

**PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO THE USE OF IGBO PROVERBS IN IGBO
TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION**

BY

**UZONDU CHUKWUEMIKA MICHAEL
ART2100855**

DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS

FACULTY OF ARTS,

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

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**BEING A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
LINGUISTICS STUDIES FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
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APPROVAL

I, **Uzundu Chukwuemika Michael**, a student of the Department of Linguistics Studies, University of Benin with Matriculation number ART2100855 completed the requirements for the course work and research 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 for any other degree or diploma program of this or any other university or Institution.

Ezeneme Ifeanyichukwu Benjamin
(Author)

Date

Dr .J.O. Onu
(Project Supervisor)

Date

Dr. (Mrs.) P.O. Solomon-Etefia
(Head of Department)

Date

External Examiner

Date

PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATION

I, UZONDU CHUKWUEMIKA MICHAEL with the matriculation number **ART2100855** declare that this work titled “**A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO THE USE OF IGBO PROVERBS IN IGBO TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION**” has successfully passed the anti- plagiarism test, and so does not violate any copyright regulation.

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Uzondu Chukwuemika Michael

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God, whose grace, wisdom, and strength made this research possible. I also dedicate it to my beloved parents and family for their love, prayers, and constant encouragement. Finally, I dedicate it to all lovers of the Igbo language and culture, whose passion continues to keep our heritage alive.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of proverbs in Igbo traditional communication from a pragmatic perspective. It aims to show how Igbo proverbs serve as tools for expressing wisdom, maintaining social harmony, and conveying meaning beyond the surface level of words. Data for the study were drawn from selected Igbo proverbs commonly used in daily communication. The analysis focused on how context, speaker intention, and cultural knowledge shape the interpretation and functions of these proverbs.

Findings reveal that Igbo proverbs perform several communicative and social functions such as advising, warning, correcting, teaching moral values, promoting unity, and reinforcing cultural norms. The study further shows that the pragmatic meaning of a proverb depends largely on the situation in which it is used and the shared understanding between speaker and listener.

The research concludes that proverbs remain a vital aspect of Igbo language and culture, serving as effective tools for teaching, persuasion, and cultural preservation. It recommends that more attention be given to the teaching and documentation of proverbs to sustain their communicative and cultural relevance in modern Igbo society.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Proverbs, Igbo Language, Communication, Culture

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Language is not only a tool for expressing thoughts, but also a cultural resource through which people communicate values, preserve traditions, and maintain social harmony. In African societies, especially among the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria, proverbs occupy a central place in communication. They are regarded as the distilled wisdom of the ancestors, serving as a repository of moral values, social norms, and cultural philosophies. Proverbs are used to educate, persuade, warn, settle disputes, and beautify speech. In linguistics, the study of how meaning is derived from context is the concern of pragmatics. Pragmatics goes beyond the literal interpretation of words to examine how speakers use language in particular situations to achieve communicative goals. Within this perspective, proverbs can be seen not only as figurative expressions but also as pragmatic tools that perform specific functions such as advising, warning, consoling, or softening criticism. The pragmatic approach therefore provides a suitable framework for analyzing Igbo proverbs, as it accounts for how speakers use them to communicate implied meanings, achieve politeness, and manage interpersonal relationships.

1.1 Background of Study

Among the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria, traditional communication is not complete without the use of proverbs. Proverbs are regarded as the “oil with which words are

eaten,”(mmanụ eji eri okwu) and they represent compressed wisdom, drawn from the experiences, philosophies, and moral codes of the people.

In traditional Igbo society, proverbs serve several communicative functions. They are used to teach moral lessons, regulate social behaviour, resolve conflicts, and strengthen persuasive speech. Elders, orators, and storytellers employ proverbs to give weight to their utterances, while listeners draw from their shared cultural knowledge to interpret the intended meaning. Proverbs thus act as cultural signposts, guiding interaction and reinforcing the communal values of respect, politeness, and social harmony.

From a linguistic perspective, the study of meaning in use falls within the domain of pragmatics. Pragmatics is concerned with how utterances achieve meaning in context, focusing on elements such as speech acts, implicature, presupposition, politeness, and shared knowledge. A pragmatic approach to proverbs, therefore, examines how speakers use them strategically to achieve communicative goals beyond their literal sense. For instance, an Igbo proverb used during a dispute may not simply describe an event but may function pragmatically as a warning, an advice, or a subtle command.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Proverbs, as an important aspect of Igbo traditional communication, embody the wisdom, philosophy, and worldview of the people. They play crucial roles in conflict resolution, persuasion, moral instruction, and the reinforcement of cultural norms. However, despite

their centrality in Igbo discourse, their pragmatic functions are often underexplored in scholarly research. Most studies on Igbo proverbs have focused on their semantic content, literary value, and stylistic features (Nwachukwu-Agbada, 1994; Egudu, 1972), while little attention has been given to how they function within specific communicative contexts to achieve particular pragmatic effects. The neglect of this pragmatic perspective creates a gap in understanding the full communicative power of proverbs. Pragmatics, as a branch of linguistics, is concerned with meaning in context and the ways in which speakers use language to perform actions (Levinson, 1983). Thus, applying pragmatic theories to the study of proverbs can reveal how Igbo speakers employ these expressions not only to embellish speech but also to perform speech acts such as advising, warning, consoling, or criticizing indirectly. Without such an approach, the deeper communicative value of proverbs may be lost.

1.3. Statement of the problem

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1.4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the use of Igbo proverbs as tools of communication. It aims to show how proverbs go beyond being wise sayings to becoming effective means of giving advice, teaching morals, resolving conflicts, and preserving cultural values. By studying their meanings and the situations where they are used, the research seeks to highlight the role of proverbs in shaping social relationships and maintaining the Igbo way of life. The study is also meant to draw attention to the importance of keeping proverbs alive in modern times, especially among the younger generation, as part of protecting the Igbo language and identity.

1.5. Research Questions

1. In what communicative contexts are proverbs most commonly used in Igbo traditional communication?

2. What are the relevance of Igbo proverbs in today's society, particularly in sustaining cultural identity?
3. How do proverbs enhance politeness, persuasion, and conflict resolution in Igbo communication?
4. What pragmatic functions do Igbo proverbs perform in traditional discourse?
5. How do Igbo speakers employ proverbs to manage social relationships and maintain cultural values?

1.6. Aims and objectives

1. Identify the communicative contexts in which proverbs are commonly used in Igbo traditional communication.
2. To access the relevance of Igbo proverbs in today's society, particularly in sustaining cultural identity
3. Examine how proverbs enhance politeness, persuasion, and conflict resolution in Igbo communication
4. Analyze the pragmatic functions by Igbo proverbs in traditional discourse
5. To investigate how Igbo speakers employ proverbs to manage social relationships and maintain cultural values.

1.6. Methodology

This chapter presents the research design and methods adopted in carrying out the study.

It discusses the research design, population and sample, method of data collection, method of data analysis, and the reliability and validity of the study.

1.6.1. Research design

This study adopts a *qualitative research design* used in pragmatic analysis. Since the study is concerned with meaning in context and the functions of proverbs in communication, the qualitative approach is most suitable. It allows the researcher to explore selected proverbs in depth, focusing on their interpretations, uses, and relevance in Igbo traditional settings.

1.6.2. Population of the study

The population of this study comprises Igbo native speakers, particularly elders, traditional leaders, and community members who actively participate in traditional communicative practices. Elders, orators and storytellers are of particular interest because they are the custodians of oral traditions and make frequent use of proverbs in discourse.

1.6.3. Sample and Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique will be employed. The sample will consist of selected proverbs commonly used in Igbo traditional communication, as obtained from oral interviews, folktales, and community gatherings. A sample size of approximately *40--

60* proverbs will be analyzed. This number is considered adequate to provide a representative overview of the pragmatic functions of Igbo proverbs.

1.6.4. Method of Data Collection

Data for this study will be collected through the following sources:

1. Oral Interviews: One-on-one interviews will be conducted with Igbo elders, traditional leaders, and speakers skilled in proverbial usage. The interviews will focus on the contexts in which proverbs are used, their intended meanings, and their communicative functions.
2. Observation: Participation and observation during traditional meetings, storytelling sessions, and other communicative events where proverbs are employed.
3. Secondary Sources: Relevant textbooks, journals, and previous studies on Igbo proverbs, pragmatics, and African traditional communication will be consulted to complement the primary data.

1.6.5. Method Of Data Analysis

Data will be analyzed using pragmatic and contextual analysis such as :

1. Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) : to examine how proverbs perform communicative acts, that is,
 - speaker's intention;
 - the situation in which it is used;
 - the implied meaning based on context.

1.7. Significance of the Study

This study is so important in many ways. Academically, it adds to knowledge by looking at Igbo proverbs from the angle of how they are used in real communication, not just how they sound or look. Culturally, it helps to keep Igbo proverbs alive as carriers of wisdom and values, and it can remind young people of the need to use them. Socially, the study shows how proverbs help people live in peace, correct bad behavior, and settle disputes. In practical use, teachers, elders, and groups that promote culture can use the findings to teach language and tradition better. In all, the study proves that proverbs are still very useful in keeping the Igbo way of life strong even with the changes of modern times.

1.8. Justification of the Study

This study is justified because proverbs are a central part of Igbo communication, but their use is steadily reducing as younger generations pay less attention to traditional ways of speaking. Many studies have looked at Igbo proverbs mainly as pieces of literature or as collections of sayings, but few have focused on how they work in everyday conversation and what roles they play in passing messages. A pragmatic study is needed to show how proverbs actually function in real communication, especially in advising, warning, teaching morals, and keeping social order. Also, in today's modern society where Western ways of speaking are spreading fast, this research is necessary to show that proverbs are not old or useless, but remain powerful tools for building peace, teaching values, and keeping cultural identity alive.

1.9. Scope/Limitation of the Study

The scope of study is centered on the use of proverbs in Igbo traditional communication.

It looks at how proverbs are applied in everyday settings such as meetings, storytelling, and cultural events, with focus on their meanings and roles in passing messages, teaching morals, and keeping peace. The research relies on selected communities, interviews, and existing texts. However, the study is limited to a small number of proverbs and contexts because of time and resources. It also depends on respondents' knowledge and memory, which may not always be complete. In addition, the work deals mainly with the practical use of proverbs in communication and does not cover their full literary or historical background.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature relevant to the study of proverbs and their use in traditional Igbo communication from a pragmatic perspective. This section discusses the previous works related to this study under the following subheadings: Conceptual review, previous studies, and concerns of present study.

2.1 Conceptual Review

Under the conceptual review, the definition of the following concepts are well provided :

Proverbs, pragmatics, traditional communication, culture, Pragmatic use of Proverbs in Igbo communication, and Proverbs as a tool of social control in Igbo society.

2.1.1. Proverbs

Proverbs are short, meaningful, and metaphorical statements that convey wisdom, truth, advice, or values of a people. They are regarded as cultural signposts that transmit traditions across generations. Finnegan (2012) describes Proverbs as “the most succinct and memorable expressions of traditional wisdom”. Yankah (1989) argues that Proverbs represent the communicative competence of African societies, serving as a link between language, culture, and social practice. They serve as diluted forms of knowledge used to persuade, instruct, entertain, and warn. In traditional Igbo communication, Proverbs are

not just decorative speech but essential tools for effective dialogue, especially among elders.

2.1.2. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that studies how language is used in context to achieve meaning. It simply means how meaning is influenced by context. Levinson (1983) defines it as "the study of relations between language and context that are basic to an account of language understanding". Mey (2001) also stresses that Pragmatics examines how language users make meaning in real life situations. For proverbs, Pragmatics is very crucial because they often carry meanings that go beyond their literal words, requiring the use of context and cultural interpretation.

2.1.3. Traditional communication

Traditional communication refers to indigenous forms of transmitting information and preserving knowledge within a community before the emergence of modern media. Wilson (1987) defines it as "the process of information exchange rooted in people's culture, values, and experiences". In Igbo culture, traditional communication includes oral genres such as folktales, riddles, songs, chants, and particularly proverbs. In the Igbo society, traditional communication plays a significant role in teaching values, resolving disputes, and ensuring social harmony. Nwuneli (1983) observes that these forms of

communication serve not only to entertain but also to instruct, regulate behavior, and reinforce cultural identity. Proverbs, therefore, remain a significant aspect of Igbo traditional communication. Proverbs also stand out as a respected medium of expression, often used to achieve specific communicative purposes.

2.1.4. Culture

Culture can be seen as the shared values, beliefs, language, and practices that define a people. It shapes how individuals communicate and interpret meaning within a society. Among the Igbo, culture is preserved and transmitted largely through oral traditions such as proverbs. As recent studies show, proverbs serve as cultural repositories for teaching morals, resolving conflicts, and maintaining social harmony (Ogbuehi & Olashinde, 2025; Nwabudike, 2025). Proverbs therefore function not only as linguistic devices but as cultural tools. Their meanings depend on the social and situational context in which they are used, making culture central to both their use and interpretation (Ik-Iloanusi & Mbagwu, 2025). This study situates proverbs within Igbo culture as instruments of traditional communication and cultural continuity.

2.1.5. Pragmatic use of Proverbs in Igbo communication

Pragmatics focuses on how meaning is shaped by context, intention, and cultural knowledge. Proverbs, as a form of figurative language, are best understood through a

pragmatic lens because their meanings go beyond literal interpretation. In Igbo society, proverbs are essential tools of communication, used not only to embellish speech but also to perform specific functions such as advising, warning, persuading, encouraging, and resolving conflicts. Ogbuehi and Olashinde (2025) show that Igbo proverbs function pragmatically as “speech acts” because they achieve communicative goals like advising or cautioning without direct confrontation. Similarly, Ik-Iloanusi and Mbagwu (2025) argue that proverbs embody politeness strategies, enabling speakers to maintain respect and social harmony. Nwabudike (2025) further observes that proverbs in the Enuani dialect serve pragmatic roles in promoting peace, morality, and communal unity.

2.1.6. Proverbs as Tools of Social Control in Igbo Society

In traditional Igbo society, proverbs are not merely decorative elements of speech but serve as powerful instruments of social control. Social control refers to the ways a society regulates behavior to maintain order, morality, and communal harmony. Proverbs function in this regard by embodying collective values and prescribing acceptable behavior. Through indirectness, proverbs correct deviant actions without open confrontation. Ogbuehi and Olashinde (2025) note that Igbo proverbs embody moral lessons that guide behavior and maintain peace within communities.

2.2. Previous Studies

Several scholars have examined the use of proverbs in African and Igbo communication.

Okoye (2017) carried a study on Igbo Marriage negotiations. Okoye carried out a qualitative study on how Igbo elders employ proverbs during traditional marriage negotiations. Data was collected through interviews with ten community elders and observation of three separate marriage ceremonies in Anambra State. Findings revealed that proverbs functioned primarily as politeness strategies, serving to soften delicate issues such as bride price discussions and family expectations. The use of proverbs allowed speakers to pass sensitive messages indirectly, thereby preserving respect and social harmony. This study is significant because it illustrates the pragmatic effectiveness of proverbs in maintaining peace in high-tension communicative contexts. However, its focus was limited to marriage settings, leaving unexplored other dimensions of Igbo traditional communication.

Ezenwa-Ohaeto (2013) investigated Igbo proverbs embedded in folktales and their pragmatic roles in teaching morals to children. Using textual analysis of twenty folktales collected from Imo and Enugu States, the study revealed that proverbs acted as reinforcement tools for moral instruction. They provided authority to the narrator's voice, engaged listeners, and ensured that cultural lessons were not lost. The research concluded that without proverbs, folktales lose much of their cultural and pedagogical power.

Nwachukwu-Agbada (2012) examined the relevance of proverbs in modern Igbo oral literature. Using oral interviews and analysis of performance texts, the study found that

despite modernization and Western media influences, proverbs retain their communicative value. They continue to function as concise carriers of wisdom, diplomacy, and social control. One notable finding was that younger generations often struggle with interpreting proverbs, leading to a gradual decline in everyday usage. The study is important because it highlights the cultural challenge facing Igbo society, justifying further documentation and pragmatic analysis of proverbs.

Okolo (2020) conducted an in-depth ethnographic study of how Igbo elders employ proverbs in settling community disputes. Through interviews with elders and observation of conflict resolution sessions, the study showed that proverbs acted as indirect speech acts, softening accusations, recommending solutions, and preserving face between disputants.

Okafor (1992) investigated the use of proverbs in Igbo traditional conflict resolution. His findings showed that proverbs serve as diplomatic tools in settling disputes and restoring social harmony. However, the study did not systematically apply pragmatic theories such as speech acts or implicature.

Nwachukwu (1995) examined the role of proverbs in Igbo oral literature, emphasizing their importance in transmitting moral values and cultural identity. His study, however, focused mainly on the literary and semantic aspects, paying little attention to their pragmatic functions.

2.4. The Concern Of The Present Study

This study is concerned with examining the pragmatic functions of proverbs in Igbo traditional communication. It focuses on how proverbs perform roles such as advising, warning, persuading, and resolving conflicts, while also highlighting how context and culture shape their interpretation. The research further considers how proverbs serve as tools for preserving Igbo identity in the face of modern influences. Another concern of this study is to examine how contextual factors such as speaker-listener relationships, cultural norms, and situational settings influence the interpretation and effectiveness of proverbs.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical basis of the study. Since proverbs in Igbo communication function as actions that advise, warn, persuade, or correct, the conversational implicature Theory provides the most suitable framework. It explains how language is used not only to convey meaning but also to perform functions within social interaction. This theory is appropriate because they explain how proverbs function as communicative acts and how their meanings often depend on what is implied rather than directly stated. This framework aligns with the pragmatic use of proverbs in Igbo society as tools of communication and cultural preservation.

3.1. Conversational implicature

The theory of Conversational Implicature, proposed by Grice (1975), is concerned with the way meaning is conveyed indirectly in communication. Grice introduced the Cooperative Principle, which assumes that speakers and listeners generally work together to achieve understanding. He outlined four maxims that guide conversation:

1. Maxim of Quantity: Providing the right amount of information (not too little or too much).
2. Maxim of Quality : Saying what you believe to be true.
3. Maxim of Relation : Being relevant.

4. Maxim of Manner : Being clear, brief, and orderly.

Now, speakers sometimes deliberately flout these maxims to create additional meanings, and this is where implicature arises. In Igbo traditional communication, proverbs often depend on implicature to convey wisdom, warnings, or advice without direct confrontation. For instance, when an elder says “ikuku fee, ahu ike ọkụkọ” (the buttocks of the fowl will expose when breeze blows), now, the literal meaning may be unclear but the implicature by the speaker means that a hidden truth or secret will be exposed someday. Instead of stating a message directly (which may be considered rude or confrontational in Igbo culture), speakers rely on shared cultural knowledge to infer meaning. This supports the pragmatic perspective that communication is not only about words, but also about context, intention, and cultural interpretation.

3.2. Relevance of The Present Study

In this study conversational Implicature is relevant because it highlights how Igbo proverbs achieve their pragmatic force through indirectness, inference, and implied meaning. Proverbs are not usually straightforward statements; instead, they invite the hearer to interpret and uncover the intended message within the cultural context. This demonstrates that proverbs function as effective pragmatic tools in Igbo traditional communication.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected for this study. The data comprise selected Igbo proverbs gathered through interviews, oral interactions, and literary sources that reflect various aspects of traditional communication. The aim of this chapter is to examine how these proverbs function pragmatically in conveying meanings, intentions, and cultural values within Igbo society. The analysis in this chapter is guided by the principles of pragmatics, particularly those relating to context, implicature, speech acts, and inference. Each proverb is interpreted not only based on its literal meaning but also within the communicative situation in which it is used. In Igbo traditional communication, proverbs serve as indirect but powerful tools for persuasion, admonition, advice, and conflict resolution. Therefore, the analysis focuses on the pragmatic meanings that emerge from the interaction between the speaker, listener, and context.

4.1 Data Presentation

This section presents the data collected for the study. The data consist of selected Igbo proverbs obtained from oral interviews, conversations with native speakers, and relevant literary materials. The proverbs are arranged in a table for easy reference and further analysis in the following sections.

4.1.1 Proverbs In Igbo Language

S/N	PROVERBS	LITERAL TRANSLATION
1	Ụwa mgbede ka mma	The evening life is better
2	Ọka anaghi etokari onye kuru ya	A maize plant never grows taller than the planter
3	Ụkwa ruo oge ya, ọ daa	When the breadfruit is ripe, it falls
4	Ugo chara acha adighi echu echu	A well-adorned eagle never loses its beauty
5	Ogologo abughi na nwa m etola	Tallness does not mean my child is mature
6	Anaghi ezi nwata onu ara nne ya	A baby is not shown the way to the mother's nipple
7	Agwa nti ma nti anughi, egbupu isi, nti esoro ya	When advice is given to the ear and it refuses to hear, if the head is cut off, the ear follows it
8	Osimiri anaghi eri onye o hughi ukwu ya	The river does not drown a leg it does not touch
9	Oji akwu nyetu nchi, na nchi adighi ari elu	He that has palm fruit should give the grasscutter because it cannot climb
10	Ebule naa azu, o bia ogu	The ram retreats before attacking
11	Okuko nwa ogbenye bu ehi ya	A poor man's chicken is his cow
12	Nwa eze anaghi efu na mba	A king's child never gets lost in a foreign land
13	Mmiri mara ugo, sara ugo ahu	The rain that falls on the eagle also bathes the eagle
14	Ogo biakaria, ezie ya kpata nku	When an in-law visits too often, he is asked to fetch firewood
15	Mgbe onye ji tete ura bu ututu ya	Whenever a person wakes up is his morning
16	Ka a na-achu aja ka ikpe, ka ikpe na-ama ndi mmuo	Let's keep sacrificing; let the gods take the blame
17	Ahia oma na-ere onwe ya	A good market sells itself
18	Were ehie choba ewu ojii tupu chi eru	Look for a black goat in the daytime before night falls
19	Aturu muru ebule gba aka nwa	A sheep that gave birth to a ram has no child
20	Agwo emeghi ihe o ji buru agwo, umuaka e nwere ya kee nku	If a snake does not use what it was born with, the children will tie firewood with it
21	Ehi n'enweghi odudu, chi ya na-achuru ya ijiji	An elephant without a tail, its god helps chase the flies away
22	Ihe okenye no n'ala hu, nwata ri elu oji agaghi ahu ya	What an elder sees while sitting, a child can't see even if he climbs a tree
23	Onye kpara nku ahuhu si nwere	He who fetches ant-infested firewood invites

	bjara ya ọrụ	the lizard for a feast
24	Ala adighi mma bu uru ndi nze	Land that is not fertile benefits the elders
25	Onye isi nkwocha anaghi aga ogu okwute	A bald-headed person does not go to a stone fight
26	Nwata maara nna ya amarago ndi ichie	A child who knows his father already knows the ancestors
27	Oji ofo ga-ana	The one who holds the ofo (symbol of truth and justice) will go free
28	Ajughị ajụ eri na-akpata ariaghi ariā anwụ	Failing to ask questions before eating leads to sickness or death
29	Obere onye kpara obere nkụ, nnukwu onye kpara nnukwu nkụ	A small person fetches small firewood; a big person should fetch big firewood
30	Nkwuto nwa ogaranya kariṛi ogbugbu ya	The fall of a rich man's child is greater than his death
31	Nwata kpatakarị ogbo ya na nkụ, asị na o bara n'ajọ ohia	When a child brings home more firewood than his mates, people say he went to a bad forest
32	Nwata na-amụ iri elu, obi ga-aka ya	A child learning to climb a tree must be brave at heart
33	Ihe onye choro ka o ga afu	Whatever a person desires, they will surely see it
34	Were ire gi guo eze gi onu	Use your tongue to count your teeth
35	Okocho chi umu anaghi efe elu	A hen with chicks does not fly high
36	Mbo na-afu gi, atukwana onye ozo	If a pinch hurts you, don't do it to others
37	Anaghi amu aka ekpe na nka	One does not learn to use the left hand in old age
38	Ukwu na-ama ogodo adighi mma igba oto	A waist that ties wrapper is not good to be seen naked
39	Otu osisi anaghi eme ohia	One tree does not make a forest
40	Anyuko mamiri onu, o gba ufufu	When people urinate together, it foams
41	Onye ogodo mbite anaghi agbasi egwu ike n'ogbo	Someone who borrowed a wrapper does not dance hard on the dance floor
42	Naani ukwu gbara apiti na-eri ihe guru ya	Only a muddy foot eats what it wants
43	Dinta muta atughi atu gba, egbe amuta ebeghi ebe fee	If a hunter never aims before shooting, the bird will learn to fly off before landing
44	Nwata akwo n'azu amaghi n'ije di ufu	A child carried on the back does not know that the trekking is painful

45	Ewu nwurū n'oba ji, o bughị aguu gburu ya	The goat that died in a barn of yams was not killed by hunger
46	Aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu	Dirty hands will lead to oily mouth
47	Nku nwata kpara n'okochi ka o ga-anyan'udu mmiri	The firewood a child gathers in the dry season is what he will use during the rainy season
48	Nganga ka okenye ji agbara ehi oso	An elder uses sense to run from a cow chasing him
49	Ijiji anaghi eso ndumodu na esokwa ozu ala ini	A disobedient fly follows the corpse to the grave
50	Ejighi ihe a na-agba na nti agba n'anya	You don't wear what is for the ear on the eye
51	Agwo otu onye huru na abu eke	A snake one person sees is usually a python
52	Anu gbaa ajo oso, agba ya ajo egbe	When an animal runs recklessly, it is shot recklessly
53	Ikuku fee ahu ike okuko	When the wind blows, the chicken's buttocks will be exposed
54	Oke soro ngwere maa mmiri, o kochaa ngwere; o gaghi akochaa oke	A rat that follows the lizard into the rain, the water will dry faster on the lizard than on the rat
55	Nwata kwọ aka, o soro ogaranya rie nri	A child that washes his hand will eat with the wealthy
56	Anaghi agwa ochinti n'agha esu	You don't warn the deaf during war
57	Egbe belu ugo ebelu nke si ibe ya ebeghi, nku kwa ya	Let the kite soar and the eagle soar; each takes its own firewood
58	Agha akara aka adighi eri ngworo	An expected battle does not surprise the crippled
59	Mmadu anaghi ahapu ebe a na-echi ozọ gawa ebe a na-alu agwu	One does not leave a place of merriment for a place of agony
60	Aka nri kwọ aka ekpe, aka ekpe akwọ aka nri	The right hand washes the left hand, and the left hand washes the right hand
61	Etu isi dobe ute gi ka i ga-esi lahu	How you make your bed, so shall you lie on it
62	A na-ebido n'ulo mara mma puo ezi	Beauty starts from inside the compound before going out

4.2. Data Analysis

1. Ụwa mgbede ka mma

Literal Translation: "The evening life is better"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb encourages patience and hope. It implies that one's later days may be better than the present. The speaker uses it indirectly to advise someone not to give up, showing the Igbo belief in endurance and positive change.

2. Ọka anaghi etokari onye kuru ya

Translation: "A maize plant never grows taller than the planter"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb is used to warn or remind younger people to respect their elders or mentors. It indirectly teaches humility and acknowledges experience. The speaker uses it to caution anyone trying to outshine or challenge their superior.

3. Ụkwa ruo oge ya, ọ daa

Translation: "When the breadfruit is ripe, it falls"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches patience and the value of timing. It implies that everything happens at the right time. The speaker uses it indirectly to advise someone to wait for the proper moment before taking action or expecting success.

4. Ugo chara acha adighi echu echu

Translation: "A well-adorned eagle never loses its beauty"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb is used to praise someone of good character or lasting reputation. It implies that true virtue or excellence does not fade. The speaker uses it indirectly to commend or encourage consistent good behavior

.5. Ogologo abughi na nwa m etola

Translation: "Tallness does not mean my child is mature"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb warns against judging maturity by appearance. It indirectly teaches that wisdom and understanding come with experience, not size or age. The speaker uses it to correct pride or overconfidence in young people.

6. Anaghi ezi nwata onu ara nne ya

Translation: "A baby is not shown the way to the mother's nipple"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb implies that some knowledge or skills come naturally. It is used to stress that certain abilities are inborn or instinctive. Pragmatically, the speaker uses it to remind someone that some actions need no formal instruction.

7. Agwa ntị ma ntị anughị, egbupụ isi, ntị esoro ya.

Translation: "When advice is given to the ear and it refuses to hear, if the head is cut off, the ear follows it"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb serves as a warning against stubbornness. It implies that ignoring advice can lead to destruction. The speaker uses it indirectly to caution someone to listen to counsel or face the consequences.

8. Osimiri anaghi eri onye o hughi ukwụ ya

Translation: "the river does not drown a leg it does not touch"

Pragmatic analysis:

This proverb emphasizes safety through caution. It implies that one stays out of trouble by avoiding risky situations. The speaker uses it indirectly to advise someone to be careful and avoid unnecessary danger.

9. Oji akwụ nyetu nchi, na nchi adighi ari elu

Translation: "He that has palm fruit should give the grasscutter because it cannot climb"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches kindness and understanding. It implies that those who have should assist others who lack certain abilities. The speaker uses it indirectly to encourage generosity and empathy within the community.

10. Ebule naa azu, o bia ogo

Translation: "The ram retreats before attacking"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches patience and strategy. It implies that stepping back can be a sign of preparation, not fear. Pragmatically, the speaker uses it to encourage self-control and remind others that restraint often precedes strength. This encourages the wisdom of taking time to assess a situation before plunging into it.

11. Okuko nwa ogbenye bu ehi ya

Translation: "A poor man's chicken is his cow"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb emphasizes contentment and respect for what one has. It implies that everyone values their possessions, no matter how small. Pragmatically, the speaker uses it to teach humility and appreciation for one's means.

12. Nwa eze anaghi efu na mba

Translation: "A king's child never gets lost in a foreign land"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb expresses confidence and identity. It implies that a person of good upbringing or strong heritage will always stand out, no matter where they go.

Pragmatically, the speaker uses it to encourage pride, resilience, and self-worth.

13. Mmiri mara ugo, sara ugo ahụ

Translation: "The rain that falls on the eagle also bathes the eagle".

Meaning: Unfortunate events can turn out to be blessings in disguise.

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb reminds people that challenges can produce positive outcomes.

Pragmatically, the speaker uses it to encourage optimism and resilience, showing that hardship can lead to growth or hidden benefits.

14. Ọgọ biakaria, ezie ya kpata nkụ

Translation: "When an in-law visits too often, he is asked to fetch firewood"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb cautions against taking advantage of hospitality. It implies that frequent or prolonged visits may lead to loss of respect. Pragmatically, the speaker uses it to teach moderation and the importance of knowing one's limits.

15. Mgbe onye ji tete ụra bụ ụtụtụ ya

Translation: "Whenever a person wakes up is his morning"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches that it is never too late to start or make progress in life.

Pragmatically, the speaker uses it to encourage determination and hope, reminding others that everyone's time of success is different. It implies that everyone's progress or success

comes at their own time. The speaker uses it to encourage someone who feels left behind, reminding them that late achievement is still achievement.

16. Ka a na-achụ aja ka ikpe, ka ikpe na-ama ndị mmụọ

Translation: "Let's keep sacrificing; let the gods take the blame"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches acceptance and responsibility. It implies that humans should keep doing their part and leave the rest to fate or the gods. Pragmatically, the speaker uses it to encourage perseverance and to remind people that some outcomes are beyond human control.

17. Ahịa ọma na-ere onwe ya

Translation: "A good market sells itself"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that quality attracts attention naturally. It implies that if something is genuinely good, it does not need much advertisement. The speaker uses it to encourage effort, honesty, and excellence, showing that value speaks for itself. This proverb suggests that high-quality products or work naturally attract attention without the need for promotion. In Igbo culture, it advises that excellence and authenticity speak louder than words. The meaning is implied rather than stated directly: instead of saying "Do good work and people will notice," the proverb uses the market as a metaphor.

18. Were ehihie chọba ewu ojii tupu chi eru

Translation: "look for a black goat in the daytime before night falls"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb emphasizes the importance of taking action at the right time. It implies that tasks should be done promptly, while conditions are favorable, rather than waiting and risking failure. In Igbo communication, it serves as indirect advice, teaching prudence and timely decision-making. Metaphorically, the “black goat” represents an opportunity or challenge, and “daytime” symbolizes the period when success is possible. Culturally, it reflects the Igbo value of foresight and proactive behavior. Pragmatically, the proverb functions as a subtle reminder or counsel, guiding behavior without explicitly commanding it.

19. Aturū mūrū ebule gba aka nwa

Translation: "A sheep that gave birth to a ram has no child"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb conveys disappointment or the idea of unfulfilled expectation. It implies that sometimes, outcomes may not match what was hoped for or expected. In Igbo communication, it functions as commentary or advice, often used to prepare someone for unforeseen results. Metaphorically, the “sheep” represents someone with certain expectations, while the “ram” symbolizes an outcome that differs from those expectations. Pragmatically, the proverb is used to teach acceptance, caution, and realistic thinking,

showing how Igbo proverbs often deliver moral or practical lessons indirectly, relying on cultural understanding and inference.

20. Agwọ emeghi ihe o ji buru agwọ, ụmụaka e nwere ya kee nkụ

Translation: "If a snake does not use what it was born with, the children will tie firewood with it"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches that natural abilities or advantages must be used wisely. It implies that failing to apply one's gifts or skills can lead to them being wasted or misused by others. In Igbo communication, it serves as indirect advice, reminding people to take action when necessary and also responsibility.

21. Ehi n'enweghi ọdụdụ, chi ya na-achụrụ ya ijiji

Translation: "An elephant without a tail, its god helps chase the flies away.

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb conveys the idea that even the powerful sometimes need help. It implies that everyone, regardless of strength or status, relies on external support to overcome difficulties. In Igbo communication, it functions as indirect advice or observation, reminding people that no one is entirely self-sufficient. Metaphorically, the "elephant" represents someone strong or important, and the "god chasing the flies" illustrates that support, protection, or assistance is necessary.

22. Ihe okenye nọ n'ala hụ, nwata ri elu oji agaghi ahụ ya

Translation: "What an elder sees while sitting, a child can't see even if he climbs a tree"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb emphasizes the value of experience and wisdom. It implies that knowledge and insight come with age, experience, and exposure, and cannot be easily acquired by those who are young or inexperienced. In Igbo communication, it functions as indirect advice or instruction, teaching respect for elders and recognition of their guidance.

23. Onye kpara nkụ ahụhụ si ngwere bịa ya ọrụ

Translation: "He who fetches ant-infested firewood invites the lizard for a feast."

Pragmatic Analysis:

It implies that actions have consequences, and careless or reckless behaviour can bring trouble. In Igbo communication, it functions as indirect advice or warning, alerting listeners to consider the possible outcomes of their actions before acting. Metaphorically, "ant-infested firewood" represents a problematic situation or task, while the "lizard feasting" illustrates the inevitable consequences or trouble that follow careless actions. The listener infers that if one engages in risky or thoughtless behavior, they will invite difficulties.

24. Ala adighi mma bu uru ndi nze

Translation: "Land that is not fertile benefits the elders."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb conveys the idea that opportunities or resources often benefit those with the experience, wisdom, or influence, even when they are not ideal. It implies that people, due to their knowledge or authority, can take turn unfavorable situations to their own advantage. In Igbo communication, it functions as indirect commentary or advice, showing the value of wisdom and strategic thinking. Metaphorically, “land that is not fertile” represents challenging or less rewarding circumstances, while “elders” symbolize those with the experience or foresight to benefit despite difficulties. The listener infers that patience, experience, and cleverness can transform disadvantage into gain.

25. Onye isi nkwocha anaghị aga oḡu okwute

Translation: "A bald-headed person does not go to a stone fight."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches caution and self-awareness. It means that a person should avoid situations that expose their weakness or put them in unnecessary danger. In Igbo communication, it reminds people to act wisely and know their limits.

26. nwata maara ndi nna ya amarago ndi ichie

Translation: "A child who knows his father's people already knows the ancestors".

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that knowing where you come from helps you understand your roots and traditions. It teaches that awareness of your family and background connects you to your heritage. In Igbo communication, it encourages respect for one's origin and culture.

27. Oji ọfọ ga-ana

Translation: "The one who holds the ọfọ (symbol of truth and justice) will go free."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that a truthful and just person will always be vindicated. It teaches that honesty and fairness protect a person from wrongdoing. In Igbo communication, it serves as a reminder for people to stand by the truth no matter the situation.

28. Ajuighi ajụ eri na-akpata ariaghi arija anwụ

Translation: "Failing to ask questions before eating leads to sickness or death."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that acting without proper understanding can lead to problems. It teaches that asking questions and seeking knowledge help people avoid danger. In Igbo communication, it serves as an advice encouraging carefulness, curiosity, and wise decision-making.

29. Obere onye kpara obere nkụ, nnukwu onye kpara nnukwu nkụ

Translation: "A small person fetches small firewood; a big person should fetch big firewood."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that people should work according to their strength and ability. It teaches that everyone has a role to play and should contribute fairly. In Igbo communication, it gives indirect advice, encouraging hard work, fairness, and responsibility.

30. Nkwuto nwa ogaranya kariṛi ogbu ya

Translation: "The fall of a rich man's child is greater than his death."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that disgrace or failure can be more painful than death, especially for someone from a respected or wealthy background. In Igbo communication, it serves as indirect advice or reflection, warning against pride and careless living.

31. Nwata kpatakarị ogo ya na nku, asị na o bara n'ajo ohi

Translation: "When a child brings home more firewood than his mates, people say he went to a bad forest."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that people often criticize or suspect others' success instead of appreciating their hard work. It reflects human jealousy and misunderstanding. In Igbo communication, it serves as indirect observation or warning, encouraging people to stay focused and not be discouraged by others' opinions.

32. Nwata na-amụ iri elu, obi ga-aka ya

Translation: "A child learning to climb a tree must be brave at heart."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches that courage and determination are needed to achieve success. It means that anyone who wants to grow or face challenges must be bold and confident. In Igbo communication, it serves as an encouragement, urging people not to fear difficulties.

33. Ihe onye chọrọ ka ọ ga afu

Translation: "Whatever a person desires, they will surely see it."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that people often get the results of what they seek or wish for, whether good or bad. It teaches that one's intentions and actions determine their outcomes. In Igbo traditional communication, it serves as indirect advice or reflection, reminding people to desire good things and act rightly.

34. Were ire gị guọ eze gị ọnụ

Translation: "Use your tongue to count your teeth."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb advises people to think carefully before speaking or acting. It means that one should be wise, cautious, and reflective when faced with decisions or problems. In

Igbo communication, it serves as indirect advice, encouraging self-examination and patience.

35. Ọkụkọ chi ụmụ anaghị efe elu

Translation: "A hen with chicks does not fly high."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches responsibility and caution. It means that someone who has others depending on them must act carefully and avoid risky behavior. In Igbo communication, it serves as indirect advice or reminder, urging people to be mindful of their duties and those who rely on them.

36. mbọ na-afụ gị, atụkwana onye ọzọ

Literal translation: "If a pinch hurts you, don't do it to others."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches empathy and fairness. It means that you should treat others the way you want to be treated. In Igbo traditional communication, it is used to remind people to consider how their actions affect others.

37. Anaghị amụ aka ekpe na nka.

Translation: One does not learn to use the left hand in old age.

pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches that it is difficult to learn new skills or change habits when one is old. It encourages people to develop good behavior and useful abilities early in life. In

Igbo culture, it reminds both young and old that preparation and training should start on time, because change becomes harder with age.

38. Ukwu na-ama ọgọdọ adighi mma igba ọtọ

translation: "A waist that ties wrapper is not good to be seen naked".

pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches modesty and caution. It means that a person who is respected or holds dignity should not behave carelessly or expose their weakness. In Igbo communication, it is used to warn people to protect their reputation and act with self-respect.

39. Otu osisi anaghi eme ọhịa.

Translation: "One tree does not make a forest."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb emphasizes the importance of unity and cooperation. It means that no one can achieve great things alone; success and progress come through collective effort. In Igbo traditional communication, it encourages teamwork, solidarity, and mutual support within the community.

40. Anyukọ mamiri ọnụ, ọ gba ụfufu.

Literal Translation: "When people urinate together, it foams."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb stresses the value of unity and cooperation. It means that when people join hands and work together toward a goal, their combined effort brings noticeable and positive results. In Igbo traditional communication, it encourages collective action, teamwork, and mutual understanding.

41. Onye ọgọdọ mbite anaghị agbasị egwu ike n'ọgbọ.

Translation: "Someone who borrowed a wrapper does not dance hard on the dance floor."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that when you are living on borrowed things or in a temporary situation, you should behave carefully. It warns people not to act proudly or carelessly when they are not in full control of their circumstances. In Igbo culture, it teaches humility, caution, and wisdom in handling what does not belong to you.

42. Naanị ụkwụ gbara apịtị na-eri ihe gụrụ ya.

Translation: "Only a muddy foot eats what it wants."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that only those who work hard and make sacrifices enjoy the benefits of their labor. It teaches that success comes through effort, not laziness. In Igbo communication, it is used to encourage diligence and perseverance, reminding people that reward follows struggle.

43. Dinta mụta atughi atụ gba, egbe amuta ebeghi ebe fee.

Translation: "If a hunter never aims before shooting, the bird will learn to fly off before" landing.

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that lack of skill or preparation can make one's efforts useless. It teaches that carelessness gives others an advantage and makes success difficult. In Igbo traditional communication, it is often used to caution people to be wise, patient, and strategic before taking action.

44. Nwata akwọ n'azụ amaghi n'ije dị ụfụ.

Translation: "A child carried on the back does not know that the trekking is painful."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that people who are being supported or cared for often do not realize the effort, pain, or sacrifice of those helping them. It teaches awareness, gratitude, and empathy. In Igbo traditional communication, it is used to remind dependents (especially the young) to appreciate the struggles of their parents or benefactors.

45. Ewu nwurụ n'ọba ji, ọ bughị agụụ gburu ya.

Translation: "The goat that died in a barn of yams was not killed by hunger."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that people sometimes suffer or fail not because of lack of opportunity, but because of carelessness, greed, or mismanagement. It teaches that having

resources alone is not enough; wisdom and discipline are also needed. In Igbo traditional communication, it is often used to criticize those who waste chances or misuse blessings.

46. Aka aja aja na-ebute ọnụ mmanụ mmanụ.

Translation: “Dirty hands leads will lead to oily mouth”

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that hard work brings reward. It teaches that people who make effort and get involved in productive work will surely enjoy the benefits. In Igbo traditional communication, it is used to encourage diligence and discourage laziness.

47. Nkụ nwata kpara n'ọkọchị ka ọ ga-anyanwu mmiri.

Translation: “The firewood a child gathers in the dry season is what he will use during the rainy season.”

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that the preparation and hard work done ahead of time determine how one will cope in the future. It advises people to make use of opportunities while they last because difficult times may come when help or resources won't be available. In Igbo traditional communication, it is a reminder that laziness and lack of planning lead to regret later in life.

48. Nganga ka okenye ji agbara ehi ọsọ.

Translation: “An elder uses sense to run from a cow chasing him”

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches the value of wisdom and practical thinking. It means that experience and intelligence help people avoid danger rather than acting recklessly. In Igbo traditional communication, it is used to highlight that age and knowledge guide one's actions, especially in difficult or risky situations.

49. Ijiji anaghi eso ndumodu na esokwa ozu ala ini.

Translation: "A disobedient fly follows the corpse to the grave."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches that ignoring good advice can lead to trouble or even disaster. It means that those who are stubborn or reckless may suffer the consequences of their own actions. In Igbo traditional communication, it is used to caution people to listen to guidance and warnings.

50. Ejighi ihe a na-agba na nti agba n'anya

Translation: "You don't wear what is for the ear on the eye."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches that one should be extremely careful and also use things or methods appropriately according to their purpose. It means that what works in one situation may not work in another, and careful judgment is needed. In Igbo traditional communication, it serves as indirect advice, reminding people to be wise, practical, and discerning.

51. Agwọ otu onye hụrụ na abu eke.

Translation: "A snake one person sees is usually a python."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that people often exaggerate or overstate what they see or experience, making problems seem bigger than they are. It teaches caution against believing everything at face value and encourages verifying information. In Igbo traditional communication, it is used to warn against fear, gossip, or misinterpretation.

52. Anụ gbaa ajọ ọsọ, agba ya ajọ egbe.

Translation: "When an animal runs recklessly, it is shot recklessly."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that difficult or dangerous situations often require strong or decisive actions. It teaches that sometimes, to handle a serious problem effectively, one must respond with equal force or urgency. In Igbo traditional communication, it is used to justify firm measures in the face of serious challenges.

53. Ikuku fee ahu ike ọkụkọ.

Translation: "When the wind blows, the chicken's buttocks will be exposed."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that hidden faults or secrets are eventually revealed over time or under pressure. It teaches that one cannot always conceal their mistakes or secrets forever.

In Igbo traditional communication, it is used to warn people that truth and consequences will eventually come to light.

54. Oke soro ngwere maa mmiri, ọ kọchaa ngwere; ọ gaghi akọchaa oke.

Translation: “A rat that follows the lizard into the rain, the water will dry faster on the lizard than on the rat.

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches that people experience different fates in life. It means that even when faced with the same circumstances, individuals will not have the same outcomes due to differences in luck or circumstance. In Igbo traditional communication, it is used to remind people that life treats everyone differently and that one should be mindful of certain choices.

55. Nwata kwọ aka, o soro ọgaranya rie nri.

Translation: “A child that washes his hand will eat with the wealthy.”

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches that effort and preparation open doors to opportunity. It means that those who prepare themselves or take responsibility can enjoy the benefits of wealth, privilege, or success. In Igbo traditional communication, it is used to encourage diligence, cleanliness, and readiness.

56. Anaghị agwa ọchịntị n'agha esu.

Translation: “You don’t warn the deaf during war.”

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb means that people who refuse to listen to advice or correction must face the consequences of their stubbornness. In Igbo culture, it is often used to caution against pride and disobedience.

57. Egbe belu ugo ebelu nke si ibe ya ebeghi, nkụ kwa ya.

Translation: "Let the kite soar and the eagle soar; each takes its own firewood."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches that everyone should pursue their goals in their own way and take responsibility for their actions. It means that people have different paths, abilities, and resources, and each must manage their own affairs. In Igbo traditional communication, it is used to encourage independence, and respect for others' endeavors.

58. Agha akara aka adighi eri ngworo.

Translation: "An expected battle does not surprise the crippled."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb contextually means that being aware of upcoming challenges helps one prepare for them, even if they are weak or disadvantaged. It teaches that foresight and preparation prevent being caught off guard. In Igbo culture, it is used to stress the importance of planning, vigilance, and readiness.

59. Mmadu anaghị ahapu ebe a na-echi ọzọ gawa ebe a na-alụ agwụ.

Translation: "One does not leave a place of merriment for a place of agony."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches that people should avoid unnecessary hardship when they are already in a good situation. It means that one should appreciate and remain in favorable circumstances rather than seek trouble or discomfort.

60. Aka nri kwọ aka ekpe, aka ekpe akwọ aka nri

Translation: "The right hand washes the left hand, and the left hand washes the right hand."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb teaches the importance of mutual support and cooperation. It means that people must help each other to succeed and maintain harmony. In Igbo traditional communication, it is used to encourage reciprocity, and collaborative effort.

61. Etu isi dobe ute gị ka ị ga-esi lahu.

Translation: "How you make your bed, so shall you lie on it."

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb talk about personal responsibility and accountability. It means that the consequences one faces are a direct result of one's own actions or decisions. In Igbo traditional communication, it is used to remind people that they must accept the outcomes of their choices, whether good or bad.

62. A na-ebido n'ụlọ mara mma pụọ ezi.

Translation: "Beauty starts from inside the compound before going out"

Pragmatic Analysis:

This proverb contextually emphasizes that charity and good character should begin at home because the society is a reflection of our families. It means that family play the important role in the upbringing of our children into the society.

4.3. Categorization of Proverbs by Pragmatic Functions

1. Advisory / Didactic Proverbs:

These are proverbs that give guidance, teach morals, or advise on proper behavior. Some of them are:

Uwa mgbede ka mma "Evening life is better"

Ọka anaghi etokari onye kuru ya "The corn does not grow taller than the planter

Ụkwa ruo oge ya, ọ daa "Breadfruit falls when it is ripe"

Ugo chara acha adighi echu echu "A well adorned eagle never loses its beauty"

Ogologo abughi na nwa m etola. "Tallness does not mean my child is mature"

Anaghi ezi nwata ọnụ ara nne ya "a baby is not shown the way to the mother's nipple"

Mgbe onye ji tete ụra bu ụtụtụ ya. "whenever one wakes is his morning"

Ka ana achu aja ka ikpe, ka ikpe na ama ndi mmụọ "Let us keep sacrificing; let the gods take the blame"

Ahia ọma na ere onwe ya. "A good market sells itself"

Nwata na-amụ iri elu, obi ga aka ya. "A child learning to climb needs to be brave"

Ihe onye chọrọ ka ọ ga afụ "One will reap what one desires"

Ọkụkọ chi ụmụ anaghị efe elu "A chick does not fly without learning"

Mbọ na-afụ gị, atụkwana onye ọzọ if a pinch hurts you, don't do it to others

Anaghị amụ aka ekpe na nka "One does not learn with the left hand only"

Otu osisi anaghị eme ọhịa "One tree does not make a forest"

Nwata akwọ n'azụ amaghị n'ije di ụfụ "A child carried on the back does not know the trekking is painful"

2. Cautionary / Warning Proverbs

These are proverbs that highlight dangers, consequences, or risks of action. Some of them are as follows;

Agwa ntị ma ntị anughi, egbupu isi ntị esoro ya "If ear does not heed warning, when head is cut off it'll follow

Osimiri anaghị eri onye ọ hughị ụkwụ ya "The river does not drown a leg it does not touch"

Ọgọ biakaria, ezie ya kpata nkụ "When in-laws visit too often, he is asked to fetch firewood"

Atụrụ mụrụ ebule gba aka nwa "A sheep that gave birth to a ram has no child"

Agwọ otu onye hụrụ na abu eke "A snake one person sees is usually a python"

Anụ gba ajọ ọsọ, agba ya ajọ egbe "Harsh situations call for harsh actions"

Otu onye tọọ izu, o gbuo ọchụ “Acting alone may lead to failure”

Ijiji anaghi eso ndumọdu na esokwa ozu ala ini “A disobedient fly follows the corpse to the grave”

A naghi agwa ọchintị n'agha esu “You don’t warn the deaf during war”

Ewu nwuru n'oba ji, ọ bughi agụu gburu ya “The goat that died in a barn of yams was not killed by hunger”

Ikuku fee ahu ike ọkuko “When the wind blows, the chicken’s buttocks will be exposed”

Mmadu anaghi ahapu ebe a na-echi ọzọ gawa ebe a na-alu agwu “One does not leave a place of merriment for a place of agony.”

3. Wisdom / Prudence Proverbs

These are proverbs emphasizing intelligence, foresight, strategy, or careful thinking.

Examples;

Ebule naa azu, ọ bia ọgu “The ram retreats before attacking”

Mmiri mara Ugo, sara Ugo ahu “The rain that falls on the eagle also bathes the eagle”

Etu isi dobe ute gi ka i ga-esi lahu “How you make your bed so shall you lie on it”

Nganga ka okenye ji agba ehi ọsọ “An elder uses sense to run from a cow chasing him”

Onye ọgọdọ mbite anaghi agbasi egwu ike n'ogbo “Someone who borrowed a wrapper does not dance hard in the dancefloor”

Ejighi ihe a na-agba na nti agba n'anya “You don’t wear what is for the ear on the eye”

4. Effort / Hard Work Proverbs

These are proverbs highlighting diligence, preparation, or personal responsibility.

Examples are;

Nkụ nwata kpara n'okochi ka o ga-anyanwu mmiri "Firewood a child gathers in dry season is for the rainy season"

Aka aja aja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu "dirty hands leads to oily mouth"

Nwata kwọ aka, o soro ogaranya rie nri "A child that washes his hand will eat with the wealthy"

5. Unity / Cooperation Proverbs

These proverbs emphasize teamwork, mutual support, or social harmony. Some examples include;

Aka ekpe kwọ aka nri, aka nri akwọ aka ekpe "The left hand washes the right hand, and the right hand washes the left hand"

Anyuko mamiri onu, o gba ufufu "Urinating together makes it foam"

Egbe belu ugo ebelu nke si ibe ya ebeghi, nku kwa ya "Let the kite soar and the eagle soar; each takes its own firewood"

6. Fate / Destiny Proverbs

These Proverbs focuses on destiny, or unavoidable outcomes. Some of the samples from the data are;

Oke soro ngwere maa mmiri, ọ kọchaa ngwere; ọ gaghi akọchaa oke “People experience different fates”

Ijiji anaghi eso ndụmọdụ na esokwa ozu ala ini “A stubborn fly will surely follow the corpse to the grave”

4.4 Thematic Discussion of Proverbs

The thematic discussions looks at the main roles of Igbo proverbs in traditional communication. The proverbs were discussed based on their functions: teaching and guiding behavior, giving warnings, promoting wisdom, encouraging hard work and teamwork, reflecting cultural values, and sharing life lessons about fate. It was also shown that understanding these proverbs requires knowledge of context and culture, since many meanings are implied rather than directly stated.

4.4.1 Proverbs as Tools for Teaching and Guidance

Igbo proverbs serve as important tools for teaching and guiding people in everyday life. They provide moral lessons and instructions on how to behave in the community. By listening to these proverbs, younger members of society learn from the wisdom and experiences of elders. Proverbs help shape good character, encourage respect for rules, and guide individuals in making correct choices. Essentially, they act as a form of informal education that reinforces proper behavior and societal norms.

4.4.2 Proverbs as Warnings and Cautionary Messages

Many Igbo proverbs act as cautionary messages to alert people about potential dangers or mistakes. They advise individuals to avoid reckless behavior, think before acting, and consider the consequences of their actions. By offering indirect warnings, proverbs encourage careful decision-making and self-control. This function helps maintain social order by teaching people to avoid harmful behavior without directly criticizing them.

4.4.3 Proverbs as Expressions of Wisdom and Prudence

Certain proverbs emphasize wisdom, intelligence, and careful judgment. They encourage people to plan ahead, weigh options, and act sensibly. This shows the high value Igbo culture places on thoughtful decision-making and foresight. Such proverbs guide individuals to approach life situations with prudence, making them more responsible and aware of possible outcomes.

4.4.4 Proverbs Promoting Hard Work and Cooperation

A number of proverbs highlight the importance of effort, diligence, and teamwork. They teach that success comes from persistence, dedication, and working together with others. By promoting collaboration and personal responsibility, these proverbs strengthen social bonds and encourage a collective sense of duty. They also serve to motivate people to work hard and contribute to the well-being of the community.

4.4.5 Proverbs Reflecting Cultural Values and Beliefs

Igbo proverbs carry cultural beliefs, social norms, and traditional wisdom. They teach respect for elders, communal living, spiritual values, and proper social conduct. By transmitting these cultural lessons from one generation to another, proverbs help preserve the Igbo heritage and ensure that the community's values and traditions are maintained.

4.4.6 Proverbs Highlighting Fate, Destiny, and Life Lessons

Some proverbs focus on life experiences, fate, and destiny, teaching lessons about patience, acceptance, and perseverance. They remind people that certain life events are unavoidable and that one must respond wisely to challenges. These proverbs encourage reflection on the uncertainties of life and help individuals understand and cope with circumstances beyond their control.

4.4.7 Pragmatic Nature of Proverbs in Communication

Understanding Igbo proverbs often requires knowledge of context and culture. Many proverbs do not directly state their meaning but rely on implied messages, requiring listeners to interpret the lesson. This shows how communication in Igbo society is deeply rooted in pragmatics, where meaning depends on social, cultural, and situational factors. It also demonstrates how proverbs engage listeners, making communication interactive and thought-provoking.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This final chapter looks at the main results of the study, gives conclusions, and suggests recommendations. It shows how Igbo proverbs help to teach, guide, and reflect Igbo culture.

5.1 Summary

This study examined the use of proverbs in Igbo traditional communication. It focused on how proverbs are used to teach lessons, give advice, warn people, and preserve Igbo culture. Using a pragmatic approach, the research analyzed various proverbs to understand their meanings, functions, and cultural significance. The study showed that Igbo proverbs are not just expressions; they are important tools for guiding behavior, passing knowledge, and maintaining social values. This study looked at how Igbo proverbs are used in traditional communication, focusing on their meaning and purpose. Chapter One introduced the topic, explained why the study is important, and outlined the research objectives and questions. Chapter Two reviewed previous studies on proverbs, pragmatics, and African language traditions, providing the framework for the research. Chapter Three described how the study was carried out, including how data were collected and how the proverbs were chosen. Chapter Four presented and analyzed the proverbs, giving translations and explanations, and grouped them by their practical

functions such as teaching lessons, giving advice, warning, guiding behavior, and showing Igbo cultural values.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study revealed that Igbo proverbs play a significant role in traditional communication, serving multiple pragmatic functions that shape social behavior and cultural understanding. Analysis of the proverbs showed that they are not just mere expressions but tools that teach, guide, warn, and preserve cultural values. Firstly, many proverbs were found to teach and guide individuals, providing moral lessons and advice on proper behavior. They serve as practical instructions on how to act in various situations, emphasizing respect, responsibility, and wisdom. Secondly, some proverbs function as warnings, cautioning against mistakes, danger, or poor decision-making. Proverbs such as *Anụ gba ajọ ọsọ, agba ya ajọ egbe* remind people that reckless actions can lead to serious consequences. Thirdly, certain proverbs emphasize wisdom and careful thinking and encouraging foresight in daily life. Proverbs like *Etu isi dobe ute gị ka ị ga-esi lahu* demonstrate the importance of planning and intelligence in achieving success. Fourthly, a number of proverbs encourage hard work, diligence, and cooperation, showing that effort and teamwork are valued in Igbo society. For instance, *Nwata kwọ aka, o soro ọgaranya rie nri* teaches that effort can help even the less privileged gain from opportunities. Proverbs stressing unity also highlight the communal nature of Igbo culture. The study found that proverbs reflect cultural values and worldview. They encode beliefs, traditions,

and perspectives on life, fate, and social relationships, showing how language is intertwined with cultural identity. Lastly, the study highlighted the pragmatic nature of Igbo proverbs. Understanding their meaning often requires knowledge of context, cultural background, and social norms. Many proverbs are indirect, relying on implied meaning rather than literal words, which demonstrates how pragmatics operates in Igbo communication.

5.3 Discussion

The study shows that Igbo proverbs are very important in traditional communication. They are used to teach lessons, give advice, guide behavior, and share cultural values. Proverbs are not just words; they are practical tools that help correct mistakes and encourage good behavior, often using indirect language that relies on cultural understanding. Proverbs serve many purposes at the same time. They educate, warn, promote wisdom, and encourage social harmony. This shows how rich and meaningful Igbo language and culture are. Elders use proverbs to pass down lessons and values to younger generations, helping to preserve traditions. The study also highlights that understanding proverbs depends on knowing the social and cultural context. Many proverbs have meanings that are implied rather than directly stated, showing how language, culture, and communication are closely connected.

5.4 Conclusion

The study revealed that Igbo proverbs are very important in traditional communication. They help to teach lessons, give advice, warn people, and keep cultural values alive. Proverbs are not just words; they are practical tools that guide behavior, promote wisdom, and support social harmony. Understanding proverbs depends on knowing the cultural and social context because their meanings are often implied rather than directly said. This shows how language, culture, and communication are closely connected in Igbo society. In short, Igbo proverbs are powerful tools for teaching, guiding, and preserving culture, and they play a central role in everyday communication and social life.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Encourage the use of Proverbs in Education: Schools and learning programs should teach Igbo proverbs to help students learn morals, values, and cultural lessons.
2. Promote Cultural teaching at Home and Community: Parents, elders, and community leaders should continue using proverbs to guide young people and pass on traditional knowledge.
3. Documentation and Preservation: Efforts should be made to document Igbo proverbs, as younger generations are increasingly influenced by modern communication.

4. Encourage More Research: Researchers should study Igbo and other African proverbs further to understand their role in communication and culture.
5. Apply Proverbs in Modern Life: Proverbs can be included in media, literature, and public speaking to teach lessons and preserve cultural values.

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