

Proverbs and their Discourse Relevance: Insight from Ehugbo Dialect of Igbo

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Abstract

Nigerian languages thrive on the deployment of proverbs to ground the social import of [their] numerous conversational exchanges. The Ehugbo people likewise, particularly utilize these proverbs as a condiment to flavor and embellish their talks regardless of the general characteristics of the meaning of what is being discussed. Among the Ehugbo people of Igbo, proverbs are the heart of language use. Proverbs exist in all the cultures of the world and have invariable applications, as garments of thought; they imbue the speaker with the ability to make his or her expression more ornate and culturally relevant to the topic of discourse. Hence, Africans employ them in conversations to accomplish acts that ordinary words cannot realize. However, proverbs in Ehugbo dialect of Igbo are used in different settings for different purpose to overtly connect the tenor of discourse. Using data carefully gathered from numerous episodes of conversation among core native speakers of the dialect under study, the paper, using critical discourse analysis examines some proverbs and their discourse relevance.

Keywords: *Proverbs, Discourse, Ehugbo, Condiment, Conversations*

Introduction

Every language or dialect has proverbs that are particular to it. Apart from conveying the values, ethos and deep-rooted beliefs of the people, proverbs denote an in-depth knowledge or mastery of any language or dialect. Proverb is a short sentence known by many people which usually contains words of wisdom, truth, or morals based on common sense or practical experience. It is often a description of a basic rule of conduct that all persons generally follow or should follow. Proverb (from Latin: Proverbium) is a simple and concrete saying popularly known and repeated, which expresses a truth based on common sense or the practical experience of humanity. They are often a metaphorical statement embellished with some philosophical colouration. Mieder (1993:24) observes that a proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorizeable form and which is handed from generation to generation. This is to say that proverbs are handed down to the younger generation by the ancestors or older generation. This is why in Ehugbo, every proverb begins with a mention of the ancestors; thus: NdeIchiesi (the ancestors say). The much anyone can do is to twist then but not to add new ones, and no matter how hard a proverb may be, it is not interpreted or explained to an adult listener. It is a popular believe that when that is done, the dowry paid on one's mother becomes a waste. Among the Ehugbo people, proverbs are the vehicle of thought, when the truth is elusive; it is proverbs we use to elicit it.

Demarcating types and uses of proverbs is easier than defining them. Generally, proverbs are an indication of a people's thought, beliefs, fears, and aspiration. As many proverbs as exist in Ehugbo, so do their functions differ remarkably, when the proverbs do not match their tenor of discourse, it is often misused and the speaker is seen as one who is not culturally oriented in the use of his or her language. The people of a particular society are the custodians of its culture, and should take active part in the preservation of their culture and tradition. In view of this, the paper is poised among other things, to ascertain how the proverbs used by adult male/female, youths, children, educated and non-educated populace are relevant to their discourse as an intrinsic component of a language. There are proverbs used to caution, to advice, to encourage, show self confidence, disapproval or indifference, conflict resolution etc. However, using proverbs to achieve the above is not in contention in Ehugbo, but how the proverbs are deployed to mirror their conversational relevance is the subject of this paper; it also seeks to know the reason for their non-use and misuse and to make necessary recommendation(s)

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The paper finds "Relevance Theory" suitable for this work. Relevance theory was propounded by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson in (1986, Revised 1995& 2002). This theory explains the method of communication; one that takes into account implicit inferences. It argues that the hearer/reader/audience will search for

meaning in any given communication situation and having found meaning that fits their expectation of relevance, will stop processing. Sperber and Wilson's theory begins with some water shed assumptions that are typical of pragmatic theories, namely, it contends that all utterances are encountered in some context and that utterances convey a number of implications. In addition, they posit the notion of manifestness, which is when something is grasped either consciously or unconsciously by a person. They further note that it will be manifest to people who are engaged in influential communication that each one has the notion of relevance, which is the notion that implicit messages are relevant enough to deserve bordering to process, and the speaker will be economical as they possibly can be in communicating it. The core of the theory is the "communicative principle of relevance", which states that the act of making an utterance the speaker is conveying is that what they have said is worth listening to, that is, it will provide "cognitive effects" worthy of the processing efforts required to find the meaning. In this work, energy ostensive act of communication, that is, the lexical "clues" that are explicitly conveyed when we speak or write will be something like;

1. The speaker purposefully gives a clue to the hearer (Ostensifies) as to what he wishes to communicate-that is a clue to his information.
2. The hearer infers the intension on the clue and the context mediated information. The hearer must interpret the clue, taking into account the context, and then summarize what the speaker intended.

The Concept of Proverb

Proverb according to a more serious source should be cited for this (from Latin: Proverbium) is a simple and concrete saying, popularly known and repeated which expresses a truth based on common sense or the practical experience of humanity. They are often metaphorical. A proverb that describes a basic rule of conduct may also be known as a maxim. For Russel (1850:231) a proverb is the wit of one and the wisdom of many. Achebe (1958) avers that proverb is the palm-oil with which words are eaten.

According to Cayne (1984) proverb is a brief familiar maxim of folk wisdom, usually compressed in form, often involving a bold image and frequently a jingle that catches the memory. From the view of Cayne above, it is clear that proverbs have to do with wisdom and image, this is why in Ehugbo, the wisdom of any one is judged by the number of proverbs he or she is able to aptly inject into a discourse to embellish and flavor an ongoing talk. A youth who deploys proverbs to flavor talk especially in the midst of elders is often regarded as one who was given birth to by the father (o naghimuruḡu) whereas his counterpart who lacks this wisdom is regarded as "Nkita nwanji zuru" (a dog trained by a woman). Mieder (1993:24) observes that a proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorizeable form and which is handed from generation to generation. The Oxford Advance learner's Dictionary sees proverb as a short well known saying that is a general truth or gives advice, for instance: Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Similarly, an Ehugbo proverb will say "Achikwaiteebogaamkpa-mkpa (do not take two earthen pots when going through a narrow path).

Nnadi et al (2006:90); in their conceptualization of proverbs see it as embodiment of wisdom, and beauty on the aggregate, proverb expresses wit, philosophy, vision and wisdom that strike with its beauty which result from its sense, its shortness and the literary devices with which it is embellished. According to Fakoya (2007) proverbs are to African languages what the cat walk is to western fashion. Proverb as a literary form expresses the people's philosophy, values, beliefs, world views, taboos etc. Lewis (2013) explains that "African proverbs are the foundation of social and cultural wisdom and therefore serve as the basis for formulation of concepts that govern the social relation.

However, Fashina (2011) claims that more advanced exposure to the science and semantic philosophy of proverbs now reveals that proverbs are strategies of discourse complication, which takes discourse to the level of the sublime. But Etta and Mogu (2012) opine that African proverbs are necessarily essential in understanding and transmitting African epistemology because knowledge has been acknowledged to be indispensable for human existence, as well as the core of epistemology. Egoobiambu (2013) on his part says that every tribe in the African continent has a repertoire of proverbs employed in various facts of life, according to him; proverbs are a mirror in which a community can look at itself and reveal itself to others. He goes on by saying that proverbs highlight the values, the aspiration, the behaviours of people, and the angle from which they see and appreciate their reality, and response.

According to Bokor (2004) in Egoobiambu (2013), proverbs are usually based on human observation of things of nature. The basic figures deployed in proverbs are human beings, animals, nature itself and the spirit world. A careful observation of proverbs shows that they relate to issues as death, envy, love, power, conflict resolution, encouragement, advice, caution etc. that form the basics of the people's mindset. A famous statement in Igbo has it that a proverb is the horse of conversation; when the conversation lags, a

proverb will revive it, a wise man who knows proverbs reconciles difficulties, proverbs are known to give flavor to speech, or they can include interest in important and practical problems. Great orators in the African traditional setting have deployed proverbs to send their message down to the audience. Also, proverbs are a means of identifying the traits/behaviours in a society. They provide a window through which the African way of life can be seen. The religious, socio-cultural, political and economic features of a community can be seen through its proverbs. This is why it is said that a proverb is a mirror through which a community sees itself and others; they represent the world views of Africans. In other words, proverbs have the ability to explain a thousand words in one simple sentence or statement. That is to say, what most lengthy essays, articles and the likes would say, an African proverb will do it in a clear and concise sentence/statement. The present research aligns with the views of the scholars so reviewed. However, among the literatures reviewed, that of Achebe (1958) stands out. This is because it defines proverb using proverb i.e the oil with which words are eaten. In view of this the present study sees proverb as not just the oil with which words are eaten, also the pepper, salt, onions, and whatever spices that make the concoction very palatable.

Ehugbo Culture and Proverbs

Proverbs in Ehugbo are so ingrained just as it is in the Igbo language, that there is no avoiding them except one does not speak the dialect very fluently. They often give words an elevated status and a philosophical colouration, in turn taking; the speaker who employs them is always regarded as a good orator. In Ehugbo, proverbs are devised to enliven and to enchant, the listeners are made to think deeply and sometimes they show appreciation by concurring with the speaker or by nodding their heads. Proverbs in Ehugbo help to provide an understanding of the way of life of the people. It sums up a moral lesson in a concise manner, it can be used to convey a message, pass information or end a discussion, and proverbs can convey a heart-hurting message in a profound manner rather than a nasty or demoralizing way.

The Ehugbo people are culturally refined, a fact that is attested to by their conduct, especially during turn-taking, customary court proceedings (ekpukaeto and Esaa courts), and face to face interactions. So much is proverb a part of the ehugbo culture that it is generally asked, whenever anyone seems to be inattentive to the dictates of the situation *í búgúónyè Èhugbó?* (Are you not from Ehugbo?), This type of statement is not a question to probe the addressee's place of origin, but an insinuation of a lack of cultural correctness befitting a person from the society. Thus, the Ehugbo people have expectations concerning every aspect of life and living, not the least, the use of proverbs. Proverbs in Ehugbo are products of accumulated experience and built on frequently occurring situations that demonstrate human behavior, social traits, certain habits or customs that are associated with Ehugbo people.

Ene (2010) opines that Igbo idiomatic expressions either proverbs or parables are derived to enliven and to enchant. The listeners are made to think deeply, and sometimes show appreciation. Proverbs in Ehugbo are solemn components of kola nut communion (*igooji*). This is commonly seen in Ehugbo whenever libation is poured or blessings are said on kola nuts or wine, one witnesses a high level use of proverbs. It helps to share with the world the practical wisdom the people learnt in their way of life. For instance: *Achighiteeboon'aghankpankpa* (you do not carry two earthen pots side by side when passing through a narrow track"). They also provide an understanding of the way of life of the Ehugbo people. View on many sayings are summed up in proverbs. Most of the proverbs in Ehugbo are influenced by the beliefs of the people as represented by, birds and other animals, for instance, a strong or brave man is called "Agu" meaning "Lion". Hence, the expression; "Agu" *n'aruokpak'ikeadighia*" means that "the gentleness of a Lion is not a symbol of cowardice". Other factors that influence proverbs in Ehugbo include plants, wind, sand, house hold items etc. proverbs also come from legendary, myths and folklores that are handed down from one generation to another.

This is why many proverbs in Ehugbo begins with an overt mention of a particular animal credited as the speaker, for example:

- i. "Òchíchásín'ómàòrùègwúètèkámàòbúnaókúkúánàgáékwiéhàókpá" (the cockroach says it is a better dancer, but that its problem is that the fowls won't let it dance).
- ii. "Anighiókèúbàn'òdébé" (you don't give a fish to a rat to take care of).
- iii. "Enwòsín'òmòghòógóchírínwá òbùlà, kphakwáánkéóvún'éhò" (The monkey says it cannot vouch for any of her children except the one still in her womb).
- iv. *Mbesin'òzùòzòka ma nwùhù*" (The tortoise says another death shall occur).

In Ehugbo, Tortoise is one of the animals popularly used, probably on account of its wisdom. A myth in Ehugbo has it that the neighbouring village to Ozizza in Afikpo North referred to as "Ndelkumoro" (The

people of ikumoro) by the Ehugbo, who share a common market, inter marrying and fish in the same river kept wondering about the proficiency of the tortoise in the use of those proverbs, the story has it that one day some fishermen from the Ikumoro extraction caught a tortoise in their fishing net, took it to the village square and assembled all their kindreds and demanded the tortoise to say all the things it used to say to the Ehugbo people, but to their chagrin the tortoise never altered a word.

Factors Responsible For the Non-Use/Misuse of Proverbs

Arora (1983:43) observes in his study of language maintenance that often deposit or because of parents' interest, children or young people resist maintenance of the ethnic-mother tongue while their children in turn hold a more benign attitude towards it. The above shows that the attitudes of parents to proverbs could affect the ability to imbibe them. They might only see them as resources for scolding, which sparks off hatred for them. Also, most young people consider proverbs as hindering understanding and cohesion. Beyond that, most parents or adults do not deploy these proverbs while conversing with their children even when they do, it is to answer questions that young people should not ask.

Moreover, proverbs are seen to be an exclusive preserve of the adults, especially male adults. The young people readily prefer to code-mix, and it gives them room to achieve almost colloquialism and communicate effectively among their peers.

Methodology

The work is interested in seeing how relevant proverbs are to ongoing talk in Ehugbo-Igbo. Data were sourced from different discourse situations involving culturally conscious native speakers. The method of data analysis is descriptive using Critical Discourse Analysis.

Sample Data and their Discussion

Proverbs as an act of language use is an act whose success and message is determined by the choice of appropriate words, relevant situations, culturally suitable to the tenor of discourse and the hearer must share a common background knowledge with the speaker, else, the proverb will not pass its message. This section will examine the different situations of language use where these proverbs are aptly injected, these include; caution, encouragement, conflict resolution, sexuality and sexist proverbs.

Caution

To emphasize the need for caution, adults sometimes resort to proverbs with cautions imagery that can fully display to the hearers the import of the advice being provided.

Sample A ₁	Gloss
Ana eleje enya n' ikwu ulo ta n'ejije ebite oku	One watches the compound he or she goes to fetch fire carefully.

As seen in the proverb, once the hearer is presented with a proverb such as the one in sample A, the kernel of the discourse has been provided and he or she is expected to heed the advice encoded in it. In Ehugbo, people live in colonies, but due to some human tendencies, some do not always agree with one another, hence the need for one to apply caution when dealing with such people by trying as much as possible to avoid them.

Sample A ₂	Gloss
Nde ichie si nwata kpalaje n'ube hasia oji	The ancestors say a child should limit himself to the pear trees and avoid the kola nut.

Whenever anyone is presented with a proverb such as the one in sample B above, the import of the proverb will register instantly on the warning already given. A proverb such as this might present difficulty to a young person but the image of pear and kola nut shows that while a child can play with the pear tree as he or she pleases, the kola nut on the other hand must be an exclusive preserve of the elders, hence the need for caution.

Sample A ₃	Gloss
Ndi ichie si amaga abari a nyenna di enya ani k'ehisi eka enya	The ancestors say that one cannot stop scratching an itchy eye simply because one's step mother has one eye.

In the function of a discourse marker, the proverb in sample C1 forcefully brings to the fore the speaker's point along. There is no room for putting up a lackadaisical attitude any longer simply because of

a close relationship. Anyone presented with a proverb such as this will automatically know that the die has been cast and the need to be cautious is paramount, else the repercussion will be severe.

Encouragement Proverbs

A question may be asked, who encourages who, using proverbs? It may seem as if proverbs which are used for Encouragement is exclusively for the adults, but the truth remains that anybody can encourage anybody using proverbs. An adult can encourage a young person, a man can encourage a woman and vice versa.

However, it seems adults are generally using proverbs to encourage, especially male adults, but not without situational constraints. Based on the data for this study, only youths who reside in the villages and who are culturally oriented and initiated in the pragmatic relevance of proverbs to talk are able to properly ground their conversational contributions with one or two encouragements proverbs. Their city counterparts, on the other hand hardly imbue their talk with proverbs, let alone knowing their cultural relevance since they are somehow alienated from the culture that utilizes proverbs as a condiment to flavor talks.

Among adult members, certain situations generally call for the use of these proverbs and give hope or revival to their souls. It could be asserted here that many proverbs that are used for encouragements are best deployed in conversational encounters involving a few culturally conscious members. Let's consider the use of the highlighted proverbs in the next item;

Sample B₁ Gloss

Maka na nde ichie si na chineke niri nwatakiri ike ojiri koye ji ja ni a ike ojo ji kwufute e	For the ancestors say that the God who gave a child the strength to cultivate yam, will equally give that child the strength to harvest it
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The cultural import of a saying like the one above will definitely re-assure the hearer of the speaker's support and encouragement. A proverb such as this has the cultural bearing of the addresser occupying the highest stratum in the conversation. The addressee on the other hand, is very much unlikely to miss the point in the speaker's proverb, unless he or she is not properly schooled in the use of proverbs. However, even if the hearer is not schooled in the use of proverbs, the imagery created in the proverbs will give a soothing encouragement to the hearer.

Sample B₂

Gloss

Okwa nde ichie n'asi je na mmadu anagha bu nwatan'anu o gburu	Afterall, the ancestors say that no one is a child in the animal he killed.
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This salacious proverb in sample E2 can only be effective if the proverb is deployed in a conversational situation meant to encourage anyone. Moreover, the use of the proverb by the speaker is enough to reassure the hearer of the speakers resolve to encourage him or her.

Sample B₂

Gloss

Tasie na nde ichie si a kpom-kpom n'ata ju oba	Be courageous for the ancestors say that droplet by droplet a tank is filled.
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Once the hearer is presented with a proverb such as the one above, the kernel of the discourse has been provided and he or she is therefore expected to heed the advice encoded therein. If a proverb such as the above is employed in a discourse, it encourages the addressee and also re-assures him to be steadfast.

Conflict Resolution

In the Ehugbo culture and tradition, when certain social events seem to be getting out of control for the members of the society, the wise folks take solace in waiting for a sure resolution of what may look like a thorny issue at the present time, for instance when a misunderstanding is tearing a community, a village, families or even neighbors apart, the elders or wise folks employ proverbs to express their confusion and to underscore their hope for a definite and peaceful resolution of the issue.

Sample C₁

Gloss

Maka na nde ichie si n'ibe ebu-ebu n'anagha eyi oku kama ana ala jie ala	Because our ancestors say that you do not set fire where people live, instead you clear and pack the grasses
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The import of a saying like the one in sample G₃ justifies the need to patiently look forward to a peaceful resolution of thorny issues. Among the Ehugbo people, the future holds a lot of hope for the individual as well as the communities, hence, the expectation that the rift between people should be resolved amicably

instead of igniting war. A situation where the warring individuals or communities are advised not to allow their quarrels degenerate to chaos might result to everyone being affected hence, the relevance of the proverb to settle such disputes and initiate peace.

Sample C₂

Gloss

Nde ichie si n'obu achukwatu nnawuru awuri okuku -eja The ancestors say that when you have chased the wild cat to a considerable distance you also throw some sand to the fowl.

In Ehugbo and in many cultures of the world, certain issues, such as family, marriage, land etc are often resolved with care, especially when third parties are involved, therefore, to be on a safe side, one person is not always blamed for the cause of the dispute. In Ehugbo such disputes is often resolved using the type of proverb deployed in sample H₃ so as to bring peace to the conflicting groups.

Sexuality Proverbs

Generally, proverbs are indication of people's thoughts, beliefs, fears and aspirations and while there are those proverbs that clearly appeal to people's fancies, there are also a host of others that make some people uneasy perhaps on account of morality or religious affiliation. Some of the proverbs that seem to offend such people are those that smack off obscenity or that, which literally present verbal pictures of the human sexual organs. Proverbs found in this category are generally de-emphasized by such members during conversations, who may either not deploy them at all or employ other more socially appropriate ones, although such people need only to be reminded that the use and meaning of a proverb is contextually determined. However, rather than considering these proverbs socially distasteful or inappropriate, this paper focuses on their contextual relevance and situations that warrant them. It is the opinion of this work that the use of a proverb is determined by the requirement of ongoing discussion or situation; thus, it is the conversational relevance of the proverbs that would determine its acceptability.

In referring to parts of the body, for instance, the Ehugbo people avoid the use of words that may create curiosity in the young ones and raise eye brows among the adult members of the society. Therefore, parts of the body such as the penis and the vagina are usually called by other names-term with which the young ones are familiar and which do not present difficulty in understanding. So, in place of utu (penis) and ikpu (vagina), many Ehugbo people, especially the elderly ones make their children to refer to these parts as "ihie" (his or her thing), ihom (that thing). So strict is this moral code enforced in Ehugbo that children found using them, no matter the demands of the situation are instantly rebuked and momentarily tagged onyenninna (a producer of taboo words). In fact, even among the old members, these parts of the body are usually invoked with some decorum and any one flouting them is looked at as being stupid, wayward and is seriously cautioned to use euphemisms associated with the parts of the body relating to sexuality, otherwise his or her linguistic performance would be adjudged obscene and consequently fail to achieve conversational success.

Sample D₁

Gloss

Onye raduru nwanyị kueonye okpara, echi utu e ama gapa vusiri One who after having sex with a lady and calls her a prostitute, would he not have another erection?

The proverb above portrays a situation where one, after enjoying a privilege rendered him begins to ignore and treat the person who offered him or her help in his or her time of need with disdain as if he or she will not have another need. Therefore, the portrait of the inconsiderate lover returning to make love to a woman whom he called a prostitute quite supports the saying that one should not bite the finger that fed him or her because, he or she will never stop being hungry. Naturally, not many women would be eager to do such a man any sexual favour again after being called a prostitute.

Sample D₂

Gloss

E jighi oke utu akpasu ochie-ochie nwanyi No one frightens an old woman with a large penis

This proverb exemplifies a situation where one is told that the price of something has gone high, but because he or she can comfortably afford it no matter the amount, therefore, as a discourse marker, this proverb is deployed by the person? A proverb such as this, is never employed as an ordinary pair-part in a conversation, but as a terminator-signalling a lack of willingness to advance the interaction and a generally rude discourse strategy to inform the addressee that the speaker is undaunted by the threat. Also such a bold attitude demonstrates unequivocally to the addressee that the speaker has the money to pay off the increment.

Among the Ehugbo people, no culturally wise person would be found enlarging the discussion at this point, unless, however, to understand the pair-part as disrespect and responds to it as such.

Sample D₃

Oke utu abugu oke nwa

Gloss

Large penis is not plenty of children

The proverb above can be applied in a discourse situation where someone is always boastful of a particular thing, maybe on account that he has such things in abundance or he is the only person who that has a possession of it. Therefore, to remind or caution such a speaker to control his boastfulness, one sometimes resort to the imagery that can fully display to the hearer the import of the advice being provided.

Sexist Proverbs

A sexist, according to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary is a person who treats other people especially women unfairly because of their sex or who makes offensive remarks about them. Therefore, sexist proverb is the act of using metaphorical language that is derogatory against another, either to wound, hurt or injure the person's feeling.

This section of the study focuses on how people utilize the instrument of language to capture the Ehugbo society. In essence, no one can see the mind or read the mind of another, it is through words stringed together as sentences of any language and packaged in mediums like proverbs that form channels through which expressions in the mind are relayed. The images used in Ehugbo proverbs to represent any aspect of the womanhood range from those of weakness, childish, selfish, irresponsible, foolish, dangerous, and generally inferior to men Therefore, we shall select and critically analyze some of the proverbs that are sexist in nature in the Ehugbo cultural practice and then determine if they are relevant to their discourse situation.

Sample E₁

Nkita nwanyi zuru anagha agbo-ujja

Gloss

A dog trained by a woman seldom barks

As seen in the proverbs above, once a person is presented with a proverb such as this, an image of gentleness; weak and inferiority automatically registers in his or her mind. On the very surface, it could be true because women may not be well schooled on how to train dogs to bark since they do not hunt or engage in activities that need the assistance of dogs. In Ehugbo, a proverb such as this is not deployed to derogate the woman but should be understood based on their discourse situations as women are seen to over pamper and therefore produce weaklings.

Sample E₂

Nwoke-nwanyi

Gloss

man-woman

In Ehugbo, a woman can only be referred to as "nwoke-nwanyi" when she behaves or shares some attribute of men, but when such statement is targeted at a man, it shows that the person behaves in the awkward manner of a woman, as such its understanding depends on the inference and the situation with which the statement is rendered.

Sample E₃

Nne omogo hu onye oka ike n'osi panahaya nwa n'oje
ogu

Gloss

If a nursing mother sees a person she, defeated she begs
for the child to be taken away from her.

When this proverb is used on any one, the cultural import is that of, pretense, not necessarily to derogate but to portray a situation or setting where, when a person comes in contact with a simple task, he or she claims to be courageous, but when he or she encounters a difficult one he or she gives excuses. In the proverb above, there is no one-to-one relation between the proverb and actual messages passed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Proverbs as a cultural expression mean differently across cultures. To Achebe (1958) proverb is the oil with which words are eaten. However, to the Ehugbo culture, proverb is much more than the oil with which words are eaten, it includes the salt, pepper, onions and all other spices that make the concoction very palatable to enable it go down well with the words. Among the Ehugbo culture, conversational success often hinges on the relevant proverbs deployed to support the turns making up the discourse. At each turn, a proverb deployed by one interactant might be enough to stimulate other participants' thought or argument about something in

a logical way; at other times, a proverb might be all that is required to register one's concession or objection. In fact, it may be said here that among the Ehugbo people as well as other people of African, there is almost no instance of social involvement that cannot be captured by at least two proverbs which are relevant to the occasion or event. A culture is an autonomous, dynamic aggregate of longstanding wisdom, philosophy and consciousness of its people, as such, no culture should be adjudged superior to others. However, some folks seem to have an excessively globalized cultural stance which gives them away as modeling their own culture on a foreign one, or adopting an unfamiliar culture as a behavioural pattern within a highly localized domain – facts reveal for instance by their avoidance and criticism of proverbial and idiomatic element like the ones considered in the study. Therefore, for people to validate the cultural competence, they need to understand the conversational dynamics that would justify the use of proverbs. When one seeks to caution, encourage, envision a resolution of dispute, the type of proverbs used is extremely paramount. Each proverb is a packet of meaning from which the other participants infers interpretation for understanding. The more complex a proverb is, the more complex meaning becomes, and as such inference would demand some cultural competence.

With this therefore, the study wishes to make the following recommendations.

- i. Since idioms and figures of speech are taught as topics in school curriculums of English and Igbo courses in the secondary and tertiary institutions, proverb should also be added so as to revitalize the use of it among students.
- ii. Parents and elders should endeavor to encourage the youths to make extensive use of proverbs in their conversations, since they contain their values, ethos and deep-rooted beliefs as a way of transmitting and preserving them.
- iii. Proverbs should aptly be injected in speeches because they can help in preserving their values.
- iv. Proverbs come with wisdom and truth, therefore people of Ehugbo should imbibe it for betterment of their society.
- v. The people of Ehugbo should use proverbs constantly because it helps in improving their oratory abilities.

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