


Proverbs As Cultural Communication: The Ukwuani Paradigm

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Abstract

This study examines proverbs as cultural communication using Ukwuani communities as a point of departure. Based on the communicative action theory, which was put forth by German philosopher and social theorist Jürgen Habermas, this paper adopts content analysis and interviews with Ukwuani people to learn more about how proverbs are used and interpreted. Proverbs which are known for their aesthetic appeal and capacity to transmit wisdom, values, and beliefs within a society, are essential components of cultural communication. These succinct and powerful quotes condense important ideas into a small number of words. To effectively communicate universal truths and wisdom, they frequently make use of recurring words, metaphors and striking imagery. Over the years, a few scholars have examined proverbs for their capacity to impart moral lessons and cultural values. Even though Ukwuani proverbs are unique and valuable, experts have given them very little attention and if nothing is done to change this, the use of these proverbs will diminish and become obsolete. It is considering the above that this study examines the function of proverbs in Ukwuani culture and considers their importance as a means of cultural communication. According to the study, proverbs are essential for conveying beliefs, customs and values among Ukwuani groups, it also serves the function of establishing cultural identity. Therefore, recording the Ukwuani people's proverbs is crucial to guaranteeing their survival for upcoming generations.

Keywords: Communication, Culture, Language, Ndokwa, Proverbs, Ukwuani.

Introduction

For Ali (2020), the study and interpretation of proverbs, which includes their beginnings, meanings, use, and cultural significance, is known as paremiology. The subject according to him, "owes its existence to Alan Dundes a founding paremiologist, who did tremendous work on establishing the field of inquiry" (qtd. In Ali 71). From Ali's observation, Dundes was a pioneering paremiologist who made significant contributions to the understanding and analysis of proverbs across various cultures and languages, with his research focusing on unraveling the intricacies of proverbs and examining their role in literature, folklore, and everyday

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communication. On his part, Barone is of the view that "proverbs usually serve as an aspect of unwritten communication, a kind of verbal arts or oral literature alongside poetry, songs, riddles, myths, and jokes" (Barone, 2021). The above statement is true, however, for the benefit of future generations, it is important to document these verbal aspects of communication that are at the verge of extinction. Ali further states that Mieder is another scholar who has done great work on proverbs, building on Dundes's work (qtd. In Ali 71). He outlined Mieder's contributions to the study of proverbs as delving into various aspects of proverbs, including their historical evolution, linguistic nuances, and cross-cultural variations (qtd. In Ali 71). Proverbs, commonly referred to as adages or sayings of wisdom, are widely acknowledged as a powerful medium for sharing values, ethics, and experiences between various communities. Mieder describes proverb to be "a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation" (3). From foregoing, proverbs serve as important form of communication that are deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of societies, serving as a rich repository of wisdom, passed down through generations, offering guidance, motivation, and caution to individuals within their respective societies. Their enduring power lies in their ability to encapsulate profound truths in concise and memorable language, making them readily accessible and easily shared. Noah corroborates the above when he said that "proverbs proclaim truth that transcends time, space and culture" (Vi-Vii).

Proverbs are rich in symbolism, metaphor, and imagery, which enable people to explore and express complex ideas in a succinct and memorable form. This is in line with Barone view that: Stylistically set apart from regular speech, proverbs are often metaphorical or symbolic in nature. Speakers can use proverbs to impart knowledge, offer advice, teach or reinforce morals, make an argument, relieve interpersonal tensions, aid in understanding, or to console or inspire others (Barone 2021)

Proverbs, therefore, serve as an important tool for cultural communication, conveying a unique perspective on life, social norms, and customs of a particular society. The enormous intellect and understanding of society are reflected in their proverbs, showcasing the bond with their environmental surroundings, while teaching them their customs and moral principles. Barone is particularly interested in the values that are instilled in individuals using proverbs and asserts that "the moral imperatives of the lessons included in proverbs throughout many cultures of the world speak to many common human desires for kinship, friendship, equality and justice.

By encouraging the highest form of moral conduct, proverbs inspire good deeds and discourage selfishness and anti-social behaviour” (Barone 2021). According to Babs”

Proverbs are used to “bring out clearly, the meaning of obscure points in conversations and arguments” They are indirect modes of communication which is yet more effective than direct speech. Knowledge of proverbs is a sign of wisdom and is a preserve of the old; although close association with elders can enable youths acquire such knowledge (qtd. In Mede 2).

From the above, proverbs often encapsulate complex ideas and ethical teachings in succinct yet memorable phrases, making them powerful tools for communication within communities. In situations where direct language may be perceived as impolite or confrontational, proverbs offer a more indirect and nuanced means of communication thereby helping individuals to navigate delicate topics or address sensitive issues without causing offense, allowing for smoother interactions within the community. The paper investigates the crucial role of proverbs in conveying cultural knowledge, values, and beliefs within the Ukwuani communities, highlighting their significance and the diverse ways in which they are used as cultural communication.

How Proverbs and Culture Interact

Many societies around the world, like that of the Ukwuani/Ndokwa people of Delta State, Nigeria, rely deeply on proverbs. Because they can capture complex concepts in a clear, striking way, they are useful tools for communication. The message is given more depth and richness through the use of metaphor and exaggeration. Chinua Achebe, a renowned Nigerian author, highlighted the significance of proverbs within Igbo culture by likening them to “palm oil with which words are eaten”. This metaphorical expression underscores essential role that proverb plays in communication not just among the Igbo people but Nigeria generally. Just as palm oil enhances the flavour and nourishment of food, proverbs enrich language by adding depth, wisdom, and cultural heritage to the spoken words.

The relationship between proverbs and culture is close because they are deep-rooted in linguistic characteristics of a culture and they arise from their and values. They are a part of the dialect, reflecting the unique ways in which a language is used by its speakers. Proverbs have great cultural worth in communities all across the world. Proverbs provide insight into a people’s culture because there are sayings that are specific to each culture. The above is affirmed by Deng & Liu that:

Proverbs may provide interesting little glimpses or clues to a people's geography, history, social organizations, social views, attitudes. People who live along sea coasts and whose livelihood is dependent on the sea will have proverbs about sailing, about braving the weather, about fish and fishing...In cultures where old age is revered, there will be proverbs about the wisdom of the elders. And in societies where women's status is low, there will be a number of sayings demeaning them" (qtd. in Zhang 276).

Also, Todd and Hancock notes "Proverbs are the distilled wisdom of a group of people and their study can provide insights into the activities, interests and philosophy of the people who created them" (qtd in Zhang 385). Proverbs offer a wealth of information about the cultures that create them. As distilled wisdom passed down through generations, they reveal cultural values, historical activities, and philosophical outlooks that together paint a rich portrait of human society. Commenting on the cultural significance of proverbs, Krishika notes that, "Proverbs reflect the core values and beliefs of a culture. They often offer insights into what a society deems important, whether it's family, community, honesty, hard work, or other virtues" (Krishika). Meider assert that "proverbs remain an effective discursive force in various communicative modes" (1). Proverbs are significant in social communication, providing common ground aimed at expressing ideas, opinions, and emotions. In interpersonal interactions, proverbs are often used to convey messages indirectly or subtly without causing offense. They serve as tools for diplomacy, persuasion, and conflict resolution by framing arguments or advice within familiar cultural contexts.

As language is a system of communication that uses symbols to convey meaning, proverbs can be considered a subset of language due to their communicative nature. According to Zhang, "language is the carrier and container of culture, for all human knowledge and experience are described and stored in language; whereas it is in turn influenced and shaped by culture" (277). He further cites Sapir emphasizing language's interaction with the society it represents when he noted that "Language has a setting...Language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives." (qtd. in Zhang 277). Language is an important aspect of culture because they shape, preserve cultural knowledge and experiences. Language is not just a tool used in communication, but an embodiment of a culture that encapsulates its values, beliefs, customs, traditions, and collective wisdom. Through language, cultures are able to articulate their unique identities and pass on their rich heritage to future generations. Onigu and Ogiwo explain the relationship between culture and communication thus:

Communication which is an act, a process of interaction, is carried out primarily through the use of signs (or symbols). Such signs or symbols must arouse the same meaning in other person (individual or group or people) as it does in one's self. Communication is an aspect of culture and the non-material culture. Indigenous and traditional communication modes and channels, therefore, have a sort of cultural diversity. Such modes and channels are identified, assessed and understood in the context of the particular culture and its value system. The communication process is initiated when the source or sender utters symbolic sounds which refer to experiences and rooted in the environment. If the receiver or audience has had similar experiences, rooted in the environment and has been conditioned to associate the given sounds with those experiences and attach a common meaning, we then say that communication has been possible. The communication would be effective if the desired response follows (29).

From the above, it is obvious that the significance of messages can only be comprehended when the codes utilized are ingrained in the cultural artistic expressions of the people.

In many societies, there is a gender difference in the use of proverbs. Men are often more likely to use proverbs compared to women. This may be attributed to traditional gender roles where men are seen as the holders of wisdom and knowledge. According to Omoera and Inegbeboh, “older people, especially men use proverbs to communicate meaning to the younger generations” (21). This may stem from the idea expressed by Okpewho that “age and experience put them (elders) in a better position to understand the full implication of the wisdom and truth contained in the proverbs and so to impart these to the younger members.” (qtd.in Omoera and Inegbeboh 21)

Mensah et al in the study, “The Power of Proverbs: An Analysis of the Role of Proverbs in Shaping Gender Roles and Stereotypes in Russian and Ga Cultures” investigated how Russian and Ga cultures' use of proverbs shape gender roles and stereotypes. A comparative analysis of cultural proverbs was also presented, pointing out the areas of agreements and disagreements in the representation of gender roles. The study also investigated how proverbs contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality. Natives and speakers of both languages contributed the proverbs used for the study. It came to the conclusion that proverbs contribute significantly to the formation of gender norms and stereotypes in both cultures. It reiterated the importance of recognizing and addressing the harmful effects of gender stereotypes and inequality, and the need to promote gender equality and inclusivity in all aspects of life. It also suggested that it is crucial to recognize the importance of proverbs in determining gender roles. By analyzing

proverbs and understanding their underlying messages, the study shed some light into the gender roles and expectations of different cultures and how to work towards promoting gender equality and breaking down harmful stereotypes. (Mensah et al 2024).

In another study, Context of Usage and Aesthetics of Selected Proverbs from Southern Nigeria by Omoera and Inegbeboh, the authors analyzed a number of Southern Nigerian proverbs to show that they are aesthetically pleasing but diachronically performed, and that they still serve certain socio-cultural purposes of amusement and education within the communities of their meanings. They additionally oblige people in many Southern Nigerian communities to follow the laws, customs, and traditions of the land, and they teach a way of expressing life that has an aesthetic flavour. They used Dell Hymes' "SPEAKING" speech analysis model and conducted a content analysis on twelve Southern Nigerian proverbs that were purposefully chosen at random. According to the study's findings, oral artists, presenters, audiences, and listeners, at various levels, utilize commonplace events and visuals found in their surroundings to represent and convey the unique life they lead.

They further stated that Southern Nigerian proverbs are philosophical, instructive and delightful and have the potentialities of enriching the indigenous knowledge base of the people (Omoera and Inegbeboh 2013).

Abou-Zaid carried out an innovative study that examined the connection between American sayings and proverbs and the economic practices seen in American culture in order to look at the impact of proverbs on a society. Regarding economic behaviour, the survey included four categories: work ethics, investment and risk-taking, consumption and savings, and, lastly, educational achievement. According to the study's findings, American proverbs have a significant influence on people's economic behaviour, which is another example of how proverbs can affect people's attitudes and practices. (qtd. in Ali 72).

This study investigates the cultural significance of proverbs in Ukwuani culture, with a focus on their use in everyday communication and the preservation of traditional customs. It seeks to uncover concealed meanings, social values, historical contexts, and moral teachings from these linguistic expressions.

Methodology

The study adopted content analysis. Content analysis is a research method that analyzes communication material, including texts, photographs, and speeches. Krippendorff defines it

as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to their contexts of use" (18). The study's data were gathered from interviews and existing material which is a Master's Dissertation titled "Ukwuani Folk Media Performances: The Recapitulation of the People's Worldview" submitted to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and published in the University's online repository. The interviews conducted with members of the Ukwuani community provided valuable qualitative data on how proverbs are perceived and utilized in everyday life. Through interviews, the researcher gathered firsthand accounts from members of the communities especially the elderly people who use proverbs regularly. These interviews shed light on the contexts in which proverbs are employed, and offer insights into the communicative and cultural significance attached to these linguistic expressions. The dissertation provided the secondary data for the study. A total of ten (10) proverbs with five (5) from each of the sources were analyzed to determine their significance as cultural communication.

The study Area

The Ukwuani/Ndokwa is an ethnic group in Delta State, Nigeria. The name Ndokwa was formed from two words: Ndoshimili and Ukwuani. Ndokwa nation is divided into three Local Government Areas (LGAs) namely, Ndokwa East with the headquarter in Aboh, Ndokwa West in Kwale and Ukwuani in Obiaruku. Obah explains that:

Ndoshimili are people living within the water terrine (literally meaning; water people) while Ukwuani literally means Nde-Ukwu-ani or the upland people. The upland people are the Ndokwa-Westerners and the people from Ukwuani local government areas. Ukwuani local government consists of the following communities: Obiaruku, Obinomba, Amai, Umuebu, Ezionum, Eziokpor, Owa, Umukwata, Ebedei inland and water side, Akoku, Umuaja and Obetim. Ndokwa –West consists of the following communities: Utagba-Uno, Utagba-Ogbe (Kwale), Ogume, Abbi, Emu and Onitcha-Ukwuani. The Ndokwa-Easterners are the water people and their communities are: Aboh, Ashaka, Iselegwu, Ossissa, Obikwele, Aballa-Obodo, Akarai-Etiti, Ase, and Umuolu to mention a few (44)

In the north, Ukwuani/ Ndokwa share borders with the local government areas of Ika South and Aniocha South. It is bordered to the south by Isoko South and to the east by the River Niger, and to the west and east by Edo State, Ughelli North, and Ethiopia East Local Government Areas. The Ndokwa people speak Ukwuani language, while different villages in the Ndosimili area speak the same language with some variation.

Theoretical Projection

Communicative action theory proposed by German philosopher and social theorist Jürgen Habermas formed the basis of this study. The theory suggests that human communication is not just about transmitting information, but also about creating shared understanding and working towards common goals. According to Habermas, communication is a cooperative process where individuals engage in rational dialogue based on mutual respect and openness. Individuals take part in discussions to achieve mutual understanding and agreement. Participants in this process communicate their opinions, listen to others, and engage in reasonable debate in order to settle disagreements and reach consensus. Habermas emphasizes the necessity of honest communication, free from compulsion or manipulation, as a criterion for genuine understanding and collaboration between persons. The analysis of proverbs through the perspective of communicative action theory reveals how these linguistic expressions (proverbs) encourage discussion, foster mutual understanding, and contribute to the construction of collective identities within Ukwuani communities.

Proverbs as Cultural Communication

As highlighted by Akande and Mosobalaje, "Proverbs are, often, brief loaded with value expressions with multiple layered messages that can be understood only by those who hold a good knowledge of the oral art and culture that produced them" (35). Omoera and Inegbeboh argue that "Nigerian proverbs can be evaluated at two distinct levels: first at the superficial level; then second at the deeper underlying structural level" (22). From the view above, one of the distinguishing features of proverbs is their multilayered meanings. On its outer layer, a proverb may appear plain and uncomplicated; however, when analyzed closely, it reveals deeper layers of meaning and importance. Proverbs' depth stems from their capacity to express numerous meanings at once, allowing individuals to gain various lessons based on their background and point of view. Nigerian proverbs can be interpreted based on their actual meanings which offers plain advice, insights about life, or cautions as well as based on deeper meanings that represent their cultural values, beliefs, and worldview. Proverbs provide insights on cultural standards, moral principles, historical events, and philosophical concepts. This study will investigate selected proverbs on these two levels.

We shall begin the analysis by providing chosen proverbs in their original Ukwuani language. After presenting the proverbs in Ukwuani, then we shall transcribe them into English. This method is to capture the basic concepts of the original proverbs and precisely preserving their

literal meaning in a different language. Transcribing Ukwuani proverbs into English allows for a broader audience to engage with and appreciate the wisdom encapsulated within them. Once the proverbs have been transcribed into English, we will proceed to analyze them based on the context in which they are used as cultural communication.

Ukwuani: Ochune Okuku nwe eda (Obah 2013)

English: He who chases the chicken falls

Context of Usage: This proverb implies that those who harbour ill intentions towards their neighbors will never experience positivity in their own lives. An illustrative incident occurred in Ashaka community; a woman attempted to poison the neighbour's child. Upon returning from school, the targeted boy opted to play with a friend, the malicious woman's child, before consuming food. Subsequently, before the boy ate, he invited his friend to share the meal, the friend ingested a portion and swiftly exhibited symptoms of poisoning, including foaming at the mouth. The cry drew the attention of their mothers and upon witnessing such incident, the mother who was innocent disposed of the remaining food, which was then consumed by the other woman's dog. The dog quickly fell ill and, in its distress, bit its owner, who then admitted to poisoning the food intended for the innocent woman's son. Tragically, it was her own son who ingested the poisoned food. Despite efforts to seek medical help for the boy, he succumbed to the poison. The dog also perished, and the woman exhibited strange behavior before passing away on the same day. In a twist of fate, her malicious intentions towards another individual led to her own demise.

Ukwuani: Okuku eline ife, okpaya fu aya (Obah 2013)

English: If a chicken doesn't want to eat something, it will scratch it away

Context of Usage: The proverb describes individuals who exhibit envy and sabotage opportunities for others due to their own failures or insecurities. This behaviour is commonly known as "crab mentality." Crab mentality refers to a metaphor where crabs in a bucket try to escape by pulling down any crab that tries to climb out, ensuring that none can succeed in escaping. In human terms, this concept signifies individuals who are envious or resentful of others' success and actively work to undermine or obstruct their progress.

Ukwuani: Nnunu nweni ofu isu ebuba, nefe ggame (Obah 2013)

English: Birds of a feather, flock together; those who share similar qualities or interests stick together

Context of Usage: This proverb means “show me your friend and I will tell you who you are” It suggests that the company one keeps reflects their own character. True friendships often stem from shared values and beliefs. Individuals with similar worldviews are more likely to form strong bonds compared to those with conflicting perspectives. For instance, a thief is inclined to befriend another thief, and a prostitute may gravitate towards associating with others in the same profession.

Ukwuani: Agha wekanaka eli nwa ngwolo (Obah 2013)

English: A predicted war never over takes a cripple

Context of Usage: This proverb in question highlights the significance of preparation in various aspects of life. To illustrate this, it presents two scenarios involving students who are about to take an exam. The first student, despite being aware of the exam schedule and having enough time to prepare, fails to take the opportunity seriously and complains about the difficulty of the exam. In contrast, the second student makes use of the available time to study and performs exceptionally well. When asked about their lack of preparation, the first student would likely respond that they were informed about the exam. However, they neglected to make proper use of the time provided to them. This behaviour demonstrates a lack of responsibility, discipline, and seriousness towards their studies. The second student, on the other hand, recognizes the value of preparation and uses the information provided (exam schedule) to their advantage. They invest time and effort in studying and ultimately achieve success in the exam. This student embodies a proactive attitude towards learning and seizing opportunities.

Ukwuani: Uku naga gbalagbala бага, enya naga gbalagbala dinafu aya

English: The legs that roves, are seen by the roving eyes; Nothing is hidden under the sun.

Context of Usage: The proverb pertains to an individual who may believe that his illicit actions are concealed and unknown to others. He will be astounded to discover that all the deeds he thought were hidden secrets are actually widely known by everyone in his vicinity and even beyond.

Ukwuani: Okwu eji ogidi nabu yashini mkpu ba bu eze anu

English: One should not be noisy

Context of Usage: The bulldog is a consistently vocal creature that always presents itself falsely. The proverb underlines the significance of acting appropriately at all times. By connecting the bulldog's behaviour to the larger concept of decorum, it serves as a reminder to preserve dignity and respect in all settings. An example of this was when a young man who was going for an interview unknowingly boards the same vehicle with his interviewer. Because he was running late for the interview, he beckoned on the driver to speed up to the disapproval of other passengers who quickly lashed out on him. His interviewer in a bid to test the young man's character said some insulting and abusive words to him. The young man maintained his calm and politely apologized to his interviewer not knowing who he was. At the end of the journey, he offered the young man the appointment and disclosed that all he wanted was to test his level of tolerance and respect. If the young man had responded rudely to the interviewer, by behaving like the bulldog, he would never have gotten the job.

(7) Ukwuani: Mkpu ji onu aya ku ebe odiye

English: Do not be too loud, you will expose yourself

Context of Usage: This proverb emphasizes the significance of being careful and refraining from boasting. It is like letting the cat out of the bag which refers to someone who has revealed a secret or made an inappropriate statement. It serves as a warning against being too outspoken or exposing critical information recklessly. Being too loud or careless might expose one's secrets and cause shame, scorn, or mocking from others. There was an incident that took place during my junior secondary school days. It was about a boy who claimed to be a wrestling champion and goes about brewing troubles all around because he felt that no one could defeat him. On a fateful day, he threatened and challenged to beat up another boy who was always quiet and easy going. Despite efforts to ensure that the fight does not happen, the boy remained stubborn. However, when he charged at his opponent to throw him down, he lost his balance as a result of the other boy moving swiftly from his charge, and boom, the self-acclaimed champion was on the ground to the amazement of everyone on the scene. Beginning from that day, he became a laughing stock and had to move from the school due to shame.

(8) Ukwuani: Nwanne nebe amu oku ne li nli

English: Brothers cannot light the lamp to eat; Be truthful and plain to one another

Context of Usage: The proverb highlights the significance of honesty and integrity in interpersonal interactions. Using the term "brother" to refer to people in one's daily life reflects this. Proverbs can convey universal truths or concepts, and this one emphasizes the importance of honesty in daily relationships with others, including family members. The term "brother" is used symbolically to refer to more than only biological siblings. It represents a sense of unity, community, and common humanity among all individuals. The proverb highlights the idea that sincerity should be extended unconditionally, irrespective of social class, background, or kinship.

(9) Ukwuani: Ishi anu kuwe acho enya ya

English: Truth is said wherever it is found

Context of Usage: The proverb implies that the truth cannot be kept hidden forever, it will eventually be revealed. The comparison to the head of an animal emphasizes that truth, like the prominent and visible head of an animal, is easily noticeable and apparent. Just as one cannot hide the head of an animal, one cannot suppress the truth indefinitely. The essence of this proverb lies in the belief that truth has a way of revealing itself regardless of attempts to obscure it.

(10) Ukwuani: Nwa nwenuche adini uno, ewu amua ni unyi

English: Do whatever you know is right

Context of Usage: A sensible person, characterized by wisdom and prudence, recognizes the necessity of responding to urgent situations promptly and appropriately. In this proverb, being "at home" signifies being present and available to address challenges or opportunities as they arise. By juxtaposing this with the image of a goat giving birth while still chained, the proverb emphasizes that true wisdom lies in taking action when needed and not allowing oneself to be constrained by external factors.

Proverbs are part of Discourse Analysis, specifically Ethnography of Communication. Propounded by Dell Hymes, ethnography of communication is an approach to discourse which seeks to analyze patterns of communication as part of cultural knowledge and linguistic behaviours, and the fact that such behaviours are integral part of what members of a speech community know and practice as members of a particular culture (Ashipu 14). Proverbs are an essential tool in communication in Nigeria. They serve several purposes, including:

1. They help to convey complex messages in a simple and concise manner that is easy to understand.
2. They add depth and richness to conversations, making them more engaging and memorable.
3. Proverbs are used to express advice and wisdom in various settings, such as family gatherings, community meetings and public speeches.
4. They are used to express cultural identity and promote communal values in Nigeria; Proverbs are a vital component in Nigerian communication and are often used to promote understanding, values, and wisdom in the society. As one of the unique attributes of Nigerian communication, it is important to always incorporate them into discussions and conversations as they add richness to sentences, making communication more profound.

Krishika identified the significance of proverbs to include successful communication, cultural identity, entertainment, narrative, and social cohesion. Proverbs are short and memorable, contributing to cultural identity and helping people connect with their roots. They also function as morals in stories and foster a sense of community among ethnic or linguistic groupings. (Krishika 2023)

Conclusion

Proverbs are significant to Ukwuani culture because they aid effective communication, conveying traditional wisdom, morals, and values. They are used in everyday conversations, storytelling, and teaching, helping to educate and guide members of the community. Manikas-Forester and Syswerd (661) corroborates this when they assert that "...these wise sayings (proverbs) describe patterns that operate in everyday life, offering us advice on how to conduct ourselves in various situations." (qtd.in Omoera and Inegbeboh 17) Proverbs also serve as a form of entertainment, adding humor and wit to interactions. Additionally, they help to preserve the cultural heritage of the Ukwuani people, passing down knowledge from generation to generation ensuring that the collective wisdom of their ancestors is preserved and shared with future generations.

The study recommends that the proverbs of the Ukwuani people be documented as this is essential to ensuring their preservation for future generations. Firstly, it ensures that these linguistic expressions are not lost over time due to factors such as globalization, urbanization, or language shift. Furthermore, documenting proverbs can also have practical applications in education and cultural revitalization efforts. Schools and cultural institutions can use these

documented proverbs as teaching materials to educate younger generations about their heritage. By incorporating proverbs into educational curricula or public programs, communities can ensure that traditional knowledge of the Ukwuani people is passed down effectively from one generation to another.

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