

## Sociolinguistic Appraisal of Selected Proverbs in Nwagbo Pat Obi's *When Women Go Naked*

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### Abstract

The paper appraises selected proverbs in Nwagbo Pat Obi's *When Women Go Naked* from a sociolinguistic point of view. A critical reading of the play was done through which proverbs used by different characters were identified. The aim of the paper is to examine the typology and functions of the proverbs used in the play. To achieve its purpose, the paper adopts Hyme's Ethnography of Communication S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G grid as its theoretical framework. Fifty-six proverbs were identified out of which seventeen were purposively sampled as data for the study. The choice of the seventeen proverbs is influenced by the brevity of the study. The study reveals that the proverbs used in the play reflect varying typologies. Out the seventeen proverbs studied, four each are analytical (problem solving), rhetorical, and philosophical, respectively; while only two are epistemological, and three are didactic. Most of the proverbs in the play function as advice, impartation of knowledge, and expression of displeasure and disappointment. Other functions include inspiration, resistance, and hilarity. The study further shows that most characters interpose their utterances with proverbs in order to reinforce their intention in an unequivocal manner. Proverbs in Igbo community as depicted in the play, tend to feature more in the utterances of elderly men than elderly women. Like the women, the youth hardly interpolate their speeches with proverbs. Since the play, *When Women Go Naked*, is set in a typical Igbo community, it mirrors how proverbs are used in Igbo cultural setting.

**Key words:** Sociolinguistics, Proverbs, Topology, Functions, Igbo community.

### Introduction

Sociology of language is one of the several approaches to the study of the patterned co-variation of language and society. It is a term which views society as being broader than language, and therefore, providing the context in which all languages behaviour must ultimately be viewed. It embraces such features as ethnography of communication, linguistic etiquette, among others. Sociolinguistics is defined as the relationship which exists between languages and the culture and tradition as well as the politics of a particular community, (Akindele & Adegbite, 1999:3). It is a discipline which assigns functions to various languages that exist in a community, and such functions may suggest that a language be used as a mother-tongue, second language as well as a foreign language. Sociolinguistics, in addition, examines the interaction between language use and social organizational behaviour. In other words, it focuses on the entire gamut of topics related to the social organization of language behaviour, language attitudes and other behaviours towards language users. For example, every society has its own attitude to dialects and other forms of language being used (Fishman, 1973 p. 68; Bell, 1997 p. 76; Trudgill, 2000 p. 71). Sociolinguistics is therefore, any study of language in relation to society that started from the late 1960 in language by Labov and his followers. In that sense, sociolinguistics

involves the study of correlations between linguistic variables such as; the precise phonetic quality of a vowel, or the presence or absence of a certain element in a construction. Sociolinguistics is equally concerned with non-linguistic variables like the social class of speakers, their age, sex, style and others.

The play, *When Women Go Naked* is centred on Oganigwe, the wealthiest man in Umundiagu, who entices the king with wealth in order to become king. He incites his wife and daughters to death, satisfied that his sons would inherit his wealth. However, their death triggers other deaths in his household. The play chronicles the different shades of gender dysphoria and social marginalization in the Nigerian society. Since literature mirrors the society, it is a microscopic representation of the society. Appraising proverbs used in a literary work affords us the opportunity to view the function language plays in human communication in different contexts.

### **Conceptualization of Sociolinguistics**

Different scholars have given varying accounts of sociolinguistics as a concept. Hymes confirms this by saying that the term sociolinguistics means many things to different people, and no one has an all inclusive definition (1972, p.195). Sociolinguistics as a field studies the relationship between language and society and between the users of language and the social structures in which they live. Crystal (2008, p. 18) sees sociolinguistics as a discipline which “studies language variation and use in relation to the cultural patterns and beliefs of man”. In Holmes’ view (2000), sociolinguists are interested in explaining why we speak differently in different social contexts, and their major focus is identifying the social functions of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning. This gives an insight into the way language works as well as the social relationship that exists among users in a linguistic community. Akindele and Adegbite (1993, p. 3) define it as “the relationship which exists between a language or languages and the culture and tradition as well as the politics of a particular community”. They state further that “it examines the interaction between the use of language and the social organizations behaviour (p. 4). From these different accounts, it is obvious that language and society are key terms in sociolinguistics.

According to Hudson, sociolinguistics as a field of linguistic study gained prominence in the late 1960s and early 1970s (1980, p. 1). This shows how recent the field is. Crystal gives an all embracing definition of the term as a branch of linguistics which studies all aspects of the relationship between language and society. It studies matters such as the linguistic identity of social groups, social attitudes to language, standard and non- standard forms of language, the patterns and needs of national language use, social varieties and levels of language use, social barriers of multilingualism and so on (1980, pp. 440-441). It also studies how language varieties differ between groups separated by some social variables, such as ethnicity, status, gender, literacy level, age, etc. and how creation and compliance to these rules can categorize individuals in social or socio-economic classes. Language use varies among social classes just as the use of language varies from place to place.

William Labov is considered to be one of the proponents of sociolinguistics who has immense importance in its development. He is noted for introducing the quantitative study of language

variation and change and for making the sociology of language a scientific discipline. (Labov, 2007).

### **Proverb**

The term 'proverb' is coined from 'proverbium' a Latin compound word which means 'put forth' (pro) and 'word' (verbium). The Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary (1972) defines proverb as a "short saying in common use expressing a well-known truth or common fact ascertained by experiences". Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, on the other hand, defines it as 'a short statement usually known by many people for a long time that gives advice or express some common truth.' This definition takes cognizance of not only the functions of proverbs but also the communal ownership. Thus, whoever uses proverb has an intention. Closely related to Cambridge definition is that of Akporobaro, who says 'proverb is an aphorism, a wise saying, based upon people's experience and is a reflection of the social values and sensibility of the people' (2006, p. 69). Meider (1985, p. 117), the famous paremiologist, defines proverb as a "phrase, saying, sentence, statement or experience of the folk which contains above all wisdom, truth, morals, experiences, lessons and advice concerning life and which has been handed down from generation to generation. It is often metaphorical and symbolic. A proverb that describes a basic rule of conduct may also be known as maxim. From the above definitions, it is obvious that proverb is the property of the society/culture that uses it; it is based on the community of users' experience and social values. Proverbs are seen and regarded as expressing a well known truth in the society.

Mieder (1985) further asserts that the wisdom of proverbs has been a guide to people in their social interactions for thousands of years throughout the world. Lamidi, however, posits that a proverb is a witty saying which captures the logic, culture and observations of a people (2008, p. 61). To Olatunji (1984, p. 19), proverb often evolves from traditional lore, history, and religion, and is usually attributed to elders as it is believed to contain words of wisdom from the elders and ancestors.

Proverbs are not just short statements or truth but they are also instructional devices due to their educational values. Some functions of proverbs are listed in Knowledge is Power: Anthropology of Proverbs are 'impart knowledge, offer advice, teach or reinforce moral, make an argument, relieve interpersonal tensions, aid in understanding, or to console or inspire others'. Thus, the intention of the speaker as well as the context of the speech guides the choice of proverb by a speaker. However, for any proverb used not to be a misfit in the utterance, both addresser and the addressee must share some basic cultural knowledge of the symbols of the proverb.

### **Ethnography of Communication**

Dell Hymes' (1972) Ethnography of communication is "concerned not simply with language structure but with language use, with rules of speaking...the ways in which speakers associate particular models of speaking, topics, or message forms, with particular setting and activities". Ethnography is the description of different races and culture while communication suggests the human language, especially the spoken form. Hymes' Ethnography of communication accounts for participants at discourse, channels for transmitting messages, the codes, setting, genres,

topics, comments generated from discourse, the events, and characters (Bell, 1997, p. 407). Wardhaugh (2000, p. 242) gives a breakdown of Hymes's *Ethnography of Communication*. He posits that Hymes's *Ethnography of communication* takes various factors that are involved in communication into cognizance. For the sake of convenience, he uses the acronym SPEAKING for the various factors he deems relevant in understanding how a particular communicative event achieves its objectives. These factors are explained below:

**S- The *Setting and Scene*.** The *setting* is the physical environment and time in which speech takes place while *scene* refers to the abstract setting or the cultural definition of the occasion. The setting and the scene of a linguistic event have a determining effect on it. The setting determines the type of communication that would ensue and of course the type of proverb that would be used. In other words, a particular piece of linguistic code chosen during interaction might be appropriate or inappropriate depending on the setting and the scene in which it takes place.

**P- *Participant*.** This refers to the parties involved in the communication. A market conversation will include a trader and his customers, in a council of elders meeting the Interlocutors could involve the king and his chiefs. Again, the participants involved in a linguistic event determine the type of communication that ensues between them. For example a child is not expected to use proverbs in conversation with an elder in African society.

**E – *Ends*** refers to the recognized and expected outcome of the communication. Every piece of communication has an outcome. The use of a proverb may have advice, rebuke, warning, praise, castigation or challenge as its end, just as haggling between a buyer and a seller, for instance, is targeted at out-doing each other in the bargain.

**A – *Acts sequence*.** This is the actual form and content of the communication. This represents the exact words used and how they are used as well as how what is said relates to the present topic of discussion.

**K –*Key*** refers to the tone, manner, or spirit in which a message is passed across. The message could be light hearted, humorous, precise, sarcastic etc. The key is put into consideration when communication takes place. The key should be reflective of the topic for communication. Where the key does not match what a person is saying, people would pay attention to the key. Key here relates to the interpersonal function of language following the Hallidayan systemic functional grammatical model (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Bloor and Bloor, 2004; Eggins, 2004 ).

**I –*Instrumentalities*** as the name suggests has to do with the medium for passing the message across, and this could be written or spoken. This also refers to the form of speech used such as the language, dialect and the register that is employed, which could also be formal or informal. For instance, in a meeting or gathering where English is spoken, the orator or master of ceremony could switch to vernacular when it is time for the presentation of kola-nuts because,

“kola nut does not understand the English language”, as it is often said in local parlance. One may choose to employ different instrumentalities during a single verbal exchange of a considerable length by switching from writing to speaking, quoting a proverb, and code switching between different languages.

**N –Norms of interaction and interpretation** refers to the specific behaviour associated with communication and how these behaviours are viewed. In other words, these are the norms or rules that govern speaking. There are norms of interaction and norms of interpretation. Norms of speaking are the specific behaviours and properties that attach to speaking, while norms of interpretation relates to the number of interpretations to be placed on norms of interaction by someone who does not share them (Longe, 1995, p. 70).

**G -Genre** refers to the precise type of utterance, such as poems, proverbs, prayers etc. Of course, the occasion determines the genre. In a festive mood for instance, one is expected to use songs that would reflect the mood while in a council of elders meeting in typical Nigerian community meeting, proverbs are used richly to embellish speech.

As outlined above, Hymes’ Ethnography of Communication shows that communication is a complex activity that requires expertise on the part of the speaker and the listener. These communication codes given by Hymes would guarantee success when applied in strict compliance. Herein lies Dell Hymes communicative competence which can “be seen to consist of factors which are non-language - a point which is often neglected by many exponents of the concept” (Longe, 1995, p. 10).

### **Methodology**

Through a critical reading of the text, fifty-six proverbs were identified. Different characters in the play uttered the proverbs identified. From the fifty-six proverbs, seventeen were purposively selected. These seventeen proverbs constitute the data for this study. The analysis in this study is done using Dell Hyme’s SPEAKING model with specific interest in how each applies to the proverbs used in the play.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

#### **Datum 1**

##### **Act Sequence**

“This new seed from your farm.”

**Analysis:** A new child is born into the family. ‘New seed’ signifies a new life while ‘farm’ symbolizes the family of the new born baby – the addressee.

**Typology:** Analytic

**Setting:** Time and place: in the morning, open space in the compound of Oganaigwe.

**Scene:** Ugoli advising Ogana over the birth of his new baby to be happy and give thanks to Chukwu for the gift of the new baby.

**Addresser:** Ugoli, a female character who shares a blood relation to Ogana.

**Addressee:** Ogana, the father of the new born child.

**End:** to advise the cousin (Ogana) to accept the baby and give thanks for the gift of the baby.

**Key:** Sober tone.

## **Datum 2**

### **Act Sequence:**

“Away with that plantain generation!”

**Analysis:** This proverb stresses that the birth of another girl child in the family is unacceptable. The speaker, Ogana, is tired of having many female children and was expecting a male child this time. However, his wife was delivered of another female child, to his dismay. He, therefore, referred to his female children as plantain generation. Plantain usually produce plenty offshoot which are not firmly rooted in the soil. He uses the symbol of plantain to indicate that female children are not rooted in the family of their birth because they will be given out in marriage.

**Typology:** Rhetorical

**Setting:** Time and Place: in the morning, open space in the compound of Oganaigwe.

**Scene:** Oganaigwe with an unwelcoming deportment refusing to take the new baby as Obiageli moves close to him and makes to hand the baby over him.

**Addresser:** Ogana

**Addressee:** Obiageli

**Ends:** It proves to the women who are rejoicing over the birth of the new baby that the speaker is not happy with the continuous birth of girls in his family.

**Key:** Harsh tone.

## **Datum 3**

### **Act Sequence**

“I must trace him and show him what fire does to the ear of a rat.”

**Analysis:** Oganaigwe is angry at a diviner who had told him the child would be a male.

**Typology:** Rhetoric and didactic

**Setting:** In the morning, open space in Ogana’s compound.

**Scene:** Time and Place: Ogana makes move to trace the diviner who told him the baby would be a male.

**Addresser:** Ogana

**Addressee:** Ogana was talking to himself but the women celebrating the birth of the baby heard him.

**End:** To vent his anger on the diviner.

**Key:** Boastful and challenging tone.

#### **Datum 4**

##### **Act Sequence**

“We have visited with good legs.”

**Analysis:** The speaker’s arrival coincides with the birth of the new baby. He arrived when women were celebrating the birth of the new baby.

**Typology:** Philosophical

**Setting:** In the morning, open space in Ogana’s compound

**Scene:** Time and Place: Ofodile visits Ogana family with others to meet them celebrating the birth of the new baby. He goes to admire the baby and makes move to shake Ogana.

**Addresser:** Ofodile

**Addressee:** Ogana and the women celebrating.

**End:** That they met them celebrating the arrival of the new baby.

**Key:** Joyful tone.

#### **Datum 5**

##### **Act Sequence**

“A hyena with a wound in his mouth does not laugh like other hyenas.”

**Analysis:** Ogana likens his condition to that of a hyena with a wound in its mouth. This is because Ogana’s wife has consistently given birth to six girls without a boy to inherit him or bear his name. He is annoyed and does not see any reason for celebration. Unlike Ofodile and Nnadozie who have sons that will inherit them, he cannot laugh.

**Typology:** Philosophical and rhetorical

**Setting:** In the morning, open space in Ogana’s compound.

**Scene:** Time and Place: Ogana remains indifferent to Ofodile and Nnadozie despite their frantic efforts to amuse him. He is perturbed by his inability to have a male child and sees no reason to laugh.

**Addresser:** Ogana

**Addressee:** Ofodile, Nnadozie and others present.

**End:** Expressing the enormity of his pain for not having a male child.

**Key:** Serious tone.

#### **Datum 6**

##### **Act Sequence**

“When a hyena does not laugh like his kinsmen and goes about a particular mission, it means he must accomplish it.”

**Analysis:** Ogana stresses the reason for his distress and that nothing stops him until it is accomplished.

**Typology:** Analytic

**Setting:** Still in Ogana’s compound as he stands discussing and arguing with others.

**Scene:** Time and Place: Ogana is still expressing his anger and the need to kill the diviner who lied to him he will have a boy.

**Addresser:** Ogana  
**Addressee:** Ofodile and Nnadozie  
**End:** Explaining why he should be freed to go away.  
**Key:** Serious tone.

### **Datum 7**

#### **Act Sequence**

“It is really a thing of joy when a woman climbs down.”

**Analysis:** Ofodile is expressing his joy over safe delivery Ogana’s wife.

**Typology:** Rhetorical

**Setting:** In the morning, open space in Ogana’s compound.

**Scene:** Time and Place: Ofodile is stressing why Ogana should be happy irrespective of the baby’s gender.

**Addresser:** Ofodile

**Addressee:** Ogana, Nnadozie and the women.

**End:** To encourage Ogana to cheer up as child birth could cost the woman her life.

**Key:** Humorous.

### **Datum 8**

#### **Act Sequence**

“Cocoyam and yam are resident in the earth, yet beetle knows why it left cocoyam’s house and entered that of yam.”

**Analysis:** Ofodile uses this proverb to justify the son’s choice of Udenkwo as his wife to be. He refers to Uduonna as a beetle that is wise and knows how to make good choice in the midst of abundant choices. Yam is a symbol of endowment; Udenkwo is well endowed

**Typology:** Epistemological.

**Setting:** In the morning, open space in Ogana’s compound.

**Scene:** Time and Place: Ofodile was introducing the purpose of their visit to Ogana’s house by creating a suitable background.

**Addresser:** Ofodile

**Addressee:** Ogana, Ugoli and the women in attendance.

**End:** He tells Ogana that they are in his house, is not for lack of who to marry but choice.

**Key:** Formal tone.

### **Datum 9**

#### **Act Sequence**

“Proverbs are bullets, with which words are shot into the ears if you do not load them well, you shoot at somebody’s heart and hurt his feeling with words.”

**Analysis:** Nnadozie is stressing why Ofodile speaks using proverbs. Elders, by norms, are expected to speak in proverbs which is an integral part of authoritativeness and collection of wisdom. However, the choice of proverb must be done with thoughtfulness in order not hurt hearers’ feelings and emotions.



**Typology:** Philosophical

**Setting:** In the morning, open space in Ogana's compound.

**Scene:** Time and Place: Ogana was complaining that why Ofodile would not go straight to his point but rigmarole around with proverbs and Nnadozie tries to justify Ofodile style of speech.

**Addresser:** Nnadozie

**Addressee:** Ogana

**End:** Ofodile use of proverbs was not a mere rigmarole and expression of lack of idea but a demonstration a good speaker and eldership.

**Key:** Reflective tone.

## **Datum 10**

### **Act Sequence**

“The mission he has come for is like people gathered to eat a rat. They do not eat it straight else people mock them as rat eaters.”

**Analysis:** A matter such as being discussed needs to be engaged in fun and jokes so as to achieve its essence.

**Typology:** Analytical

**Setting:** In the morning, open space in Ogana's compound.

**Scene:** Time and Place: Nnadozie still convincing Ogana on the efficacy of the use of proverbs in any discourse.

**Addresser:** Nnadozie

**Addressee:** Ogana

**End:** Reiterating the essence of proverbs in communication.

**Key:** Serious and candid tone.

## **Datum 11**

### **Act Sequence**

“Is it until the deaf hears and answers your questions, you will not realize that your questions and all you have been saying have fallen into deaf ears.”

**Analysis:** Ogana is hell-bent on going to the diviner and is not ready to cooperate with his guest.

**Typology:** Analytical

**Setting:** In the morning, open space in Ogana's compound.

**Scene:** Time and Place: Ogana was asking Ofodile, Nnadozie and the women refusing to yield to their demands. They were still

**Addresser:** Ogana

**Addressee:** Ofodile and Nnadozie.

**End:** Ogana was resisting corrections and advice from Ofodile and Nnadozie.

**Key:** Pessimistic.

## Datum 12

### Act Sequence

“When a drink comes with visitors, the respect it deserves is to be sipped while sitting as the talk goes on.”

**Analysis:** Ogana was not willing to offer his visitors seat. Ofodile therefore seized the opportunity to instill some morals into Ogana; to remind him that drinks is a symbols of fraternity and expression of love. However, Ogana’s refusal symbolizes that the visitors are not welcomed.

**Typology:** Didactic and rhetorical.

**Setting:** In the morning, open space in Ogana’s compound, they were still standing arguing.

**Scene:** Time and Place: Ofodile found that Ogana seemed not to understand their culture as it is demanded in a situation like this.

**Addresser:** Ofodile

**Addressee:** Ogana

**End:** Ofodile creates the ideal scene where a matter of the magnitude being discussed should be done.

**Key:** Reflective.

## Datum 13

### Act Sequence

“Remember, no matter how you hurry in licking the soup on your fingers while you are eating, the soup and the food will finish and your fingers will still remain on your palm; none shall fall off.”

**Analysis:** Ofodile was reminding Ogana that they are visitors and should be treated well that whatever he wants to do could be done after they finish as they were not going to remain there forever.

**Typology:** Philosophical and didactic

**Setting:** In the morning, open space in Ogana’s compound, they are about to discuss the marriage proposal between Udunna and Udenkwo.

**Scene:** Time and Place: Ogana is trying to deny Ofodile and Nnadozie the respect required to accord their visit and Ofodile is admonishing him.

**Addresser:** Ofodile

**Addressee:** Ogana

**End:** A matter of importance should be treated as such as there is time for everything under the sun and nothing lasts forever.

**Key:** Serious.

## Datum 14

### Act Sequence

“Ogana, you have many palm kernels on the palm trees in your compound that are ripe.”

**Analysis:** The palm kernel used refers to Ogana daughters, one of whom they have come to ask for her hand in marriage. Palm kernel is used to symbolize female children.

**Typology:** Rhetorical

**Setting:** In the morning, open space in Ogana's compound, trying to initiate a marriage proposal.

**Scene:** Time and Place: Ofodile was trying to initiate a discussion on how to get a wife for his son, Udunna. They are seated now.

**Addresser:** Ofodile

**Addressee:** Ogana

**End:** To season the discussion with humour.

**Key:** Humorous but serious.

### Datum 15

#### Act Sequence

“Ogana, do not remove the feather of a fowl in public.”

**Analysis:** Ugoli warns Ogana not humiliate himself and the family before the visitors.

**Typology:** Epistemological

**Setting:** They are seated in the morning, open space in Ogana's compound.

**Scene:** Time and Place: Ogana tries to deny that he is not Udenkwo's father but Ugoli warns him not to do such as it will amount to a public disgrace.

**Addresser:** Ugoli

**Addressee:** Ogana

**End:** To prevent Ogana from saying what he was about to say and save the family of any humiliation.

**Key:** Serious and candid tone.

### Datum 16

#### Act Sequence

“When a snake bites you and runs away and you are hell-bent on revenging, you do not measure your revenge with its length; otherwise you elongate your revenge.”

**Analysis:** It means that vengeance is not measured by the gravity of the offence committed.

**Typology:** Didactic

**Setting:** Time and Place: in the morning at Oganaigwe's compound

**Scene:** Nnadozie visits Oganaigwe with his friend, Ofodile and Udunna to ask for Udenkwo's hand in marriage for his son, Udunna.

**Addresser:** Nnadozie

**Addressee:** Oganaigwe

**End:** It was a piece of advice to Oganaigwe, not to avenge whatever the late sister may have done against him on her daughter, Udenkwo.

**Key:** Serious tone.

### Datum 17

#### Act Sequence

“The snake crawls, be careful when you pursue a snake for vengeance.”

**Analysis:** Any man who goes on vengeance mission must take caution.

**Typology:** Didactic and rhetorical

**Setting:** Time and Place: in the morning at Oganaigwe's compound

**Scene:** Nnadozie visits Oganaigwe with his friend, Ofodile and Udunna to ask for Udenkwo's hand in marriage for his son, Udunna.

**Addresser:** Nnadozie

**Addressee:** Oganaigwe

**End:** It is a piece of advice and warning to Oganaigwe to deter him from hurting his dead sister.

**Key:** Serious tone.

### Discussion of Findings

**Table 1 displaying the use of proverbs in the play by gender**

S/N	Characters	Gender	Number of proverbs used	Total proverbs used
1	Ofodile	Male	21	Total proverbs used by male characters: 47
2	Nnadozie	Male	11	
3	Oganaigwe	Male	11	
4	Udunna	Male	3	
5	War Dancer III	Male	1	
6	Ugoli	Female	4	Total proverbs used by female: 9
7	Udenkwo	Female	5	
				Total proverbs used: 56

Table 1 above displays characters, gender, number of proverbs used by each of them, the total per gender and the total of the proverbs used in the play. The proverbs used in the play are reflective of a typical Igbo community which the play represents. In the play, almost all the characters used proverbs but the male adults used more proverbs with Ofodile being the eldest used 21 proverbs out of the 56 proverbs used in the play. The irregularity in the use of proverbs by the elders shows their level of wit. It is believed that the elder who interposes his speech with more proverbs is wiser than one who uses a few in his speech. Since literary works are miniature of the society, language use in such works is reflective of the society.

**Table 2 displaying typology and function of the selected proverbs**

S/N	Data	Typology	Function
1	Datum 1	Analytical	Advice
2	Datum 2	Rhetorical	Expression of disapproval (sadness)
3	Datum 3	Rhetorical and didactic	Expression of anger
4	Datum 4	Philosophical	Expression of happiness
5	Datum 5	Philosophical and rhetorical	Expression of disappointment
6	Datum 6	Analytical	Expression of disappointment
7	Datum 7	Rhetorical	Inspiration
8	Datum 8	Epistemological	Aids understanding
9	Datum 9	Philosophical	Moral reinforcement
10	Datum 10	Analytical	Reinforce moral / cultural conduct
11	Datum 11	Analytical	Expression of resistance
12	Datum 12	Didactic and rhetorical	Moral reinforcement
13	Datum 13	Philosophical and didactic	Impart cultural knowledge
14	Datum 14	Rhetorical	Act of hilarity
15	Datum 15	Epistemological	Moral reinforcement
16	Datum 16	Didactic	Advice
17	Datum 17	Didactic and rhetorical	Advice

Amongst the seventeen proverbs studied, four are Analytical (problem solving), Rhetorical and Philosophical in nature. Only two are Epistemological and three are Didactic. The paper shows that proverbs performed varied functions such as giving advice, reinforcing cultural morals, imparting knowledge, inspiring and expressing approval, disapproval, happiness, joy and relieving interpersonal tension.

Using the SPEAKING model, the paper analyzes seventeen proverbs out of fifty-six proverbs used in Nwagbo's *When Women Go Naked*. The paper equally shows that proverbs are peculiar in communication as there cannot be any successful communication without proverbs. The study shows that the typologies of the proverbs used ranges from analytic, rhetoric, philosophical, didactic, and epistemological and some of the proverbs combine two different typologies. This is evidence that proverbs are used in different contexts and are multifunctional. The functions performed using proverbs include teaching and reinforcing moral values, advising as well as expressing positive and negative emotions. The proverbs studies express Igbo general attitude concerning life and the laws that govern the way of life in Igbo community. In addition, the proverbs recommend positive system of values and condemning some unacceptable behaviour and vices. While some of the proverbs are used to express general truths and observations in Igbo community.

The study reveals that the elderly ones mostly use proverbs for driving home their messages; proverbs hardly feature in the speeches of young ones. In like manner, men flock frequently employ proverbs while the women used them sparingly in their utterances. The symbolisms in the proverbs studied are reflective of the culture of the people - Igbo culture. Hence, most of the symbols are drawn from agricultural domain and rural setting. The use of

familiar symbols makes the information being passed across to fit into the discourse and the addressees can interpret the information intended by the addresser.

The study also reveals that proverbs can be analyzed using ethnography model of SPEAKING. None of the proverbs discussed leaves out any of the elements in SPEAKING. They all apply to the different proverbs used in the play.

### **Conclusion**

Proverb, a short wise saying used to reinforce intentions of speakers in an unequivocal manner, is an essential ingredient in every human communication as demonstrated in the play. The study reveals that, the selected proverbs characterized Igbo cultural symbols and imageries. It further shows that proverbs play key communicative roles in every speech community. This study further affirms the communicative function of proverbs by appraising selected proverbs used in Nwagbo's *When Women Go Naked*. The study demonstrates that proverbs are used to impart knowledge, advice, inspire, support, and calm nerves, aid understanding, express disagreement, as well as express positive and negative emotions. However, efficient and successful usage of proverbs require that the participants in the interaction share common knowledge of the imageries and symbols that feature in the proverbs used otherwise, the proverb will misfire and become a misfit within the discourse. The seventeen proverbs analyzed belong to different typologies such as analytic, rhetoric, philosophical, didactic, and epistemological. Proverb in Igbo community as depicted in the play, tend to feature more in the utterances of elderly men than elderly women. Like the women, the youth hardly interpolate their speeches with proverbs. Since the play, *When Women Go Naked*, is set in a typical Igbo community, it mirrors how proverbs are used in the Igbo cultural setting.

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