ewètà ndị ọbiá - Good food brings visitors.

In Igbo tradition, food is central to hospitality. “Good food” means not only tasty meals but also reflects kindness and generosity. A household where people are well-fed naturally becomes a gathering point. This reflects the Igbo saying: “Ebe nri dị, mmadụ niile na-aga.” (Where there is food, people gather).

8. Ákà nā-enye, nā-anọ n’èlú mgbe niile - The hand that gives is always on top.

This proverb lifts up generosity as a sign of dignity and superiority. The giver, through hospitality, holds an honored place in society. In ceremonies like marriages, funerals, and title-taking, givers are praised, remembered, and sometimes immortalized through songs and oral tradition.

9. Ó bụ sīté n’èlètà ọma kà mmádụ mārà ézì mmádụ. - It is by good visitation that one knows a good person.

Hospitality reveals character. A person may claim to be good, but how they treat others shows their true nature. This proverb insists that one’s moral worth is tested through acts of hospitality.

10. Onye wètàrà ọjị, nwètàrà ndú- He who brings kola nut brings life.

The kola nut (ọjị) is the highest cultural symbol of hospitality in Igbo society. It represents life, peace, and communion. Before any gathering begins, kola is presented

and prayers are said for life and blessing. This proverb captures the idea that hospitality is life-giving, connecting people in peace and friendship.

Hospitality in Igbo culture goes beyond courtesy; it is a sacred duty and moral obligation. These proverbs show that receiving a guest means embracing life, blessings, and communal growth. The Igbo view hospitality not only as kindness but also as a spiritual act; visitors can bring fortune, messages from the gods, or tests of one's character.

Proverbs like “Onye wetara oji, wetara ndu” illustrate how symbolic items like kola nut serve as anchors of hospitality, while sayings such as “Ulo e wuru n'amaghi onye obia ezughi ezu” show that life without community feels incomplete. Food, gifts, tolerance, and openness are consistent themes.

In essence, hospitality defines Igbo identity. A hospitable home becomes a hub of friendship, prosperity, and honor, while an inhospitable one attracts isolation and disdain. The Igbo worldview presents hospitality not merely as social etiquette but as a philosophy of life welcoming others sustains the very fabric of humanity.

Application of Dell Hymes SPEAKING model

The proverbs chosen for analysis is :

“Onyé óbùla nā-anàbàtà onyé óbíá n'ùlọ́ ya, nā-agózi.”

Whoever receives a visitor into their home receives blessings.

S – Setting and Scene

This proverb reflects a typical Igbo sociocultural setting where hospitality is deeply valued. The “setting” is the home—a sacred space in Igbo culture. The “scene” is when a visitor is welcomed warmly into someone’s home, symbolizing openness, generosity, and community.

P – Participants

Speaker: A wise elder, parent, or any culturally grounded Igbo individual.

Listener: Typically, the younger generation, community members, or someone being advised or corrected.

Referents: The host (who receives the visitor) and the visitor.

E – Ends (Purposes, Outcome and Function)

Goal: To emphasize that hospitality brings blessings, not just socially but spiritually.

Outcome: Encouraging openness, generosity, and maintenance of social ties.

Function: Moral instruction; promoting traditional values of welcoming strangers and kin.

A – Act Sequence

A concise, proverbial statement, which highlights that receiving a guest = receiving blessing.

K – Key (Tone, Manner, Spirit)

Tone is advisory and reflective.

Manner is respectful and didactic, often delivered in a calm, serious, or elder's voice.

Spirit is uplifting and communal, reinforcing moral values.

I – Instrumentalities

Oral speech

N – Norms of Interaction

Norms: It's culturally expected for hosts to be generous, There's no need to announce one's goodness; actions (like receiving a visitor) show it. A person's character is judged by how they treat guests.

G – Genre

Genre: Proverb — a fixed, traditional, and often poetic expression conveying communal wisdom.

- It belongs to didactic folklore, used to teach values through indirect speech.

This proverb captures a core Igbo belief that hospitality is sacred. It's not just about etiquette but is tied to blessings, prosperity, and social honour. Through the SPEAKING model, we see how every element of communication — from setting to tone — supports the message that to welcome others is to welcome favour.

Application of Semiotics Theory

Selected Proverb:

Onye wètàrà òjì, nwètàrà ndú.- He who brings kolanut brings life.

Semiotic Breakdown:

- Signifier (Form): Òjì (kolanut)
- Signified (Meaning): Life, peace, welcome, unity

Semiotic Elements:

- Icon: The kolanut itself visually represents welcome and respect; what is seen is what it symbolizes directly in Igbo culture.
- Index: The presence of kolanut in any Igbo gathering instantly indicates that peace and hospitality are being extended. It points to the intention of the host.

- Symbol: Kolanut symbolically stands for deeper cultural meanings: it's not just a fruit but a ritual object. Its meaning is culturally assigned — in Igbo cosmology, kolanut is life, unity, and sacredness.

Interpretation:

This proverb operates semiotically by elevating the act of offering kolanut to something beyond a gesture — it becomes a symbol of life itself. In Igbo culture, to bring kolanut is to extend peace, blessings, and respect. This proverb reflects how deeply signs and symbols are embedded in Igbo communication.

4.2.3. Theme of Truth and Sincerity.

1. Éwu nwurū n'óbà jí abùghị àgụ gbùrù ya. - A goat that dies in a barn was not killed by hunger.

This proverb highlights that truth cannot be concealed by lies or excuses. If a goat dies in a yam barn, it clearly did not die of hunger; the cause of its death is different. Elders use this saying during disputes to show that reality will always come to light, regardless of efforts to twist facts. In Igbo culture, when people lie, the truth often reveals itself through shame, misfortune, or punishment. Thus, the proverb encourages honesty and condemns deceit.

2. Ó mè ihe, jìde òfò - Whatever a person does, he should always stand on truth.

Òfò is a sacred staff that represents justice, truth, and the authority of elders. When elders resolve disputes, the truthful person is often asked to “hold òfò” and swear by it. The belief is that anyone who touches òfò unjustly or lies while invoking it will face trouble from the gods. This proverb teaches that truth is not only a social principle but also a spiritual and moral law governing human actions.

3. Ó jì òfò gà-àná.- He who stands on truth will always prevail.

This proverb reflects the Igbo belief that truth has its own power. Elders often say this to encourage disputants not to fear false accusations because lies may last for a moment, but truth endures. During traditional court proceedings, the one with òfò is considered likely to succeed, no matter how strong or popular the liar may seem. This illustrates that in Igbo thinking, truth is stronger than power, wealth, or manipulation.

4. Onye kwè, chí ya èkwè- If one agrees, his personal god agrees also.

This proverb emphasizes the importance of sincerity in commitment. In Igbo culture, chi (personal god/destiny) means the spiritual world aligns with a person’s honesty. If someone is truthful and sincere in his decisions, his chi will support and bless him. But if he is dishonest, his chi will withdraw. Thus, truth is not just a social idea but also a connection between humans and the spiritual realm.

5. Onye nà-èfè òfò, chí ya nà-èfè ya - He who serves justice is supported by his god.

This proverb emphasizes that truth is aligned with divine justice. In traditional Igbo society, someone who upholds òfọ (truth, sincerity, and fairness) is protected both spiritually and socially. In village disputes, the person who insists on truth often gains support from elders, deities, and ancestors. This reflects the Igbo belief that sincerity attracts supernatural support, while lies lead to downfall.

6. Onye nà-ekwu éziokwu à dágħì echeta ihe ò kwùrù.* - He who speaks the truth does not need to remember what he said.

Truth is natural, simple, and consistent. A liar must keep track of his words to avoid contradictions, but a truthful person speaks without fear. In Igbo philosophy, truth brings peace of mind and freedom from worry. Elders use this saying to advise young people to live honestly because lies complicate life while truth makes it straightforward.

7. Éziokwu n'èmè kà mmadụ mārà mma. - Truth makes a person beautiful.

Beauty here refers not only to physical attractiveness but also to moral dignity and respect. A truthful person is admired and trusted in society. In traditional Igbo culture, elders respected for their honesty are often chosen to mediate disputes, as their truthfulness grants them social beauty. On the other hand, liars are despised. Thus, sincerity enhances character.

8. Éziokwu à nagħì àgbà mgba - Truth does not wrestle.

This proverb highlights the effortless power of truth. Lies may struggle to gain recognition, but truth stands confidently and shines on its own. Elders often say this during family conflicts to encourage patience and remind people that truth does not need excessive defense. It aligns with the Igbo belief that sincerity will always stand firm even under attack.

9. Nwókè nà-ekwu éziokwu, chí ya nà-eche ya. - A man who speaks the truth is protected by his god.

This saying is closely linked to òfọ. It stresses that truth is divinely protected. In traditional settings, elders reassure someone falsely accused by stating that their chi will defend them if they are truthful. Truth here is not just a social value but a shield of divine justice.

10. Éziokwu bú ndú - Truth is life.

This is the strongest expression of the Igbo perspective on sincerity. Truth supports life, peace, and harmony, while lies destroy both society and individuals. For the Igbo, a community that abandons truth is destined for collapse. Therefore, truth is equated with life itself. Elders often invoke this proverb during important decisions like land agreements, marriage contracts, and oath-taking to remind people that life and truth are intertwined.

In Igbo philosophy, truth (éziokwu) and sincerity form the foundation of justice, peace, and social harmony. The regular mention of òfọ in these proverbs shows that truth is not just an individual quality but also a sacred, collective, and spiritual principle. The òfọ, as a sacred object, symbolizes fairness and is used in oath-taking, dispute resolution, and judicial rituals. To hold òfọ falsely is believed to invite divine punishment, demonstrating that truth is seen as more powerful than human manipulation. Across the proverbs, truth is described as:

1. Self-sustaining and effortless (Éziokwu à naghị agba mgba).
2. A shield of divine justice (Nwókè na-èkwu éziokwu, chí ya na-eche ya).
3. A source of beauty and dignity (Éziokwu n'èmè ka mmádù màrà mma).
4. The foundation of life itself (Éziokwu bú ndú).

Philosophically, the Igbo recognize that truth connects both human society and the spiritual world. A liar might succeed for a time, but lies eventually fall apart, while truth endures and promotes peace. In summary, truth is not only a moral ideal but also a cosmic law that binds humans, ancestors, and deities together in harmony.

Application of Semiotics theory

Proverbs for analysis:

“Ó mè ihe, jide òfò.”

Whatever a person does, he should always stand on truth.

This proverb is heavily symbolic and fits well into semiotics theory, especially through the lens of symbolism and cultural indexing. Here's the breakdown:

Sign, Signifier, and Signified:

Signifier: “Òfò” (a sacred staff)

Signified: Truth, justice, righteousness, moral uprightness, ancestral authority

The òfò is not just a physical object; it is a cultural symbol used among the Igbo people to represent truth and justice. It is often held during oath-taking, dispute resolution, and when making declarations that must not be broken. Holding the òfò is a visual sign that one is aligning with truth and moral correctness.

Symbol: In semiotics, a symbol has no inherent connection to what it represents, but is culturally agreed upon. The òfò here is a perfect example. It symbolizes truth because of its cultural role and spiritual weight, not because its physical appearance dictates so.

Icon: Though not iconic in the sense of resembling what it represents, the ritual use of òfò makes it culturally recognized its presence immediately calls to mind justice and ancestral backing.

Index: The òfò serves as an index because it points to a deeper cultural and spiritual reality. When someone is said to “jide òfò,” it implies that their actions are backed by

ancestral authority, and they are confidently truthful, knowing that any lie or injustice could invite cosmic or ancestral consequences.

Cultural Context: Among the Igbo, òfò is not given to everyone. It's usually held by elders, priests, or people with integrity. To “jide òfò” is to stand in alignment with the values of truth, fairness, and accountability. This proverb encourages moral responsibility and implies that truth has divine and ancestral backing.

This proverb works powerfully within semiotics theory because the term òfò functions as a cultural sign that represents abstract concepts like truth, justice, and ancestral approval. It carries social, moral, and spiritual weight making it more than just language, but a whole system of meaning.

4.2.4. Theme of Conflict Resolution

1. Ìwé nwanne à naghị eru n'ókúpúkpụ - A brother's anger does not get to the bone.

This proverb highlights the strong bond between siblings or kinsmen. It teaches that conflicts, no matter how bitter, should not sever family ties because blood relationships run deeper than momentary anger. In conflict resolution, this saying reminds disputants that coming together is more valuable than holding on to bitterness.

2. Íkwú na-amaghị íbé, ézí ya - When a kinsman does not know, the relatives will teach him.

Here, the proverb emphasizes correction as part of resolving conflicts. A wrongdoer may act out of ignorance, but the community or relatives can guide and teach them. It encourages patience, dialogue, and mutual correction instead of revenge or hostility.

3. Ó jí onye irò n'álà jikwa onwe ya- He who holds the enemy to the ground is also holding himself.

This proverb shows the futility of holding on to enmity. By hindering another person's progress, one also limits their own. In resolving conflict, it warns against retaliation and teaches that freedom and peace come when both parties let go of hostility.

4. Ótù mkpịsị àkà rùtà mmànù, yá èzùó òhá. - When one finger touches oil, it soils the others.

Conflict has a spreading effect. A quarrel between two individuals can impact the entire family, community, or society. The proverb serves as a reminder to resolve disputes quickly before they affect others and disrupt peace.

5. Nwanne na nwanne bí n'údò bú élètà àghàrà. - Peace between siblings is forbearance.

This proverb points to tolerance as the basis of peaceful living. Since offenses are unavoidable in relationships, the ability to endure and forgive ensures harmony. It reminds disputants that without forbearance, conflicts will persist.

6. Bili kà m bíli mètè na Ụwà na-agá nke oma. - Live and let live, that life may go forward.

This highlights reciprocity and mutual respect. Conflict resolution is linked to coexistence: when each party allows the other to thrive, society progresses. It discourages selfishness and encourages collective well-being.

7. N'ógè ọkọchị, ọkùkọ à naghị mátà onye gà éfò ya òdù n'òdu mmiri.- During the dry season, the hen does not know who will pluck its feathers in the rainy season.

This proverb reminds us of human interdependence and life's uncertainties. Those in conflict might need each other's help in the future. It warns disputants that today's enemy may become tomorrow's ally, so it is wise to reconcile and maintain peace.

8. Wètè èhíhé chụọ éwu ojii tupu o rùè àbálí, mgbe ọchịchịrị na éwu ojii gà-àbụ òtù.- Look for the black goat during the day before night falls when the black goat and darkness will become one.

This proverb speaks to the importance of addressing conflicts early before they escalate into serious issues. Delaying resolution often leads to complications that make peace harder to achieve.

9. Mgbe mmadụ abụọ kwụsiri igba òsò, hà na-amalite íkwú okwu.- When two people stop running, they begin to talk.

This proverb values dialogue over aggression. Conflict can lead to pursuit, competition, or hostility, but true resolution happens only when disputants pause to listen and converse. It promotes dialogue as the way to peace.

10. Ó kà mma kà ísì nà-ehùlàtà kàríà kà ébèpù ya.- It is better for the head to bow than to be cut off.

Humility and compromise are highlighted here. Pride prolongs conflict, but a humble spirit bends for peace. In conflict resolution, this saying encourages yielding and making concessions rather than seeking destruction

The proverbs on conflict resolution collectively emphasize peace, tolerance, humility, correction, and timeliness. They draw on deep cultural wisdom to show that human beings are interdependent and that unresolved disputes have far-reaching consequences. Thematically, they can be grouped into: family bond and brotherhood – e.g. *Ìwé nwanne à naghị eru n'ókúpúkpú* teaches that family quarrels should not go beyond repair, correction and Guidance e.g., *Ìkwù na àmàghị ibe, èzí ya* promotes patient teaching rather than punishment, futility of hostility e.g., *Ó jí onye irò n'álà jíkwa onwe ya*. shows that hurting others eventually hurts oneself, widespread effect of conflict e.g., *Ótù mkpisi àkà rùtà mmànù, yá èzùó òhá*. reminds that quarrels spread like oil stains,

tolerance and forbearance e.g., Nwanne na nwanne bí n'údò bú élètà àghàrà; promotes forgiveness as the foundation of peace, mutual coexistence e.g., Bíli kà m bíli mètè na Ùwà na-agá nke oma;emphasizes live-and-let-live as a necessity for progress; human interdependence e.g., N'ógè ọkọchị, ọkùkò à naghị mátà onye gà éfò ya òdù n'òdu mmiri reminds that no one knows tomorrow, so peace is wise; timeliness in resolution e.g., Wèrè èhíhé chụọ éwu ojii tupu o rùé àbálí, mgbe ọchịchịrị na éwu ojii gà-àbụ òtù.shows that early settlement is better than late repair; dialogue over violence e.g., Mgbe mmadụ abụọ kwụsịrị igba òsò, hà na-amalite íkwú okwu. teaches conversation as the pathway to reconciliation; humility and compromise e.g., Ó kà mma ka ísì na-ehùlàtà values humility over destruction.

Application of Semiotics Theory

Proverb for analysis :Ótù mkpịsị àkà rụtà mmànù, yá èzùó òhá.

When one finger gets oil, it spreads to others.

Explanation:

This proverb is a rich example of how signs communicate deeper social meanings beyond their literal sense. Semiotics analyzes how signs (words, symbols, actions) generate meaning.

Signifier (Form): The image of a finger getting oil and the oil spreading to other fingers.

Signified (Concept): The spreading nature of conflict or issues from one person to many.

Breaking it down with Peirce's triadic model:

Icon: The finger and oil resemble real-life objects. The visual image of oil spreading on fingers mirrors how conflict or problems spread through relationships. This is a direct resemblance.

Index: The spreading oil points to a causal relationship—conflict in one part of a family or group triggers reactions elsewhere. The oil's movement is an index (a direct indicator) of social contagion.

Symbol: The proverb itself is a cultural symbol conveying the idea that individual conflicts affect larger groups. The "finger" and "oil" don't literally mean fingers or oil but represent people and the consequences of their actions. This is a culturally agreed meaning.

Application to Conflict Resolution:

The proverb warns that conflicts are rarely isolated; they ripple out and affect the entire community or family. Just like oil spreading on fingers, a quarrel between two people can escalate, drawing others in and causing wider disruption. By recognizing this, the community understands the importance of managing conflict quickly and peacefully to prevent harm spreading. It communicates the cultural value placed on harmony and collective wellbeing.

Application of Dell Hymes SPEAKING model

Proverb: Nwanne na nwanne bí n'údò bú élètà àghàrà.

Peace between siblings is based on patience and tolerance.

Using Ethnography of Communication (SPEAKING model) to explain:

Setting (S): This proverb is used in family or community talks, especially when siblings are having disagreements or when elders advise younger ones.

Participants (P): Usually elders, family heads, or community leaders speaking to younger family members or groups involved in conflict.

Ends (E): The goal is to teach that peace among siblings or close relations requires patience, understanding, and putting up with each other's faults.

Act sequence (A): The proverb is said to remind people to tolerate and forgive, encouraging calm and unity instead of quarrels.

Key (K): The tone is wise and advising, gentle but firm, showing care for family harmony.

Instrumentalities (I): Spoken word, sometimes accompanied by gestures showing peace or calm.

Norms (N): It's socially expected that siblings keep peace by being patient, and the community respects those who do.

Genre (G): Traditional proverb or wise saying used to guide behavior and resolve conflicts.

In simple terms, the proverb teaches that when brothers and sisters want to live peacefully, they need to be patient with each other. It's about understanding and not always reacting to small issues. In the culture, this idea helps families stay united and avoid bigger problems.

4. 2.5. Theme of Wisdom and Knowledge

1. À naghị àgbà àkà azụ àná - One does not go to war without a weapon.

In traditional Igbo society, before warriors went to war, they consulted diviners, prepared charms, and sharpened weapons. This practice reflects the proverb, highlighting the relationship between foresight, wisdom, and survival. This proverb emphasizes the

importance of preparation, strategy, and knowledge before starting any task. Just as no warrior goes to battle unarmed, no one should face life's difficulties without the necessary wisdom and resources.

2. Á chụọ àjà mà ahúghị ùdèlè, á màrà na ihe mèrè n'ụlọ ndị mmụọ. - If the vulture fails to hover at the end of a sacrifice, then you know that something happened in the land of the spirits.

In Igbo tradition, sacrifices are made to gods and ancestors. The appearance of a vulture is seen as a sign of acceptance. This proverb reflects the wisdom of interpreting omens and unseen forces when making decisions. The vulture, regarded as a bird of wisdom in Igbo thought, typically appears where sacrifices occur. Its absence suggests that something unusual has taken place. This proverb shows that wisdom involves interpreting signs and understanding hidden meanings.

3. Onye hàpụrụ ọnụ ya, ụgụrụ àràchá ya. - If one fails to lick his lips, the harmattan will do it for him.

During harmattan, dry lips are common, and elders use this proverb as a warning against negligence. It teaches that wisdom requires foresight and personal effort. This teaches self-awareness and responsibility. A wise person anticipates small issues and resolves them before they grow. Relying on external forces to address personal problems leads to discomfort.

4. À túọrọ ọmàrà, ọmàrà; à túọrọ òfeke, ò fényé ísì n'ọhịa. - If you tell a wise person, he understands; if you tell a fool, he runs into the bush.

This proverb honors wisdom as the skill to interpret words, advice, and experiences correctly. A wise person requires little explanation, while a fool misinterprets and acts impulsively. Among the Igbo, elders often offer counsel through proverbs. The wise grasp hidden meanings, while fools take words literally and act irrationally.

5. Ébé àkà nụnụ nwáanyị, kà ụzọ-átùkpàsa dí ya. - Do things within your capability.

Marriage life is often used as a metaphor in proverbs. In this case, a woman's strength symbolizes personal capacity, while a husband's dependence represents external expectations. Wisdom involves self-awareness and moderation. One should not take on tasks beyond their strength, as this can lead to failure and disgrace.

6. Onye ùbiàm àdighị áza “òmèokàchie - A poor person does not take the title of “Omeokachie” (one who completes whatever he starts).

In Igbo society, titles represent honor and responsibility. A poor person cannot hold such titles because they lack the resources to sustain them. This proverb illustrates that knowledge and wisdom are linked to resources. Poverty limits the ability to fulfill good intentions, but wisdom helps one recognize boundaries and avoid unnecessary shame.

7. Nwátà mà ndí nna ya, àmà lụgọ ndí íchiè. - A child that knows his father has known his ancestors.

Ancestor veneration is central to Igbo culture. Knowing one's lineage ensures a sense of belonging and wisdom in community life. This proverb highlights the importance of understanding one's roots. A wise person is grounded in their history, as heritage connects individuals to their identity and influences their future.

8. Àjùghị àjù, éri n'á kpatà, àrịághị àrịá ànwú. - Failure to ask questions or seek help before acting can lead to ruin.

In apprenticeship systems among the Igbo, such as trades and crafts, questioning elders is encouraged. Ignorance leading to mistakes brings shame to the learner and their family. The proverb underscores that wisdom develops through inquiry. Foolishness results from pride or ignorance that refuses to ask, leading to irreversible mistakes.

9. Ùzù na-amaghị àkpú òghènè ya, na-é gbé ànyá n'òdù. - A blacksmith who does not know how to forge his metal keeps staring at the anvil.

Blacksmithing is a vital part of Igbo craft. An unskilled smith becomes a burden, illustrating that wisdom is demonstrated through action, not merely pretense. This teaches that wisdom is practical knowledge, not idle observation. A person without skill or understanding remains stagnant, wasting time without achieving results.

10. Nwáanyị mùtá íte òfè mmírí mmírí, dì ya àmùtá ípì ùtàrà àkà wéré sùrù òfè - If a woman decides to make watery soup, the husband will learn to dent the garri before dipping it into the soup.

Food is central to Igbo family life. A watery soup, though not ideal, teaches adjustment. Wisdom lies in finding ways to cope with imperfection. This proverb emphasizes adaptability as a form of wisdom. When circumstances change, the wise adjust and survive instead of complaining.

These proverbs collectively portray wisdom and knowledge as essential for survival, success, and harmony in Igbo society. They emphasize various aspects of wisdom:

- Preparation and foresight (Proverbs 1, 9).
- Interpretation of signs and symbols (Proverb 2).
- Self-awareness and responsibility (Proverbs 3, 5, 6).
- Ability to interpret and apply advice (Proverb 4).
- Value of heritage and identity (Proverb 7).
- Learning through questioning and inquiry (Proverb 8).
- Practical adaptability in challenges (Proverb 10).

In the Igbo worldview, wisdom is not just theoretical but practical, evident in actions, adaptability, foresight, and cultural continuity. A wise person not only knows but effectively uses knowledge to meet life's challenges.

Application of Semiotics theory

Proverb for analysis:

Á chụọ àjà mà ahúghì ùdèlè, á mārà na ihe mèrè n'ụlò ndí mmụọ.

If the vulture fails to hover at the end of a sacrifice, then you know something happened in the land of the spirits.

Semiotics is the study of signs and meaning, shows how meaning is constructed through the use of strong cultural symbols in this proverb.

Sign (General): The entire proverb functions as a sign conveying a deeper cultural message when expected signs are absent, something is wrong.

Icon: An icon resembles what it represents. The vulture here is an icon of a known natural pattern vultures are expected to appear when there's a sacrifice, especially with meat. So, their appearance symbolizes fulfillment or acceptance.

Index: The absence of the vulture serves as an index points to a hidden problem or something gone wrong spiritually. It's not the vulture itself that matters, but what its absence indicates. The proverb is saying: "This isn't normal; check deeper."

Symbol: The vulture is a symbol in Igbo cosmology. It's believed to have a connection with the spiritual realm. Its presence often symbolizes that the spirits have accepted a sacrifice. Therefore, the vulture symbolizes approval, spiritual order, or normalcy. The

sacrifice (àjà) also functions as a symbol of ritual communication between humans and the spirit world.

Cultural Meaning: The proverb teaches that wise people observe signs around them. When something expected doesn't happen, it is a signal to look beyond the physical. It encourages critical thinking, awareness, and interpretation of events beyond face value.

In conclusion, this proverb is rich in symbolic meaning and reflects the wisdom in reading signs. The vulture, sacrifice, and spiritual connection are all signs that carry deeper cultural meanings. The proverb uses these elements to pass on knowledge about spiritual alertness, wisdom, and the need to question when norms are disrupted—central to the Igbo worldview and to the theme of wisdom and knowledge.

Application of Dell Hymes SPEAKING model

Proverb for analysis:

Onyé ùbiàm àdìghì áza “Òmèokàchìe.”

A poor person does not take the title of Òmèokàchìe (one who completes whatever he starts).

Using the SPEAKING model:

S – Setting and Scene:

This kind of proverb is likely used in social gatherings, village meetings, or advice-giving moments especially when discussing responsibility, leadership, or personal growth.

P – Participants:

The speaker could be an elder or experienced person advising a younger person or group. The listener is often someone being encouraged to build capacity or avoid overstepping limits.

E – Ends (Purpose):

The aim is to teach wisdom: You should only take on responsibilities or make bold claims when you have the means or capacity to follow through. It emphasizes the importance of self-awareness and humility.

A – Act Sequence:

The proverb is delivered as a short, strong statement. It carries weight and is often followed by a pause for reflection or further elaboration. It might come up during discussions about who is fit to lead, take titles, or make big plans.

K – Key (Tone or Mood):

The tone is advisory and sometimes humorous but serious at the core. It may sound like a light joke but carries deep wisdom about knowing your limits.

I – Instrumentalities:

It's spoken in standard Igbo, often in informal settings, and passed on through speech. The proverb itself is a communication tool—rich, compact, and effective.

N – Norms of Interaction:

Proverbs like this are respected and rarely questioned. In Igbo culture, speaking in proverbs shows maturity and knowledge. The audience is expected to understand the message without direct explanation.

G – Genre:

This is a proverb, a common genre in Igbo oral tradition. Proverbs are used to teach, caution, and explain situations using symbolic or indirect language.

This proverb shows how communication in Igbo culture goes beyond just words—it reflects social structure, values, and expected behavior. Through this proverb, the culture teaches that wisdom includes knowing your capabilities. It reflects how speech and cultural values are deeply tied together, making it a perfect fit for ethnography of communication.

4.2.6. Theme of Patience

1. Onyé ndídí n'èrì àzù ùkpò- One who is patient eats the big fish.

This proverb stresses that those who endure and wait without rushing enjoy greater rewards. In Igbo culture, a “big fish” represents wealth and abundance. For example, a farmer who patiently tends his crops will reap more than one who rushes the process. The saying teaches against quick, short-term gratification.

2. Kà ànyị na-àgà n’òbì, kà jí na-ákà - As we walk gently in heart, so does the yam mature.

Yams are highly valued in Igbo society, especially as the “king of crops.” They require time and patience to mature. This proverb means that human progress, like yam growth, cannot be rushed. For instance, education takes years before yielding success. Thus, patience is tied to maturity and productivity.

3. Ọ na-àbụ à sị nwátà wúbà áhụ, ọ sàbá àfọ́ ya. - When you tell a child to bathe, he washes only his stomach.

Here, the impatience and half-heartedness of youth is criticized. Children often want quick results without thoroughness. It is a cultural reminder that patience also means being complete and diligent, not cutting corners. In real life, an apprentice who rushes through training will not master a trade.

4. Onyé bùrù chì ya ụzọ, ọ gbàgbùó onwe ya n’ọsọ. - He who runs ahead of his destiny will stumble.

The Igbo see destiny (chi) as sacred. This proverb warns against trying to overtake fate. Impatience with life's timing leads to downfall. For example, a young man who seeks wealth through shortcuts may fall into disgrace. It teaches trust in divine timing.

5. Òké òsìmiri ànòkataghị rié onyé óbùla nke ò hùrú úkwú ya ànyá. - The river does not swallow a person whose feet do not touch it.

This highlights patience as wisdom in avoiding unnecessary involvement in danger. A person who does not “rush into deep waters” will not be harmed. For instance, those who wait and observe before acting often avoid conflict or disaster.

6. Úkwá rùò ògé ya, ọ dàá - When breadfruit is ripe, it falls.

This proverb reflects God's timing. Just as ukwa (breadfruit) drops naturally when ripe, life's blessings come when the season is right. It discourages forcing success and emphasizes divine providence. A cultural parallel is seen in marriages—when the right time comes, the right partner arrives.

7. Ébé onyé òsò rùrù, ka onyé ìje gà-erùkwa.- Where the runner reaches, the walker will also reach.

This promotes endurance and patience over unhealthy competition. Both the fast and the slow can achieve their goals. For example, in business, one may rise quickly, another gradually, but both can succeed if persistent. The Igbo lesson is that life is not a race.

8. Ndidí bụ ụzọ ísì nwee ihe ọmà - Patience is the key to obtaining good things.

This is a general philosophical statement. The Igbo stress patience as a gateway virtue that unlocks progress, peace, and prosperity. In practical life, a family dispute resolved with patience avoids generational enmity.

9. Ûgò nke n'àchá ntà na-échèrì ànyị oriri ya. - The eagle that hunts waits patiently for its prey. The eagle symbolizes strength and wisdom. This proverb links patience to strategy. Just as the eagle does not waste its energy rushing, humans must learn to wait for the right moment. A hunter or trader who is patient will have better success than one who acts hastily.

10. À naghị àgbà ọsọ ítụ àjà - One does not rush to offer a sacrifice.

Rituals and sacrifices in Igbo tradition require calmness and order. This proverb teaches that sacred or important matters must not be done in haste. In modern life, it applies to decision-making—rushed decisions often lead to mistakes. Patience brings honor and correctness.

The Igbo worldview values patience (ndídí) as a guiding principle for successful living. These proverbs highlight that life's blessings and progress are not rushed; instead, they come through endurance, self-control, and respect for time.

Patience connects with divine order, as seen in "Onyé bùrù chì ya ụzọ, ọ gbàgbùó onwe ya n'ọsọ". and "Úkwá rùó ògé ya, ọ dàá showing that hurrying brings failure, while waiting for God's time ensures success. It is also linked to success and reward ("Onyé ndídí n'èrì àzụ ụkpò."), avoidance of conflict and mistakes ("À naghị àgba ọsọ ítù àjà"), and progress at one's own pace ("Ébé onyé òsò rùrù, ka onyé ìje gà-erùkwa.").

Overall, the proverbs present patience as both a personal virtue and a social necessity. In Igbo philosophy, a patient person is seen as wise, honorable, and ultimately prosperous.

Application of Semiotics theory

Proverb for analysis:

Onyé buru chí ya ụzọ, ọ gbàgbùó onwe ya n'ọsọ.

He who runs ahead of his "chi" stumbles.

Semiotics analysis:

Sign (general message): The proverb conveys a warning about impatience, pride, and moving faster than destiny or divine guidance allows. It emphasizes waiting for the right time.

Icon (resembles what it means): The idea of “running ahead” literally matches the concept of physical movement it visually reflects someone rushing. It serves as an icon for impatience.

Index (connected to reality): Chi is a spiritual entity in Igbo culture that represents destiny or personal god. Saying someone “runs ahead of their chi” is an index of someone acting without spiritual alignment, ignoring divine timing.

Symbol (culturally assigned meaning): Chi is symbolic—it does not literally walk behind a person. It represents divine will or destiny. Stumbling is symbolic too. It doesn’t always mean physically falling but can indicate failure or setbacks due to haste or spiritual disconnection.

Cultural Implication:

In Igbo culture, chi plays a crucial role in personal identity and destiny. This proverb teaches that no matter how ambitious or skilled you are, you must act in alignment with your chi. Otherwise, your plans may fail.

Application of Dell Hymes Ethnography of Communication (SPEAKING model)

Proverb for analysis:

Ébé onye òsò rùrù, ka onye na-íje gà-erúkwa.

Wherever the runner reaches, the walker will also reach. With patience, one will eventually arrive at their goal, even if others seem faster.

Application Using the SPEAKING Model:

S – Setting and Scene

This proverb is typically used during family discussions, communal gatherings, or personal mentoring sessions.

P – Participants

Usually said by an elder, parent, or teacher to a younger person or peer who feels pressured by others' success. E.g., an apprentice watching his peers succeed before him.

E – Ends (Goals)

The goal is to encourage patience, perseverance, and faith in one's journey. It's meant to comfort or caution against unnecessary comparison or haste.

A – Act Sequence

The speaker tells the proverb to someone who is likely feeling anxious or left behind. The listener receives it as reassurance that their effort will pay off in due time.

K – Key (Tone or Manner)

It is delivered gently, often with a calm and wise tone. The manner is reassuring—not scolding.

I – Instrumentalities (Form or Style of Speech)

It is oral, in Igbo language, and often accompanied by gestures or stories. May be shared as part of storytelling or moral instruction.

N – Norms

There is mutual respect in the interaction. The speaker is often in a position of experience or wisdom. The listener listens quietly and reflect.

G – Genre

It is a proverb, a culturally grounded oral form used in Igbo society to teach morals, values, and life lessons.

This proverb reflects how the Igbo people view success, progress, and patience. By using the SPEAKING model, we see that its function goes beyond words—it’s shaped by context, participants, and social meaning. It’s not just what is said, but how, when, and why it is said that gives it power.

4.2.7. Theme of Cultural symbolism (use of animals and colour)

1. Ngwéré sị n'èlú dàá, màdụ e tó ya, ó tó onwe ya. - When the lizard falls from a high place and no one praises it, it praises itself.

The lizard is a common creature in the Igbo environment. It often nods its head after surviving a fall. This action is seen as self-praise. The proverb teaches resilience and the ability to recognize one's achievements even when others do not. In Igbo culture, while modesty is valued, the lizard symbolizes self-affirmation and endurance in the face of neglect.

2. Mbé na-aga nwayọ nwayọ, mà ọ na-ekwu na ọ kárijí ndí ọzọ. - The tortoise walks slowly, yet it claims it has outpaced others.

The tortoise (m̀bè) is a well-known trickster in Igbo folklore, often linked to cunning and deceit. This proverb mocks people who exaggerate their efforts or lie about their achievements. Just like the tortoise deceives others in folktales, the proverb warns against pride based on falsehood and dishonesty.

3. Ọdum àdighị àgba ọsọ n'efu, mà ọ búrù na ọ na-agba ọsọ, ọ na-égbu ànù -The lion does not run aimlessly, but when it does, it makes a kill.

The lion (òdum) symbolizes power, majesty, and authority in Igbo culture. Unlike lesser animals, the lion's actions are purposeful. This proverb praises strength used wisely and

effectively. It teaches that true leadership and power are not wasteful but deliberate. It reflects the Igbo respect for calculated action and dignified strength.

4. Mgbe ójì juru àfọ́, ì sì na ọ́ húghị ọ́chá.- When black fills the stomach, it says it hasn't yet seen white.

The colour black (ójì) in Igbo thought represents greed, insatiability, and sometimes misfortune. This proverb criticizes people who are never satisfied, no matter how much they gain. It reflects the cultural warning against excessive desire, showing that unchecked greed prevents a person from appreciating contentment.

5. Ó bù na-áchà ọ́chá ka a na-eфе chí - It is with white that the gods are worshipped.

White (ọ́cha) is a sacred colour in Igbo beliefs, symbolizing purity, peace, and truth. In rituals, white chalk (nzu), white cloth, or white offerings are used to approach the gods. This proverb emphasizes that sincerity, purity, and honesty are the true foundation of spirituality. It reflects the Igbo belief that the divine is best served with a clean heart and truthfulness, not with corruption or deceit.

Application of Semiotics theory

1. Proverbs for analysis:

Ngwéré sì n'èlú dàa, màdụ e tó ya, ó tó onwe ya.

When the lizard falls from a high place and no one praises it, it praises itself.

Sign: The lizard itself.

Index: The lizard nodding its head after surviving a fall points to self-praise or resilience.

Icon: The lizard's action (nodding head) mimics human self-affirmation.

Symbol: The proverb symbolizes the value of self-recognition and perseverance even when others ignore your achievements. In Igbo culture, modesty is prized, so self-praise is unusual but necessary here.

Explanation: The lizard represents a person who, despite neglect from others, acknowledges their own success. This symbolizes endurance and confidence amid adversity, teaching resilience.

2. Proverb for analysis:

Mgbe ójì jurụ afọ, ìsù na ọ hụghị ọcha.

When black fills the stomach, it says it hasn't yet seen white.

Sign: The colour black (óji).

Index: Black filling the stomach points to greed or insatiable desire.

Icon: The colour black is associated with darkness, fullness, and excess, visually representing greed or dissatisfaction.

Symbol: In Igbo culture, black symbolizes greed, insatiability, and sometimes misfortune.

The proverb uses black as a symbol of excessive desire, criticizing people who are never satisfied regardless of what they get.

Explanation: The black colour stands for uncontrolled greed or desire that blinds a person to contentment (white, symbolizing purity or satisfaction). This warns against never being satisfied, showing that unchecked greed causes misfortune.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the main findings from the thematic analysis of selected Igbo proverbs. It shows how these proverbs reflect cultural values, social communication, and moral lessons in Igbo society. The chapter also discusses whether the study met its goals, points out any limitations faced, and offers suggestions for further research and practical uses of the proverbs to promote Igbo culture and communication.

5.1. Summary

This study has presented the first comprehensive and structural analysis of Igbo proverbs using a thematic framework that were collected during the study . Sixty-five proverbs were collected from five native speakers and organized into main themes like: social control, hospitality, truth and sincerity, conflict resolution, wisdom and knowledge, patience and cultural symbolism, creating a large corpus of selected Igbo proverbs data.

After a brief introduction to the study, a review of the related literature to the study was presented. This include: the concept of proverbs, the concept of Igbo proverbs, communication, language, meaning, symbolism and culture. Details of the research field sites and research participants were given. Similarly, the study employed two main theoretical frameworks to analyze the proverbs: Ethnography of Communication theory

and Semiotics theory. Ethnography of Communication theory, developed by Dell Hymes in the early 1960s, focuses on the ways language is used within its cultural context. Hymes emphasized understanding communication not just as linguistic exchange but as a social act deeply embedded in cultural norms and practices. This theory provides tools to explore how language functions in specific communities, highlighting components such as setting, participants, and purpose of communication. By applying this theory, the study was able to analyze the proverbs within their cultural environment, revealing their role in social interactions, control, and transmission of values. Semiotics theory, attributed mainly to Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) and Charles Sanders Peirce (late 19th to early 20th century), centers on the study of signs and symbols as fundamental elements of communication. Saussure introduced the idea of the linguistic sign as a combination of the signifier (form) and signified (concept), while Peirce developed a triadic model of signs including icons, indexes, and symbols. This theory allows for a deep understanding of how meanings are constructed and interpreted through cultural symbols, gestures, and signs. In the context of this study, semiotics was crucial for interpreting the symbolic meanings embedded in the proverbs, especially those involving animals, colors, and other cultural motifs, thus enriching the analysis of how the Igbo culture communicates complex ideas and values non-verbally. Overall, the theories were useful tools, creating room for a dynamic analysis.

There was data presentation and analysis. A wide range of data was found to exist in selected Igbo proverbs. Proverbs that cut across hospitality, truth and sincerity, conflict resolution were discussed. The data presentation and analysis showed that these proverbs convey a wide range of meaning. The analysis also showed that Igbo proverbs carry deep cultural meaning. They serve as vital tools for expressing community values, resolving conflicts, promoting moral and passing down wisdom through generations, for instance, Igbo conflict resolution proverbs portray Peace not merely as the absence of war, but as the presence of tolerance, humility, mutual respect and timely dialogue. They are tools for teaching individuals and communities that harmony is both a moral duty and a social necessity. The study indicated that these proverbs are used purposefully.

.5.2. Conclusion

1. The study aimed to examine selected Igbo proverbs and how they illustrate cultural, moral, and communicative values. Based on the thematic analysis, it is evident that the study met its goals. These goals include:
2. Identifying and examining selected Igbo proverbs as they appear in different contexts during conversations and social interactions.
 - i. Exploring the major themes reflected in these selected Igbo proverbs.
 - ii. Looking at how the selected Igbo proverbs support effective communication among Igbo speakers.

3. Demonstrating the role of proverbs in preserving and sharing Igbo cultural values. The analysis clearly shows that Igbo proverbs are more than just wise sayings—they are carriers of deep cultural meaning. Through their use, the Igbo people pass down important values such as respect for elders, the importance of truth and sincerity, the value of patience, wisdom, hospitality, unity, and peaceful living. For instance, proverbs like “Ànụ̀ bù ụ̀zò na-ànụ̀ mmirí ọ́ma” emphasize discipline and responsibility, while “Nwá́nne na nwá́nne bí n’údò bú élètà àghàrà” promotes peace and tolerance within families and communities. These proverbs are used in everyday conversations, storytelling, conflict resolution, and even formal settings like traditional meetings and ceremonies. They help maintain social order by setting standards for behavior and guiding moral conduct. In doing so, they not only reflect Igbo worldview but also ensure the continuity of cultural norms and beliefs from one generation to the next. By analyzing these proverbs, it becomes clear that they are powerful tools for cultural education, identity preservation, and community bonding.

All these goals were reached through detailed categorization, explanation, and interpretation of each proverb related to its theme. The study shows how proverbs serve not just as language expressions but also as carriers of tradition, learning, and social rules.

5.3. Limitation of the Study

One limitation of the study is the limited number of informants, as proverbs were mainly gathered from one native speaker. This may have narrowed the variety and regional

diversity of the proverbs collected. Additionally, time and access to more diverse sources restricted the study from including a wider range of contexts in which proverbs are used. Despite these limitations, the proverbs analyzed still offer valuable insights into the communication purposes and thematic richness of Igbo oral tradition.

5.4. Recommendations

This study suggests that future researchers should broaden their data collection to include a greater number of speakers from various Igbo regions. This will help capture the differences in dialects and the wider use of proverbs. It also recommends documenting these proverbs in both written and audio formats, particularly by native speakers, to ensure they are preserved for younger generations. Finally, more interdisciplinary studies could investigate the role of proverbs in media, literature, and contemporary Igbo discussion, highlighting their importance in today's communication.

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