

Rethinking Proverbs as Problem-solving Tools in the 21st Century: The Example of Ogu in Southwestern Nigeria

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Abstract

Proverbs are short witty sayings which do not only contain a lot of wisdom, morals, truth as well as metaphors, but also constitute part of the linguistic and cultural repertoire of many African languages. This study examined proverbs in Ogu, a minority language spoken in Southwestern Nigeria, with the aim of ascertaining their extent of entrenching and preserving the core values of the Ogu people, including their ethno-linguistic heritage. Data were gathered using the research instruments of key informant interviews and focus group discussions to establish the role and effects of proverbs as linguistic forms among the people. The study adopted the framework of metaphoric analysis in analysing the conceptual metaphors that are embedded in the proverbs while data were subjected to descriptive and content analyses. Findings show that proverbs are regarded as a very intricate part of the linguistic repertoire of the Ogu people and are highly valued. They represent their core values and act as checks and balances in maintaining decorum, both in the family and in the wider community. Data from interview sessions, however, reveal that Ogu proverbs are disappearing as only the elderly ones now use them. Findings from focus group discussions also reveal that parents hardly transfer proverbs to their children while the younger speakers neither understand proverbs nor use them. The study submits that Ogu people need to revisit the use of proverbs as a problem-solving tool in the 21st Century.

Keywords: Proverbs, Problem-solving tool, Ogu, 21st Century, Southwestern Nigeria

Introduction

This study takes a radical examination of proverbs in Ogu, a minority language spoken in Southwestern Nigeria, with the aim of ascertaining the extent to which they entrench and preserve the core values of the Ogu people, including their ethno-linguistic heritage. Proverbs are short witty sayings (Finnegan 1994) which do not only contain a lot of wisdom, morals, truth as well as metaphors, but also constitute part of the linguistic and cultural repertoire of many African languages. This view is corroborated by Ssetuba (2002:1) who sees the proverb as 'a noble genre of African oral tradition that enjoys the prestige of a custodian of a people's wisdom and philosophy of life'. Proverbs are regarded as a very intricate part of the linguistic repertoire of the African people and are highly valued. They represent their core values while also acting as checks and balances in maintaining decorum, both in the family and in the wider community. They are usually fixed metaphorical sayings that are often handed down from generation to the other. Perhaps, that is why Anderson (2013), submits that proverbs are collective phenomena. Again, Agbaje (2002) agrees that a proverb is a rich source of imagery and succinct expression, encapsulating abstract ideas and allusive wording, usually in metaphorical form. It therefore takes some form of learning to understand the meanings of proverbs and use them, thus making their use more of the prerogative of elderly people.

Owomoyela (2005:12) explains that the meanings of proverbs are deduced from closely observing and reflecting on life, forms of life, their habits and characteristics, as well as the environment, and natural phenomena. In support of Owomoyela's position, Ebenso et al., (2012:1) posit that 'proverbs are not part of an unchanging past but instead part of contemporary understandings of the world.' Proverbs do not only help to express societal and communal truths; they also contain wisdom for everyday life. In addition, they enhance and reveal a people's experience, as well as their expectations. They also portray ways people should do things, and how to and how not to behave (Finnegan 1994, Owomeyela 2005). This way, proverbs may provide keys to the historical understanding of the customs, beliefs, traditions, cultural realities and attitudes in many African societies.

Malinga-Musamba and Ntshwarang (2014) reveal that in Botswana, proverbs are part of the cultural repertoires where indigenous knowledge and information are stored. Others include, songs, stories, folk tales, and metaphorical sayings. They are very important in shaping societal behaviour, attitudes, and belief systems. Proverbs constitute part of the linguistic repertoire of a group of people, while also acting as checks and balances for the day to day lives of the people. They are commonly used in most African countries where they are considered as a cultural template for impacting cultural beliefs, wisdom, morality and traditional pedagogy. Baloyi and Ramose (2016), explain that metaphors, idioms and proverbs are some of the modes of expressions that African languages are rich in. In fact, in traditional African societies, an individual is not considered a competent speaker of indigenous languages if they are not fluent in the use and comprehension of proverbs. The amount of wisdom a person has is measured by the extent to which they can lace their speech with proverbs, and how much of proverbial sayings they understand. Since proverbs are wise sayings, anyone who is not profound in the use of proverbs is perceived as unwise (Agbaje, 2002).

Proverbs portray the ideologies of the African people, their world views as well as medium for the dissemination of information. Megbowon and Uwah (2021) explain that in many parts of Africa, indigenous languages are replete with proverbs that serve as a way of instructing people against vices and directing them towards virtuous living. African proverbs discourage laziness, stealing, short cut to success while extolling the dignity of labour, focus, resilience and hard work. Issues that border on gender are also reflected in African proverbs as revealed by Phiri et al. (2015). Such proverbs reflect the thought patterns and positions of Africans on gender-related matters. In furtherance to the other views on proverbs, Megbowon and Uwah (2021:1) aptly capture proverbs thus:

African proverbs, as a component of indigenous knowledge system (IKS), are a cultural template and framework through which African societies leave an indelible mark. The beauty of proverbs lies in their relevance, which includes being a way of impacting wisdom, education and morality.

Proverbs are also used as a means of societal control. As explained by Olaoye (2010), Yoruba people use proverbs to check dishonesty, while also encouraging their people to employ honesty and transparency in dealing with one another. Agbaje (2002) further reveals that proverbs are very effective tools for conflict resolution among the Yoruba people in Nigeria. The

conflict-resolution power of African proverbs can, therefore, be employed to solve societal problems in the 21st Century.

The Ogu People

This study examines the use of proverbs among the Ogu people of Southwestern Nigeria. The Ogu people are found mainly in Lagos and Ogun States, where they are in the minority. They are surrounded by speakers of Yoruba, a majority language and one of the national languages of Nigeria. Ogu, is a member of the Aja-Ewe language group, which, in turn, belongs to the KWA family (Greenberg, 1963). Ogu speakers are mainly around the borders between Nigeria and The Republic of Benin. That is why Ogu is spoken in both countries although with different nomenclatures. While Ogu is a minority language in Ogun and Lagos States of Southwestern Nigeria, it is one of the major languages in Benin. For instance, not only do Ogu people constitute 30% of Beninese population (Ofulue 2013), they are also politically and economically privileged. The Ogu people have a very rich culture, which is evidenced in their proverbs and metaphorical expressions.

Closely related to Ogu, in the Republic of Benin, is Fon, which also enjoys the status of a major language in the country. Ogu also shares affinity with Ewe as spoken in parts of Togo and Ghana. Generally, Ogu, Fon and Ewe belong to languages of people in the Aja-Tade belt in West Africa (Asiwaju, 1979). Ogu is erroneously referred to as Egun among non-natives, especially Yoruba people, who are the closest linguistic neighbours to Ogu communities (Onadipe-Shalom 2013). The people find this nomenclature derogatory and that is why the Ogu Studies Society, in August 1985, reaffirmed the correct name as Ogu (Gbolahan, 1991). Ogu is the correct name for the language and the people. Egun is a corruption of the name by the Yoruba and mainly used by them to mock and ridicule the people. For instance, Yoruba people often refer to Ogu people as *Egun lasan lasan* (worthless people). This has informed why a number of Ogu people are ashamed to identify as Ogu. Many have shifted to Yoruba and taken on Yoruba names and identity (Onadipe-Shalom 2013, Senayon 2017). Ogu has only about 1.5 million speakers in both Lagos and Ogun States. This figure is based on the 2006 census result and the Nigerian growth rate projection at 2.5%.

Ogu, however, has been experiencing widespread shift by its speakers to Yoruba, the language of wider communication and one of the three national languages of Nigeria. This is due to the socio-economic and political marginalization, as well as deprivation that the people suffer. (Onadipe-Shalom 2013; Senayon 2017, 2019, 2021). The shift often manifests in the denial of Ogu identity, privileging of Yoruba over Ogu and bearing of Yoruba names (Durodola 2004, Onadipe-Shalom 2013, Senayon 2019). The shift has further depleted the number of Ogu speakers in Nigeria while also endangering the language. It has also affected the use of proverbs among the young people as many of them no longer understand Ogu let alone its proverbs, hence the need for this study.

Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on the framework of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980). Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) in analysing the conceptual metaphors that are embedded in the proverbs. Since proverbs often reflect the material and ideational parts of a linguistic community, the metaphoric model is the ideal framework for understanding the deep meanings of proverbs.

The theory explains that metaphors understand and experience something in another way or sense. Other scholars see Conceptual metaphors as the use of concrete concepts as source and the abstract ones as the target for a better understanding of the epistemological underpinnings of proverbs (Semino 2008, Kövecses 2010, Mele 2013). Mele (2013) further explains that the Kanuri people of Northern Nigeria conceptualize proverbs as concrete objects, metaphors and categories. This shapes their response to the content of the proverbs and the way the proverbs impart their everyday lives. Conceptualisations make people to shape their perception of ideas in a way that is peculiar to their thought patterns. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) also posit that conceptual systems are not arbitrary but rooted in cultural and physical experiences. Since proverbs are metaphorical statements, it becomes pertinent that the conceptual metaphor theory be employed to decipher the metaphors in Ogu proverbs,

Methodology

This study was carried out in three Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Lagos and Ogun States where there is a predominant presence of Ogu people. The LGAs are Badagry (Lagos State), Ado-Odo/Ota and Ipokia (Ogun State). Data for the qualitative research were collected using the research instruments of key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). KIIs were carried out with purposively selected elderly Ogu men and women who were believed to be custodians of Ogu proverbs. Five males and five females, aged between 60 and 80 years, were interviewed to gather proverbs that express the way of life of the people. By virtue of their age and experience, they could give firsthand information about the way of life of their people and some of the proverbs that may not be popular with young people. Similarly, three FGDs were carried out with randomly selected young Ogu people in the three LGAs under study to decipher their knowledge of Ogu proverbs and their meanings. The essence of the group discussions was to find out if the knowledge/ignorance of proverbs has positively/negatively impacted/ affected the way of life of the youths. Each FGD was made up of 5 people each (3 males and 2 females). This gives a total research population of 25 informants and discussants. The key informants were purposively selected due to their age brackets while the discussants in the FGDs were also purposively selected. The research instruments were deployed to establish the role and effects of proverbs as linguistic forms among the people. The study adopted the framework of Metaphoric Analysis in analysing the conceptual metaphors that are embedded in the proverbs. Data were also gathered from library sources and other archival materials. The data were then subjected to descriptive as well as content analyses.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section analyses the proverbs gathered from the elderly people using the instrument of interview. The elderly people were the few who could still speak in proverbs and could tell us the meanings of some Ogu proverbs. The section also presents and analyses data gathered from FGDs. Some of the proverbs and their metaphorical meanings are analysed below.

Azandido ma du whesisor-The imperative of an appointment forbids distraction from fries.

This proverb encourages people to take whatever assignments they are given, or whatever they are pursuing in life seriously. It encourages focus and work/ labour before pleasure. Elders who were taught this proverb, in the time of their youth, agreed that the proverb helped to shape their conception of success in life. They learnt that they must pursue their education/or learning of a craft with seriousness and endure the sacrifices therein before enjoying the pleasures that come after such focus and resilience. The constant use of this proverb helped young people to avoid distractions that would mar their future goals. The proverb resonates with the English idiom 'Make hay while the sun shines'/Time and tide wait for no man'.

Nue po depo ma whe depo-Whatever remains one should not become less than one.

This proverb is a plea for one not to lose everything in life, as a result of the loss of something. It encourages people who have lost something dear to them, such as spouse, child, job, property, money, etc. to take heart for 'whatever remains one should not become less than one'. The proverb checks excessive grief over the loss of something dear, to the extent of losing something more. Some people grieve over the loss of their spouses or children to the extent that they fall sick and even lose their lives. The proverb provides hope in the time of loss and advocates reason to approach life with courage and resilience, as the loss of something dear is not the end of life. The proverb resonates with Mele's (2013) submission that people's beliefs or philosophy dictates their responses to matters of domestic life such as death, illness, happiness or birth.

Ogbeh ma do vaan-Life is not a straight view. / Life is not a bed of roses.

The understanding that life is full of ups and downs is what keeps people going in the face of challenges. Many African cultures have proverbs that teach people to expect the good, the bad and the ugly in life so that when such happens, people are able to face them. Among the French people, 'la vie n'est pas fait des roses' resonates with the English idiom 'Life is not a bed of roses'. Young Ogu people who are brought up with this proverb are already aware that life situations could be sometimes challenging. They therefore brace up when they are faced with such challenges. Due to the absence of proverbs of this nature nowadays, young people easily give in to the pressures of life. Some are unable to stand challenging situations and commit suicide while some respond by getting into social vices such as cultism, drug abuse, alcoholism, teenage pregnancy and armed robbery. Many young people have mental health issues due to societal challenges that keep tampering with their peace of mind. Any young person that has been raised with the Ogu proverb under discussion, may not be rattled by challenges as they have been prepared to tackle them. Perhaps, this is why Megbowon and Uwah (2021) call for the inclusion of proverbs in the indigenous education system so that African children can be taught culturally acceptable and moral norms. For instance, it is a taboo for an Ogu to commit suicide. An average Ogu child who has been taught that 'Ogbeh na do vaan' (life is not a bed of roses) knows that suicide is not an option when faced with difficult situations.

Mehoho ma do afor koklovi ji moh hotor-An adult does not deny an accidental crushing of a baby duck. / When an elder crushes a chick, they don't deny doing so.

The proverb above talks about the virtue of owning up to one's errors and mistakes. An adult would not intentionally step on a chick and kill it. When such happens, however, it is often a mistake and the adult has to take responsibility for such a mistake. Ogu adults are regarded as models for young people to emulate and so must exhibit good character as well as a high sense of morality. If an adult owns up to an accidental error, it doesn't make them less of an adult. It, however, teaches the children to be honest and take responsibility for their actions. That way, the children learn honesty from the adults and the society is better for it (Olaoye, 2010).

Nue son sin, ma gon sin - Whatever is of the homeland must necessarily return to the homeland.

Migration is a part of human society as man is adventurous in nature. People migrate from their homelands in quest of greener pastures and this is a common practice among the Ogu people. However, the proverb advises the Ogu people not to completely abandon the homeland in their quest for better living. It speaks to the fundamental necessity of humans to have an identity and a home. Although, some scholars believe that it no longer matters where a person lives (Pickbourn, 2022), Ogu people believe that their identity and ancestry is something that should be guarded. This proverb may not be unconnected with the massive migration of Ogu people from their ancestral communities to cities in Southwestern Nigeria. Many of such Ogu migrants have totally abandoned their homes, denied their Ogu identity and taken on Yoruba names. This behaviour has adversely affected the group identity of the Ogu people, aggravated their minority status as well as further reduced their number in a country where socio-political recognition is based on numerical strength (Senayon, 2017).

Hunwan ma mion - A male child is expected to be brave/ A male child should not be a weakling.

African societies place much value on male children as they will eventually become heads of their homes and shoulder a lot of responsibilities. The proverb advises male children to be brave, strong and courageous in order to be able to tackle their responsibilities. The proverb is against laziness, fear, sluggishness and lack of will power. Children whose parents taught them this proverb grow up to be very dutiful, smart, courageous and active. They are bold, face life's challenges with resilience and are not easily shaken by difficulties since they have been taught from childhood to be tough. Bascom (1984), supports this fact by revealing that Yoruba proverbs express morals and ethics, thereby making them acceptable standards for expressing social approval for those who conform to accepted conventions. The same perception of proverbs goes with the Ogu people who often employ their proverbs to appraise behaviour.

Owedudu ma glo, pitipiti mo glo. - If you cannot dance vigorously, at least shake your body/ When dancing is unaffordable, shaking should not.

This proverb encourages Ogu people to keep on trying, no matter the situation they find themselves. If they have not been able to achieve their dreams, they should by all means keep

on trying. The proverb speaks against resignation to fate and refusing to push further. It extols willpower, resilience and courage.

Klemeh yi ye who yevo de tho mo ohun do emeh (It takes a dawn slaughter to find the blood in a white man).

The proverb encourages setting out early in the pursuance of one's goals, dreams and aspirations in life as any achievements are a consequence of an early start. The proverb resonates with the English rhyme:

“Tick says the clock, tick tick,
what you have to do, do quick”

Otin gbigban ji yi ye nor tho mor jijlor - It is upon a crooked tree that a climber notices a nearby straight tree.

This proverb encourages people not to look down on little beginnings. No matter the situation, life is about starting small and then with focus, hard work and resilience, success is attained. This proverb is particularly instructive to young people who do not want to start small; instead, they get themselves involved in shady deals in order to get rich quick.

Owe na du do agunmeh ma lerkor yi ezon ye tho kan metor si oyin bior-Ceaseless dancing at the square provokes curiosity about the dancer's father/provenance.

The proverb above speaks to the value of focus in achieving a vision or a goal. When a person consistently focuses on what they do, eventually they would be noticed and get the desired results.

Ye ma ze meh tho opor whin ji mor ze alacha gbigble tho alomeh na meh - A person placed on the trail of a lion should not be handed a rusted gun.

This proverb speaks to the value of giving people the appropriate tools to tackle whatever tasks they are given. Going after a lion is a dangerous task that demands a working gun and not a rusted one. Parents, employers, elders, etc. are by virtue of this proverb encouraged to give their wards, employees and younger ones the right environment, empowerment as well as requirements to achieve their targets.

Awhanehyintor ma hen opo- A pigeon keeper doesn't bear sticks.

This proverb speaks to self-control, the ability to stay calm in the midst of extreme provocation. An individual who keeps pigeons cannot afford to bear sticks for if he raises the stick, all the pigeons will fly away and he ends up losing all. The proverb advises mentors, bosses, parents or leaders of any type against being harsh in order not to cause more damage to a delicate situation.

Note tho du, ozan ye tho zon-A guest that yields to the plea of their host to have a yet-to-be-ready meal will end in a benighted return journey

The proverb above speaks to the importance of weighing the consequences of momentary pleasure against the eventual challenges that follow such options. By the time a guest waits to eat a meal that is not immediately ready, he will end up embarking on his return journey in the night. Such a journey is likely going to be risky as night journeys are associated with many dangers such as armed robbery attacks, accidents, and loss of one's way. The dangers far supersede the pleasure of a meal and one is advised to be disciplined while weighing the cost of some pleasure, the dangers of travelling at night and other associated challenges. The proverb advises people to consider options very well before taking a decision.

Meh noyi ma noh azon sa ye du agloeb - You are not served an unripe fruit when your own sibling is in charge of the windfall under the fruit tree.

This proverb talks about family bond and the need for members of families to support one another. Any family member that has the resources or opportunity should share them and not allow their siblings to suffer lack. That way, everybody is empowered and the family bond gets stronger. The proverb speaks to the communal lifestyle in African communities where resources are jointly owned and everybody looks out for the other person.

Mede ma chan azon mo jotho e sa – A windfall gatherer does not leave the fruits exposed

The proverb speaks to the value of being protective of one's success especially when people around one have not experienced such success. The proverb teaches people to be sensitive of their environment, and not flaunt their harvests in order not to hurt other people's feelings. Ogu people must be mindful of the situation around them before proclaiming their progress so that their success does not cause sorrow or envy to other people, or worse still bring trouble for them.

Discussion of Findings-Endangerment of Ogu Proverbs

Findings show that proverbs are regarded as a very intricate part of the linguistic repertoire of the people and are highly valued. They represent their core values and act as checks and balances in maintaining decorum both in the family and in the wider community. Bascom (1984: 98) argues that proverbs express morals and ethics thereby making them convenient standards for (i) appraising behaviour; (ii) expressing social approval for those who conform to accepted conventions and ridiculing deviants; (iii) warning against defiance or derision of an enemy or rival, and (iv) counselling against actions that cause social friction, open hostilities, or direct punishment.

Data from both interview sessions and FGDs, however, reveal that Ogu proverbs are disappearing, as their use is now more common with the elderly people. An aged informant revealed thus:

Many middle-aged parents of nowadays no longer understand proverbs let alone use them. In our days, we competed in our use of proverbs to show how versed we were in our language and culture.
(70-yr old trader).

The situation described above is representative of the current linguistic situation in many Ogu communities where young adults and children neither speak nor understand the language. It has become even more difficult for them to understand the meanings of proverbs which are mainly metaphorical. A speaker has to be well-groomed in a language to understand the deep meanings of proverbial expressions. Another informant explained that although her own parents spoke to her in proverbs, she has failed to also teach her own children.

My own parents spoke a lot to me in proverbs and I understand many of them. However, I wasn't intentional in speaking to my children in proverbs. If I even try to now, they look at me as if I was speaking Greek.

Fishman (1991) emphasised the intergenerational transmission of languages as a sure way of ensuring the continued existence of any language. If, as revealed by the elders, Ogu proverbs are not being passed on to the younger generation, a vital aspect of the language is gradually disappearing. Language loss is also tantamount to loss of the rich cultural heritage of its speakers. Parents have to be decisive in not just teaching their children their indigenous language but also proverbs, idioms and folktales.

Findings from focus group discussions also reveal that parents hardly teach their children the use and importance of proverbs. Many young speakers revealed that their parents did not use proverbs to communicate with them. So, they neither understand proverbs nor use them. Ogu, as a language, is already threatened due to its minority status and small number of speakers. The language has also been experiencing widespread shift by its speakers to Yoruba, the language of wider communication and one of the three national languages of Nigeria. Due to the socio-economic and political marginalization, as well as deprivation that Ogu people suffer, the speakers have been shifting to Yoruba (Onadipe-Shalom 2013; Senayon 2017, 2021). The shift often manifests in the denial of Ogu identity, privileging of Yoruba over Ogu and bearing of Yoruba names (Onadipe-Shalom 2013, Senayon 2019). As a minority language that is not only facing threats from a prestigious language, but also on the verge of disappearing, there is urgent need for rigorous language activism. The language activism should also be geared towards revitalising Ogu proverbs especially among the younger generation.

The loss of proverbs among Ogu youths constitutes another form of linguistic loss as proverbs are part of the linguistic repertoire of most African languages. If Ogu is already threatened, due to loss of its speakers, the loss of its proverbs further aggravates the precarious condition of the language. Language endangerment, according to Wurm (2003) does not happen suddenly. Rather, it is a gradual process that takes time and affects different aspects of a language at different times. Parents claim that when they try to speak to their wards in proverbs, they do not seem to understand. They decry the fact that they are not able to teach their children certain wisdom and knowledge that are better captured by proverbs. This speaks

to the importance of intergenerational transmission of proverbs. As part of the richness of any language and culture, proverbs should be acquired by children even as they acquire their mother tongue. Another young informant had this to say:

I don't understand proverbs and I don't use them.
Am I an aged person to be using proverbs?
Proverbs are meant to be used by old men and
women in the villages; not a young person like me
(An18-year old male student)

The absence of proverbs, in the linguistic repertoire of present-day Ogu youths, has seriously affected the behavior and mentality of the young people. Many of them are no longer focused in pursuing their life goals. Some are distracted by pleasures of life, yet they do not want to work before they enjoy. Nowadays, young people want to get rich quick and engage in all sorts of vices to achieve the pleasures of life. Young girls, in their bid to get pleasure before work, get pregnant, lose focus and drop out of school, while young boys get involved in robbery, drugs, and other vices. Such distractions have caused the society to be filled with all manner of young people who have lost focus and have become miscreants. As Finnegan (1994) notes, proverbs do not only help in shaping societal behaviours, they also act as checks and balances. The fact that Ogu youths do not understand proverbs anymore has had a negative impact on their conception of the society they live in and the world around them. Perhaps, this is why Megbowon and Uwah (2021) call for the inclusion of proverbs in the indigenous education system so that African children can be taught culturally acceptable and moral norms. For instance, the proverb 'nuhe ye tho we ye no gben' (you reap what you sow) teaches people to be careful with what they do in life as there are either rewards or repercussions for every action. Proverbs of this nature help to condition people's way of life. Life is seen as a farm where seed are sown for harvest. The wisdom and morality learnt from proverbs are now lost to many young people in Ogu communities.

Conclusion

The importance of proverbs, in entrenching the core values of a people as well as acting as communal checks and balances, cannot be over emphasized. The 21st century is replete with societal challenges, especially among young people, which range from crime, drug abuse, depression, dishonesty, laziness, etc. for which proverbs can offer solutions, if properly harnessed. Ogu proverbs appraise behaviour, approve conformation to community standards, ridicule deviants, warn against the repercussions of negative acts as well as acts that may cause friction, tension, and hostility in Ogu communities. The 21st Century now witnesses the loss of proverbs as a vital socio-linguistic and cultural tool. Many young Ogu people neither understand proverbs nor use them. Parents too hardly use proverbs in communicating with their children as some of them do not even understand the commonly used proverbs in their linguistic repertoire. Ogu proverbs are filled with many metaphors that act as checks and balances in their communities. They are part of the linguistic and cultural resources of the people which address their core values. The loss of proverbs among the Ogu community, and,

by extension, other indigenous communities in Nigeria is tantamount to language endangerment, which calls for urgent interventions by all linguistic and cultural stakeholders. The study submits that Ogu people need to revisit the use and intergenerational transmission of proverbs as a problem-solving tool in the 21st Century.

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