

## **A Review Of The Creative And Symbolic Expressions In Nigerian Proverbs Usage In Indigenous Communication**

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### **Abstract**

Nigerian proverbs are an important aspect of communication that highlight the creative uses embedded in culture and language. They are a distinctive feature used by individuals across various contexts. Nigerian proverbs are both creative and symbolic, frequently employed in formal and informal conversations. This tradition is widely practiced within Nigerian linguistic communities. The proverbs included in this research were chosen for their symbolic and creative contributions to communication and expression. This article aims to reestablish some sustainable Igbo socio-cultural philosophies found in proverbs, while reviewing their social meanings as a means of transmitting societal norms and values. It also analyzes proverbs used by different people, explaining their meanings and situating them within contemporary communication processes in various settings throughout Nigeria and beyond. Specifically, it examines the cultural patterns of conversation, utilizing Nigerian proverbs as creative and symbolic expressions in broader communication. Consequently, the impact of Igbo proverbs on speakers' communication and their interpretations is assessed. The paper focuses on the influence of English blending with various indigenous language dialects in the usage of proverbs, as well as the prevalence of creative and symbolic uses of proverbs in speech communication in Nigeria. Finally, the paper advocates for users and linguists to place greater emphasis on the ongoing use of proverbs and other creative expressions to preserve indigenous speech culture, norms, and values. This will help transmit cultural beliefs and practices to younger generations within the Nigerian society and beyond.

**Keywords:** Proverb, Creativity, Symbolic Expression, Nigeria, and Communication.

### **Introduction**

Proverbs are an essential aspect of human communication, possessing the linguistic features of other human languages. The values and norms of any society are reflected in their speech and behavioral principles, which impact individuals in diverse communities in Nigeria. Individuals are shaped by the effectiveness of the speech in their communication and their models of transmitting information. Nigerian proverbs are one of the speech patterns used as a process of transferring norms and values during cultural communication and interaction in some communities in Nigeria.

Proverbs are oratory instruments used in diverse spheres of teaching, learning, and knowledge transfer, serving as symbols of cultural heritage, cultural identity, and signets of belief, politics, law, and social norms and values. Nkansah-Obrempong, (2002). Proverbs are an important form of human

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communication. They are used in various languages by many speech communities, depicting the users' culture, values, and education to the younger generation, hence, the description of proverb by Fayemi (2009) as the "relics of cultural experiences".

Proverbs are embedded in African folk materials, serving as genuine tools for expression. These folk materials can include proverbs, figurative expressions, riddles, idioms, tongue twisters, and more. They illustrate the uniqueness of African creative usage derived from experience and culture. Proverbs are also used in various expressive genres, such as songs, riddles, stories, and other traditional institutions for the cultural education of their society's members. They incite listeners to think through a series of mental exercises, arousing curiosity to unravel their interpretations Costandius, 2007).

Proverbs must be properly interpreted and understood before they can be used as educational instruments. The youths are culturally educated using proverbs to convey words of wisdom of their culture and society. This way, they understand the deeper meaning of words used in their society and beyond. This lends emphasis on early and constant usage to familiarise them with the meaning of proverbs. This also helps in improving the morals, behaviors, and attitudes of society members.

Although proverbs have been used during the time of our fore-fathers, they still hold contemporary significance and remain relevant as mediums of instruction, even in this digital age. In the words of Gyan et al. (2020), the effectiveness of using proverbs as tools for education is described by the Yorubas of Nigeria as 'a horse that can carry one swiftly to the discovery of ideas'. Amazingly, our society is in a state of constant change, the present era is filled with new cultures emanating from creativity and symbolism in diverse scenarios. In Nigeria, where English is spoken as a second and official language, the spread of Western culture alongside the English language paved the way for diverse communicative strategies, which are considered creative and symbolic.

Hence, this article examines the cultural patterns of conversation using Nigerian proverbs as creative and symbolic expressions used in wider communication.

- The impact of Igbo language proverbs on the speakers' communication and their interpretations.
- The influence of the English language blending with the various indigenous language dialects in proverbs usage and communication in Nigeria.
- The frequency of creative and symbolic usages of proverbs in speech communication.

### **The Theoretical Framework**

The theory that is used in this research is the theory developed by the British language psychologist Howard Giles and others since the early 1970s. They explain why speakers accommodate the application of divergence strategies, such as variation in the use of different ranges of linguistic, prosodic, and non-verbal features that help to sustain interaction in individual communications. Hence, the linguistic accommodation theory.

### **The Linguistic Accommodation Theory:**

The Accommodation Theory – more precisely, Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) – is a social psychological approach to language variation. Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT), which is more recently referred to as Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). It includes a wider range of factors that show how different levels of accommodation can occur in communication. Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) provides a framework that explains the reason behind some communication realignments. Communications are accommodated in different ways, which impact our actions in English language communication in Nigeria and beyond.

Speakers change the way they speak in face-to-face interaction. A speaker's attitude towards another speaker in conversation can influence the way (s)he talks. The two key concepts of SAT/CAT are convergence and divergence. However, among the different accommodative strategies that speakers use to achieve these goals, convergence has been the most extensively studied and can be considered the historical core of CAT (Giles, 1973). It has been defined as a strategy whereby individuals adapt their communicative behaviors in terms of a wide range of linguistic (e.g., speech

rate, accents), paralinguistic (e.g., pauses, utterance length), and nonverbal features (e.g., smiling, gazing) in such a way as to become more like their interlocutor's behavior. In other words, sometimes our communications are driven by our identities.

Thus, Giles, H., Coupland, N., & Coupland, J. (1991) state that the constant movement toward and away from others, by changing one's communicative behavior, is called accommodation. Linguistic divergence is thus a deliberate attempt by speakers to maintain or increase their linguistic differences. A speaker uses accents to distance him/herself from his/her conversation partner, a deliberate attempt to 'purify' a speaker's language.

Language convergence is created because of the increase in the similarity of features between neighboring languages, mainly due to various processes of language mixing, borrowing, and more. Linguistic divergence functions as an identity marker. It induces the desire to adopt other styles of communication, such as 'slang', to prove their independence, while convergence constitutes a linguistic, accommodative process that enables a speaker to modify his/her speech to resemble more closely the speech of the person he/she is communicating with.

These are two linguistic strategies that interlocutors apply to indicate the general directions in which accommodation can occur in a speech situation. The foundation of the theory rests on the idea that people adjust (or accommodate) their style of speech to one another. Communication in Nigeria reflects an individual's identity—socioeconomic, religious, and cultural—distinguishing it from that of another individual; these differences also influence the English language.

Depending on the attitude that speakers show towards each other, their language varieties, and the shared social context, accommodation can take the form of either convergence or divergence. For example, ethnic minorities can signal their social distinctiveness by the deliberate use of ethnic markers when they interact with members of ethnic majorities, as expressed in the use of the ethnic variety, Nigerian slangs, proverbs, Pidgins, or creoles. This type of usage that influences linguistic accommodation is reviewed using proverbs as a means of communication.

### **Research Method and Data Collection Procedure Explained:**

This study collected detailed verbal data randomly, through personal interviews, group discussions, personal observations, and written works by males and females between 18 to 65 years of age from different parts of Nigeria working or schooling in the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria, FUTO, and its environs, on the use of proverbs, and how they are interpreted within speech communication and interaction process.

The study was conducted within three months. The interview guide was designed based on the impact of Igbo language proverbs on the speakers' communication and their interpretations. The influence of the English language blending with the various indigenous language dialects in proverbs usage and communication in Nigeria, and the frequency of creative and symbolic usages of proverbs in speech communication, their interpretations, and meanings. Written proverbs or those posted in the media were also collated.

Each personal interview lasted for less than one hour and was audio-recorded, with the traditional chiefs and family heads within the university environment and nearby villages. 14 personal interviews were conducted. The participants' responses were carefully translated from the local languages to English by the researchers, with the help of the participants. The views expressed by the study participants were linked to their identities because not all of them are of Igbo origin.

This Institution is situated in Igboland, Imo State, in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria. The Igbo cultural society of Nigeria is one of the many tribes that is very accommodating to diverse individuals in the country. They preserve their norms and values using cultural heritages, through the speech and actions of older people within social communities. They emphasized those ideologies and moral conduct endorsed in a social environment and conveyable through communication. In the Igbo cultural society, their values and norms serve as a guide to their social etiquette; these values are therefore revered with a high sense of decorum and integrity, relished through consistent usage in speech. See Iwunze and Adindu, (2008).

### Concepts Definitions

Nigeria is a nation that has experienced a cross-current of linguistic activities because of multilingualism. Language encompasses all forms of human activity, including culture. Culture provides the platform for individuals of a given community to adapt their social behaviors. The Lewis (2009) Ethnologue report for Nigeria posits that there are about 527 Nigerian languages, of which 514 are living languages co-existing with one another. There are also non-native languages such as English, French, Arabic, etc., spoken in Nigeria, as well as pidgin, which probably has the greatest population of users. A country with this number of languages is expected to have language usage problems or a crisis. Given this, the paper will review some conceptual definitions below.

**Language:** Any means through which information is disseminated is generally perceived as language. It could be through signs, symbols, or speech. In human social settings, emitted interactions revolve around the agreed-upon norms and values, thereby transmitting them through language. Hence, Halliday's (1978:25) definition of "language as an activity". Halliday's view suggests that language can impact the speakers from a deposited repertoire of vocabulary that can influence the speaker's thoughts to perform a task in the affairs of any society.

Fromkin and Rodman (1978) describe language as a conventional system characteristic of vocal behavior through which members of one community interact. As such, language becomes a genealogical vocal transmitter, mediator, or link to invaluable socio-cultural values and ancestral knowledge and ideas to enable individuals to trace their roots. Finegan(2012) suggests that language is a vehicle of expression that aids the transfer of ideologies from one individual to another.

Njemanze (2008) describes language as an architect opening many creative potentials achievable through thoughts. Fromkin and Rodman's (1978) use of vocal behavior and Finegan's (2012) inclusion of the word expression affirm that some specific communal structures within a speech community can only be conveyed through speech (language). These assertions seem to suggest that the speech pattern of any language is, therefore, an indispensable cultural asset to perpetuate identity. In summary, a language is the functional speech patterns of cultural norms and values in constant use within a society.

**Norms and Values:** Norms and values are standard principles adopted as patterns of living in a particular society (Wikipedia). They are imbibed through the emulation of the inherent cultural heritages of the society. As such, the speech patterns, customs, beliefs, morals, taboos, abominations, and others are transmitted through speech within the society.

**Creativity and Symbolism:** Creativity, according to Njemanze (2010), brings out the manipulative power of an individual. The author further states that creativity is all about a shift within or outside the domains of action. These shifts are usually accompanied by appropriate investitures of formal, informal, and technical expressions to explain issues. Njemanze (2010) asserts, "Creative experience involves self-expression, which is largely concerned with the need to experiment, express original ideas, think critically, and react promptly.

Thus, the same author goes further to assert that, "Creative or symbolic expression involves self-expression which is largely concerned with the need to experiment, express original ideas, think critically, and react promptly. Creativity thus enables a person to use suitable language as a stylistic form of presenting unique Nigerian expressions, which are relevant to their thought process and ancestral roots. Most of these expressions are proverbial or transliterated expressions.

Proverbs, therefore, are an integral part of Igbo tradition, which serves as the core of conversation in both written and oral conversation. It is an example of a conversational strategy in Igbo tradition. Egudu (1972: 101) affirms that "proverbs and the like are ready tools for thinking and communicating, not only their aesthetic exquisiteness, but also for being a way of life in Igbo (African) culture".

**Proverbs:** Most African speeches and writings thrive in proverbial usage, which aims at incorporating the social conversational exchange of the people into their cultural relevance.

Different attempts have been made by scholars in various disciplines to define a proverb. According to Simpson and Speake (1998:2), “it is a traditional saying which offers advice or presents a moral in a short and pithy manner”. Thus, a proverb is a concise expression, and it is derived from old tradition. Mieder (1985:118) describes it as “a short generically known sentence that expresses common traditional, didactic views in a metaphorical and free form, which is repeatedly used and has a metaphoric fixed structure which helps the user to remember whichever he/she wants to use.”

Salzmann (1998:261) describes proverbs as pithy sayings that contain generally accepted truth. He goes further to say, “it is the voice of the old-age authority and collective wisdom of a particular society”. Thus, it is not the user of the proverbs who speaks, but he uses the proverbs to represent the experience of the past generations. This enhances traditional education, the transmission of cultural values, and historical information of the society. This view is also supported by Olatunji (1984:167), who describes proverbs as “an inheritance from elders that might have experienced various things...”.

Also, Balogun (2006:86) defines a proverb as: “cultural relics preserved amid countless deconstructions because of brevity, laconic and in-depth meaning”. Proverbs, which are pithy sayings, are popular devices usually used to state metaphorically certain general ‘truths of life’. These scholars believe that proverbs are usually in short and pithy forms, and they are relics of our cultural heritage. This may not always be the case. Not all Igbo proverbs are short, and even when we have such short proverbs, they express a lengthy lesson or moral. Proverbs are unique expressions used by individuals to express issues whose meanings may not be realized at the surface level of interpretation.

Proverbs reflect human experiences and observations. They are used to depict issues like love, envy, human shortcomings, and more. In other words, it may not always be a traditional saying but could be, according to Oyelade (2004:212), ‘a posteriori and contemporary reaction to conventional wisdom, natural intelligence and traditional sayings. They are used to represent what ordinary statements cannot portray. Proverbs do not change their meanings easily, but may be twisted through a user’s creative ability, and in line with the global trend of constant reformation of language usage.

The historical circumstance that surrounds the origin of the proverb differs according to various cultural experiences that generated the proverb. This is in line with Dzobo’s (1992:95) position that proverbs are metaphoric expressions reflective of a people’s cultural experiences. Proverbs have many approaches and unique qualities that separate them from their resemblance to metaphoric statements, clichés, and maxims.

Proverbs are used to represent what ordinary statements cannot portray. Proverb thus represents the people’s collective wisdom, which is transmitted from generation to generation through oral or written media. They are traditional statements derived from experience used in expressing truth and in transmitting moral lessons. Often, a proverb carries extensive metaphoric expressions to enhance its conversational role. Njemanze and Ononiwu (2014). Below are examples of proverbs with their interpretations and symbolic/creative meanings.

### Proverbial Expressions, Interpretations, and Meanings:

Table 1.

S/NO	Proverbial Expressions	English Interpretation	Symbolic/Creative Meaning
1	<i>A man who kills the sacred python in the secrecy of his hut knows that the matter lies between him and his ‘Chi’.</i>	Committing a crime in a hidden place has consequences for you and your God.	Covering your atrocities will not last long, because nemesis will catch up with you.
2	<i>When a handshake goes beyond the elbow, we know it has turned to another thing.</i>	It is easy to identify unpleasant situations.	Escalation in situations can easily be spotted from the person's reaction.
3	<i>Who cannot see a spider on an elephant?</i>	Those who think they are wise always claim to be right.	Knowledge does not reside in one head
4	<i>It is only the pauper who inherits the possessions of his younger ones.</i>	Why should someone who cannot struggle to acquire	The never –do –well inherits his own children’s property.

		his/her wealth fight over the wealth of another person?	
5	<i>Can anyone retrace his/her footprints in water?</i>	Unconditional deeds (good/bad) have no barrier.	Impossibility: One cannot change from odd ways after a series of known actions.
6	<i>It is only a fool who throws away the bone of a stockfish.</i>	The bones of a stockfish are sweet and soft.	It forms part of the food
7	<i>The world is like a mask dancing, if you want to see well, you do not stand in one place.</i>	Doing so many things to achieve the same result.	Multitasking to achieve one thing. Achieving one thing through different means.
8	<i>A man who brings home ant – infested faggot should not complain if he is visited by the lizards.</i>	When you attract actions that beget consequences, you should be ready to handle them.	Do not get into a situation that will have consequences that you cannot manage.
9	<i>Since the ‘eleke nti oba’ has learnt to fly without perching, I will shoot without losing.</i>	If you play smart with someone, the person will track you through other means.	Devising another strategy of escape, in pursuit, will make your pursuer change strategy.
10	<i>One tree cannot/does not make a forest.</i>	No one individual can control the affairs of the community.	You need others to thrive in every society and life
11	<i>The lizard who threw confusion into his mother’s funeral rite, did he expect outsiders to carry the burden of honoring his dead?</i>	Someone expected to exhibit exemplary actions brings disappointment to others.	Who will send the appropriate signal that other people will emulate?
12	<i>A child who will not allow his/her mother to sleep will also keep awake</i>	Someone who creates trouble for another person will also be restless.	While the pursuer is busy chasing the other person, he is constantly running.
13	<i>Where the branches of a tree bend is the direction that the tree will eventually fall</i>	A person’s heart is always where his/her treasure lies.	Be careful with what you associate yourself with.
14	<i>The man who carries a deity is not a king</i>	No matter how strong or great a man was, he should never challenge his ‘Chi’/God.	Do not be faster than your shadow.
15	<i>Only a foolish man can go after a leopard with his bare hands.</i>	Be cautious in what you do	Stay safe and careful always.
16	<i>No matter the number of spirits that plan a man’s death, it would come to nothing unless his god took a hand in the deliberation</i>	No matter the setup against a person, once he lives a truthful life, it will come to naught	A Man’s fate is dependent on his personal God.
17	<i>A person praying for a mad person does not close his eyes.</i>	You must be alert when dealing with untrusted people.	Stay alert and smart when with people.
18	<i>It is what makes an egg strong in the pot that makes the yam soft in the pot.</i>	One person’s value may not be the same as another person’s.	Individual preferences will always differ
19	<i>The Fish that was scattered in the soup is still inside the soup</i>	When you think that what you have has lost its value, that possession is still yours.	Be happy with what you have, no matter its appearance
20	<i>That a monkey is smart is because there is a nearby tree.</i>	You get away with what you do because there is coverage.	Do not play smart always, it may not always turn out positively.
21	<i>You do not buy wind with money without experiencing a storm</i>	Those who stir up trouble suffer the grievous consequences.	Engage in beneficial things, not trouble
22	<i>If hunger is out of poverty, poverty is finished.</i>	Hunger and poverty exist side by side.	Do not compromise your stance because of hunger.

23	<i>He who dives into water does not remember or know that his back is exposed.</i>	Whenever a person tells a lie, traces are always left behind that will implicate the person	The truth would always be revealed, even if it is not sooner, it will be later.
24	<i>When mouths are together, the forest can lead easily to the town</i>	When people combine their efforts, they achieve success together.	The proverb calls for unity among people.
25	<i>It is the kola nut that befits a king that is offered to a king.</i>	Honour should be given to whom honour is due.	Respect is earned.
26	<i>Those who washed their legs did not meet the Oba, let alone those who rubbed soap on sponges.</i>	Punctuality is the soul of greater achievements.	Urgency and a time limit induce achievements.
27	<i>You don't have to tell a wise child to stay out of the smoke.</i>	'Smoke' is used as a sign of warning or admonition.	"Once bitten, twice shy."
28	<i>A person who stands on the road to dance has a drummer in the bush.</i>	When one acts with reckless abandon, there is a visible source to it.	A person who cares less has a secret behind her actions.
29	<i>It is the wine that is inadequate for Benin to consume that intoxicates Uselu.</i>	It admonishes one to be content with whatever one has. "Benin and Uselu are used synonymously".	Wine is a 'trend' in human activities, which should be carried out with caution.
30	<i>"Let the hawk perch, let the eagle perch, anyone who says the other should not perch, may it lose its wings."</i>	People should stay peacefully with one another, and may the evil people get punished if they refuse to tolerate others.	People should be considerate of one another.

The meanings of the above proverbs cannot be realized through surface description, except with the application of in-depth analysis and interpretation. Proverbs are not static; they can undergo some content reformations while portraying the same meaning and purpose.

**Below is the demography of the research participants.**

**Table 2.**

Study Participants	Ethnicity	Number	Sex		Age		Occupation	Education
			M	F				
3 Men 2 Women	Igbo	5	3	2	30-65		FUTO Staff	B.Sc.-Ph.D.
2 Men	Calabar	2	2	0	28-50		FUTO Bus Drivers	School Certificate
1 Man and 1 Woman	Yoruba	2	1	1	40-60		FUTO Staff	B.Sc.-Ph.D.
3 Men	Bayelsa	3	3	0	35-58		Motorcycle Rider	B.Sc.-School Certificate
2 Men	Hausa	2	2	0	50-65		FUTO Staff	HND (2)

The interviewed participants were fourteen (14). Twenty (20) proverbs were collated and interpreted. The other proverbs were obtained through participant observation, open conversation, and a few written proverbs. The greater number of participants in this study were male participants (see Table A). They are comprised of individuals in different strata of the institutional environment, FUTO. Some of the participants were highly educated, yet they made use of proverbial expressions in their language communication. Also, participants were from diverse ethnicities in Nigeria, which is an indication that the proverb is used diversely by all tribes; even though the intended meaning was the same, the interpretation may be distorted. Some prominent features of proverbs are thus discussed below.

### **Discussion:**

Despite the hitches posed by expression in a foreign language, Nigerian languages still have much endowment embellished with some creative capacity that combines with their rich oral literature, native experience, and imported tradition expressed within proverbial usages and communication. This has greatly enhanced their cultural values, norms, culture, and communication in diverse settings. Hence, these researchers review the use of proverbs in this research based on,

- The impact of Igbo language proverbs on the speakers' communication and their interpretations.
- The influence of the English language blending with the various indigenous language dialects in proverbs usage and communication in Nigeria.
- The frequency of creative and symbolic usages of proverbs in speech communication.

They were reviewed through the outlined subheadings below.

### **Features of Proverbs**

Njemanze and Ononiwu (2014) assert that the crowning glory of most creative interactions in this era of globalization is the use of folkloric language, which is largely drawn from oral culture and values. Proverbs have their origin in oral tradition, which existed before the written tradition. These explanations that underpin this research inquiry are written below.

#### **The impact of Igbo language proverbs on the speakers' communication and their interpretations.**

Proverbs undergo some forms of change in form and content. This was explained earlier on this article because the user tries to import adequate words to convey the meaning of his/her intended meaning in communication. They are usually constructed to suit the speech, especially by the younger generation of speakers who are not very conversant with the original words as used by the elders.

- Proverbs can be used on any topic and in every circumstance; they just have to suit the specific situation for which it is used.
- A proverb is decorated with literary aesthetics like figures of speech, metaphors, clichés, and even maxims. Although maxims reflect individual experience, clichés have their origin in literature through the manipulative power of individuals; they blend these features to match with proverbs.
- . Proverbs are persuasive; they are used to resolve difficult problems of communication.
- Proverbs are handed down from one generation to another. They are capable of being interpreted to transmit different messages in different situations.

In conclusion, a proverb, according to Oladele (1976:32), “deals with all aspects of life. Proverbs are used to emphasize the words of the wise....To convey the precise moral lessons, warnings, and advice, since they make a greater impact on the mind than ordinary words”.

#### **English Language Influence on African Proverbs and Interpretations.**

The influence of the English language blending with various indigenous language dialects in the usage of proverbs and communication in Nigeria is discussed below. The language issue in Africa has been ongoing for many decades and remains a source of intense controversy that has yet to be resolved. This has resulted in the recreation of the African proverbs in a highly creative and realistic style as practiced in the past.

The major tool for interpreting African culture is the linguistic processes of transfer and translation. Translation and transfer have been known as the predominant linguistic and literary tools in African literary culture. Linguistic tools beget linguistic categories such as coinages, borrowing, loan blends, semantic extension, collocation, and extension. According to Ekpenyong (1998:95), translation is “an indisputable key to communication, development, and understanding in our multilingual world”. Translation emanated as a result of the new contact situation in Nigeria, which is predominantly



multilingual. Contact and conflict situations lead language users to encounter interferences, and consequently, they adopt transfers to overcome their communication difficulties.

Thus, Romaine (1995:51) defines interference as, a product of the bilingual individual's use of more than one language in everyday interaction". This author further posits that interference is 'the adoption of any elements or features from the other language, while transfer is applied to 'the phenomenon in which previous knowledge is extended to a new domain'. Interference occurs mainly as a result of language contact. The researcher believes that language contact results when two or more languages are used alternately by the same persons.

Hence, interference is the phenomenon that occurs as a result of language contact, and it invariably involves the concept of conflict linguistics. Linguistic categories such as coinage, blending, and borrowing were used to represent the real situations in communication. The interview participants brought out the creativity and symbolism in proverbial usages and also used expressions that showcased the influence of the English language on native language communication. The efforts of Africans (Nigerians) to recreate the traditional ideologies created room for the emergence of the linguistic categories mentioned above. Thus, the effort to sustain the diverse African values, norms, and ideologies has always been threatened by the infusion of Western cultures into African communication.

In an attempt to satisfy two demanding, culturally different language situations, the speaker creates an avenue to describe situations or modes of thought that have no direct equivalence in the English language in a manner that accommodates his idea and way of life as a Nigerian. Thus, there is a combination of elements of traditional communication with narrative ideas from their culture, in their proverbial usages. The next research objective is discussed below.

### **The frequency of creative and symbolic usages of proverbs in speech communication (Creativity and Symbolism).**

Proverbs are a creative concept in Nigerian culture and communication. Creative concepts require original composition of ideals. Creativity in proverbial usage reflects the user's abilities to clearly express the antiquity embedded in his/her cultural heritage. Identification of cultural reality is important because it provides the base for the appreciation and implementation of African cultural heritage. Through the use of proverbs, Africans return to the "source" to bring out the rhythms of African life into their communication.

Thus, the use of a proverb as a creative concept represents the application of original ideas from communicative constructs in speech decoration. This entails an in-depth mastery of speech (oral/written) mechanisms that the user can apply to represent a carved-out thought in communication. Creativity is, therefore, stylistic, structural, comparative, and functional. These attributes bring out the dynamic nature of proverbs in Nigerian speeches and other stylistic approaches, such as idiomatic expressions, parables, and others, to achieve effective representation and sustenance of cultural communication.

### **Conclusion**

Proverbs have been identified as one of the primary ways to communicate logical customs, norms, values, and rules of social lifestyle. This study has demonstrated that the cultural patterns of conversation, utilizing Nigerian proverbs, showcase creative and symbolic expressions within broader communication. The influence of Igbo proverbs on speakers' communication and their interpretations is significant, and English impacts the various indigenous language dialects in the usage of proverbs in speech communication across Nigeria.

This study has also revealed that interpretations of proverbs are found within different socio-cultural contexts and the localities where they are employed. Proverbs are couched in different indigenous languages. The interpretations are developed creatively and symbolically based on the knowledge of

the users and their ethnic societies. The paper concludes by advocating for users and linguists to place more emphasis on the use of proverbs and other creative expressions to preserve indigenous speech culture, norms, and values. This approach will help inculcate indigenous speech patterns and transmit cultural beliefs and practices to younger generations, early, using appropriate methods within Nigerian society and beyond.

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