



Research Article

The use of Igbo proverbs and oral tradition in local radio broadcasting in Enugu North LGA.

Okafor, Sebastine Chukwuebuka, Ph.D, Egwuagu, Uloma Bridget, Ph.D., Asogwa, Joel and MAGNUS, AJA Eze, Ph.D

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About the Authors

Okafor, Sebastine Chukwuebuka, Ph.D.

Email: sebastine.okafor@esut.edu.ng
Department of Mass Communication,
Enugu State University of Science and
Technology (ESUT), Enugu, Nigeria.

Egwuagu, Uloma Bridget, Ph.D.

Email: uloma.egwuagu@esut.edu.ng
Department of Mass Communication,
Enugu State University of Science and
Technology (ESUT), Enugu, Nigeria.

Asogwa, Joel

Email: asogwajoel2@gmail.com
Department of Mass Communication,
Enugu State University of Science and
Technology (ESUT), Enugu, Nigeria.

&

MAGNUS, AJA Eze, Ph.D

Email: majeze1969@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examined the use of Igbo proverbs and oral tradition in local radio broadcasting within Enugu North Local Government Area (LGA). Anchored on the cultural significance of proverbs as tools for transmitting values, identity, and collective wisdom, the study sought to determine the contexts in which proverbs are employed, their communicative functions, and how audiences perceive their use in contemporary radio. A survey research design was adopted, with a sample of 400 respondents selected using the Taro Yamane formula and stratified random sampling technique across the wards of Enugu North LGA. Data were collected through structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that radio listenership is high, with 52% of respondents listening daily, and 98.5% confirming awareness of proverb usage in broadcasts. Proverbs were found to be most commonly used in drama and storytelling programmes (75%), followed by entertainment and music (17%). Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that proverbs help preserve Igbo language and culture (91%), make programmes engaging (93%), and simplify complex issues (83%). Audience perception was largely positive, with 98.5% expressing pride in hearing proverbs on air, though some respondents noted challenges in comprehension. The study concludes that Igbo proverbs remain powerful communicative resources in local broadcasting, enhancing cultural pride and effective communication, but their limited use in news and educational programmes highlights a missed opportunity for broader cultural preservation.



1.0 INTRODUCTION

Human communication is deeply rooted in cultural contexts, and oral tradition remains a key pillar for preserving communal values, identity, and wisdom in many societies. Proverbs, as compact and metaphorical speech forms that encapsulate shared cultural norms, serve not only aesthetic but also communicative, moral, and social functions. In Igbo culture, proverbs are an important means of imparting moral instruction, reflecting communal philosophy, and mediating interpersonal relations (Obiegbu, 2024; Onyeka & Asuzu, 2021).

Media technologies, particularly radio, offer a unique public space in which oral traditions can be preserved, adapted, or transformed. In Nigeria's multilingual environment, radio remains one of the most accessible mass media, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, and is often used in local languages to reach wider audiences with varying literacy levels (Rauf, Adebomi, & Ademola, 2023; Nkamigbo & Ndubuisi, 2023). Radio broadcasting in indigenous languages can help reinforce cultural identity and allow listeners to engage with content that resonates more directly with their lived experiences. For instance, the study of Amuludun FM (Ibadan) and Orisun FM (Ile-Ife) found that many listeners prefer programmes in indigenous languages and affirm that such stations promote effective communication through culturally familiar idioms and linguistic modes (Rauf, Adebomi, & Ademola, 2023).

Despite many studies on Igbo proverbs in literary, social, and interpersonal settings, there is less empirical research focusing on how radio broadcasts use Igbo proverbs—frequency, contexts, functions, and audience reception. Research such as *Proverb Use in Insecurity and Conflict Resolution in Igbo* by Uba and Okoli (2022) shows that proverbs are actively used in oral, non-mediated contexts to warn, advise, criticize, and reconcile in situations of insecurity (Uba & Okoli, 2022). Another study, “A

Pragmatic Study of Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigeria,” compares Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba proverbs, exploring forms and pragmatic functions like warning, satirising, and rebuking, but again in non-broadcast contexts (Obiegbu, 2024).

In the broadcast domain, *Broadcasting in Nigeria's Indigenous Languages: A Case Study of Purity FM, Mgbakwu and NTA Aba* documents that indigenous languages are not always given a prominent place in radio and television broadcasts, largely due to limited airtime, lack of policy support, and attitudes of media practitioners (Nkamigbo & Ndubuisi, 2023). Such findings suggest that even where the potential for oral tradition exists in radio, there are structural and operational constraints that may limit or shape the deployment of proverbs and other traditional oral forms.

Enugu State itself has examples of media initiatives that aim to preserve Igbo language and culture through radio. For example, Owelle FM, a community radio station in Enugu, emphasizes broadcasting in Igbo and aims to inform, entertain, and cultivate indigenous culture and tradition among its audience (Duruiheoma, 2025). This shows that there is local institutional awareness of the importance of indigenous language broadcasting and cultural heritage, including oral tradition.

Given the strengths of radio as medium and the cultural importance of proverbs, there is a critical need to investigate how Igbo proverbs and oral tradition are used in local radio broadcasting in Enugu North LGA. Key issues include: *How often* proverbs appear in such broadcasts; *which types* of programs make use of them; *why* broadcasters use them; *how* listeners perceive them; and *what constraints* or supports affect their usage. Such research could contribute to cultural preservation, more culturally responsive broadcasting practice, and policy discussion around indigenous language media.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Oral tradition, particularly proverbs, has long been central to the Igbo worldview and remains one of the most powerful tools for transmitting values, norms, and cultural identity. However, in the era of globalization and rapid media transformation, the continuity of this tradition faces increasing challenges. While radio, as one of the most accessible media in Nigeria, has the potential to serve as a channel for preserving and popularizing proverbs, its actual practice often reflects competing priorities such as commercialization, time limitations, and the influence of Westernized broadcasting models (Nkamigbo & Ndubuisi, 2023; Rauf, Adebomi, & Ademola, 2023).

Existing scholarship on Igbo proverbs has largely concentrated on their literary, religious, and interpersonal functions, emphasizing their role in moral instruction, conflict resolution, and social regulation (Onyeka & Asuzu, 2021; Uba & Okoli, 2022; Obiegbo, 2024). While these studies affirm the enduring relevance of proverbs in traditional communicative contexts, they offer little empirical evidence about how these cultural resources are deployed in mediated forms such as local radio broadcasting. Consequently, there is insufficient knowledge on the frequency, contexts, and functions of proverbs on the airwaves, as well as the reception and interpretation of these proverbs by contemporary audiences.

In Enugu State, radio stations have demonstrated varying levels of commitment to indigenous language programming. For example, Owelle FM has deliberately promoted Igbo language and culture in its broadcasts (Duruiheoma, 2025). Yet, little is known about whether such initiatives systematically integrate proverbs into programming, how presenters adapt them to modern broadcast formats, and whether audiences in specific LGAs such as Enugu North perceive them as valuable cultural tools.

This gap is particularly concerning because the younger generation of Igbo speakers many of whom form a significant portion of radio audiences are increasingly exposed to English-dominated media environments. Without intentional integration of proverbs into mass communication platforms, the intergenerational transmission of this oral tradition may weaken over time, leading to cultural erosion and a decline in indigenous knowledge systems.

Therefore, the problem this study addresses is the lack of systematic documentation and analysis of how Igbo proverbs and oral tradition are used in local radio broadcasting in Enugu North LGA, including the motivations of broadcasters, the pragmatic functions of proverbs in broadcast contexts, and the audience's perceptions of their cultural value. Addressing this problem is essential to understanding the intersection of oral tradition and modern media, as well as to informing strategies for language preservation and culturally responsive broadcasting.

2.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the contexts in which Igbo proverbs are used in local radio programmes within Enugu North LGA.
2. Examine the communicative functions of Igbo proverbs in radio broadcasting.
3. Assess the perceptions of audiences in Enugu North LGA towards the use of Igbo proverbs and oral tradition in radio broadcasts.

2.1 Research Questions

Based on the above objectives, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. In what contexts are Igbo proverbs used in local radio programmes within Enugu North LGA?
2. What communicative functions do Igbo proverbs serve in radio broadcasting?
3. How do audiences in Enugu North LGA perceive the use of Igbo proverbs and oral tradition in radio broadcasts?

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Obiegbu (2024) conducted a comparative study of Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba proverbs, highlighting their pragmatic roles in communication, including warning, satire, rebuke, and moral instruction. The study emphasized that proverbs function as essential communicative resources that transmit shared values and strengthen interpersonal relationships.

Similarly, Onyeka and Asuzu (2021) explored the Umunnachi dialect of Igbo and found that proverbs play a significant role in moral education by guiding behaviour and reinforcing ethical standards. In a related context, Uba and Okoli (2022) examined the role of proverbs in conflict resolution and insecurity within Igbo society. Their findings revealed that proverbs are frequently used as persuasive tools for cautioning, advising, and reconciling parties in conflict, demonstrating their enduring relevance in addressing contemporary social challenges.

In the media landscape, Rauf, Adebomi, and Ademola (2023) investigated the impact of indigenous language radio stations such as Amuludun FM and Orisun FM on cultural identity. They reported that 82.4% of listeners believed such stations helped them understand societal issues better, while 95.7% stated that broadcasting in indigenous languages strengthened social cohesion.

Likewise, Nkamigbo and Ndubuisi (2023) noted that indigenous languages are often underutilized in mainstream Nigerian broadcasting due to commercialization pressures and weak policy support, even though community-based stations continue to serve as vital platforms for cultural preservation.

Duruiheoma (2025) documented the role of Owelle FM, a community radio station in Enugu, which consistently broadcasts in Igbo to promote cultural values. Audience feedback showed a strong sense of cultural pride, with more than

90% of listeners affirming that the station reinforced their attachment to Igbo identity.

Additionally, Ik-Iloanusi (2021) demonstrated how proverbs were used effectively in radio communication during the COVID-19 pandemic, simplifying health messages and fostering behavioural change. From these studies, it is evident that proverbs and oral traditions are more than linguistic expressions; they are dynamic communicative tools relevant to both traditional and mediated contexts. However, despite their potential, research shows that proverbs are predominantly used in drama and entertainment programming, with limited use in news or educational broadcasts (Nkamigbo & Ndubuisi, 2023). This gap underscores the need for a deeper investigation into how Igbo proverbs are employed in local radio broadcasting in Enugu North LGA, particularly in relation to audience perceptions and their role in cultural preservation.

4.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT). UGT is a central framework in mass communication research that explains why and how audiences actively seek out specific media content to satisfy their needs. Unlike passive audience theories, UGT posits that media users are active participants who choose content that aligns with their cultural, informational, or entertainment interests (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974).

In relation to this study, audiences of local radio stations in Enugu North LGA intentionally tune in to programmes that do more than inform and entertain, they seek content that resonates with their cultural identity. The use of Igbo proverbs and oral traditions in broadcasting can therefore be understood as a gratification mechanism, enabling listeners to connect with ancestral wisdom, reaffirm their cultural roots, and better comprehend complex social and moral issues. UGT thus provides a useful framework for understanding why audiences value proverb-rich

content and how such content influences their perceptions of radio communication and cultural preservation.

5.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive survey design. The design is considered appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection of data from a defined population to describe the current state of Igbo proverbs and oral tradition in local Igbo broadcasting. The survey method was chosen as it facilitates the gathering of quantitative information from a wide range of respondents in order to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses.

The population of this study comprises listeners of selected radio stations in Enugu State that broadcast programmes in the Igbo language. These include Enugu State Broadcasting Service (ESBS Radio), Dream FM, Coal City FM, and Radio Nigeria Enugu. The target audience covers adults aged 18 years and above, since this demographic is more likely to comprehend and evaluate the cultural significance of proverb and oral tradition on radio. Therefore, the target population for this study is estimated at approximately 333,669 residents of Enugu North L.G.A. (National Population Commission, 2006). This estimate is derived from the projected annual growth rate of 2.1% recommended by NPC (2006).

A sample size of 400 respondents was selected to ensure adequate representation of the population. The sampling technique adopted for this study is multi-stage sampling technique. First, purposive sampling was used to select the radio stations that broadcast in Igbo. Second, stratified random sampling was employed to ensure proportional representation of respondents based on age, gender, and educational background. Finally, systematic sampling was used within each stratum to select participants.

The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was

divided into sections covering demographic information, exposure to Igbo radio programmes, perceptions of proverbs and audience engagement. The items include both closed-ended questions (using Likert scales) and open-ended questions to allow for nuanced responses.

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in mass communication and Igbo cultural studies. A pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents who were not part of the final study sample. Reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient at 0.83, which is above the acceptable threshold of 0.7.

The researcher and trained assistants administered the questionnaires face-to-face to respondents across different communities in Enugu State. This approach ensures a higher response rate and provides opportunities for clarification where needed. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were observed.

Data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages were used to summarize responses.

6.0 ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF DATA

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: In what contexts are Igbo proverbs used in local radio programmes within Enugu North LGA?

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents on the Frequency of their Listenership to Local Radio Stations

Value	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Daily	208	52.0
Weekly	108	27.0
Occasionally	49	12.3
Rarely	35	8.7
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2025

Findings from table 1 shows that 208 respondents (52.0%) listen to local radio stations daily; 27.0% responded weekly; 12.3% responded occasionally; while 8.7% responded rarely. This suggests that local radio station is a trusted medium of communication in Enugu North L.G.A.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents on the Awareness of the use of Igbo Proverbs in Local Radio Programs

Value	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	394	98.5
No	6	1.5
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2025

Result from table 4.2 indicates that 98.5% of the respondents are aware of the use of Igbo proverbs in local radio programs.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents on the Program in which Igbo Proverbs is being used the most

Value	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
News/Current Affairs	12	3.0
Talk Shows/Interviews	20	5.0
Drama/Storytelling	300	75.0
Entertainment/Music	68	17.0
Educational Programs	00	00
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey 2025

Findings from table 4.4 show shows that 77.0% of the respondents agree that Drama/Storytelling are the programs in which Igbo proverbs is being used the most. While, 17.0% of the respondents suggests Entertainment/Music.

Research Question Two: What communicative functions do Igbo proverbs serve in radio broadcasting?

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents on the communicative functions of Igbo proverbs in radio broadcasting

Variable	Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Proverbs on radio help preserve Igbo culture and language	Strongly agree	168	42.0
	Agree	196	49.0
	Undecided	11	2.7
	Disagree	25	6.3
	Strongly Disagree	00	00
	Total	400	100
Proverbs help presenters explain complex issues in a simpler way	Strongly agree	112	28.0
	Agree	220	55.0
	Undecided	40	10.0
	Disagree	8	2.0
	Strongly Disagree	20	5.0
	Total	400	100
Proverbs on radio make Igbo programmes more interesting/engaging	Strongly agree	72	18.0
	Agree	300	75.0
	Undecided	00	00
	Disagree	28	7.0
	Strongly Disagree	00	00
	Total	400	100

Findings from table 3 show that majority of the respondents 91% either agree or strongly agree that proverbs helps in the preservation of Igbo language and culture. Similarly, greater fraction of the respondents 83% either agree or strongly agree that proverbs helps presenters explain complex issues in a simpler way. While, on the issue of weather proverbs makes Igbo programs more

interesting, most of the respondents 93% of the respondents either agree or strongly agree the assertion.

Research Question Two: How do audiences in Enugu North LGA perceive the use of Igbo proverbs and oral tradition in radio broadcasts?

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents on audience perception of Igbo proverbs in radio broadcasting

Variable	Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I feel proud when my language and proverbs are used on radio.	Strongly agree	308	77.0
	Agree	86	21.5
	Undecided	6	1.5
	Disagree	00	00
	Strongly Disagree	00	00
	Total	400	100
Radio stations should dedicate special programmes to oral tradition and proverbs	Strongly agree	116	29.0
	Agree	144	36.0
	Undecided	60	15.0
	Disagree	60	15.0
	Strongly Disagree	20	0.5
	Total	400	100
I appreciate and understand proverbs used on radio.	Strongly agree	176	44.0
	Agree	112	28.0
	Undecided	20	5.0
	Disagree	60	15.0
	Strongly Disagree	32	8.0
	Total	400	100

Findings from table 4 show that 98.5% of the respondents either agree or strongly agree that they feel proud when their language and proverbs are being used on radio. Furthermore, on the issue of dedication of special programs to oral tradition and proverbs, majority of the respondents (65%) either agree or strongly agree, while 15% of the respondents are undecided. More so, most of the respondents (72%) either agree or strongly agree that they understand and appreciate the use of proverbs on radio, while 23% of the respondents either disagrees or strongly disagree. this suggests mixed feelings on the understanding of proverbs amongst respondents in Enugu North L.G.A.

6.1 Discussion

The findings of this study illustrate that Igbo proverbs and oral traditions remain highly relevant in radio broadcasting in Enugu North LGA, with both the broadcasters and audiences

appreciating their communicative and cultural value. One of the key findings of the survey is that more than half of the respondents (52%) listen to local radio daily, whereas a very small percentage (8.7%) reported occasional listenership. This explains that radio is still a viable and widely consumed form of communication in the study area. These observations align with the arguments of Rauf, Adebomi, and Ademola (2023), who argued that radio stations that use local languages to broadcast have high listeners' loyalty because they are accessible and culturally appealing. Similarly, Nkamigbo and Ndubuisi (2023) highlighted the utilization of radio in the dissemination of indigenous languages and the preservation of cultural identity in multilingual communities, an observation reflected in the high percentage of awareness (98.5%) of proverbs among radio listeners in Enugu North.

The study also indicated that drama and storytelling programmes, followed by entertainment and music, are the most frequent contexts in which Igbo proverbs are utilized. That means that proverbs thrive best in creative and narrative genres that allow for dialogic and creative use of language. Obiegbu (2024) also made this observation, noting that proverbs function best in conversational and narrative genres where their symbolic and metaphorical meanings can be savored. Conversely, the research revealed extremely minimal use of proverbs in news and current affairs, and a complete absence in educational programmes. This echoes the observation by Nkamigbo and Ndubuisi (2023) that professionalized sections of Nigerian broadcasting tend to ignore indigenous oral forms in favor of standardized formats derived from Western media models. The absence of proverbs in radio education contradicts Onyeka and Asuzu (2021), who pointed out their importance in transmitting moral norms and shaping behaviour. This variation reflects a missed opportunity on the part of the broadcasters to more deliberately engage oral tradition in formal education programming.

A second overarching observation is that respondents firmly consider proverbs to be effective communicative devices. The majority of them agreed that proverbs help to preserve Igbo language and culture, explain difficult issues more clearly, and make programmes more engaging. These results are consistent with Onyeka and Asuzu (2021), who further stated that Igbo proverbs serve a critical function in transmitting moral and cultural values to the populace. They also align with Uba and Okoli (2022), who illustrated that proverbs are employed every time to talk about insecurity and conflict resolution, as caution, persuasion, and reconciliation. With the emphasis on the explanatory and entertaining roles of proverbs in radio broadcasting, the research offers further evidence that proverbs are not only markers of cultural identity but also useful vehicles for promoting understanding and

sustaining listeners' attention. These findings extend those of Ik-Iloanusi (2021), who observed that proverbs were effective in disseminating information and encouraging behavioral change during the COVID-19 pandemic. While Ik-Iloanusi's work focused on health communication in times of crisis, the present study underscores the wider communicative functions of proverbs across entertainment, drama, and routine broadcasting.

Audience perception of proverbs in radio broadcasting was overwhelmingly positive. Practically all the respondents (98.5%) said they feel proud when they hear their proverbs and language on air, and 65% agreed that special programmes should be dedicated to oral tradition. That people feel proud suggests that proverbs are symbolic identity markers of culture, reinforcing listeners' attachment to their heritage. Duruiheoma (2025) also contended when covering the work of Owelle FM, which actively utilizes Igbo to reaffirm cultural pride in its audience. In the meantime, this study also found that while 72% of the respondents understood and appreciated proverbs listened to on radio, about 23% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, indicating some level of difficulty in understanding. This ambivalent reaction is suggestive of a generational or educational divide in proverb interpretation. Obiegbu (2024) also noted that although proverbs are culturally rich, their metaphorical density is occasionally balanced by a lack of transparency to certain listeners, particularly younger listeners who are less familiar with traditional oral genres.

In general, these findings indicate continuity as well as change in oral tradition use in the modern broadcast environment. For one, proverbs continue to play vital communicative roles, echoing earlier studies that documented their functions in moral education, conflict resolution, and preservation of culture. For another, the underuse of proverbs in news and educational programs and the uneven levels of comprehension

among listeners point to areas where their use in radio broadcasting can be improved. Broadcasters may need to adapt their use of proverbs by interpreting them or simplifying traditional forms to suit young listeners without losing cultural richness.

In general, this study shows that Igbo proverbs remain a living cultural resource in Enugu North LGA radio broadcasting. Not only are they not just linguistic decorations, but also conveyors of values, promoters of cultural pride, and stimulators of audience interest. The findings confirm earlier studies stressing the ongoing importance of oral tradition in contemporary communication, as well as the need for deliberate policy and creative broadcasting practice to ensure that these cultural resources are not pushed to the periphery in the face of modernization and media globalization.

7.0 CONCLUSION

This study has shown that Igbo proverbs and oral traditions remain a vital part of local radio broadcasting in Enugu North LGA. The findings reveal that proverbs are most frequently used in drama and storytelling programmes, where they enhance engagement, preserve cultural values, and simplify complex ideas. Audiences strongly associate proverb use with cultural pride and identity, although challenges of comprehension among some listeners highlight the need for clearer explanation and adaptation. While indigenous stations demonstrate commitment to promoting oral tradition, proverbs remain underutilized in news and educational broadcasts, representing a missed opportunity for cultural preservation. Overall, the study confirms that Igbo proverbs are not only linguistic resources but also powerful tools for fostering cultural continuity, audience connection, and effective communication in modern media.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Increased Use of Igbo Language and Proverbs

in Broadcast Media: In order to enhance audience satisfaction, cultural pride, and listener loyalty, broadcast stations should deliberately increase the use of Igbo language and proverbs in their programmes.

Integration of Proverbs for Cultural Preservation: Media organizations and cultural institutions should promote the systematic inclusion of Igbo proverbs in radio content as a strategy for safeguarding and transmitting cultural values to younger generations.

Use of Proverbs as Communication Tools: Broadcast media presenters should be trained on the effective use of proverbs to enhance clarity, understanding, and audience engagement, especially in educational and discussion-based programmes.

Content Development and Policy Support: Media regulatory bodies and station management should develop policies that encourage indigenous language content, including the structured use of Igbo proverbs, to promote cultural sustainability and improve effective communication in broadcasting.

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