

Globalization and Discursive Constructions of Identity in Two Generations:

The Igbo People of Nigeria

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that while registered as a candidate for the research degree, I have not been a registered candidate or enrolled student for another award of the University or other academic or professional institution

I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award and is solely my own work

Signature of Candidate: Anthonia Dumebi Onyeibe

Type of Award: Doctor of Philosophy

School: Language and Global Studies

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this thesis was to investigate identity as a process (Eckert, 2000), examining how identity is influenced by a range of factors in our environment and is constructed discursively during spontaneous interactions. The study focused on the Igbo tribe in Nigeria, and addressed issues of generational and cultural complexity, language and identity shift and death, and new visions of national identity. The focus was on (a) language attitudes observed, in particular the language attitudes of elders and youths towards the use of proverbs and the transfer of this identity-related language practice from one generation to another, and (b) language use through the exploration of instances of discursive constructions of identity as identified in the data. The study, which is inspired by ethnomethodology and is rooted in interactional sociolinguistics, aimed to identify the effect of globalization on identity construction, especially in relation to the issue of generational transition of discursive patterns, including the use of proverbs, and the change in patterns of expression by the younger generation. The study also examined the role of local context in relation to the expression of identity and how the context of an interaction influences identity by exploring identity theories and narratives. It illustrated stylization (Blommert, 2001; De Fina, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2007; Weber & Horner, 2012) and contextualization cues were employed by speakers to construct different Communities of Practice (CofP) within the wider local community and express their attitudes and identities in a changing environment.

This was achieved by comparing the use of proverbs within each CofP via interviews with youths and elders (12 participants), and the observation of three CofPs (62 participants). The research was conducted over a period of two months and while the interview duration varied, the duration for observation of each CofP was 30 mins. The project also adopted where relevant a narrative framework and CofP framework, which focused on the importance of practice. These frameworks were essential in order to

understand the use of social practice, discursive patterns, interactions and the concept of 'process' in the analysis of identity.

The research questions were: (1) Can traditions (and in particular the use of proverbs) that index the identity of Ute-Okpu people, survive with globalization? (2) Do younger speakers provide new variations on proverbs as a way of re-appropriating this inherited and culturally significant practice? (3) How do speakers of different ages feel about these acts of re-appropriation of cultural traditions?

Findings showed that the production of proverbs among Ika youths has declined as a result of their inability to speak the native language fluently. However, the research established that exploring new variations in the production of proverbs among Ika youths (Igbo tribe) indicated that the production of proverbs was transformed to cater for the younger speakers' new social reality, a reality that combines a deep-rooted respect for inherited cultural structures and values, but also one that embraced a more accessible international context.

This study deepens understanding of Igbo proverbs and furthers research on language contact, globalization and language variation in the field of sociolinguistics. The recommendation arising from the research emphasizes an immediate focus on language variations and re-appropriations of proverbs by the youths in a world affected by globalization. It is further suggested that future research could focus on children's use of proverbs in interaction and consider the extent to which they adhere to the traditional ways of producing proverbs or start re-appropriating these proverbs at a young age.

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## **List of Abbreviation**

**CA**      Conversational Analysis

**CofP**    Communities of Practice

**CS**      Code-switching

**EM**      Ethnomethodology

**UN**      United Nations

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## Summary of Transcription Conventions

Symbol	Significance
<i>Italics</i>	indicates the use of the Igbo language
Times New Roman	indicates the use of English
<b>Bold Italics</b>	indicates the use of Nigerian Pidgin English
→	indicates interpretation
↑	indicates high intonation
UPPERCASE	indicates emphasis on words
<b>Bold Times New Roman</b>	narrative
()	gestures, body language, facial expressions

Ika Proverb: Nwata a ghosi nedi egedi ebe we bi mbu

Translation: A child does not show his fore fathers where they lived in the olden days



## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter is an introduction to this research. Section 1.2 illustrates the background to the research by focusing on the growth of language variation research in sociolinguistics over the years, indicating what part of language variation study is relevant to this research. More specifically, it explores oral traditions and language use in Africa, providing a discussion of the language situation and its relationship to globalization, immigration and colonialism. Section 1.3 illustrates the aims of this study. Section 1.4 sheds light on the research questions. Section 1.5 highlights the originality and the significance of this study. Section 1.6 is a summary of each chapter of this thesis.

#### **1.2 Background of the Study**

The current study is rooted in interactional sociolinguistic study, also drawing, where appropriate and relevant, on narrative analysis in relation to identity construction. Interactional sociolinguistics, which derives from anthropology, interactional pragmatics and ethnomethodology, is concerned with how speakers signal and interpret meaning in social interaction. John Gumperz is considered the founder of this perspective (1982, 1982b), who brought to the forefront the importance and use of the contextualisation cue. A contextualization cue is ‘any feature of linguistic form that contributes to the signaling of contextual presuppositions’ (Gumperz 1982, p. 131). Interactional sociolinguists work with recordings of spontaneous speech and study language use during situated interactions. Ethnography is taken into account, including

wider socio-cultural structures and values, as the researcher seeks to explore how social meanings, including identity, are created and/or challenged (see Kotthoff, 2017). More specifically, the study examines the effect of globalization on the production of proverbs and the local language variety used in producing proverbs in Ute-Okpu (Igbo tribe). The study explores cultural globalization (a part of globalization), in particular the impact English has on the use of tribal language. Globalization is a factor of language change because of its capacity to connect societies around the world and this connection may greatly impact on tribal languages.

Agwuele (2010) and Obadan (2015) suggest that due to globalization, younger generations of the Igbo tribe cannot speak the local variety at all or fluently, but prefer to acquire English, which they feel can set them on the global stage and enhance their integration. For example, in Nigeria the impact English has on tribal languages cannot be denied, and as a result the government has formed language policies to try and mitigate this impact (Agwuele, 2010). One of the policies relates to the constitutional reinforcement of the education policy. According to sections 55 and 97 of the 1999 Constitution, the business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Thus, although English is the official language of Nigeria, the above policy encouraged the use of local languages such as Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba for government matters as opposed to just English. The other policy relates to the National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1988, which suggests that the language of instruction in pre-primary school should be the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community (NPE, p.3); in the primary school, English can be introduced (NPE, p. 4); and to promote unity, every child should learn one of the three major languages (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo) in addition to their mother tongue at the secondary school level (NPE, p. 4). In the same light with the first policy, the second policy was established to encourage the use of local languages. The problem with these policies was that they

were not inclusive of other indigenous languages in Nigeria, which is over 400, something, which has caused controversies. Also, these policies were not considered to be practical and did not encourage the speaking of local languages at home. As a result, they did not reduce the increasing number of Nigerians unable to speak their local languages (Agwuele, 2010).

The study also addresses key sociolinguistic issues such as multilingual language use, stylistic variations, discursive constructions and reappropriations of identity, language practices (including face-saving strategies and constructions of rapport), language attitudes and language use in relation to gender. By exploring three communities of practice in Ute-Okpu (Elderly Men CofP, Elderly Women CofP and Youth CofP) and their use of proverbs during interaction, this study also examines how identities are constructed in social interaction (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; De Fina, 2003).

Proverbs are cultural metaphorical expressions and oral traditions used during interaction in the Igbo tribe of Nigeria (Ssetuba, 2002). Thus, researchers have emphasized and suggested that proverbs in the Igbo tribe of Nigeria are vital oral expressions, which indicate the identities of people from the tribe (Achebe, 1958; Kanu et al., 2014; Nwonwu, 2014). As this chapter will make clear, there can be a silent struggle in some cultures in respect to how older generations and new generations' best express themselves (their ideas, values and identities) through language. In some cases, new generations will often adopt new inventions – and in this particular context, metaphorical expressions – to make meaning. Over the years, the idea of transferring these cultural metaphorical expressions from one generation to another has become difficult to practise. This silent struggle between generations is a crucial issue in the continent of Africa in general and in the country of Nigeria in particular. Africa is known for its many heritages and traditions; however, there is a struggle to carry these on to the next generation (Oduaran & Oduaran, 2006; Obadan, 2015). These traditions,

including proverbs, index an identity of some sort, which many believe should not be allowed to go into extinction. Hence, there are ranges of research on these traditions in their literature. African writers such as Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka try to portray the effect of colonization on their culture by insisting they had a culture before they were colonized, that they still do and that this culture should be kept alive irrespective of civilization and globalization (Brodie, 2013; Rhoads, 1993). Writers such as Achebe, Nwonwu have tried to keep elements of the Igbo culture alive through language. Chinua Achebe, author of the novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* uses transliteration to express the identity of the Igbo people (Ifejirika, 2014; Ogbaa, 1999). In his novels, Achebe's use of transliteration highlights elements of the Igbo language through his incorporation of Igbo words and proverbs (language). These Igbo words inserted by Achebe make the readers understand their meanings when used. Thus, Achebe achieves a connection to a wider audience by helping non-Igbo readers identify with and relate to the Igbo culture. Achebe's use of Chi in *Things Fall Apart*, for example, represents a significant aspect of Igbo culture and their god.

Subsequently, authors such as Nwonwu (2014), Peek and Yankah (2004) also represent African proverbs, which are a part of African tradition, in their literature to showcase and preserve the culture of Africa for the next generation (see Literature Review). Nwonwu (2014, p. 119) describes his book *Philosophy of Proverbs in Igbo Culture: The Chicken Metaphor*, 'as a prelude to the revival of Igbo language, a wake-up call to get back the Igbo roots and pick up their values, a plea for the Igbo people to seek the black goat in the daytime and not wait till nightfall when everywhere will be dark'. He uses the proverb, 'seek the black goat in the daytime and not wait till nightfall when everywhere will be dark', to state the urgency of what the people of Igbo need to do in his opinion. He further explains that 'failure to do that means failing the forefathers of the Igbo tribe' because the culture and tradition of the Igbo tribe should be passed on

from one generation to another. If the Igbo language gets lost, what will be passed on to the next generation by the present generation? Also, Kizza (2010, p. 9) highlights these crucial issues by stating that elements of African cultures are gradually fading away. Kizza states: ‘the speed at which stories that anchor this oral tradition and language that sustain them are disappearing with the passing of each generation of Africans’. The need to preserve and pass their culture to the next generation becomes paramount. Looking at language, for example, the language of dominant cultures is quickly spread through media and the Internet. It is fast becoming a standard means of communication. For example, the English language is a common language for use with the present-day communication opportunities, and this common use of English brings about change in cultural identity (e.g. the native fairy tales told as a way of entertainment to a generation ago are now exchanged for superhero fairy tales for the new generation). The cultural identity of a generation ago becomes different from that of the next generation, which makes the investigation of issues of language death crucial to societies who believe that these languages are theirs to preserve. According to Holmes (1992, p. 70), ‘language is an important component of identity and culture and maintaining their distinct identity and culture is usually important for self-esteem.’ Therefore, it is not surprising that maintaining the language of a people is paramount to the way they perceive themselves in the midst of others. However, the current research focuses more on the performance of elements of Igbo language than the competence of such elements within specific groups in a globalized environment. It looks at how younger generations recreate and reappropriate traditions and construct their forms of self-expression.

Language (discourse), being the centre of every human interaction and existence, brings a lot of attention towards itself (Aronoff, 2007; Fitch, 2011). Hence, when a change in language use occurs, there is bound to be an urge from society as a whole, and the sociolinguist in particular, to understand the language in its new dimension. By way of

illustration, there might be a focus on the sociolinguistic and linguistic patterns resulting from a range of contact situations including migration (Clyne, 2003; Nwaozuzu, 2013), patterns of multilingualism (Kevogo et al., 2015), or diglossia (Ferguson, 1959, 1973) in which adults may have different repertoires from children; fellow migrants from the same region now living elsewhere have different repertoires, again resulting from migrations (Kerswill, 2006). These existing researches, and that of this study, seek to understand identity construction in language contact situations. The most prominently used theme in more recent identity research is that identity is not a reflection of reality or biological characteristics; rather it is socially constructed through language (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). According to O'Grady et al., (2001, p. 1):

Language is at the heart of all human beings. We use it when we are talking, thinking, reading, writing, and listening. It's part of the social structure of our communities; it forges the emotional bond between mother and child; it's the vehicle for literature and poetry. Language is not just a part of us; language defines us. All rational human beings have at least one language, and it is difficult to imagine much significant social, intellectual, or artistic activity taking place without the opportunities for communication offered by the language.

This description of language helps to understand the function of language in aiding effective communication among human beings, in forging healthy relationships and in identifying who we are as individuals. Therefore, the numerous ways we use language in our social interactions are profoundly embedded in our everyday affairs. Indeed, the simplest verbal exchange can say much about an individual or a group of people's background, predilections, character, belief, attitude and culture. As a result, there are numerous research studies, which focus on language variation, how individuals use language to construct their everyday life, their social roles, their identities and those of

others (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Edward, 2009; Hall, 2002; Nguyen & Kellogg, 2005; Norton, 2000; McKay & Wong, 1996).

According to Coupland (2007, p.4) 'stressing variability has been important to resist the ideological assumption that what matters in language is linguistic uniformity and standardness.' This stress on variability by some scholars (Labov, 1967, 1994; Eckert, 1989, 2005) is to challenge the belief that a standard language is more orderly than the variation of such standard language (Milroy, 2002). Language varies from one society to another, from one social group to another or from one interaction to another and variation is a characteristic of language and a vital linguistic behaviour (Coupland, 2007). The investigation of approaches to sociolinguistic variations has been significant over the years. It can be traced to Gauchat (1905), who conducted a study to investigate the differences between the speech of older and younger people in a Swiss village using the apparent-time method (Kerswill, 2010; Labov, 1994; Romaine, 1988). However, Labov is regarded as the founder of variationist sociolinguistics because his earlier work in 1966 played a leading role in establishing the field. He was the first to look at urban settings (as opposed to most dialect studies, which looked at regional settings). Nevertheless, his concept of Speech Community and his idea that language use can be predicted, are now considered rather rigid, with later studies becoming more fluid. Also, Kerswill (2012, p.2) criticizes studies of sociolinguistic variation because of the depth of some research and the routine use of old data collected by other means and for other purposes by researchers (Labov, 1963; Trudgill, 2004). Giving an example, Kerswill stated how Labov used data from the Linguistic Atlas of New England, collected in 1933 in locations including Martha's Vineyard (p, 2). Therefore, Kerswill suggested that there should be an increase in scope for language variation studies looking at real-time changes.

Over the years, important studies on sociolinguistic variation have adopted the study of real-time changes (Eckert, 2000; Moore, 2003; Sundgren, 2009). Kerswill also suggests a disadvantage in the study of sociolinguistic variation by criticising the acceptance of observation as a means of studying variation by sociolinguists. However, studies in sociolinguistics variation have continued to expand over the years (Eckert, 2012). Eckert (2012) categorizes and gives an overview of the sociolinguistic growth of language variation study by dividing this growth into three waves of variation studies. Earlier sociolinguistic studies identified predetermined social categories, such as gender and social class, ignoring the role of a speaker as agent in the construction of identity. Eckert (2012, pp. 88-90) identifies these earlier studies as ‘First Wave’ sociolinguistic studies. Labov’s work is usually referred to as a representation of this first wave of variation studies (Kerswill, 2010). The second wave explores the local categories and configurations that inhabit these broader categories. It suggests that the vernacular of a community or group has the ability of indexing such group (see Labov, 1972). In essence, the vernacular of a group is regarded as an expression of identity, thus viewing identity as fixed and stable. However, further investigation suggested that linguistic variables like vernacular, do not index categories, but characteristics. This gave way to a new wave of study relating to identity, which, Eckert (2012) refers to as ‘Third Wave’ sociolinguistic studies. According to this more recent wave, identity is a social process that is discursively constructed in the everyday life of individuals and is reflected in their language use, as well as affecting their social roles and the social roles of others. The third wave suggests that the linguistic practice in which speakers place themselves in the social landscapes through stylistic practice reflects their social identities and categories (Bucholtz, 1999, 2010; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Fought, 1999; Irvine, 2001). This new wave of sociolinguistics focuses on the ways in which people position themselves and are positioned by others in socio-cultural situations through language,



regarding all of those variables that index identity for each society in the speech of its members. The growth of sociolinguistic studies on variation from the first wave to the third wave took place because: ‘sociolinguistic variation studies have been sociologically naïve by correlating isolated social facts about a speaker (e.g. their gender, their social class, their ethnicity) with language use, rather than observing how social groups form and evolve. Also, analysing the dialect that emerges from that social practice’ (Britain, 2016, p.1).

The current study, drawing mainly on the third wave Sociolinguistics Studies, explores the linguistic variations used in making social meanings by a group of people or a community in their everyday use of language during social interactions. It also draws from the third wave Sociolinguistics Studies because it aims at investigating the effect of language contact, to determine the change in stylistic practices as a result of language contact, the choice made by speakers to negotiate their identity and the identity of others. More specifically, this study explores the use of proverbs as a stylistic practice, which reflects social identities, and how social groups’ position and negotiates their identities of self and others in the Ute-Okpu, Igbo tribe of Nigeria.

Therefore, to investigate issues such as language variation, performance, reappropriations, and exploration of the relationship between individuals/society and language, this study adopts an anti-essentialist approach to identity (Baumann, 1996; Bennett et al., 2005) as it explores how identity is constructed during interactions (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; De Fina, 2003) of participants from communities of practice (CofPs) that represents two generations in the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. Hence, the researcher adopts different theories to study identity as socially constructed. The study draws on aspects of ethnomethodological approach to explore the concept of identity as socially constructed (Atkinson & Drew, 1979; Maynard, 1984, 1989, 2003; Martin & Lynch, 2009; Mehan & Wood, 1975; Thomas, 2011). More specifically, it carries out a

micro-level analysis of language; thus, it explores social life as a display of people's local understandings of what is occurring (Garfinkel, 1967). Therefore, the researcher in this study did not take identity with her to the scene of the investigation but focused on investigating identity in interaction (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). It also adopts the CofP framework, utilising narratives to analyse identity construction within three CofPs in Ute-Okpu

### **1.3 Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this research is to explore how identities are constructed and used, or oriented towards or challenged, in interaction to explore if identity construction occurs as a process, a process during which inherited traditions are reappropriated. In particular, it seeks to investigate identity, how it is expressed (in the case of the Igbo tribe, proverbs are a means of expressing cultural identity) and can be influenced by some factors in our environments such as immigration, civilization and globalization. It will also aim to address issues of generational and cultural complexity. Since this study adopts an ethnomethodological approach, it explores the idea that inherited knowledge, 'normative knowledge', can be invoked by speakers, but then challenged and revised, so it is transformed into something new. In this case, into something that younger speaker feels they can identify with. It will also investigate whether gender plays a role in the use of proverbs by the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. It will seek to illustrate how narrative practices are employed by speakers to construct different CofPs within the wider local community and express their attitudes and identities in a changing environment during interaction. The study is based on semi-structured interviews and participant observation during community meetings, with a focus on discursive patterns manifested in each community of practice during spontaneous interaction.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

Researchers have previously raised question about globalization and how it affects identity construction (e.g. Bauman, 2001; Kerimova, 2009), especially concerning the issue of generational transmission of discursive patterns (see Oduaran & Oduaran, 2006). My work complements such research, as I am seeking to answer questions such as: (1) Can traditions (and, in particular, the use of proverbs) practices of Ute-Okpu people survive with globalization? (2) Do younger speakers provide new variations on proverbs as a way of reappropriating this inherited and culturally significant practice? (3) How do speakers of different ages feel about these acts of reappropriation of cultural traditions?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study combines methods that have not been combined before to the best of my knowledge. It looks at language practices in three separate communities of practices, exploring a context and generation that has not been studied before from an ethnomethodological perspective. It is of particular importance in an age of globalization not to take for granted identity categories and normative knowledge, but as a researcher, to observe and explore how identity is constructed *at the scene of interaction*. As a result, a close look at these identity choices may help to bring into focus cultural complexities, language affiliations, and negotiation of identity. This study also highlights the usefulness of combining the communities of practice framework, with the study of language use in two different contexts: spontaneous speech and interviews. This is especially useful in the study of smaller communities to understand how individual members of the community engage in meaning making. The research also explores generational transitions of language from one generation to another. It focuses on the use of proverbs by the Nigerian people, using the Igbo tribe as

a case study to illustrate language use in identity construction.

## **1.6 Structure of the Thesis**

Following this introduction to the thesis, Chapter 2 is the first section of the Literature Review. It provides a background to the growth of theories of identity over the years, first introduced in the current chapter. This section presents the anti-essentialist theory on identity as the major theory this research draws from. However, it also explains and illustrates key theories relating to the analysis of identity from different perspectives, examining their development, limitations and contribution over the years in relation to the analysis of identity.

Chapter 3 is the second section of the Literature Review and it further develops Chapter 2 and the theme of language and identity by more explicitly interrogating the literature regarding proverbs in the Igbo tribe of Nigeria (focusing on the village of Ute-Okpu). There is also an attempt to interrogate the role language contact in a globalized world plays in the production of proverbs and how it influences the construction of identity.

Chapter 4 describes and explains the research methodology, which will be used to answer the research questions presented in Chapter 1. Moreover, the background of participants and a description of their environment is portrayed in this chapter. The aim is to give an understanding of the beliefs and surroundings of participants to understand their actions better.

Chapter 5 is the first analysis chapter, and it explores how co-participants in interaction signal their use of proverbs. It also focuses on identifying the social function of proverbs in interaction within each CofP, which is an attempt to explore and compare linguistic repertoires across each CofP and the role of context in the interpretation of proverbs.

Chapter 6 further develops the previous chapter by examining how participants construct identities during interaction. It examines language choice and variation in the production of proverbs by each generation. It focuses on the reappropriation of proverbs by the younger generation within their CofP and how youths manage and rely on language varieties and styles during interaction. Most especially, it focuses on the patterns of proverb production used by the different generations.

Chapter 7 further develops the study by exploring the attitudes of the older and younger generations towards re-appropriations and shifts from traditional norms by the Youth CofP enacted in order to accommodate diversity.

Chapter 8 is the conclusion to this study. This chapter summarises the main findings of this study. It also highlights the overall contributions of this study to the field of sociolinguistics, the contribution of this study to deepening the understanding of Ute-Okpu proverbs and discusses some of its limitations as well as directions for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW: THE THEORETICAL APPROACH**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the historical and critical analysis of relevant theories on identity construction. Section 2.2 presents a background to two major theories on the construction of identity and its growth over the years. In an attempt to situate this study, it examines the essentialist and non-essentialist views on identity. More specifically, it explores social constructionist and discourse constructionist views on identity construction and situates identity as socially constructed through discourse. Section 2.3 further explores ethnomethodology as the methodological perspective adopted by this study. Section 2.4 of this chapter examines the literature on narrative analysis as an approach to analysing identity. The final section (2.5) further explores identity, narrowing it down to aspects of discourse such as stylization and code switching in interactional context, which are prominent practices in the interactions of the participants.

#### **2.2 Background to the study of identity**

Identity is a crucial concept in any attempt to understand contemporary society and a wide range of research literature exists on the topic. Huntington (1996) argues in *A Treatise on Global Conflicts* that identity is at the centre of the conflicts and clashes between countries and groups. This is not far from the truth, as being able to understand one's identity helps in forging good relations and understanding. Identity studies have evolved over the past few years with the contribution of various institutions, and the development of various theories on how best to analyse identity such as the essentialist

and the anti-essentialist theories (Cartwright, 1968; Holliday, 1997, 1999; Kaplan & Grewal, 2006). The development of these theories of identity can be traced back to the essentialist view, which itself can be traced back to the works of Plato (Platonic idealism) and Aristotle.

Essentialists (Gelman, 2003, 2004; Gelman & Wellman, 1991; Graham et al., 2004; Hofstede, 1991; Jaswal & Markman, 2002; Prasada, 2000) suggest that identity is a trait of the individual. Hence the identity of an individual emerges from the physiological traits, psychological predisposition and natural attributes an individual possesses. It positions identity as a concrete phenomenon that represents the essentials of an individual or a group of people and cannot be reconstructed or deconstructed.

According to Zhou (2016), the anti-essentialist theory lays emphasis on the social construction of identities. The anti-essentialist perspective (Baumann, 1996; Bennett et al., 2005), in contrast to the essentialist view, suggests that the identity of an individual is not inherent in the individual from birth. Rather, it is nurtured and can be constructed and deconstructed. The emphasis is more on the process of interaction undertaken by individuals to form an identity, to make meaning for themselves and others through processes rather than through pre-existing structures.

The list of theories based on the anti-essentialist views and perspective on identity is vast (e.g. social constructionism, ethnomethodology, sociolinguistics, social identity theory, discourse constructionism). Though they do not all have the same approach to analysing identity, there is a central understanding of identity as being constructed by an individual or a group, not because they are owned by them but by the interaction or talk that goes on in everyday activity (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). Antaki and Widdicombe (1998) suggested, 'A good part of the meaning of an utterance (including of course one that ascribes or displays an identity) is to be found in the occasion of its

production' (p. 4). In essence, the major focus of this research is to investigate selves and identities in interactional discourse (It will explain discourse further in Section 2.2.1) and move away from the idea of inherent personality traits. Simply put, 'to know anything is to know in terms of one or more discourse' (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 45). The emphasis is more on the process of interaction undertaken by individuals to form an identity, make meaning of themselves and others through processes rather than a structure. This is the bedrock of theories on identity in recent times such as social constructionism (Andrews, 2012; Cerulo, 1997; Schwandt, 2003). Best (2008) traces the origin of 'social constructionism' as a term that was first used within sociology as far back as the early twentieth-century. Social constructionism has been influenced, modified and refined by other intellectual movements such as ethnomethodology, social studies of science, feminism, post-structuralism, narrative philosophy, psychology, post-foundational philosophy, post-positivist philosophy of science, philosophy, sociology and linguistics amongst others (Burr, 1995). In the case of identity analysis, social constructionism is the most general perspective, which is said to 'provide a basic way of thinking about identity' (De Fina et al., 2006, p. 2). Social constructionism is valuable in its attempt to make sense of the social world by explaining roles played by language, culture, discourse and knowledge in the formation of identity. De Fina, Schifffrin and Bamberg are of the opinion that identity is neither given nor a product. Rather, 'identity is a process that takes place in concrete and specific interactional occasions, yields constellations of identities instead of individual, monolithic constructs, do not simply emanate from the individual, but results from processes of negotiation, and contextualization that are eminently social, and entails discursive work' (p. 2). It is this 'concrete and specific interactional occasions' that is referred to in the ethnomethodology of analysing identity as 'indexical and occasioned', and it is this 'process' of identity construction that concerns the social constructionist.



However, social constructionist perspectives are diverse (Lynch, 2008) and should be understood as a ‘mosaic of research effort with diverse (but also shared) philosophical, theoretical, methodological, and empirical underpinnings’ (Holstein & Gubrium, 2008, p. 341). Therefore the researcher maps several socially-minded areas of linguistics, which focus on spontaneous speech exploring how micro-level practices can construct acts of identification during spontaneous interaction, leading to an understanding of self-identification and in-/out-groupness. Thus, this study examines theories such as interactional sociolinguistics, discourse constructionism and narrative analysis, which combine with ethnomethodological perspectives to identity analysis and practice-based approaches (including the Community of Practice framework), which problematize identity as a social practice. By introducing and utilizing these theories and perspectives, the study aims to explore how social identities are constructed in everyday life. Thus, it tracks the ‘what’, ‘when’ and ‘where’ of identity constructions.

### **2.2.1 Discourse and Discourse Constructionism**

Discursive constructionism has to some extent mingled with other sub-disciplines and theories in the analysis of identity through discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). In comparison, the social constructionist theory is broad and deals with a lot of concepts like language, discourse, knowledge and culture in the analysis of identity (Burr, 1995). On the other hand, discourse constructionism is a narrower theory, which studies a range of descriptions, claims, reports and allegations as part of human practices, which is central to discourse (Potter & Hepburn, 2006). This study adopts this theory because it places emphasis on discourse in identity work. Therefore, to understand the theory of discourse constructionism, we must first understand what discourse means.

The definition of discourse varies among a range of social theorists. In recent years, social theorists (Mills 1997; Schneider, 2013) have taken their lead primarily from

Michel Foucault (1970, p. 80), who explained that discourse, like so many terms in social theory, has a variety of meanings:

Instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word 'discourse', I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualized group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements.

The above definition by Foucault shows him giving three different definitions to discourse within his work. The first one as he calls it is 'the general domain of statement'. This means that all forms of communication, either in the form of an utterance or form of a text, could be called discourse. The second definition of discourse, he states, is an individualized group of statements, which could be referred to as discourse associated with a particular system or movement. Foucault's second definition of discourse suggests they are groups of utterances that are regulated in some way to possess a coherence, which can be identified as a discourse of a movement like feminism, or a discourse of imperialism, etc. A third definition is a discourse as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements, which could mean discourse as a practice with rules and regulations to guard the production of utterances. Since it is possible to have more than one definition of what discourse means, it is important to explain the meaning of discourse for this study. According to Fairclough (2001), the term 'discourse' continues to refer to language in use, but more often in the form of texts, whether written or spoken. More comprehensively, Burr (1995, p. 48) defines discourse 'as a set of meaning, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements, and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events'. In essence, whatever makes meaning, interaction, communication and interpretation possible is discourse. Thus, discourse in discursive constructionism includes arguments, conversations, workplace interactions or talk, and even the most recent, fastest, non-

face-to-face means of interaction brought in by the development of technology over the years (e.g. phones, email conversations and social networks). Therefore, Burr's definition gives a comprehensive illustration of what is meant as discourse in this study.

According to Potter and Hepburn (2008), discourse constructionism is a radical constructionist theory. They explain it is radical because discourse constructionism does not go beyond the local context, texts and interaction. Discourse becomes its central way of studying human minds, events, social processes and social practices such as human interactions and how it helps in the construction of identity. Potter and Hepburn's suggestion positions discourse as the major component of discursive constructionism in contrast to social constructionism, which has a substantial range of components (including language, discourse, knowledge, culture and history) in the analysis of identity.

Potter and Hepburn (2008) also suggest that discursive constructionism is the belief that discourse is constructive. They suggest that discourse is constructive because it is brought together from a variety of resources, which could be a single word, a group of words, grammatical structures, categories, metaphors (which could also include extended metaphors), idioms and interpretative repertoire. Also, it is constructive because the words, repertoires and interactions are put together to stabilize versions of the world, of events, actions and the identity of an individual.

Discursive constructionism also explores how the employment of linguistic styles by individuals reflects the construction of meaning in the interactional context (Potter & Hepburn, 2008; Young, 2009), thus suggesting that discourse is situated in the local context of interaction. According to Potter and Hepburn (2008), discourse is "situated in the sequential environment that is basic to interaction, discourse is situated institutionally, and discourse is situated rhetorically" (p. 5). This suggests that this

theory is not only interested in exploring discourse used in interaction, but also how discourse is situated. Therefore, instead of just paying attention to the production of meaning by participants in an interaction, discourse constructionism also focuses on the local and global community in which these interactions take place (Young, 2009). So, in a case of a multilingual community, for example, we are made aware that context can influence the use of language especially in the negotiation of identity between self and other.

### **2.3 Ethnomethodology**

This section focuses on the methodological perspectives adopted in this study: These inter-related theories also derive from an anti-essentialist point of view like the theories discussed above, while, introducing a methodological perspective to identity analysis (Garfinkel, 1967; Holstein & Gubrium, 2011; Lynch, 2008; Maynard, 2003). This theory is relevant to this study because it inspired the analytical position of the researcher in this study.

According to Garfinkel (1967), ethnomethodological studies ‘analyse everyday activities as members’ methods for making those same activities visibly rational and reportable for all practical purposes’ (p. vii). Garfinkel suggests that ethnomethodology is a method of examining everyday activities, especially if such activity is for practical purposes. The use of this perspective makes it possible for phenomenon to be investigated and reported. Holstein and Gubrium (2011) stated that EM ‘is perhaps the quintessential how analytic enterprise in qualitative inquiry’ (p. 342). In contrast to their opinion, Coulon (1995) suggested that the term EM should not be understood as a specific methodology of ethnology. Instead, it should be understood as a theoretical conception of social action. According to Coulon, an appropriate description would be to view ethnomethodology as a scientific project, used to analyse the methods and

procedures that people use for conducting their daily affairs or interaction. Thus, Coulon suggests that the theory is not restricted to ethnography, but it should be an analytical methodology for exploring social action in general.

Therefore, a consideration of these descriptions of ethnomethodology suggests that ethnomethodology explains the how of any analytical process, and it is utilized by researchers to understand why things happen the way they do. Thus, researchers have employed EM as a methodological approach to identify and understand how identity is socially constructed (Abdallah, 2008; Alby & Fatigante, 2014; Allen-Collinson, 2006; Antaki, 1998, 2008a, 2008b, 2013; Arminen, 2013).

One of the features of EM, which places it in an anti-essentialist camp, is that EM explores social order as something participants or people work to achieve, not something that is given (Arminen, 2006). Another feature of ethnomethodological research is how it explores naturally occurring talk in social interaction, and places them as constitutive elements of the settings studied (Arminen, 2006; Atkinson & Drew, 1979; Garfinkel 1967; Maynard, 1984, 1989, 2003; Maynard & Clayman, 2003; Mehan & Wood, 1975). Thus, identity should be investigated within a context of interaction. Therefore, EM inspires this study because it emphasizes on everyday knowledge, which may be taken for granted ordinarily, should be explored for research on identity. The fundamental properties of social interaction should be studied, using EM as a method of enquiry, which aims at analysing, situated practices at a face-to-face level (Button, 1991).

## **2.4 Narratives and Narrative analysis**

This section explores narrative as a subtype of discourse (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001). Narrative analysis looks at how individuals use stories to interpret the world. The

rationale for adopting this approach is to explore narratives as an analytical mode for research in identity.

Like other theories on identity that agree with the non-essentialist views on identity, research on identity in narratives views identity as an unfinished product that can be constructed and negotiated in everyday interaction between individuals. Hence, there is an emphasis on discourse in the analysis of identity through narratives. It is this emphasis on the construction of identities in discourse, particularly in interactional sites, that brings together approaches to identity in discourse like social constructionism, discourse constructionism and conversation analysis (Widdicombe & Antaki, 1998).

There are several models of narrative analysis, for example, literary, anthropological, psychological and the research sociolinguistic/sociological model. These models of narrative analysis are why Brockmeier and Carbaugh (2001) suggest that the centrality of language in the study and analysis of identity is crucial. According to Brockmeier and Carbaugh, 'construction of self and life worlds draws on a particular genre of language usage: narration' (p.3). Literature as the mirror of the society relates with narrative in the sense that narrative is an expressive medium of experiences, a form of understanding the world in general.

However, there are no straightforward definitions of narratives because the concept of narrative is rich and ambiguous (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012). This is why narrative can refer to a methodological perspective, used as an epistemology, an antidote to positivist research, a communication mode, a supra-genre, a text-type, more generally, as a way of making sense of the world at times, equated with experience, time, history, and itself; or more modestly as a specific kind of discourse with conventionalized textual features' (Georgakopoulou 2007, p. 1). Similarly, Barthes (1977, p. 79) suggests, 'Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres,

themselves distributed amongst different substances as though any material were fit to receive man's stories.' Barthes' definition explains the broad and prodigious nature of narratives. However, a more specific definition that is appropriate for this study is the definition by Kim (2004), which offers a description of an aspect of narration that is focused on oral tradition. According to Kim (2004, p. 57):

Oral traditions (i.e. narratives) can contain elements of historical evidence and convey meaning where the narrative pattern of oral epics serves not merely as a mnemonic device that aids in recalling significant historical events but makes meaningful connections to the cultural experience of identity politics.

The focus of this research is proverbs and proverbs are oral traditions used in daily interactions. Although Kim's definition is specific to narratives such as oral traditions, the definition suggests that oral narratives are used to recall historical events and also make meaningful connections to this historical experience to index identities.

However, the use of narrative for identity analysis has developed over the years. One of the most famous models of narrative and the process of canonization can be traced to Labov (1972). His influential model of narrative structure (Labovian narratives), where the narrative in interview is invariably about non-shared personal experience, past events, narrated in response to the researcher's 'elicitation' questions or prompts or by the interviewer asking them informally to recall any life experience. Labov and Waletzky (1967) identified five structural features:

- Abstract, which is what the story is about;
- Orientation (sets the place, time, characters for the listeners or readers);
- Complication (which would be the main body of the narrative describing the

unusual, scary, funny, sad, etc. event that makes the story a story in the first place);

- Evaluation (comments on the events to reveal the importance of some narrative units compared to others);
- Resolution (how the event worked out);
- Coda (rounding up the story and returning to the present).

Labov and Waletzky argue that these structural features most occur as stated above without being misplaced (Hazel, 2007; Labov, 1972; Labov & Waletzky, 1967). However, there have been criticisms against this structure of narrative suggested by both Labov and Waletzky (Barthes 1997; Georgakopoulou & Goutsos 2004). Georgakopoulou and Goutsos's (2004, p. 63) criticism is against the idea of Labov's collection of stories through interviews, which hinders them from collecting spontaneous speech. They suggest that if these stories are spontaneous, the structural features they have suggested may not apply. However, while Labov and Waletzky may not have succeeded in trying to have a structure for all narratives, they succeeded in blazing a trail for students who seek to explore situated uses of narrative structures (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Bruner, 1997).

More recent responses to narrative analysis have departed from criticizing the structured model of narrative introduced by Labov, to commenting on the appropriate type of narrative for identity analysis (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006; Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Behar, 1996; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Ochs & Capps, 2001). Georgakopoulou (2007, p.1) argues that autobiography is a 'monopolized identity analysis' for analysing identity, as the participant only presents her or his perspective to the researcher and the researcher is only able to analyse the



participants' identity according to the narratives presented. Similarly, Behar (1996) criticizes the use of autobiographies: 'At the moment when autobiographical voice is so highly commodified - most visibly in the talk shows.... shouldn't scholars write against the grain of this personalizing of culture rather than reproduce it?' (p. 25).

Ochs and Capps (2001) have also pointed out a lingering bias in conventional narrative analysis for narratives with the following qualities: 'a coherent temporal progression of events that may be reordered for rhetorical purposes and that is typically located in some past time and place. A plotline that encompasses a beginning, a middle, and an end, conveys a particular perspective and is designed for a particular audience who apprehend and shape its meaning' (p. 57). They suggest that analysts using narratives should probe for less structured narratives and go for everyday social encounters, which represent human conditions.

Furthermore, Atkinson and Delamont (2006) argued for a degree of caution in narrative analysis and suggested a greater emphasis on analytic rigour and the need for an inclusion of social context. Atkinson and Delamont (2006) argued that every aspect of narrative as an analytical tool for identity should be questioned and seen as an unreliable means of accessing a perceived objective social reality. They suggest researchers should be more rigorous in their analysis of identity instead of relying on a personalized account of self. Therefore they state, 'We counsel a degree of caution, and a greater emphasis on analytic rigour. When it comes to personal narratives, spoken performance, oral testimony and auto-ethnographies, we should not simply collect them as if they were untrammelled, unmediated representations of social realities' (p. 202). They call for a situation where narratives can be used to analyse social phenomenon in a context.

In response to Atkinson and Delamont's criticism, Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) suggest an approach to narrative analysis that is rigorous in the analysis of

identity through narrative. Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) became 'interested in the social actions/functions that narratives perform in the lives of people; in how people actually use stories in every-day, mundane situations to create (and perpetuate) a sense of who they are' (p. 377). Their interest comes from criticisms that narratives are used to personalize, celebrate self and do not give a critical analysis of identity. Against criticisms that the narrative approach of analysis is reflective (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Behar 1996, Atkinson & Delamont 2006; Gubrium & Holstein 2002; Ochs & Capps, 2001), they argue that this kind of approach focuses on 'constructive means that are functional in the creation of characters in space and time, which in turn are instrumental for the creation of positions vis-à-vis co-conversationalists. Narratives, in our approach, are aspects of situated language use, employed by speakers/narrators to position a display of situated, contextualized identities' (p. 378). Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) suggest that this form of narrative constitutes a small story made up of fragments of stories. According to Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008, p. 81), small stories are:

an umbrella-term that captures a gamut of under-represented narrative activities, such as tellings of on-going events, future or hypothetical events, shared (known) events, but also allusions to (previous) tellings, deferrals of tellings, and refusals to tell....Small stories can be about very recent ('this morning', 'last night') or still unfolding events thus immediately reworking slices of experience and arising out of a need to share what has just happened or seemingly uninteresting titbits. They can be about small incidents that may (or may not) have actually happened, mentioned to back up or elaborate on an argumentative point occurring in an ongoing conversation. Small stories can even be about – colloquially speaking – 'nothing'; and as such indirectly reflect something about the

interactional engagement between the interactants, while for outsiders, the interaction is literally 'about nothing'.

Their arguments suggest small stories are a total deviation from the autobiographical model of narration or the interview narration, which are not spontaneous. They also suggest that the analysis of small stories gives a wider range of opportunities for researchers to be able to analyse social identities and prevent a monopoly of identity by the participants. It also deviates from Labov's model or structure of narrative that is based on a researcher's prompted personal experience interview, with structures that most occur in sequence. Therefore, Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008, p. 81) state that while 'big story' research sees stories as representations of identities and the world in general, 'the analysis of the construction processes of identities within the small story approach focuses necessarily on the situational and contextual emergence of identity.'

Recent developments in narrative and narrative analysis rely on unstructured narratives that take place every day. Studies in sociolinguistics, conversation analysis, and ethnomethodology focus on non-fictional and everyday narrative. De Fina and Georgakopoulou suggest that the inability to analyse narratives, which occur during interaction, will fail to account for the 'situational and locally occasioned aspects of storytelling as talk in interaction' (2012, p. 44).

Therefore, narrative analysis informs this study mainly because it aims to explore linguistic practices and their context of use to explain social phenomenon. By so doing, the researcher aims to use narratives, where relevant, as a tool for eliciting participants' understanding of events and analysing their identities through narratives. In every age, in every place, in every society, irrespective of any class, narrative is present, and people of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds can share it. Which is why, for the purpose of this study, narrative is perceived as present in every aspect of life, where

structure may not apply to every narrative (Barthes', 1977). The focus is on the need for a narrative to have a 'point' and the attempt to convey a specific type of message Polanyi (1979; 1985). The current study will also explore how speakers use narratives to negotiate personal and social roles through taleworlds (De Fina 2003). Thus, through narratives the researcher, while focusing on context, will also focus on what is said, who said it, how it is said (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012) and why it is said (Polanyi, 1985). The rationale for exploring narratives is to position this study as one that has interest in exploring 'identities in talk' (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). In this vein, identity does not only constitute a pre-existing entity, but emerges 'in the moment', through conversational practices and patterns, some of which include narratives.

The next section will explore the complexity and variability of narratives by examining stylization and discourse in interactional contexts, which the researcher intends to use in understanding how participants 'do' or negotiate identities in interaction.

## **2.5 Stylization and identities in talk**

This section will explore stylization, the relationship between narratives and identity. It will examine the questions raised in adopting narrative as an analytical mode and what the researcher will attempt to analyse by adopting narratives in research on identity. This will further project the interplay and connection of theories adopted in this study. The above section has given insights as to what is meant by narratives in this study, but a definition of stylization is also important.

Research in style encourages further exploration of identity as socially constructed (De Fina, 2007). Style is relevant to sociolinguistic research because an analysis of how speakers use these styles to disaffiliate from identities and ascribe to multiple identities depending on the context, helps understand how participants 'do' identities. Irvine (2001, p. 20) states, 'whatever styles are in language or elsewhere, they are part of a

system of distinction, in which a style contrasts with other possible styles and the social meaning signified by the style contrasts with other social meaning.’ These systems of distinction unify through talk, thus emphasizing the emergence of style through discourse (De Fina, 2007). Stylization brings to focus stereotypes and beliefs of particular social groups (Coupland, 2001; Rampton, 1999) and positions the speaker vis-à-vis their fellow interactants and wider socio-cultural discourses and ideologies.

Recent studies on narratives and identity (Blommaert, 2001; De Fina, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2007; Weber & Horner, 2012) have laid emphasis on the importance of focusing on styles or semiotic resources in the analysis of identity through narrative. This suggests that this focus on detailed talk may present a deeper understanding of identity. Thus, emphasis is placed on semiotic resources employed by participants during interaction, focusing on stylization and styles of telling, like code-switching, language crossing and translanguaging, employed by participants to index their identities through narratives.

### **2.5.1 Code-switching**

This study explores code-switching (henceforth CS) as a semiotic resource analysts use in analysing identity work in interaction. As a result of language contact (discussed in Section 3.2), multilingualism is on the rise. There are a lot of linguistic outcomes of language contact, one of which is CS. Interest in multilingual language use started to emerge in the 1970s and 1980s as a result of the stabilization of many migrant contexts (Milroy and Muysken, 1995). Scholars have suggested that language contact between two or more languages always influences the languages in question (Dweik & Qawar, 2015; Gal, 1987; Gumperz, 1964). This means that whenever speakers of two or more languages come into contact, there must be decision on which languages are to be used in their interactions.

The term 'CS' may not have been used by linguists who wrote about language contact for a long time (Gardner-Chloros, 2009, p. 9). It has, however, existed for as long as language interaction, immigration and factors like colonialism and globalization have been in existence. In everyday conversation, where two or more languages co-exist, there is bound to be an alternation of linguistic variations within the same conversation. Much debate has focused on defining and differentiating the terms 'code-switching' and 'code-mixing', with the former being associated with switches between two distinct grammatical systems (e.g. Sankoff and Poplack, 1981), and the latter being associated with the existence of one single matrix variety which maintains its monolingual characteristics throughout the process of code-mixing (Myers-Scotton 1993). Also, Annamalai (1989, p. 48), states that 'switching is normally done for the duration of a unit of discourse', but 'mixing is not normally done with full sentences from another language with its grammar'. Bentahila and Davies (1983) suggest that the act of choosing one code rather than another must be distinguished from the act of mixing the two codes together to produce something that might itself be called a third code, which is referred to as CS. Other researchers (e.g. Gardner-Chloros, 1995) have argued that CS should be considered as a blanket term for a range of interlingual phenomena without a focus on the discreteness of the linguistic systems.

Weinreich, in the seminal *Language in Contact*, referred to the 'transfer of words' from one language to another by bilinguals and dismissed it as a 'mere oversight' (Weinreich, 1953, pp. 73-74; Gardner-Chloros, 2009, p. 9). But over the years, the works of people like Haugen, Gumperz, Wilson and Blom have helped in the growth of interest in CS in research on bilingualism and language contact (Gumperz, 1964, 1967; Gumperz & Wilson, 1971; Blom & Gumperz, 1972). So far there has been an explosion of the concept in various fields where language interaction is the focus. CS has developed from what used to be looked upon as 'possibly a somewhat peculiar . . . act' (Luckman,

1983, p. 97) into a subject matter which is recognized to be able to shed light on fundamental linguistic issues, like Universal Grammar, the formation of group identities and ethnic boundaries through verbal behaviour (Auer, 1999). CS is seen to function as a contextualization cue, which serves to organize and structure talk (Gumperz, 1982), as a means to express a struggle among competing identities (Heller, 2005). It portrays the relationships between language and social categories such as ethnicity and group membership (Auer, 2005), and is used as a means to construct a multilingual and multicultural space (De Fina, 2007).

Gumperz defined CS as ‘the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub-systems’ (Gumperz, 1982, p. 59). Hence, it is not just a mixture of different languages in a conversation, but it is a linguistic variation that can occur with different languages, dialects and styles (Myers-Scotton, 1993). This means that if there is a switch in expression or any form of linguistic variation, CS is taking place. Such conversations (CS conversations) are carried out in bilingual or multilingual settings especially. For example, in West Africa in general, there is an alternative use of native language and official language. In Nigeria, there is an alternation of the three major tribal languages with English, which is the official language of expression in the country, and with the Nigerian Pidgin English, which is the outcome of language contact between the indigenous languages and the English language (this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3).

CS falls into two major types, namely: Metaphorical CS and Situational CS (Auer, 1988, 1992; Gumperz, 1982; Rampton, 1997). Metaphorical CS is characterized as typically brief and intrasentential, which initiates or ‘brings about’ new contexts. On the other hand, situational CS is characterized as relatively longer, situation-oriented, which is ‘responsively tied to contexts that are relatively fixed and brought along’ (Rampton 1997, p. 9). Thus, while switches in metaphorical code-switching tend to create ‘new

contexts', in situational CS, switchers are mostly inclined to perpetuate and fix the 'already existing contexts'.

### **2.5.2 A Historical Overview of CS**

Studies in code-switching have centred on the macro analysis of CS, micro and CA analysis and the Markedness Model of analysis. Therefore, there has been an attempt by sociolinguistic scholars to explain the circumstances under which CS occurs and what motivates a speaker to choose to switch between two languages within a particular interaction (Auer, 1998; Blommaert, 1992; Boztepe, 2010; Fishman, 1965, 1972; Gumperz, 1972, 1982; Myers-Scotton, 1993).

Fishman (1965, 1972), for example, explored a macro-level approach to explaining what motivates speakers to code-switch in interactions by suggesting that individuals make a choice to switch from one language to another according to the norms or common sets of behavioural rules in the domain. However, his approach was considered 'too deterministic to explain CS in urban contexts' (Boztepe, 2010 p.13). Boztepe argues that the macro-level approach 'tells us little about what the speaker accomplishes as a result of alternating between available codes in his linguistic repertoire. Societal factors do form the basis, at least partially, of the contextual interpretation of code choice, but certainly not at the expense of determining language choice in all cases per se.' Myers-Scotton (1993) focused on social motivations for code-switching and proposed the Markedness Model of conversational CS. This model identified marked and unmarked language choices as a way of interpreting CS utterances. Unmarked language choices refer to when the language produced is one that is expected in the context of its use and unmarked language choice as a situation where the language produced is not expected in the context of use (Gal, 2001; Myers-Scotton, 1993). Using data from Africa, Myers-Scotton distinguished between four patterns of code-switching



that emerged from her data. She referred to the first of these four patterns as a series of unmarked choices between different languages (p, 88); the second pattern as CS itself as an unmarked choice (p, 122); the third pattern as CS as a marked choice (p, 131); and the fourth pattern as CS as an exploratory choice (p, 143). However, scholars like Meeuwis and Blommaert (1994) have argued that the markedness model of conversational CS is a static and mistaken view of linking both the macro and micro levels because speakers are described as simply following or, not following rules for already existing norms.

Auer (1984, 1998), influenced by Gumperz (1972, 1982) who suggested a shift from understanding the norms of a domain towards an interactional function of CS to determine why speakers code-switch, further explored the microanalysis of CS. Auer's 1984 *Bilingual Conversation* presented a pioneering study of interactional context and code-switching. Peter Auer proposed the application of CA (discussed above) to language alternation for researchers who want to discover how CS creates interactional meaning. According to Auer (1998), 'the definition of the codes used in CS may be an interactional achievement which is not prior to the conversation ... but subject to negotiation between participants' (p. 15). Auer suggested that an analysis of CS must be centred on the participants in a conversation, and specific to an event. However, Auer does not disqualify the use of the macro level analysis of CS entirely. Rather, as Li Wei suggested, 'It is not that the relevance of these factors is denied a priori, but simply that it is not assumed – if participants themselves can be rigorously shown to employ such categories in the production of conversation, then they would be of interest to conversation analysts' (2002, p. 7).

However, Blommaert (1992) suggests that the social meaning of CS cannot be accounted for by local factors, which suggests that the micro-level approach is not completely suitable to determine why speakers code-switch. This criticism instigated

the growth of another approach, which attempted to make an association between code and meaning, so speakers supposedly ‘bring these along’ to the conversation. In studies on proverbs and language used in the production of proverbs, researchers have argued that the inability of youths to produce proverbs without CS between native language and English language are indications that they do not know how to produce and interpret Igbo proverbs (Obadan, 2015; Nwonwu, 2014; Echeruo, 1971). Therefore, the most common norm attributed to the production of proverbs is the language of production, which signals a speaker’s ability to produce proverbs. This norm gives justifiable reasons why the macro-level analysis should be used to identify reasons speakers’ code-switch. On the other hand, the micro level analysis is useful to this research study because it explores what the speaker accomplishes as a result of alternating between available codes in his/her linguistic repertoire. Indeed, speakers do manipulate the juxtaposition created by the switch (regardless of the language switched to) to create meaning; or sometimes they evoke a pre-existing identity through use of a specific variety; however, as is the case with many youths in a multilingual setting, they may evoke existing identities as a way of revising them, challenging them, or reclaiming them, etc.

### **2.5.3 Multilingualism and switching**

CS arises as a result of bilingualism and multilingualism. Recent studies in multilingualism have taken switching to a different level (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Finnis, 2014; Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 2005; Gutiérrez et al., 1999; García & Li Wei, 2014; Rampton, 1995). This section explores these studies that tend to deconstruct boundaries between groups and the rigid essentialist perception of identity.

Multilingualism is usually the result of many factors, such as colonization, intercultural marriage, cultural interaction, education and many other reasons (Rihane, 2013).

Multilingual speakers switch across different languages and cultures depending on the social and contextual factors present in the communication environment (Auer, 1988; Bullock & Toribio, 2009; Myers-Scotton, 2002; Romaine, 1995; Toribio, 2002). Thus, researchers have studied code-switching as marking multilingual, multi-cultural (Grosjean, 2015) and ethnic identities (De Fina, 2007) of the speakers.

Studies in CS have focused on the use of two or more languages by individuals or groups as routine expectation because they grew up within a multilingual context (Auer, 1988; Blom & Gumperz, 1972; Romaine, 1988). Because of this emphasis on languages, which are typical within the in-group, CS research has often focused only on variation in the cultural context of ethnic categories. However, there has been less focus on ethnic re-categorization, the exploration and adoption of alternative, or competing ethnicities (Rampton, 1997). It is important to focus on these less prominent areas to deconstruct boundaries between groups and the rigid essentialist perception of identity, to focus on adoption or exploration of identities, especially because of superdiversity, mixed languages and multilingualism as a result of globalization (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011).

Thus, an anti-essentialist perspective on identity gets rid of ‘prior assumptions about the line between origins and upbringing, proficiency, and types of language’, and ‘it refers to individuals’ very variable (and often rather fragmentary) grasp of plurality of differentially shared styles, registers, and genres, which are picked up (and then partially forgotten) within biographical trajectories that develop in actual histories and topographies’ (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011, pp. 4-5). Blommaert and Rampton (2011) suggest that there should be an emphasis on non-standard mixed language practices that draw attention to style and languages, which do not belong to a speaker (often among youths), especially in artistic and recreational contexts. They suggest that these non-standard mixed practices involve much more than the alternation between the two or

more languages of the speaker. According to Blommaert and Rampton (2011), these non-standard mixed language practices have been referred to as ‘heteroglossia’, ‘crossing’, ‘polylingualism’, ‘translanguaging’, ‘metrolingualism’ and ‘new ethnicities and language’ (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Harris, 2006; Jørgensen, 2008; Madsen, 2008; Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010; Rampton, 1995, 2011). Each of these concepts has taken switching to another level; however, for the purpose of this study the researcher will explore only a few of these concepts due to limitations of space.

#### **2.5.4 Language Crossing**

Language crossing is a form of metaphorical CS, studied in sociolinguistic literature on multilingualism (Weber & Horner, 2012). According to Rampton (1997), who was the first to coin the term, ‘language crossing is the use of a language, which isn't generally thought to “belong” to the speaker. It involves a sense of movement across quite sharply felt social or ethnic boundaries and it raises issues of legitimacy that participants need to reckon with in the course of their encounter’ (p. 1). Thus, it explores a speaker’s switch to a language that belongs to someone else and destabilizes the notion of inherited language variation. Studies of language crossing explore an option, which includes exploring other people's ethnicities, embracing them and/or creating new ones (Rampton, 1995).

Hewitt's (1986) and Rampton's (1995, 1996, 1997) studies of crossing, innovatively laid down the foundations for research on this phenomenon. Hewitt studied the use of black Creole by white youngsters/adolescents in South London. The studies found that white adolescents do cross to black Creole for various reasons. On the other hand, Rampton studied instances of crossing among adolescents to a set of codes different from their usual adoption of Punjabi, Creole and Indian English. Rampton's studies found that through crossing, a new mixed identity was expressed. Such approaches point towards

an overall trend in sociolinguistics to deconstruct perceived rigid boundaries between linguistic systems, groups and identities, and encourage a focus on linguistic practices and processes. The next section explores translanguaging as another non-standard mixed language practices that explore style and language use.

### **2.5.5 Translanguaging, and third Space**

Translanguaging is a relatively new linguistic concept, which contributes to the understanding of language, bilingualism and education (García & Wei, 2014). According to Baker (2006) translanguaging in the bilingual class, whereby use of all available language varieties is encouraged, helps to develop a learner's academic skill in both languages. It is the 'act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are ascribed as autonomous language, to maximize communicative potential' (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 140). Translanguaging includes code-switching, and hybrid language use (Garcia & Li Wei, 2014; Li Wei, 2011; Lei Wei & Zhu Hua, 2013; Martin-Beltran, 2014). The focus of this concept is not on language per se, but on the multiple discursive practices of speakers, which are observable to make sense of their multilingual worlds.

Lei Wei and Zhu Hua (2013) explored translanguaging in their research on how Chinese university students in the UK created transnational space through flexible multilingual practices. The Chinese university students did not feel like they identified as Chinese or Chinese in Britain, but as Chinese university students. Their finding suggests that through translanguaging, Chinese university students in the UK emphasized the fluidity and dynamics of their identities, which simultaneously evoke the past and point to the future. More specifically, although these Chinese university students still held on to certain aspects of their cultural heritage, they developed and negotiated new identities during everyday interactions with others.

Also, Martin-Beltran (2014) explored how adolescents use translanguaging to expand learning opportunities by examining how students drew upon different language varieties as cultural and cognitive tools to mediate learning in a third space. Findings from this study revealed fluidity for language learning during interactions among these adolescents from different linguistic backgrounds as they applied translanguaging during interaction. These findings suggest that through translanguaging speakers create new spaces within a culturally diverse interactional context. In sum, both of these findings lay emphasis on ‘new spaces’ created by speakers during interaction. The notion of third space was introduced in translanguaging as a space relevant to multilingualism because of its transformation power (Li Wei, 2011), where different identities, values, and practices coexist and combine to generate new identities (Bhabha, 1994). The idea of third space is to create a space where linguistic elements are no longer linked to national languages but the communicative objectives of speakers.

The third space concept is important to understand ethnic variety in identity construction (Bhabha, 1994; Finnis, 2014). Bhabha (1994) developed a concept of hybridity to describe the construction of culture and identity within conditions of colonial antagonism, where hybridity is positioned as a form of in between space he referred to as third space to synthesize and negotiate cultural differences within the postcolonial condition. Also, Finnis (2014) looked at how a new third space was created through code-switching practices among British-born Greek-Cypriots in London. According to Finnis, by skilfully manipulating languages and styles, speakers were able to project themselves as Greek-Cypriot by disaffiliating from mainstream British society with their use of familiar cultural resources. They were also able to challenge and reclaim their inherited identities to construct the identity of British-born Greek-Cypriot youth through code-switching in non-serious context. Finally, the relevance of focusing on these non-standard mixed language practices are that they allow analysts to

observe manufactured, interrogated, altered and changed/new/different linguistic norms, in the context studied (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011).

Section 2.6 explores the concept of communities of practice (CofP). Language practices, including code-switching practices, play a key role in the construction of identity in multilingual contexts (De Fina, 2007), and this is why the CofP framework, which has language use and practice at its core, constitutes an ideal framework for the current study. The framework is especially useful for the study of speakers who, in many ways, inhabit a space located outside the formal and inherited structures and values of society, and this is commonly the case with younger generations who live in a rapidly changing world of globalization. This framework is also appropriate, as it ‘allows for a consideration of both macro and micro aspects of socio-cultural existence providing a link between structure and agency’ (Finnis, 2009).

## **2.6 Community of Practice**

As discussed in previous sections, there has been a shift towards the use of social practice as a means of understanding ethnicity and identity in recent years. The shift towards social practice is based on the idea that participants are agents in the construction of identity, the local construction of social reality, and emphasizes the concept of practice and close observation of social behaviour in real contexts of interaction (De Fina, 2007). Lave and Wenger (1991) developed the CofP framework while studying apprenticeship as a learning model. This section outlines the key aspect of the CofP model, which is used as a framework appropriate for studying identities in talk (Eckert, 2001) in this study.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1998, p. 490) give a concise definition of a CofP by stating: ‘community of practice as an aggregate of people who come together around a mutual engagement in some common endeavour, ways of doing things, ways of talking,

beliefs, values, power, relations in short practices emerge in the course of their joint activity around that endeavour.’ They give examples of communities of practice, which are a group of colleagues, a classroom, women's fitness group, etc. Scollon (1998, p. 13) defines a CofP as ‘a group of people who over a period of time share in some set of social practices geared towards some common purpose, usually face-to-face through regular, patterned forms of social interaction and that such a CofP would develop a history over time of novices entering, moving through into expertise and retirement from the CofP.’ This definition brings into focus the gradual development that takes place within it, where a new member is considered a novice who later progresses to an expert and then retirement. However, it is important to note that not all CofPs permit the retirement of members (consider, for example, the family). It is also important to note that a group of people who do not meet face-to-face can be considered a CofP with the availability of telecommunications and the Internet (Angouri, 2016). Therefore, a consideration of the characteristics of CofP presented in the above definitions suggests that a CofP is a group of people who have a mutual engagement, shared repertoire and some jointly negotiated enterprise.

The CofP theory has introduced into the academic debate a plurality of concepts and innovative perspectives. For instance, it has introduced the sociality of practices, the sociality of language, the issue of learning process in the construction and deconstruction of identity, and the importance of learning processes within a community of practitioners. But the origin and primary use of the concept originates in learning theory.

More specifically, Lave and Wenger’s (1991) work influenced approaches to situate learning through the CofP framework. In the view of Lave and Wenger, learning is a process that entails change of identity. At a minimum, one moves from claiming the identity of a novice towards claiming the identity of an expert within a CofP. They



suggest that in a CofP there is a process of learning and this process entails changes in identity. Thus, the CofP is appropriate for this study, which examines processes of identification and contextualization. Also, Wenger (1998) suggested that within the CofP, practice comprises meaning, community, learning and identity and they are accompanied by analytic components (participation, mutual engagement, shared repertoire, joint enterprise and reification), by which the internal dynamics of CofPs can be examined. Meaning develops through participation, negotiation and reification; community develops via mutual engagement, involvement in a joint enterprise and a shared way of doing things; learning involves the evolution of the community over time and identity through experiences, which are negotiated to construct identity.

Similarly, Corradi et al. (2010) explain that the notion of CofP marks the passage from a cognitive and individual vision of learning to a social and situated one. Learning is not a phenomenon that takes place in a person's head; rather, it is a participative social process in which community is the source, and the medium for socialization that constructs and perpetuates social and working practices. They explain that the CofP can be conceived as a form of self-organization, which corresponds neither to organizational boundaries nor friendship groups but is based on sociality among practitioners and on the sharing of practical activities. Sociality meaning the dimension within which interdependencies arise among people engaged in the same practice. Thus, they suggest that these interdependences give rise to processes whereby newcomers are socialized into ways of seeing, doing and speaking. Thus, the newcomer gradually becomes a full member of the community. The knowledge at the basis of a job or profession is transmitted, and in parallel perpetuated, through the sociality of practice, hence getting acquired directly or having a first-hand experience with the community.

Eckert (2000) engaged in ethnographic fieldwork by observing and gradually learning about an emergent group's ways of interaction with each other in Detroit. Eckert's

research illustrates the importance of using a CofP in language variation, especially by illustrating how analysing social categories can lump together different people in a particular social category. But the notion of a CofP brings together a group of people with a common goal. Also, Meyerhoff (2002 p. 526) explains, ‘analysis of variation based on the CofP emphasizes the role of language use and linguistic variation as pre-eminently social practices, and they link the analysis of linguistic variables to speakers’ entire range of social practices.’

There are also suggestions that the CofP approach to variation analysis may seem to apply most productively to the analysis of variation among adolescents (Bergvall, 1999; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1999). However, Meyerhoff (2002, p.538) explains why its usefulness should not be limited to this age group. She explains that although some of the CofPs we belong to in our youth have especially strong effects on our linguistic practices, the construction of social identity is a process, which goes on all through an individual’s life. This presents the possibility of strengthening existing social identities and redefining ourselves with new ones (Holmes, 1998; Wenger, 1998). This research supports Meyerhoff’s suggestion by using the CofP approach in investigating variations in both youths and elders in their use of proverbs.

As mentioned earlier in Section 1.1, the study of sociolinguistic variation has shifted from social categories to a study of self-forming social groups to identify if these groupings are reflected in their linguistic practices. The CofP approach to language variation study is essential in understanding the use of social practice, discursive patterns or linguistic practice, interactions and the concept of ‘process’ in the analysis of identity. CofP is a framework that is interested in linguistic variation and the social meaning this variation has for people (Nagar, 2008). It is not enough to identify one by age or social class because the meanings and values associated with these traits can be changed through the negotiation that takes place in a social practice like a CofP. Based

on this emphasis on social practices, not social categories, researchers in the field of identity studies have shown that individuals and groups construct and project images of them that do not pre-exist the social practices in which they are displayed and negotiated. Rather, participants in social practice often align with or distance themselves from social categories of belonging, depending on the local context of interaction and its insertion in the wider social world. Therefore, in De Fina's (2007, p.372) words, 'analysts cannot presuppose that interactants will identify with social categories related to their social profile, since identity claims and displays are embedded in social practices and respond to a complex interplay of local and global factors.'

The relevance of CofP to this study is that CofP disentangles the practices that are shared by members. The CofP framework creates an avenue to investigate language variations. This research seeks to explore how different generations make meaning through discursive patterns (the production of proverbs in Ute-Okpu, Igbo tribe), especially in a changing world (language contact). Therefore, the CofP becomes an avenue to identify linguistic patterns of each generation (which is expected to be different as CofPs have linguistic styles peculiar to them); compare their linguistic patterns to identify variations; and how different generations use these linguistic patterns to negotiate their identity as in-groups or out-groups.

## **2.7 Summary**

This chapter illustrates the complex interplay of discourse theories on identity. It examined social constructionism as a general perspective of this study. More specifically, it examined discourse constructionism and the idea that identity is socially constructed through discourse, in contrast to the rigid essentialist view on identity. It also considered conversational analysis as an appropriate perspective for this research

because it lays an emphasis on ‘brought about’ analysis of identity, where identities are interpreted based on what speakers do.

Furthermore, it examined narrative analysis and how everyday discursive patterns such as small stories are used to interpret identities of participants. Thus, laying emphasis on spontaneous speech for the analysis of identity. More specifically, it explored literature on stylization, the language and style managed by speakers during interaction to align or disaffiliate in-group identities. It explored CS, and more recent attempts to deconstruct boundaries between groups and the rigid essentialist perception of identity.

The next chapter will further develop this research by exploring language contact, globalization and proverbs. It will examine proverbs as linguistic practices and examine existing research on the use of proverbs in the Igbo tribe of Nigeria as identity markers. Also, it further develops this research by developing the theme of language variation by exploring aspects of globalization that may cause language change and the language situation within groups in Ute-Okpu.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW: LANGUAGE CONTACT, GLOBALIZATION AND PROVERBS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter further develops this study by exploring studies on language contact, globalization and proverbs. It examines globalization as a factor for language contact, and explores the language contact situation in Nigeria and the use of proverbs in conversation, particularly in the Igbo tribe. Section 3.2 examines studies on globalization, and perspectives on the effect of globalization on culture. Section 3.2 further explores globalization and its effect on culture by examining literature on the concept of language contact, language contact situations and the outcome of language contact in Nigeria. Section 3.4 develops this chapter further by examining proverbs, and the relationship between proverbs and culture, particularly in the Igbo culture from a language contact perspective. Section 3.5 further examines theories on how to interpret proverbs. Section 3.6 explores proverbs in conversation, i.e. functions of proverbs and the stylistic properties of proverbs suggested to identify proverbs in conversation. Section 3.7 examines studies on the rationale behind generational transition of proverbs. Finally, section 3.8 examines studies on gender and proverbs. This chapter is structured this way to give an overview of the linguistic situation in Nigeria, in order to justify the rationale for exploring language use in a language contact context.

#### **3.2 The Sociolinguistics of Globalization**

As stated in the early part of this chapter (Section 2.3), this study is mainly built around socially orientated linguistic theories relating to identity. The current section further

contributes towards exploring and developing an understanding of the relationship between language, context and identity, particularly when analysing identity in a globalized world.

According to Waters (2001, p.6), 'globalization is the direct consequence of the expansion of European culture across the planet via settlement, colonization and cultural replication.' However, the underlining phrase in Waters' statement is globalization being a direct consequence of the expansion of 'European culture' across the planet. If globalization is a direct consequence of the expansion of European traditions and beliefs, where do the cultures of non-European countries stand? Are they also involved in this expansion of traditions?

Contrary to Waters' definition of globalization, Giddens' (1990) does not exclude the rest of the world from the process of globalization. Giddens' definition suggests that globalization is a process of integration or a period experienced by the world without exclusions. Giddens states:

Globalization can be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which links distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. This is a dialectical process because such local happenings may move in an obverse direction from the much-distanced relations that shape them. Local transformation is as much a part of globalization as the lateral extension of social connections across time and space. (p. 64)

This view of globalization effectively analyses its impact on the international world. Emphasizing the link between local context and the global world, Giddens' definition of globalization introduces the notion of time, space and its effect on social occurrences, where local decisions are made in dependence to a global scope. Hence, the world is

interconnected because of massively increased cultural exchange and ideas. This forces us into thinking of phenomena that are locally oriented but which also cross boundaries, which are not restricted to their particular context of occurrence.

Generally, the term globalization is most commonly used as shorthand for the intensified flow of capital, goods, people, images and discourse/language around the globe, driven by technological innovations mainly in the field of media and information and communication technology, and resulting in new patterns of global activity, community organization and culture (Castells, 1996). It centres on the age of innovation, expansion and entanglement between completely different cultures/communities.

Most definitions of globalization build on the belief that through globalization the world has become a 'village' (see Section 3.5). This was not applicable to sociolinguistics, as it mostly preferred to focus on a unit of the world (a village) instead of the world (Blommaert, 2010). However, Blommaert (2010) re-evaluates this historical distinction of sociolinguistics and its preference to study a village instead of the world. Blommaert's concern is that, although the field of sociolinguistics is unthinking and rethinking its methods, it still bears many marks of its own peculiar history, as it has focused on static variation, on local distributions of varieties and on stratified language contact. Hence, he explores a new sociolinguistic approach to globalization. This new approach explores the change from a static resource to a mobile resource, which focuses more on networks, flows and movements within the world. This change emerges because globalization is viewed now as a complex world of villages, cities; communities connected by material and symbolic ties in often-unpredictable ways (Blommaert, 2010, p. 1). This new sociolinguistic approach to globalization explores specific theories, i.e. superdiversity (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011). These theories coincide with 'third wave sociolinguistics' (Eckert, 2012).

This research attempts to join the growing tradition in sociolinguistics of scholars who engage with globalization (Block, 2005; Calvet, 2006; Coupland, 2003; De Swaan, 2001; Fairclough, 2006; Harris 2006; Rampton 2006). It also complements the work of Blommaert (2007), and will specifically try to attempt the approach explored by Blommaert, who views globalization as a ‘complex web of villages’. It attempts to move away from viewing language as fixed in time and space to highlighting language change. Blommaert (2007, p. 2) suggested that a ‘different theoretical approach to sociolinguistic issues in globalization’ should be explored. Where globalization is seen as having an effect on language (‘dislodged and destabilized’, *ibid*, p. 3). Blommaert cites theories such as superdiversity (contemporary multilingualism) as the notions to describe language situation in a changing world, thus suggesting that assumptions of a world with common polices, language and culture should not be held by linguists. Superdiversity encourages concepts such as translanguaging, polylingualism or metrolingualism to analyse the uses of linguistic resources (Simpson, 2016), therefore encouraging linguists to also focus on innovative creativity, which is upheld in the theory of superdiversity (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011). Blommaert’s notion coincides with third wave sociolinguistic theory because there is a focus on practice instead of just structure. Meaning is made prominent as we try to understand what speakers are doing in a local context while observing the actual process of change.

### **3.2.1 Perspectives on the effect of Globalization to African culture and Proverb**

As illustrated in Section 3.4.1, globalization as a concept generates diverse interpretations, views and opinions, which make it controversial if the effect it has on language is generalized without proper investigation. However, some writers have given their overt opinions of what they feel is the implication of globalization for African languages.



Giddens (1990, pp. 30-31) states that, 'globalization at any rate is not only, or even primarily, about economic interdependence, but about the transformation of time and space in our lives.' Giddens' definition explains the implications of the effect of globalization not just on economic resources, stating that not only is globalization creating an interconnection between cultures and trade but also a connection of space and time. His definition explores the geographical impact of globalization to a society (local) and the world at large (globally).

Held et al. (1999, p. 2) defines globalization as the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspect of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual. The above definition explores every aspect that the concept of globalization has impacted. They define globalization as an interconnection of the world in the economic, cultural, criminal and spiritual aspects of life. However, these interpretations or views are highly influenced by the socio-cultural, economic and political backgrounds of every society. The above opinion on globalization introduces the issues of cultural complexities in a changing global world.

More specifically, Khor's definition gives a further illustration of one of many opinions towards the effect of globalization in Africa. Khor (1995, p. 3) states that, 'globalization is what we in the third world have for centuries called colonization.' In his opinion, globalization was the consequence of the contact between European countries and African countries, thus he suggests that the term globalization could be understood from the term colonization, which is familiar in Africa.

Khor, in expressing his opinion, makes use of the imagery of colonialization; however, Friedman's (2000) opinion on the effect of globalization on African culture sheds more light on the opposing opinions on the effect of globalization in Africa, revealing the

controversy involved in considering the effect of globalization. More specifically, globalization is viewed as two-sided: it comes with a bundle of advantages and disadvantages and is received with mixed feelings. Friedman states this opinion by describing globalization as 'everything and its opposite'. He explains that

Globalization can be incredibly empowering and incredibly coercive. It can democratize opportunity and democratize panic. It makes the whales bigger and minnows stronger... While it is homogenizing cultures. It is also enabling people to share their individuality farther and wider. It makes us want to chase after the Lexus (the essence of modern life) more intensely than ever and cling to our olive trees (our traditional ways) more tightly than ever. It enables us to reach into the world as never before and it enables the world to reach into each of us as never before. (p. 406)

Friedman's explanation describes globalization as empowering, as creating a wider range of opportunities, fostering the sharing of individuality and encouraging the sharing of ideals from different localities. However, he also highlights several negative effects on the African societies, which can make it feel like there are more losses to be counted than gains, in the cultural and economic sectors, but especially when it comes to the area of identity.

Oduaran and Oduaran (2006) also express their opinion on the effect of globalization, which concurs with Khor. As explained earlier in this section, Khor describes globalization as a product of colonialization. According to Oduaran and Oduaran, colonialization fosters and encourages the imbibing of European/western culture into the lives of the African people. They suggest that the latter began to adopt the former's ways of life - the culture of the western world - and gradually it was fused into the culture of the African people. Thus, there became a range of substitutes for what was

formerly known to them as their way of life and their cultural heritage. According to Oduaran and Oduaran (2006, pp. 217-8)

In a changing world, where Africans in cities and villages drink Coca-Cola in preference for the fresh palm wine and repudiate the eating of roasted yam or plantain together with palm oil in preference for hamburgers rolling off the ovens of McDonald's? Or Kentucky Fried Chicken; the effect of globalization can be imagined.

In their opinion there is a replacement of that which is unique to the African culture, with that which was introduced into their society through globalization. They explain that this change is inherent in the switch from traditional foods that were unique to the African people, to the language used during interaction by the African society. Thus, critics of globalization argue that globalization and its processes pose a danger to the cultural heritage of the African society. They argue that globalization creates a crisis of identity and displaces people from their traditional cultures. On the basis that the culture, which represents their identity, has been mostly replaced by other cultures. Oduaran and Oduaran (2006, p. 227) state that, 'African proverbs are under grave attack from cultural globalization.' Their opinion is that access to the outside world through the Internet or telecommunications innovations has taken a toll on proverbs in particular and especially their transmission from one generation to another. They state 'there are many people of African origin or those who reside in the continent that are almost completely novices when it comes to the cultural exchange of using proverbs' (ibid 2006, p. 227).

The above opinions by scholars suggest that opinions on the impact of globalization on cultural identity are controversial because there is no clear line between its gains and losses. While some scholars believe globalization affects language negatively, some are

of the opinion that it has positive effects on some aspects of life in Africa, but definitely not in language. Also, it is the researcher's opinion that most of these opinions might not be viewed as persuasive because it can be argued that these opinions are generalized opinions, which have no evidence of critical investigations or have not made references to works that investigated the effect of globalization to African languages. It is important not to generalize the effect of globalization without properly investigating these languages suggested by some scholars to be affected negatively by globalization. Therefore, this research creates awareness of a more ethnomethodological approach into the issues of globalization and the effect it has on language and the use of proverbs in Africa.

Finally, a consideration of the above perspectives on globalization suggests that although globalization is a very broad concept, most of the scholars mentioned have suggested globalization to be the same as colonialism. In the case of Nigeria, globalization brought about introductions and access to other parts of the world through easier means of transportation, through the Internet, telecommunications amongst others. The start of globalization in Nigeria can be traced back to the days of colonial administrations, which started as a commercial venture. However, in recent times immigration and the Internet have also caused a rapid growth of globalization in Nigeria. However, this study will be focusing on globalization as it relates to the issues of immigrant languages in contact with native languages because of colonialization and immigration. Whenever the word globalization is used, what is implied are the aspects of globalization this research attempts to focus on. Therefore, globalization in this study refers to the impact of English language on the Ika language as a result of language contact. The next section will examine language contact and the significance of globalization in the process.

### 3.3 Language contact

Linguistic varieties have been in contact with each other for many years and most societies. However, it is difficult to identify a starting point for such contact. Researchers have explored the political, social and linguistic effect of language contact over the years (Thomason, 2001). Nevertheless, the focus of this research is on the effects of language contact in a globalized world.

The publication of Weinreich's *Language in Contact* (1953) has led to extensive research on language contact (Aikhenvald, 2006; Baker & Huber, 2001; Clyne, 2003; Fisiak, 1995; Heine & Kuteva, 2005; Jacobs, 2005; Johanson, 2002; Migge, 2003; Myers-Scotton, 2002; Mufwene, 2008; Ross, 2001; Thomason, 2001, Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Van Coetsem, 2000; Winford, 2003). Weinreich (1953) in his pioneering work, addresses contact in terms of interference, defining language contact as 'those instances of deviation from the norms of either language, which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language' (p. 1).

According to Mackey and Ornstein (1979, p. vii), 'Language contact is essentially a social phenomenon resulting from the meeting of people speaking different languages.' They further explain the causes of contact by suggesting that some of the causes of contact include the dominance of certain languages, social functions, location and demographics of language community, and political and economic importance.

Contrary to Mackey and Ornstein, Thomason (2001, p. 62) explains that the definitions of 'Language contact, which imply that language contact is the use of several languages in the same place and at the same time' is the simplest form of definition for language contact. She explains that it is not hard to imagine a situation where this definition might be too simple. She gives an example of a situation where two groups of young travellers are speaking two different languages while cooking their meals in the kitchen

of a youth hostel: if each group speaks only one language, and if there is no verbal interaction between the groups, then this depicts language contact only in the most trivial sense. She explains that a significant language contact situation will be a situation where at least some people use more than one language during interaction with each other, suggesting they may not be fluent speakers of the language used in interaction. Thomason also explains that languages can be in contact without speakers meeting face to face due to the availability of the Internet and telecommunications. Therefore, language contact does not require interactions to take place with the speakers physically present.

Similarly, scholars (Johanson, 2002; Siemund, 2008) have suggested there are misconceptions concerning the process in which language contact takes place. Explaining this misconception, Siemund (2008, p. 7) states that a ‘very naïve view of language contact would probably hold that speakers take bundles of formal and functional properties, semiotic signs so to speak from the relevant contact language and insert them into their own language.’ Siemund suggests that a ‘more realistic view in language contact research is that whatever kind of material is transferred in a situation of language contact, this material necessarily experiences some sort of modification through contact’ (p.7). This modification is what accounts for language shift or change.

### **3.3.1 Language contact in Nigeria**

Nigeria is a multilingual society and scholars have tried to classify the number of languages in Nigeria over the years (Adekunle, 1976; Agheyisi, 1989; Blench & Crozier, 1992; Nwaozuzu, 2013). Although these classifications varied among these scholars, it highlights the linguistic diversity of the Nigerian people. However, the official indigenous languages are Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, with English as the major official language of education. Each of the indigenous languages has various dialects;

with the Igbo dialect spoken by participants for this study is called Ika. Therefore, with all these languages in contact in Nigeria, there are bound to be new varieties of expression. Apart from witnessing a cross-current linguistic interference among the indigenous languages because of the diversity in linguistic practices, the era of colonialization by the British government also introduced English language into Nigeria. According to Sankoff (2001, p. 3), 'Language contact has historically taken place in large part under conditions of social inequality resulting from wars, conquests, colonialism, slavery and migrations (forced and otherwise).' Odumuh (1987, pp.10-11) states:

The colonial administration remained the single greatest carrier of English language and culture... The language of the colonial administration (the civil service) was English. Not only did the administrators help spread English language using bureaucratese and officialese; but more importantly in their homes they again did in their interaction with domestic staff-guards, gardeners, stewards, etc. in India these were the nurturing places, which manufactured Butler English; in Nigeria, they were responsible for the rise of Nigerian Pidgin, non-standard Nigerian English, and Nigerian English.

Like every language contact situation, the outcome of the contact between the English language and the indigenous Nigerian languages produced a Nigerian pidgin, which according to Dada (2007) has the largest number of speakers in Nigeria. Odumuh's statement suggests that Nigerian Pidgin was an outcome of language contact between the people of Nigeria and the colonial administrators during interactions. Woodward (1973, pp.39-40) defines pidgin as languages that 'are reduced in structure, contain a partial mixture of structure of two to several languages, and contain structure common to none of the languages in the communication situation'. Also Muysken and Smith

(1995, p. 3) states that pidgin languages represent speech-forms, which do not have native speakers, and are therefore primarily used as a means of communication among people who do not share a common language. However, Muysken and Smith suggest that pidgin languages generally do not have native speakers; they argue that extended pidgins such as the Nigerian Pidgin English are beginning to have native speakers.

As Le Page (1977, p. 222) states, 'Pidgins are formed when speakers of one language engage in trade with speakers of another, or work on plantations managed by speakers of another, and neither knows the other's language.' Le Page's definition suggests that each speaker must have no knowledge of the other's language, and the outcome of this interaction between two strange languages, in the context of the Nigerian and colonial administrators' situation, was Pidgin.

In Asemota's (2015) view, Nigerian Pidgin English is an effective way of speaking in Nigeria, which ranges from expressing emotional feelings to breaking communicative barriers and creating a neutral platform. Asemota states, 'I mean let's be frank! If someone greets you after a long day at work with "I welcome you" you might just frown, but if someone greets you with "I throway salute" you might just end up smiling or burst into laughter' (p. 50). Thus, suggesting that Nigerian Pidgin English is considered a language variety, which can evoke language.

In a different perspective, Dada (2007, p. 89) suggests the Nigerian pidgin is an unpleasant form of English language because of the grammatical difference in both English language and Nigerian Pidgin. Dada's opinion presents an overall view of attitudes towards the use of pidgin and how it may have been perceived by the educated as a lower level means of communication in Nigeria in the past. However, in recent times the use of Pidgin English has gained a more positive attitude and is spoken by



almost everybody (Goglia, 2010). It is predominantly used in places like Delta State, Lagos State, Edo State, Abuja and Rivers State (Dada, 2007).

Nigeria achieved independence in 1960. After the era of colonialism, the English language still remained in the system and was made the official language of the country. It became the language of communication, education and administration. This status as the official language of Nigeria made it essential for everyone to engage in the use of English language in daily interactions. However, although colonialism introduced the use of the English language in Nigeria, it is in the view of the researcher that globalization is a catchword that summarizes the different processes of language contact that have taken place around the world.

The next section further explores language contact by exploring comments and studies on the linguistic outcomes of language contact.

### **3.3.2 Outcomes of language contact: the use or death of proverbs.**

Linguistic outcomes of language contact can be classified into three typologies, namely, contact-induced language change, extreme language mixture and language death (Thomason 2001; Winford 2003).

Generally speaking, indigenous scholars and research on the outcome of language contact in African varieties, have suggested that language death is the outcome of language contact in Africa (Balogun, 2013; Brenzinger, 1998; Brenzinger et al., 1991; Crozier & Blench, 1992; Dixon, 1992; Grenoble & Whaley, 1998; Maffi, 2001; Mufwene, 2002; Nwaozuzu, 2013; Nwonwu, 2014; Obadan, 2015; Winter, 1979; Woodbury, 2006). Woodbury (2006) suggested that a language is considered dead if such language is no longer spoken in the form in which they were used in the past, if speakers of such language fail to pass it on to the next generation. Similarly, Balogun

(2013) suggested that the Yoruba language is endangered because the younger generation is finding it more convenient to use English language in their interactions, instead of the indigenous Yoruba language. More specific examples of research on Igbo proverb death are Obadan (2015) and Nwonwu (2014). Obadan (2015), in her research entitled, *Language Endangerment: Issues of Igbo Proverbs*, identified a gradual language death in the use of proverbs by the youths of Igbo tribe. The central claim of her work was that 'language endangerment is gradual. It starts with the loss of some vital aspects of the language thereby losing its communicative relevance in certain domains, suggesting that if this trend continues, and more domains lose their communicative relevance, if unchecked, might lead to an eventual total loss of the use of proverbs in Igbo tribe' (p. 1). Also, as mentioned earlier in the introduction chapter, Nwonwu (2014) in his book *Philosophy of Proverbs in Igbo Culture: The Chicken Metaphor*, explains that his work acts 'as a prelude to the revival of Igbo language, a wake-up call to get back the Igbo roots and pick up their values, a plea for the Igbo people to seek the black goat in the daytime and not wait till nightfall when everywhere will be dark' (p, 119). He uses the proverb 'seek the black goat in the daytime and not wait till nightfall when everywhere will be dark' (p, 119) to state the urgency of what needs to be done by the people of Igbo in his opinion. The common factor used to identify language death as suggested by these scholars is the inability to produce proverb, especially in native languages by the younger generation. In the case of Ute-Okpu, Ika is the traditional style used in communicating. However, as a result of language contact, other languages such as English and Nigeria Pigin English have emerged as varieties that could be adopted by some speakers in the community to communicate.

A consideration of these opinions by Woodbury (2006), Balogun (2013), Nwonwu (2014) and Obadan (2015) suggests that these scholars may not be persuasively

objective in their analysis of language death as they base their opinion of language death on the inability of the next generation to use such language as it was used in the past. A persuasive view will be that language change might not necessary mean language death but a creation of new variations of language. Although this research will be analysing the use of proverbs by two generations, it deviates from the traditional studies of language death relating to the use of proverbs, as it identifies variations that occur in the use of proverbs between two generations. More specifically, this research is centred on what Thomason and Kaufman (1988) referred to as ‘abnormal transmission’. Thomason and Kaufman describe abnormal transmission as when a ‘whole population acquires a new language with [i.e. second language, L2] within possibly as little as a single lifetime, therefore necessarily other than by parental or peer-group enculturation’ (p. 10). Abnormal transmission is a situation where creole (which developed from pidgin) becomes the primary language of communication in a community (Lim & Ansaldo, 2015). The next section further explores languages in contact by examining proverbs in Africa in general and used by the Igbo tribe of Nigeria in particular.

### **3.4 Defining Proverbs**

This section attempts to explore proverbs as a culturally discursive style used by the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. Thus, it examines the definition of proverbs, the universal use of proverbs, proverbs in conversation (functions) and studies on the interpretation of proverbs. It will further explore proverbs as an oral tradition in Nigeria and the implication of language contact in the production of proverbs.

In Latin, the word proverb is called *proverbium*, which means ‘a saying supporting a point’ (Abayomi, 2015, p. 1). *Pro* means on behalf of, while *verbium* translates to word. This description of proverbs makes clear the ability of proverbs to give more understanding to situations in conversation that are difficult to understand. There are no

ways of locating the origin of proverbs. However, proverbs are a product of someone with an exceptional creative ability, which becomes accepted by the people of a community because it appeals to their imagination and speaks the truth about life (Okpewho, 1992). This truth could be local and it could be universal.

Oral tradition is a general concept, which captures genres like proverbs, idioms and riddles, all of which are different but closely related (Healey, 1996). This is why it is important to distinguish between proverbs and other forms, especially idioms. According to Clasberry (2012), idioms are closely related to proverbs; the difference is that idioms are phrases, which can be a word to several words. On the other hand, 'Proverbs are abbreviated but complete statements that convey our thoughts in a precise and dignifying manner. They are principles of life that provide guidance, words of encouragement and redirection in our daily walk in many areas of life as well as give us hope when we are down' (ibid, p. 7).

According to Mahfauz (2012, p. 1), 'In Africa and Nigeria Cultures especially, proverbs are considered the reliable horses which convey meanings to their destinations or heart of the listeners.' More specifically, Lindfors (1973, p. 105) suggests the Yorubas have a saying that, 'proverbs are horses of speech, they can be employed not only to retrieve communication gone astray but to speed it up, slow it down, convey messages, deliver light hearted jests, sharpen arguments, criticism, clarify difficult ideas and disguise simple ones beyond easy recognition.' This Yoruba saying suggests proverbs are tools of expression that make communication flexible and suitable for a particular situation. They can be adjusted for clarification purposes, they can be adjusted to make light hearted jest, adjusted to bring into life abstract situations, and can be used to create codes or decode codes. Thus, the description of proverbs in the above definitions rely on the conventional understanding that horses are seen as means of transportation but

goes further to specify that these particular horses (proverbs) are a reliable means of transporting words to the heart of the listener. Hence, they are trusted and relied on for the effective expression of thought and effective communication. Horse is a mode of transportation which people are familiar with and what Lindfors and Mahfauz do is to compare the well-known means of transportation to the meaning of proverbs. Therefore, the Yorubas see proverbs as a mode of transportation, but in this sense transportation of words to the heart of a listener.

According to Mieder (1993), 'A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed, and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation. They are spoken in most cases to teach life lessons; making them more understandable to the audience it is spoken to' (p. 5). Mieder's definition of proverbs suggests they contain cultural beliefs, morals and values. However, it further highlights the rationale behind this study as it points out the expectation for proverbs to be passed on from one generation to the next. This definition suggests that proverbs are ways of expression, metaphors that teach, proverbs rely on metaphorical reasoning to facilitate the learning process by moving from the less known to the well known (Penfield & Duru, 1988, p. 120).

Awedoba (2000, pp. 13-14) further explains these traditional views found in proverbs by stating, 'proverbs are social and cultural artefacts that cannot be fully understood without first of all considering their societal and cultural backgrounds as well as situations and circumstances.' This suggests that proverbs are subject to the context of their production and can only be fully understood by considering the societal and cultural background, which they were uttered. This explains why the culture, heritage and identity of a race, a people, are reflected in language and proverbs in particular. Hence, a meaning given to a particular situation in one locality can be totally different

in another locality because of the difference in cultural background, situation or circumstance (this is discussed further in Section 3.4.2). For example, in Africa in general and Ute-Okpu in particular, it is believed that the elders are the custodians of proverbs; while in Korean this speech form is a cultural heritage of the lower class of the society which is not shared by the upper class (Chung, 1996). Context is vital to the interpretation of proverbs.

### **3.4.1 Proverbs as Universal**

Proverbs seem to be used in a lot of places in the world. However, there are places that have been noted to have a few or no record of the use of proverbs. For example, Bushmen of southern Africa and the Nilotic peoples and a few recorded in Nilo-Hamitic languages (Finnegan, 2012). Most African countries have a rich record of the use of proverbs (ibid, p. 379-441).

Proverbs may not have a universally applicable definition, but they are universal in the sense that they are used in interaction in parts of the world which they are found, even when their creation and interpretation rely on the social-geographical and linguistic background of the given context of usage. The universal nature of proverbs is made clear by comparing proverbs from around the world, where the same themes of wisdom and truth are inherent in proverbs from different cultural backgrounds, which are produced in different languages. For example, the English proverb ‘it is of no use crying over spilt milk’ can also translate to the proverb in Japanese ‘Fukusui bonni kaerazu’. While the English proverb made use of milk as a more familiar substance to the English social-geographical and linguistic background, the Japanese form of this proverb made use of water/tea, which is a more familiar substance in Japan (Yoneoka, 2002). This is therefore a case of proverbs from different cultures and languages sharing the same thought or message but using different imageries that are familiar to their backgrounds.

This ability of proverbs to reflect cultural, socio-geographical and linguistic backgrounds suggests that proverbs are universal, in the sense that they have a general function of reflecting the cultural values and traditions of their specific cultures.

The universality of proverbs lies in the fact that proverbs are found in every culture and used as a means of expression, reflecting their peculiar cultures and traditions, which make them unique in their own way. With the universality of proverbs explained, it is important to explore the meaning of proverbs, to understand their use in interactions

### **3.4.2 Proverbs and Culture**

Several writers on proverbs appropriate them as tools that mirror the society in their works. Even the titles given to most books on proverbs are suggestive of the role played by proverbs in different cultural backgrounds. Below are examples: *African Culture through Proverbs* (Clasberry, 2010), *An Introduction to Kasena Society and Culture Through their Proverbs* (Awedoba, 2000), *The Shona Proverb as an Expression of UNHU/ UBUNTU* (Mandova, 2013), *Prejudice, Power, and Poverty in Haiti: A Study of a Nation's Culture as seen Through its Proverbs* (Tavernier-Almanda, 1999), *Fatalistic Traits in Finnish Proverbs* (Kuusi, 1967), *Igbo Proverbs as Embodiments of Igbo-African Philosophy Proverbs* (Kanu et al., 2014), *An Exploratory Comparison of the Bemba of Zambia and the Shona of Zimbabwe* (Niemeyer, 1982). However, there are writers who disagree and argue against the idea that proverbs reflect the cultural and traditional views of specific cultures. An example of the view that proverbs are not a reflection of cultural values is the works of Mieder (1993) and Doyle (2012). They argue that proverbs come and go, therefore the old proverbs of a place still in circulation could reflect past values of a culture more than its current values.

On the other hand, a scholar like Webster has however adapted another approach to this debate on whether proverbs reflect cultural truths and traditions of specific groups.

While Webster accepts the notion that proverbs reflect cultural truths and traditions in part, Webster (1982) states that ‘the cultural portrait painted by proverbs may be fragmented, contradictory, or otherwise at variance with reality’ (p. 173). Webster encourages the study of proverbs but suggests ‘proverbs must be regarded not as accurate renderings but rather as tantalizing shadows of the culture which spawned them’ (ibid p. 173).

According to Mieder (1993, p. 24) proverbs are ‘short generally known sentences’. Therefore, Mieder explains proverbs are well-known utterances by members of the community, group, or interactions that these proverbs are produced to teach truth, wisdom or the traditional beliefs. Africa as a continent is known for its rich oral arts. These oral arts range from tales by moonlight, folklores and songs to proverbs. The tendency to feel protective towards these oral arts and language of expression is very high in Africa in particular because it reflects their culture. In the researcher’s view, proverbs reflect broad human experiences; however, they reflect imagery from specific backgrounds. Proverbs reflect familiar human experiences to make it easy for individuals to understand abstract situations, which are explained with concrete familiar experiences. Thus, proverbs are referred to as metaphorical statements, which are used to reflect a general truth by reference to a familiar experience (Seitel, 1976). Thus, proverbs reflect cultural values of a specific culture, teach moral lessons, reflect cultural imagery and appeal to the sense of listeners. They appeal to this sense because listeners can recognize the social-geographical experiences employed by the speakers of proverbs to make a point in interactions. This in turn makes proverbs peculiar to a particular people.



### 3.4.3 Igbo Tribe and Proverbs

The word *Igbo* refers to a language and the name of an ethnic group in Nigeria (Onuh, 1991). As a language, members of the community speak Igbo, however there are various varieties of the Igbo language (Kanu et al., 2014). As an ethnic group, the Igbo land is located in the South-Eastern region of Nigeria (Njoku, 1990). Several attempts to specify what states in Nigeria make up the Igbo tribe poses problems (Ekwuru, 2009; Uzozie, 1991). However, Kanu et al., (2014) suggests it is made up of Enugu, Anambra, Imo, Abia and parts of the Delta, Cross River, Akwa Ibom and Rivers States.

Ssetuba states ‘proverbs are regarded as a noble genre of African oral tradition that enjoys the prestige of a custodian of a people’s wisdom and philosophy of life’ (2002, p. 1). Ssetuba suggests that it is through proverbs that the prestige of a people is expressed by showcasing its culture, wisdom and traditions through the production of proverbs. This is also reflected in proverbs spoken in the Igbo tribe and how proverbs are perceived in Igbo communities. According to Kanu et al. (2014, p. 165), ‘Igbo proverbs are an integral element of the Igbo-African culture and undoubtedly a strong base in Igbo-African traditional system.’ Kanu et al. suggest that Igbo proverbs reveal the soul of Igbo people, and reflect the true index of they hold true. They suggest that the importance of proverbs to the Igbo tribe is obvious in how frequently they are produced in everyday conversation in the tribe. Similarly, Nwonwu (2014) states, ‘a class distinction exists within Igbo society whereby people are categorized according to their ability to lubricate their talk with proverbs as the oil of correct viscosity’ (p. xv). Nwonwu suggests that membership into groups in Igbo communities is based on the ability of individuals to produce proverbs fluently and frequently in conversation. Thus, suggesting that the production of proverbs can burst the self-esteem of individuals as the production of proverbs by speakers is seen as significant. Also, Penfield and Duru (1988) suggest proverbs in the Igbo society play an important role in the education of

children. Penfield and Duru state, 'in the Igbo society, it is the duty of the more experienced members to guide the less experienced and younger members and to keep them out of trouble' (p. 127). Penfield and Duru suggest that children in the Igbo society are taught how to produce and interpret proverbs at very young ages, 'as they grow they are addressed in proverbs by members of their family in interactional settings' (p.127).

As stated in Section 3.4.2, proverbs are developed from the socio-geographical, everyday life of a people. They are influenced to a large extent by the linguistic and socio-geographical experiences and orientations of a people, which are peculiar to them (Akporobaro, 2006). Imagery in proverbs reflects the socio-cultural milieu of every society. Referring to the Nigerian context, Akporobaro (2006, p. 72) states that 'repertoires of imagery implicit in the proverbs of the southern people are different from those dominant in the proverbs of the North'. More specifically, a writer like Chinua Achebe in his attempt to explain the meaning, use, and importance of Igbo proverbs to the Igbo tribe in his literary works *Things fall apart* (1958) states, 'Among the Igbo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm with which words are eaten (p. 6).' The use of palm oil by Achebe to describe proverbs is significant because palm oil to the Igbo tribe is a very vital ingredient for the preparation of almost all types of food. Achebe envisions and invents a scenario where words are put into palm oil, before being put into the mouth of a speaker. Thus, in order to explain the meaning and importance of proverbs to the Igbo tribe, Achebe employs the use of concrete, familiar socio-geographical experiences and orientations of the Igbo tribe. The imagery of palm oil in the above proverb reflects the peculiar natural environment of Achebe who employed it to explain something an abstract concept.

### **3.5 The Interpretation of African Proverbs**

The issue of how to interpret the meaning of a given proverb has been explored by a range of scholars (Arewa & Dundes, 1964; Barley, 1972; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1973; Krikmann, 1984, Norrick 1985). This concern of how to interpret or give meaning to proverbs is represented by Arewa and Dundes (1964)

What are the rules governing who can use proverbs, or particular proverbs, and to whom? Upon what occasions? In what places? With what other person present? Using what channel (e.g. speech, drumming etc.)? Do restrictions of prescriptions as to the use of proverbs or a proverb have to do with a particular topic? With the specific relationship between speaker and addressee? What exactly are the contributing contextual factors, which make the use of proverbs, or of a particular possible or not possible, appropriate or not appropriate? (p. 36)

Arewa and Dundes share concerns towards what rules apply to the use of proverbs. More specifically, they question whether there are rules that restrict the use of proverbs by interrogating who is allowed to use proverbs, on what occasions, and exploring the relationship between speakers and contextual factors that contribute to their production. This section of this research supports and explores their concerns by exploring these questions raised by Arewa and Dundes. These questions will be answered in order to further develop the theme of this research, which is about using language to challenge and reappropriate inherited structures and construct a new sense of belonging and identity.

The first of these questions to be addressed is the factor of context in the production and interpretation of proverbs. Before going into the factor of context, it is important to discuss the theories on the interpretation of proverbs. This is important because it will

help in investigating and identifying if proverbs are actually linguistic makers peculiar to a particular people (i.e., Ute-Okpu), which index them from others. It will also help address the question of the role of context in the interpretation of proverbs.

Scholars like Norrick (1985) and Barley (1972) have argued that a proverb can be interpreted or understood without a prior knowledge of its context of use or cultural tradition. They suggest that the socio-geographical experiences of a specific interaction do not play any role in the interpretation of proverbs. Similarly, in 1994, *The Interdisciplinary Journal Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* held a debate on two theories of interpreting proverbs, which seeks to explain how the mind interprets proverbs in interaction (Bradbury, 2002, p. 261). These two theories are a cognitive approach to the interpretation of proverbs by Lakoff and Turner (1989) and Honeck (1997).

Lakoff and Turner's theory on the interpretation of proverbs suggest that proverbs are a type of metaphor and like other metaphors they require the understanding of the source domain (the concrete experience used to explain abstract situations) presented in a proverb, which they map to a target domain: the abstract situation that is explained by the understanding of the source domain. This target domain can be specified or not specified in its context. On the other hand, Honeck's analogy-based problem-solving model agrees that cultural context enriches the study of proverbs, however argues that for 'theoretical purposes proverbs can be abstracted away from their cultural specifics because the mental structures and processes of homo sapiens are explainable based on the same theoretical principal' (1997, p. 37). The similarity in both the metaphorical- and the 'analogy-based problem-solving model' draws from their lack of concern for origins of the proverbs. Lakoff and Turner see proverbs as a product of literary text, evident in their definition of proverbs as poems (1989, p. 160) and the examples of proverbs they use, which they got from a book on poetry, W.S. Merwin's *Asian*

*Figures*. Honeck, on the other hand, does not show any concerns about the source of his examples.

Subsequently, scholars have also adopted an approach to interpreting proverbs, which does not isolate the context of production (Finnegan, 2012; Van der Geest, 1996; Hasan-Rokem, 1982; Penfield & Duru, 1988; Oduaran & Oduaran, 2006). Hasan-Rokem (1982), who observes that ‘syntactic analysis of the proverb alone is relatively unhelpful in discerning its meaning’ (p, 170) and the ‘semantic interpretation of proverbs must take into account cultural traditions and the norms of specific ethnic groups’ (p, 171). Therefore, Hasan-Rokem’s opinion is that the true meaning of a proverb can be found when it is examined in the context of usage. Similarly, Van Der Geest’s (1996) research on Akan proverbs supports Hasan-Rokem’s suggestion. Geest expresses this opinion by explaining that for a single Akan proverb, twelve different interpretations were given, which points to the important role the context of interaction plays in the interpretation of proverbs. Muhawi (2001, p. 272) also describes a situation where the ambiguous nature of a proverb leads to a misunderstanding and misinterpretation of a proverb. Therefore, suggesting that the multiple meaning of a particular proverb can lead to misinterpretation if such proverb is not interpreted within the context of use.

Indeed, the interpretation of proverbs is often complex especially interpreting proverbs from other cultures; hence the need to interpret proverbs with additional background knowledge of the context of use is essential for complete comprehension to be achieved by recipients. Since this research takes on the ethnographical approach of investigating the discursive patterns in Ute-Okpu, it supports and adds to the literature that insist that the interpretation of proverbs requires a consideration of the cultural context of use. Contrary to Lakoff and Turner seeing proverbs as a product of literary text and Honeck

not showing concern for the source of his examples, this study will attempt to interpret proverbs based on actual conversations by participants during interaction, and also explore their use and function with regard to the construction of identity in spontaneous speech.

### **3.6 Proverbs in conversation**

This section explores comments by scholars (Asimeng-Boahen, 2009; Delano, 1966; Finnegan, 2012; Kizza, 2010; Lindfors, 1973) on the functions that proverbs fulfil in daily conversations. This is relevant because it gives insights into explorations by other researchers on their findings of the functions of proverbs in their respective context of exploration. This further emphasizes the importance of context in the interpretation of proverbs.

#### **3.6.1 Functions of Proverbs in conversation**

Researchers have identified the use of proverbs during disputes in African societies. More specifically, the counsellors and judges presiding disputes use proverbs to resolve such disputes (Finnegan, 2012; Okpewho, 1992). In traditional African societies, the king is the presiding judge of every case and every dispute between individuals brought to his notice. It is the duty of the king and his cabinet of chiefs to settle them. In such situations, participants depend on the use of proverbs to make out good cases that are favourable to them, and hence proverbs constitute a powerful rhetorical device. The judges (king and chiefs) on the other hand use proverbs to comment on the conduct of those involved in disputes by a means of advising them or rebuking them for their actions.

A number of scholars (Bascom, 1965; Dagneu & Wodajo, 2014; Ifesieh, 1985; Ikenga-Metuh, 1983; Kizza, 2010; Mieder, 2004; TaeSang, 1999) have also suggested that

proverbs are also used in transmitting the wisdom, the culture and tradition of the African people from one generation to another, especially in the absence of any written traditions by African people. African proverbs are fundamental tools that teach the African way of life. They are used as a tool to educate, a way of sharing identity, heritage, norms and values. According to Kizza (2010, p. 11), 'African proverbs are also popular as age-tested knowledge banks, often used to preserve and enforce societal values and beliefs, to an outsider.' Kizza suggests proverbs are a window into the cultural social and philosophical functions of a specific people. African proverbs are and have been commonly used in facilitating and transmitting knowledge, overwhelming experience and conventions from one generation to another. For example, this proverb was used by one of the elders during this research to illustrate the wisdom of the elderly in an African society 'what an elder see sitting down, a child cannot see standing up'. In African societies, the elders are a bank of knowledge, experience and wisdom. The above proverb is usually used as a means of advice to the younger generation not to ignore the wisdom of the elderly. It can also be used as a warning to a younger person who is trying to 'play smart'.

Furthermore, scholars (Asouzu, 2007; Dukor, 2010; Grant & Asimeng-Boahene, 2006; Moreno & Di Vesta, 1994) have also suggested that African proverbs should be incorporated into schools because of the use of African proverbs to teach. They suggest that proverbs should be used to teach students in various disciplines to provide students with the skills and knowledge to succeed in a changing world, where everyone is globally connected to each other. Asimeng-Boahene (2014) suggests benefits that can be obtained if African proverbs are incorporated into schools, especially as a tool to teach social justice, critical thinking skills, and citizenship education. Asimeng-Boahene encourages the use of proverbs for students to understand different cultural backgrounds, which are connected into one because the world is viewed as a global

village. To illustrate these benefits, he gives examples of proverbs that foster teaching or education on social justice, critical thinking skills, and citizenship education. Asimeng-Boahene's suggestion alludes to the connections between each village that has made the world a web of villages connected because of globalization. Therefore, in Asimeng-Boahene's opinion, it is important to understand the different cultural backgrounds that are now viewed as a global village.

According to Finnegan (1970) African proverbs are used in presenting the language, societal imagery/perception in a concise form. Finnegan explains this presentation by stating, 'In many African cultures a feeling for language, for imagery, and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology comes out particularly clearly in proverbs' (p. 390). An example of such presentation of language was experienced during interviews for this study with the elders when they mostly switched from speaking English to the native language when producing proverbs (this will be discussed further in Chapter 5). For effective imagery and the use of concrete objects to explain abstract objects, proverbs help with painting a clear picture in conversations. One example is the Akan proverb, 'Wisdom is like a baobab tree; no one individual can embrace it.' The use of the large baobab tree signifies that wisdom is not a possession of one individual.

To break down these abstract experiences, Africans use proverbs that rely on African resources to make meaning. Opoku and Mbiti (1997, p. ix) explain this by stating

Proverbs are deeply rooted in this African culture and almost everyone who grows up in a village becomes a living carrier of proverbs. They are interwoven in local languages. At the same time, they constitute a sub-language of their own. This language of proverbs, this way of speaking by employing proverbs, is known by many people who use it with various skills



more or less throughout their lives ... the language of proverb is a whole way of seeing the world, a way of speaking with other people, a way of feeling the atmosphere in society in which they live.

Opoku and Mbiti suggest that one such resource employed is the local languages. They assume that anyone who grows up in in any African village is a carrier of proverbs. They describe proverbs to be a different way of viewing life and a way of feeling a society. Thus, their assumptions that proverbs are carried by only individuals in African villages makes it apparent that they assume those living outside these villages in Africa are not carriers of proverbs. That people in urban settings have less dense networks (Milroy & Margrain, 1980) and hence are more susceptible to language erosion.

In conclusion, these comments suggest the functions of proverbs in Africa. Familiar experiences, cultural backgrounds and cognitive backgrounds are interwoven into the formation of proverbs through their local languages to explain abstract situations. Thus Echeruo (1971, p. 66) states, 'to understand Igbo thought, even to know what Igbo proverbs mean, one has first to understand Igbo language. There is absolutely no other way.' This marks out proverbs as a form that indexes identity in Africa (Nussbaum, 1998).

Since I argue that the interpretation of proverbs is better achieved when the context of use is mapped together with a proverb, the function of a proverb used in interactions can also be better understood within the context of use. This issue of depending on context for the interpretation of proverbs makes it difficult to list all of the functions of African proverbs without actual data from interactions. Therefore, the first analysis chapter (Chapter 5) will investigate the function of proverbs in Ute-Okpu in order to avoid generalizations. Thus, for this study the researcher immersed herself in the CofPs studied to gather a decent sample of proverbs to identify their functions through observing natural speech and asked them the reasons they use proverbs during

interviews. For this research, the use of proverbs in interaction was divided into two categories: to teach and as an act of performance. This opinion is based on a consideration of the comments on the use of proverbs by various researchers mentioned earlier. While some are of the opinion that proverbs are used to teach peaceful co-existence with one another and teach morals, others identify them to be used for performance because of their aesthetic qualities, which is why those who use them in interaction are considered to be wise. Monye states, 'African proverbs generally have didactic, aesthetic and poetic qualities that are emphasized by participants depending on their intentions' (2009, p. 15).

Therefore, the intention of participants when producing proverbs in interaction also relates to how one can identify the use of proverbs in a given interactional space. This brings us back to the importance of understanding the context in which a proverb is produced in order to interpret the use of a given proverb in interaction. Therefore, the function of African proverbs to teach can be seen in their ability to teach peaceful co-existence in African communities, to teach morals including respect, discipline and obedience, and to teach the African traditions and beliefs, which are expected to be transmitted from one generation to another. On the other hand, proverbs can be used as a form of performance, where speakers produce proverbs to elevate their selves or reputation in the eyes of the audience who are listening (Finnegan, 2012). This is because African proverbs contain figurative expressions like imageries, similes and metaphors that express their social-geographical experiences. Therefore, in conversations proverbs are used to showcase these figurative expressions and anyone who is found using these proverbs is assumed to be wise because of the use of such expressions to drive home a point. Thus, Obiechina (1967, pp. 145-146) states:

For the materialization of his social function both the situational context in which a proverb is applied and the social position of its employer are of

importance. If a proverb is applied appropriately to the given situation it may be able not only to increase the value or the imprint of the remark but also to attract to the applier the attentive admiration of his audience. It may secure him influence and strengthen his social reputation.

Obiechina suggests that the use of proverbs in a given interaction is not only to aid effective communication by mapping the abstract situation to the concrete situation but it also functions as a tool, which attracts admiration to its user. Therefore, proverbs function as a performance tool to help in the elevation of status and self-esteem by the group. Which is why in Africa, the uses of a proverb in daily conversation are attributed to the elderly and the wise of the community. This is partly because an individual of oral artistry attributes the creation of proverbs to the genius nature of his/her mind (Okpewho, 1992; Finnegan, 2012).

### **3.7 How to Identify African Proverbs Used during Interactions**

This section investigates other variables that appear in the use of proverbs, which alerts users and listeners that the discourse of proverb has just been used in interaction. Thus, it is not merely sufficient to know the meaning of a proverb or to understand the local language of proverb in a particular interaction, it is also important to be able to identify the discourse of proverbs in an interaction. Therefore, this section explores suggestions and research on how proverbs are identified in interactions, narrowing it down to a particular group. According to Muhawi (1999, p. 266):

In the performance of any genre of verbal act, language is used in a particular key, or within a recognizable frame that lets listeners know how to interpret what they hear. If the proverb is to have its import, both the speaker and audience must be aware that the speaker is assuming a different voice than his

or her own, a collective voice whose archetypal style represents an idealized form of the speech of the community.

Muhawi suggests that both the listener and speaker in any interaction should be able to recognize when a particular speech act is used in conversation in order to know how to interpret it. In Muhawi's opinion, a proverb can only have import if the speaker and audience are aware that the speaker of such proverb is using a particular linguistic style, which is recognized in the community. Thus, it is important to investigate how speakers are able to identify when co-participants use proverbs during interaction in Ute-Okpu. This investigation is important to establish if their linguistic styles in the production of proverbs distinguish them as a group.

Comments (Finnegan, 2012; Peek & Yankah, 2004) have been made on how to identify African proverbs and pointers have been given on how African proverbs are identified in interaction. In their edited work, *African Folklore: An Encyclopaedia*, Peek and Yankah (2004) refer to proverbs as 'terse and pithy sayings'. A terse and pithy saying means a neatly short and concise expressive style (Oseid, 2009). Peek and Yankah also state that 'these sayings can be recognized by stylistic properties, which conform more or less to their homologues from other continents' (pp. 753-757). Peek and Yankah explain that the identification of proverbs can vary from one society to another, and suggest that one of such stylistic properties is the formulaic turn of phrase in an interaction. They however suggest that many communities are able to identify and differentiate proverbs from ordinary speech using a formulaic phrase like 'our Ancestors said', or 'in the past'. This assumption, in my opinion, is generalized because there are no specifics as to which particular communities use these formulaic turns of phrase in an interaction to identify the use of proverbs. Thus, when generalizations like this are given, one is quick to assume in interactions that African proverbs can be identified by these phrases, and as such look out for these phrases whenever proverbs

are used in interaction. Peek and Yankah refer to their book as an encyclopaedia, which could account for the generalizations they seem to accord to how proverbs are identified in Africa. Although Peek and Yankah's work has a wonderful representation of backgrounds to African folklore, its generalization on African proverbs and their characterization on how they are identified makes it difficult to identify proverbs as a linguistic marker of a local group. Thus, Peek and Yankah view the continent of Africa as a comprehensive entity and they explain that this assumption of Africa as one entity is because of the same issues and experiences in Africa, which have developed an overlap in cultural practices (ibid, viii). This generalization and assumption that the African continent has become one due to overlapping cultural practices, discourages research on language variations in Africa. If this was true, one can always assume that due to language contact, the world has become a village, hence there should be nothing called or referred to as an African proverb, rather it should be referred to as proverbs that are universally used since there is an overlapping of cultural practices due to contact. This is why Blommaert (2010) (discussed in Section 3.3) calls for a review on how to investigate language use in a changing world and suggests that the focus of a sociolinguist should be on the variations of language as a result of a changing world. Thus, this encourages research into specific localities, for example Doke (1947), on Ute-Okpu proverbs. Therefore, in order to avoid generalization, it is necessary to investigate the use of proverbs in particular groups to be able to establish how proverbs reflect the way of life of a people, and identify them as a group.

Also, Finnegan (2012) gives suggestions on how to identify when proverbs are produced in an interaction. Finnegan avoids generalization by commenting and giving examples of how the Bantu and the Swahili groups use proverbs and how the members of these groups identify them in interaction. According to Finnegan, African 'proverbs are generally marked by terseness of expression, by a form different from that of

ordinary speech, and by a figurative mode of expression abounding in metaphor' (p. 392). Finnegan gives a general opinion on how proverbs are identified in interaction by explaining that they are known by how terse they are from ordinary speech and they also contain figurative styles, which are abundant in metaphor. Finnegan however avoids generalization by giving examples of particular groups and their proverbs to illustrate that these proverbs are marked by terseness. Thus, the first two points were explained using proverbs of the Bantu people. Finnegan explains there are no general rules for the formation of Bantu proverbs but there has been an attempt to look out for common patterns that are apparent in the production of proverbs in Bantu, where 'forcibility' and 'economy' is a stylistic indicator of proverbs in interaction (p. 392). According to Finnegan, pithiness in proverbs produced in Bantu is achieved through the use of concord while the economy of words is achieved through elision.

Another stylistic device that identifies proverb in interaction according to Finnegan is 'reduplication, with repeated words or syllables' (ibid, p. 393). Finnegan uses the Swahili proverb, 'Hurry, hurry, has no blessing' (haraka, haraka, haina bar Oka) and the Ganda, 'Splutter, splutter isn't fire' (bugu-bugu simuliro) (examples from Doke 1947, pp. 106–10), as an example to illustrate how reduplication can be a stylistic device for identifying proverbs among the Swahili people. Finnegan gives more pointers like the miscellaneous patterns of fairly frequent occurrence such as the widespread 'If ... then ...' formula, the proverbs opening with 'It is better', particularly popular among the Thonga proverb, the frequent Lamba form 'As for you ...' also the rhetorical question form of stylistics devices used in identifying proverbs as in the Karanga, 'The swallower of old cows, is he choked with the bone of a calf?' (A chief who settles big cases is unlikely to be overcome by a small one) (Bisset, 1933) and the Yoruba proverbs, which are said often to come in couplets with antithesis between the two lines, noun answering to noun and verb to verb: 'Ordinary people are as common as grass, /

But good people are dearer than the eye', or 'Today is the elder brother of tomorrow, And a heavy dew is the elder brother of rain' (ibid, pp. 379-411 for more examples).

Finnegan also explains that it is possible to find societies that have no highly-developed form or fixed way of producing proverbs. Therefore, they depend on actual performance and picturesque forms, which may not be significant stylistic devices for identifying proverbs in interaction. Thus, it is sometimes possible to depend on the way such proverbs are produced to identify them as proverbs. Giving an example, Finnegan states:

I was told that in the saying mocking unjustified self-importance ('Do not walk like a European while wearing a loin-cloth'), part of its attractiveness lay in the way it was said, with a pause before the last word and the emphasizing of the idea of the loin-cloth by the long-drawn-out way in which it was pronounced.

Indeed, it is possible to generalize and say that African proverbs can be identified in a particular way, but to do this one must investigate the smaller units which make up African societies to search for variations in the use of proverbs. It is only with this specific investigation can the use of a specific speech style be used to identify peculiar groups. Thus, one can now refer to proverbs as African proverbs, West African proverbs, Nigerian proverbs, Igbo proverbs and Ute-Okpu proverbs. Unlike most oral traditions, proverbs do not require only performance from producers; neither do they rely solely on performance for listeners to identify proverbs in interaction. Rather, they also rely on figurative expressions and stylistic devices that can vary from one location to another.

Therefore, Finnegan's illustrations suggest that there is no fixed way of identifying African proverbs. While some societies may have common patterns that are used by

them, others may not have these common patterns. Thus, it can be compensated for by the way these proverbs are uttered in terms of the intonation used during production, the gestures, and whether it was a light atmosphere when it was said. Both comments (Finnegan and Peek & Yankah) suggest that identifying proverbs may vary from one community to another. However, Finnegan's examples of specific communities and how proverbs are identified in such communities in interaction allows for investigation into proverb variation in Africa. Therefore, this research, in an attempt to explore language use and the construction of identity, will also identify the stylistic devices, which let the audience of an interaction know when these proverbs are produced in Ute-Okpu.

Thus, this research further develops Finnegan's argument that identifying proverbs from ordinary speech could vary because of the peculiar linguistic styles used in the production of proverbs by different groups. Therefore, the investigation into peculiar ways (consciously or unconsciously established by groups) the use of proverbs in interaction are identified by participants who belong to the same group, helps establish such proverbs as peculiar to them. Which is one of the reasons proverbs can be said to reflect the identity of a group.

The purpose of this section was to provide the reader with an overall background to African proverbs and highlight the reason why proverbs have become the focus of research among African scholars and scholars from other parts of the world in recent years, especially in terms of linguistic practices and identity makers in recent years.

### **3.8 The generational Transition of African Proverbs**

This section explores the transition of proverbs from one generation to another. More importantly, it highlights one of the reasons for this study by investigating the



importance of transitioning proverbs from one generation to another in Africa and why concerns are shown towards proverb death.

Proverbs are highly rated in Africa and seen as a natural part of everyday speech; however, there are claims that the elderly and wise use them more. This position is supported by Musere (1991, p.1) when he states that, 'African proverbs have continued and would continue to be a wealth of oral wisdom and tradition frequently used in proverbial literature, however such literature is generally communicated and retained by the elderly in philosophical discourse situations in metaphorical contents.' Hence, there is an acknowledgement by the African people that a dying elderly African can be compared to a burning library with its wealth of resources, illustrated by the proverb 'The death of an elderly man is like a burning library' (Oduaran & Oduaran, 2006, p. 220).

It is seen as the duty of these elderly people to pass down this means of expression to the younger generation. This is to foster an intergenerational relationship, where the younger generations are made to appreciate, know and use proverbs in their daily interaction to ensure that proverbs are sustained (Oduaran & Oduaran, 2006). However, this belief that mostly elders use proverbs does not put a restriction on the production of proverbs. There are no restrictions of the use of proverbs to a particular group in Africa since those who are said to be the custodians of proverbs (elders) form intergenerational relations with the younger generations by communicating with proverbs. Therefore, some research (Oduaran & Oduaran, 2006; Obadan, 2015), including this research; focus on the generational transition of African proverbs.

### **3.9 Gender and proverb production**

Section 3.7 examined literature on the transition of proverbs from the older generation to the younger generation. This section examines studies on gender roles appropriated

through proverbs (Familusi, 2012; Hussein, 2005; Oha, 1998; Olasupo et al., 2012; Storm, 1992). It also explores studies on proverb production among men and women.

Gender, which is not only the biological sex of an individual, can also be defined as a 'socially constructed role given to men and women in a society' (Ude 2006, p.1). Gender ideology differs from one culture to another and it is constructed by everyday social practice. For example, in African social practices like naming ceremonies and the blessing of kola nuts (this is a duty performed by men in the Igbo tribe, in ceremonies to ask the gods of the land for blessings) are associated with gender role appropriation (Oha, 1998; Oluwole, 1997). Even oral narratives like folklores, proverbs and legends are used to illustrate the gender roles of each community in Africa (Hussein, 2005).

According to Hussein (2005, p. 60) in 'Africa societies, gender ideology figures large in proverbs.' As discussed in Section 3.4.3, proverbs are essential in understanding the traditions and ideologies in Africa and these traditions and ideologies extend to the issues of gender and the roles appropriated to gender. Hussein also focuses on the use of proverbs to appropriate gender roles by describing the social and ethno-cultural construction of masculinity and femininity in African proverbs. Hussein analyses the role of African proverbs in creating a gendered culture. Thus, Hussein suggests men are believed to be more intelligent than women. Women are thought particularly to be incapable of foresight and to lack the ability to make and carry through sensible and realistic plans. For this reason, it is 'generally agreed that husbands should administer the family estate and wives for the most part concur with their husbands' plans. It is commonly claimed that if a woman tried to manage property, she would very likely make a mess of it' (Oboler, 1985, p. 60).

Similarly, Olasupo (2012) focuses on the use of proverbs to state the equality of men and women. Olasupo's work centres on the use of proverbs to illustrate power in

gender, proverbs that illustrate governance or rulership roles appropriated based on gender. In the same light, Agbemabiese argues that studies of proverbs in Ewe community do not address how proverbs are manipulated to project gender inequality between a man and a woman. According to Agbemabiese, a proverb among the Fon of Benin states that ‘Woman is the source of all evil; only our souls save us from the harm she does’ (2010, p. 6).

According to Familusi (2012), in the Yoruba societies, men are seen as more privileged than the women. Familusi suggests that the superiority of men over women is appropriated in Yoruba proverbs. Citing an example, Familusi states the Yoruba proverb, ‘A k ii moko omo tan, ka tunmale omo’ (it is not proper to know one’s daughter's husband and her concubine) (p, 304). According to Familusi, there is no proverb in Yoruba that says anything ‘about knowing a son’s wife and his concubine’ (p. 304). Thus, while an adulterous woman is seen as breaking the law, an adulterous man is put in a more privileged position and considered a warrior for his actions (Olademo, 2009). Familusi argues for a need to discard such cultural practices that portray woman in a negative light.

More specifically, Oha (1998) studied gender appropriation in Igbo proverbs. Oha suggests that literature on Igbo proverbs or African proverbs portray the positive cultural practices of the Igbo society while neglecting the negative appropriation of women in proverbs. Oha argues that Igbo proverbs portray men as dominant over women in Igbo communities. Also, Oha argues that the negative portrayal of women in proverbs position men as custodians of knowledge and women as lacking such knowledge. According to Oha, ‘the inferiorization of women in Igbo proverbs affects both the use of proverbs in the culture and male-female relationship in Igboland’ (p. 96).

Finally, some scholars (Oha, 1998; Okombo, 1992) suggest that most studies project the positive cultural practices of African proverbs but very few publications have gone beyond recoding the art forms of proverbs to project inferiority of women portrayed in proverbs. Also, scholars have suggested that men produce more of these proverbs than women. Oha (1998) also suggests that the negativity projected in those proverbs may have a negative impact on the use of proverbs. Thus, although this study does not explore gender and proverbs production in detail, it interrogates and throws light on these comments and assumptions.

### **3.10 Summary**

This chapter attempted to further develop this research by focusing on language contact, globalization and proverbs. It brought to light the particular linguistic style this research will attempt to investigate, in order to explore language variations in a changing world. Therefore, this chapter discussed the contributions of various scholars towards proverbs as a cultural practice, its functions and theories on the interpretation of proverbs. It also explored language contact, the outcome of language contact and globalization as a contact phenomenon. Definitions of globalization suggest the term is broad and embodies a range of other concepts including immigration, colonialism, the development of Internet structures and telecommunication.

The next chapter will attempt to further develop this study by focusing on the methodologies that will be applied in this research; it will also focus on describing the communities of practice used for the purpose of this research.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter introduces the research methodology used for the study and how it has guided data collection, analysis and interpretation of the phenomena explored. It examines ethnomethodology and conversational analysis as the research lenses of this study. It explores the communities of practice (CofP) and narratives as frameworks for identity analysis and further describes the research design, research method (ethnography), and data recording methods explored in the study. In addition, it also gives demographic details of the community and participants involved in the study. The preliminary report, the rationale for adopting each method and process of data analysis are also explored in this chapter.

#### **4.2 Theoretical perspective**

As stated earlier in the literature review, this research is based on the anti-essentialist belief that identity is a process, not an innate individual trait (Baumann, 1996; Bennett et al., 2005). This study, although not fully founded on the theories of ethnomethodology (henceforth EM) has adopted aspects of EM method to investigate how participants make identities relevant and how interactants portray identities in their practices according to the occasion of interaction. Therefore, in this study, I will assume that the socio-cultural features of being African, Nigerian, or from the Igbo tribe, are relevant to the interactions observed, as the speakers are participating in community groups directly related to culture; hence, culture and language are focal points for the speakers. This, however, does not mean that interpretations will be imposed or that

identities are assumed to be brought along and indexed during interactions: rather, I will observe what speakers switch ‘to’, and what practices they are using (e.g. styles, varieties, etc.) to convey or challenge a particular position, orientation or social meaning. It is important to be aware of the speakers’ own background experiences and knowledge to attempt to understand how they are using, and reappropriating, their inherited social and cultural values and structures. Therefore, the study places some emphasis on the ‘brought about’ aspect of meaning (Auer & Di Luzio, 1992; Gafaranga, 2007; Li Wei, 1998; Llamas, 2010; Mendoza-Denton, 2002), where the analyst, instead of the meaning brought along by the analyst, understands social meaning as an interactive accomplishment. At the same time, however, the relevance of discourse-external cultural values and experiences are not dismissed. Neither the ‘brought about’, nor the ‘brought along’ framework is used exclusively in the current study. Indeed, while speakers are in a position to use, for example, code-switching as a strategy to structure discourse, macro socio-cultural elements of the speakers’ culture must be relevant to their perceptions of self, as their interactions revolve around community-specific issues. Therefore, this study will observe how elements which are ‘brought along’, are at times challenged and reappropriated with new socio-pragmatic meanings and identities ‘brought about’ in the moment of the interaction.

#### **4.3 Theoretical Framework**

This study relies on two interrelated approaches to explore and illustrate the process of identity construction, namely the narrative approach and the practice-based approach (which includes the CofP framework). As stated earlier in Chapter 2, there has been a shift in the analytical use of narratives in identity analysis from the autobiographical model of narrative and its counterparts, for analysis on conversational and non-elicited narratives. The exploration of a more non-elicited narrative encourages a more flexible

approach, because they reach out to every form of everyday interaction as far as communication is concerned. The shift from autobiographies to a conversational approach in identity work through narratives has encouraged and added to the growing literature of occasioned identity (Clifton, 2014; Cosmin, 2014; Georgakopoulou, 2007). Scholars like Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) suggest they are ‘interested in the social actions/functions that narratives perform in the lives of people; in how people actually use stories in every-day, mundane situations to create (and perpetuate) a sense of who they are’ (p. 3). Hence, there is an emphasis on discourse used in natural conversations, in the analysis of identity through narratives. It is this emphasis on discourse, particularly in interactional site, that brings together approaches to identity in discourse like sociolinguistics (De Fina et al., 2006) and ethnomethodology (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). The rationale for incorporating these frameworks in this study is that they explore local telling signals and situational identities (Georgakopoulou, 2007). Narratives investigate how participants negotiate and occasion conversation during interaction, in their bid to foster certain situational identity claims.

On the other hand, the CofP framework places an emphasis on the use of social practices. Based on this emphasis on social practices, researchers using the CofP framework have shown that individuals and groups construct images of themselves that do not pre-exist the social practices in which they are displayed and negotiated (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2000). Also, the CofP framework explores how participants in social practice often align with or distance themselves from social categories of belonging, which is greatly dependent on the local context of interaction and its insertion in the wider social world (Eckert, 2006). Therefore, analysts cannot presuppose that participants will be identified by the social categories (like the speech community framework, e.g. gender, sex, class) related to their social profile. This is because identity claims and displays are embedded in social

practices that respond to a complex interplay of local and global factors (De Fina, 2007). The CofP approach is therefore essential in understanding the use of social practice, discursive patterns, interactions and the concept of 'process' in the analysis of identity. CofP is a framework that is interested in linguistic variation and the social meaning this variation has for people (Nagar, 2008). Corradi et al. (2010) explain that the notion of CofP marks the passage from a cognitive and individual vision of learning, to a social and situated one where learning is not a phenomenon that takes place in a person's head; rather, it is a participative social process. Community is the source and the medium for socialization, which constructs and perpetuates social and working practices. They explain that the CofP can be conceived as a form of self-organization, which corresponds neither to organizational boundaries nor to friendship groups but is based on sociality among practitioners and on the sharing of practical activities. Sociality being the dimension within which interdependencies arise among people engaged in the same practice.

Indeed, these interdependences give rise to processes of legitimate and peripheral participation whereby newcomers take part in organizational life and are socialized into ways of seeing, doing and speaking. The newcomer gradually becomes a full member of the community. The knowledge on the basis of a job or a profession is transmitted, and in parallel perpetuated through the sociality of practice, which makes it possible to get acquainted directly or have a first-hand experience with the community. The relevance of the CofP framework to this study is because it can be used to look at groups that are not pre-existing, but are emerging; that become tangible (or, rather, that take form, albeit one that is not constant but always emerging and being re-invented through interactions and practice). It can also be used as a base for investigating interactions that can be narrowed down from groups to individuals to avoid generalization on a particular society without a critical investigation. Indeed, investigation of identity through CofP



rejects the idea that the individual is a lone ranger moving in the social matrix, but accepts that the individual is tied to the social matrix through structured forms of engagement. The individual constructs an identity and a sense of place in the social world through participation in a variety of CofPs (Eckert, 1999). The CofP is thus a rich locus for the study and analysis of situated language use, of language change and of the very process of conventionalization that underlies both (Eckert, 2006). Therefore, it is in the view of the researcher that the use of social practice as a means of understanding an individual's rejection or affiliations to group membership is essential since exploration of identity should be based on the primacy of participants' local construction of social reality. Thus, the centrality of the concept of practice and close observation of social behaviour in real contexts of interaction is better explored through the use of CofP as a framework (De Fina, 2007; Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998) suggested aspects of this practice a researcher needs to watch out for when adopting CofP as a framework, which include: meaning, community, identity and learning. Wenger also suggested that analytic components such as mutual engagement, repertoire and reification should accompany these aspects of practice.

Researchers have explored each of these frameworks separately. However, it is the researcher's opinion that a combination of these frameworks will adequately explore identity as occasioned. The usefulness of both frameworks to this study is numerous. They were adopted to illustrate how narrative practices, and their associated practices are employed by speakers to construct different CofPs within the wider local community and express their attitudes and identities in a changing environment. Therefore, both frameworks were used in developing plans for data collection, data analysis, and reporting findings.

#### **4.4 Significance of Research Methodology**

The concept of identity has a wealth of research and findings across many disciplines (for example, sociolinguistics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, ethnography, etc.). To answer questions on identity construction, researchers from different disciplines have used different methodologies and frameworks. Issues of identity over the years have been tackled through theoretical means, as well as practical means. As explained in Section 4.3, this study is inspired by ethnomethodological approach and adopts two frameworks to explore identity construction in talk. This methodological approach and frameworks were adopted in this study because, in order to explore language use within a particular group, it was important to observe language use within an interactional context. Thus, the ethnomethodological approach, narrative and CofP framework created an opportunity for the researcher to have a close contact with the participants and observe naturally occurring speech to understand how participants construct their identities discursively. Separately, researchers have explored these frameworks. Thus, scholars (De Fina, 2007; Eckert, 2006; Wenger, 1998) have adopted a CofP framework for identity analysis, with others (Clifton, 2014; Georgakopoulou, 2007) adopting the narrative framework to analyse identity. However, it is important to note that, to the best of my knowledge, researchers have not applied the use of the two aforementioned frameworks and methodologies to explore Igbo proverb use and identity construction. In her studies of Igbo proverbs, Obadan (2015) adopted a direct observation methodological approach and a language endangerment and vitality framework to explore the death of Igbo proverb use. The language endangerment and vitality framework adopted by Obadan was successful in achieving the aims of her research; however, it will not be suitable for this study as the focus of this study is not to explore language death but to explore styles, language varieties and reappropriations in a linguistic diversified environment. Also, Oha (1998) adopted what he refers to as a

contextual approach but was not clear on the framework adopted in his studies of Igbo proverb. Similar to this study, each of these studies adopted a contextualised approach to their study of Igbo proverbs, which arguably may be because proverb use and interpretation are context sensitive (Nwala, 1985; Monye, 1990; Oha, 1998). However, the methodological approach and the framework adopted in this study deepen the knowledge of Igbo proverbs and foster research on how identities are constructed discursively. This makes my own approach an innovative one.

#### **4.5 Approaches to Research Design**

This section aims to illustrate the overall plan of this research. It specifies the methods, approach, and procedures for data collection and the process of analysing data used in answering the study's research questions. There are three approaches to research design proposed in research studies: research approach, research strategy and research methods (Creswell, 2003). Following Creswell, the next section looks at research approach, strategy and methods.

##### **4.5.1 Research Approach**

There are three approaches to research, namely: a quantitative approach, a qualitative approach and a mixed methods approach (Creswell 2003). A quantitative approach encourages the use of hypotheses and questions, measurements and observation, reduction to specific variation and employs experiments and surveys to yield statistical data (Creswell, 2003). A qualitative approach is an exploratory approach that seeks to understand a research problem from the perspectives of the local population it involves. It is effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours and social contexts of particular populations (Mack et al., 2005). The mixed methods approach is an approach that applies both the qualitative approach and the

quantitative approach together (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009). Types of mixed method research design include: sequential explanatory design, sequential exploratory design, concurrent triangulation and concurrent nested (Terrell, 2012). The mixed method approach was developed because the use of qualitative or quantitative approaches independently is assumed to be inadequate for research (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The argument goes that quantitative research is weak in understanding the context of interaction; the voices of participants are not directly heard and qualitative research makes up for these weaknesses. On the other hand, qualitative research is seen as inadequate on its own because of the personal interpretations made by the researcher, which may create bias and the difficulty in generalizing findings to a large group because of the limited number of participants studied (Creswell, 2006).

However, this study adopted a qualitative approach because it is best suited to investigate the research questions posed. A qualitative or quantitative research is a human activity, which is subject to mistakes like any other human activity (CARE, 1994). Therefore, a qualitative researcher's bias is inevitable (Mehra, 2002). However, to avoid the bias posed by a qualitative research, the researcher kept detailed record in the form of a fieldnote and recording device (Rajendran, 2001), which included a reflection on the researcher's subjectivity, a consideration of self as a researcher and in relation to the research topic. As this research explored patterns of the production of proverbs within CofPs, the qualitative approach was appropriate because it enabled the description and investigation of language variation, described and explained relationships, described individual experiences, and enabled observation of group norms (Mack et al., 2005). A qualitative approach also encourages the use of strategies such as ethnography, narratives, phenomenology and case studies. Ethnography strategy focuses on naturally occurring speech to explore social meaning (Brewer, 2000); narrative strategy is a way of understanding experience through collaboration between

researcher and participants over time in social interaction context (Ejimabo, 2015); phenomenology strategy focuses on structure of a lived and shared experience of the individual or group, and questions what it is like to have such experiences (Ejimabo, 2015); while a case study strategy is a study of cases in their real life context, where ‘scores obtained from these cases are analysed in a qualitative manner’ (Dul and Hak, 2008, p, 4). These strategies are used to develop themes from the data and each of these strategies gives the researcher an opportunity to directly observe participants (Creswell, 2003). However, this study adopts an ethnographic strategy to fieldwork and data collection.

#### **4.5.2 Ethnographic Research Strategy**

Ethnography can be defined within two perspectives, where one refers to the qualitative research as a whole (Wolcott, 1973) and the subsequent definition of ethnography is restricted to fieldwork (Brewer, 2000; Burgess, 1982; Creswell, 2003). However, ethnography in this study is referred to as a fieldwork strategy. Ethnography as a strategy for research can be defined as ‘the study of people in naturally occurring settings or fields by means of methods, which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally’ (Brewer, 2000, p. 10). This definition is a description of what is expected from a researcher who adopts the ethnographic strategy. The researcher immerses themselves into the group observed to explore how participants accomplish social meaning in everyday conversation and is expected to depart from a ‘brought along’ approach to a ‘brought about’ approach as suggested by the ethnomethodology perspective on identity. The definition also highlights three features of the ethnographic research strategy. These features project the basis for much

of the criticism of qualitative research. The three principles can be summarized under the headings of naturally occurring settings, understanding participants' views and the inductive approach:

**i. Naturally occurring settings:** The aim of ethnography is to capture naturally occurring human behaviour, which can only be achieved by first-hand contact, not by inferences from what people do in artificial settings like experiments or from what they say in interviews where there is a difference between what people actually do and what they say (Genzuk, 2003). It requires 'getting the seat of your pants dirty... in the real world, not the library' (Fielding, 1993. p. 157). Thus, ethnographers carry out their research in natural settings that exist independently of the research process, instead of those set up specifically for the purposes of research. Finally, exploring natural settings implies that social meanings are to be explained in terms of their relationship to the context in which they were produced.

**ii. Understanding participants' perspectives:** This feature of ethnography suggests that to explain human actions effectively, we must gain an understanding of the perspectives on which they are based. This feature may seem obvious when we are studying a society that is not familiar to us. However, ethnographers argue that it is also as important as when we are studying more familiar settings (Francis & Hester, 2004; Genzuk, 2000). Indeed, when a setting is familiar the danger of misunderstanding is especially great. As researchers, familiar to the setting explored, the tendency of assuming that we already know the perspectives explored is there. However, an ethnography strategy minimizes such tendencies by encouraging a 'brought about' exploration of participant's identity. It stresses the importance of understanding particular groups because each group develops its distinctive worldviews. For example, different CofPs, occupational groups, speech communities or even families develop

peculiar ways of orienting themselves to the world. Therefore, it is important to learn the culture of the group one is studying through close observation, before one can produce valid explanations for the reasons members of a group act in the way they do.

**iii. Inductive approach:** One of the features of a quantitative research is that it uses a deductive approach, whereby a hypothesis is derived from existing theories and data collected to test the truth or falsity of the hypothesis (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, a deductive approach is used to test existing theories but not to develop new perspectives that might challenge existing ideas. This brings to question where the theories to be tested come from in the first place. Contrary to quantitative research, qualitative research adopts an inductive approach. An inductive approach to research is one where a researcher adopts a brought about approach and as few preconceptions as possible, allowing interpretation to emerge from the data (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Znaniecki, 1934). The theoretical ideas that frame descriptions and explanations of what is observed are developed over the course of the research. Such theoretical ideas are regarded as a valuable outcome of research.

However, the above features of ethnography have also been the basis for the criticism of ethnography as a research strategy. Scholars of natural sciences suggest ethnography as a research strategy falls below the standards of social sciences (Bryman, 1988; Dey, 2003). They suggest that the natural settings proposed by ethnography breaches several principals held dear to natural science. They also criticize the nature of data presentation, suggesting that ethnography evaluates data through extracts from interviews and field notes, instead of measuring in quantity (Dey, 2003). Thus, over the years, ethnographers have tried to prove the scientific nature of ethnography (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Fetterman, 1998). Again, scholars (Maanen, 1988) in the postmodern field have also questioned the traditional criteria of ethnography, which are validity, reliability and generalization (Brewer, 2000). Questions and doubts are expressed as to

why ethnographers depend on their research methods (e.g. field notes) as accurate representations of reality, instead of viewing field notes as reflective, in which they reflect on events and see these field notes as partial accounts. Also, Marxist scholars (Burawoy et al., 2000) have charged ethnography with not seeking to have a more thorough understanding of the deeper social forces that shape society. They suggest that ethnography only documents the surface of these social forces by exploring particular local settings, when it should be the other way around.

These criticisms do not minimize the importance of ethnography and the rationale for using it as a research strategy. The reasons for adopting this method are its appropriateness in the study of 'cultural groups in a natural setting' (Creswell, 2003, p. 14). It is also appropriate for this study, because it helped minimize assumptions by the researcher because of the researcher's familiarity to the community explored. Despite the limitations of the ethnographic approach, it has benefits for research in natural settings such as language variation in CofPs, classroom research, investigating language-learning processes in a particular speech community and so forth. The major advantage of ethnography is its observational technique that allows researchers to record the behaviour of participants as it occurs (Ejimabo, 2015). Also, the features of ethnography suggest ethnography generates knowledge, builds theories and helps engage in empirical generalization, which have practical effects. Furthermore, ethnography also uncovers an in-depth description of the phenomena in a community (Forester, 1992). Ethnography research helps to understand the phenomenon under study from the perspective of those being studied (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). However, to access social meaning and observable behaviours of participants more closely, an ethnographer needs to use several methods to collect data.



### 4.5.3 Research Methods

Research methods are procedural rules for obtaining reliable and objective knowledge (Brewer, 2000). To observe behavioural patterns by participants, ethnographers depend on several data collection techniques such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, personal documentary, and discourse analysis of natural language (Creswell, 2003). This section will illustrate the specific methods used in this study.

**i. Participant Observation:** The primary objective of ethnomethodology as a research strategy is to observe participants as they enact their identities. This is why this study adopted participant observation as a technique used to collect data. According to Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte (1999, p. 91), participant observation is the ‘process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the research setting.’ Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte’s definition suggests participant observation provides researchers with an intensive knowledge of a people’s culture, where over time the researcher becomes aware and has a first-hand knowledge of cultural beliefs observed. This day-to-day form of observation includes natural conversations in the group, interviews, questionnaires and field notes (Bernard, 1994). According to Spradley (1980), there are five types of participant observation. They are: ‘Non-participatory, passive participation, moderate participation, active participation and complete participation’ (pp. 58-62). Non-participatory types of participant observation include situations where the researcher has no contact with the population. However, the downside to this type of participant observation is that the researcher cannot ask questions as new information arises during the group observation (ibid, 1980). Passive participation of the observer occurs when the observer is a bystander and this limits the observer from immersing themselves in the field (Schwartz & Schwartz, 1955). Moderate participation occurs when an observer can maintain both the role of an insider and an outsider. This combination fosters a good level of

involvement and detachment to remain objective (DeWalt et al., 1998). Active participation occurs when an observer becomes fully immersed in the group by embracing the beliefs of the group observed for the sake of understanding them completely. Though the active participant observer can become immersed into the group observed, there is a risk of 'going native' as the observer tries to have an extensive understanding of the group observed (Spradley, 1980). The complete participation is a situation where the observer is fully immersed in the group observed because he or she is a member of the group under observation.

**ii. Interviews:** Participant observation gives a researcher an extensive knowledge of those observed (Schensul et al., 1999). However, it is important to ask those observed why they are doing what they are doing to further develop the understanding of the researcher. Interviews in ethnography are designed as triggers that stimulate the person interviewed into talking about a particular topic (Elliot & Jankel-Elliot, 2003; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Interviews are used to gain further insight into the subject explored (Cohen et al., 2008), and a form of conversation in which the interviewer seeks to get a response from the interviewee based on prepared questions (Frey & Oishi, 1995). There are three types of qualitative interviews, namely: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Bryman, 2001; May, 1997). Structured interviews are interviews where the questions are prepared before the interview takes place and all interviewees who participated in the researcher's study are asked the same questions (Corbetta, 2003). However, structured interviews are often used to produce quantitative data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Unstructured interviews are interviews that do not reflect preconceived theories and they are performed with no organization (Edward & Holland, 2013; Lodico et al., 2010). Finally, semi-structured interviews are interviews that consist of several key questions that are used to define the

areas of research to be explored, and at the same time this form of interview allows the researcher to diverge to understand an idea in more details (Edward & Holland, 2013).

Scholars have criticized the use of interviews for the purpose of research. For example, older critiques asked questions like ‘how do we know the informant is telling the truth?’ and ‘are the truths we are interested in stable across situations and perspectives?’ (Atkinson et al., 2003; Dean & Whyte, 1958). Similarly, there was a question of the difference between what the interviewee says during the interview and what they actually do outside the interview (Deutscher, 1973). Another question was whether data from interviews are incomplete, compared to the data that could be gained from participant observation (Becker & Geer, 1957). The above criticisms suggested that interviews should not be independently used. However, recent criticism of interviews has been more radical. They object to any reliance on accounts from interviews as a way of understanding the social world. For example, Hammersley (2005) argues that ethnographers should rely on observation of naturally occurring behaviour, and interview accounts should be treated as a topic, not a resource. In other words, we should analyse interview data for what they can tell us about interviews as sites for discursive meaning making, involving various sorts of discursive practice. Since the researcher took on a moderate participant observation method during group observations, she was not able to ask the participants questions during observation. The questions that arose during observation of the groups were asked through the use of unstructured interviews with four individuals from each group. Therefore, the use of interviews aided further investigation into understanding what participants have portrayed as their social meaning. It was also a way of confirming the researcher’s understanding of the social meaning observed. This research adopted the semi-structured type of interview. The researcher used the components of the CofP framework (meaning, community, identity and learning) as a guide to develop the

interview questions (Wenger, 1998). The questions were open-ended and grouped by themes.

The language of the interviews was mostly in English by the youths and mostly in Ika by the elders. Nigerians are not native speakers of English; hence, it was not out of place to have participants use the native dialect in group meetings and individual interviews. Therefore, there were occasions where the use of a translator was required to interpret the data collected for this research.

#### **4.6 Role Of The Observer In Qualitative Research**

In this study, the researcher took on the role of participant observer (Litosseliti, 2003) who observed, recorded and experienced the meanings given by three focus groups (consisting of male elders, female elders and youths) in their interactions with one another. As a participant observer, the researcher looked out for insights and variables in the use of proverbs by CofPs in making social meanings during natural conversations, and attitudes portrayed by participants towards language use across CofPs. This method provided the researcher with ways to check for expressions or feeling that were non-verbal, verbal communication within the group, time spent by participants to talk about the use of proverbs and how much of these proverbs were used in the natural interactions within these groups. The use of participant observation facilitated the development of new research questions, i.e. it raised questions concerning gender, and whether the use of proverbs in each of the CofPs was gender based. More significantly, the researcher adopted a form of moderate participation, where the researcher was an insider and outsider. The rationale for this was to remain as detached as possible. In order to create a balance to reduce the risk of relying too much on extra-discourse knowledge, the researcher assumed a moderate observation participant position during the group observations.

However, several researchers have noted some limitations of using observations as a tool for data collection. The major criticism against participant observation is the observer's paradox (Labov, 1972). According to Labov (1972) 'the aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain this data by systematic observation' (p. 209). As much as it is the duty of the linguist to observe natural speech, there are limitations to this process because these observations are performed in such a way that the participants are aware of the observer. Therefore, the presence of an observer undermines the task of gathering data on natural talk. As an observer attempts to observe the daily interactions of participants in a group or interview, the participants are aware that the research is likely to adopt a formal register, which produces talk that is not typically used by participants in their daily interactions if the observer was not present. Therefore, the observer's paradox lies in the presence of the observer in an interaction. During observation for this study, it was very obvious that participants were aware of the presence of the researcher and significantly oriented to it. Their orientation to the presence of the researcher, no doubt was reflected in the participants' keen use of proverbs during their interaction with one another.

Also, DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) suggested that male and female researchers have access to different information, because they are allowed access to different people, settings, and bodies of knowledge. Similar to their limitations, the researcher had some limitations in relation to gender. The gender restrictions of the elderly male group made the researcher uneasy. This limitation hindered the researcher initially, from feeling accepted into this elderly men's group. Schensul et al. (1999, p.18) also noted another limitation of participant observation by stating, 'all researchers should expect to experience a feeling of having been excluded at some point in the research process, particularly in the beginning.' Schensul et al. suggest that researchers should recognize

what that exclusion means to the research process, which will change into a feeling of acceptance after the researcher has been in the community for a while. As suggested by Schensul et al., at the beginning of this study it was difficult for the researcher to be fully immersed in the groups. The researcher felt excluded at some point; however, the feeling of exclusion did not last long. It is, however, important to note that there was also limitation in terms of acceptance for the elderly groups due to the age difference between the researcher and the elderly participants.

The most challenging part of the fieldwork dealt with tackling my position as a researcher (outsider) and a native speaker (insider), who is a native of the Ute-Okpu. This suggests that the researcher had background knowledge of the focus of discussion (proverbs), although the researcher was not part of the CofPs that was observed. As an insider and a native of Ute-Okpu, the personal relationship between the participants and myself influenced the interaction sometimes. Undeniably, my position as an insider gave me quick access to these CofPs, which ordinarily would have proved difficult to access. However, I was concerned that my position as an insider increased the expectations of participants towards my knowledge of Igbo proverbs, and this assumption increased the chances of getting precise data from participants. On the other hand, my position as an outsider (research) also had influence on the interaction. Participants before the observation were told that I was a research student from the UK, which put pressure on some participants (eager to please), and made some participants uncomfortable at the beginning of meetings with various CofPs. This risked the authenticity of the data collected as participants monitored their production of proverbs in spontaneous speech more carefully, unlike an interaction without an observer, which created an observer's paradox. However, I quickly realized that both of these stances had its pros and cons; during my fieldwork I put in an extensive effort into balancing it out and alternating between the two modes as much as possible (Iacono et al., 2009).

Since it is untenable to have an entirely natural speech observed without a paradox (Milroy & Gordon, 2003), there must be a consideration on the best way to overcome or reduce the effect of observer's paradox.

#### **4.7 Data Recording Methods**

When conducting an interview, or observing a group, a researcher has to make choices on how to record the data. After interviews or observations, researchers are not able to go back to the event itself. Therefore, it is important that they rely on analytical objects to do their analysis (Ashmore & Reed, 2000). The researcher can decide to use field notes, use a recording device, or use both methods to record their data (Elliot & Jankel-Elliot, 2003; Tessier, 2012).

##### **4.7.1 Field Notes**

An important role is given to field notes in the ethnographic tradition (Elliot & Jankel-Elliot, 2003). One advantage of this method is that it is the most economical option in terms of time and money (Kieren & Munro, 1985; Tessier, 2012). Field notes have been suggested to be the first method used to record data (Tessier, 2012), whereby before recording devices, there were no other means of keeping a permanent record of the event (Davidson, 2009). A simple definition of field notes is that they are notes that a researcher takes in the field (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). More comprehensively, DeWalt, DeWalt and Wayland (1998) describe field notes as 'both data and analysis, because the notes provide a description of what is observed, and at the same time a product of the observation process' (p. 63). They also note that observations are not data unless they are recorded into field notes. Wengraf (2001) suggests that these notes should include the content of the interview as well as feelings and non-linguistic data.

More elaborately, Spradley (1980, p. 78) suggested a list of what should be recorded in a field note to fully contextualise the action:

Space: the physical place or places;

Actors: the people involved;

Activity: a set of related acts people do;

Object: the physical things that are present;

Act: single actions that people do;

Events: a set of related activities that people carry out;

Time: the sequencing that takes place over time;

Goal: the things people are trying to accomplish; and

Feeling: the emotions felt and expressed.

Indeed, these are very important things to be documented in field notes. With these documentations, field notes record changes in what the researcher sees as important as their interpretation develops during observation or interviews. For example, during the first observation of the elderly men's group, there was an interruption by one of the elders. The elder stated that the main aim of the meeting was not addressed by members of the group, and suggested he was not interested in why the observer was present. The reaction of this elder, and other member of the group to the interruption was recorded in the field notes of the researcher. However, the recording device did not capture this moment effectively. Further investigation into the reason behind it suggested that the recording device was put on pause, because the individual recording thought that a particular scene did not present the group in a good light. Thus, the field note became useful to the researcher because the researcher was able to describe that particular



scenario. Soon after interviews or observations, the brain re-orders the material and makes connections within and outside the interview (Wengraf, 2001) and observation (Elliot & Jankel-Elliot, 2003). Therefore, triangulation of video recording, observation, field notes and interviews was helpful in providing a more accurate representation of what occurred (Ejimabo, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).

However, several scholars (Ashmore & Reed, 2000; Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; Button & Lee, 1987; Hamo et al., 2004; Kieren & Munro, 1985) have suggested there are disadvantages associated with using field notes. One line of attack comes from the fact that conversation is difficult to record by field notes. The researcher may find it hard to write down everything and observe at the same time (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989). The reason for this is because the speed of writing is slower when compared to that of speech. When using field notes, it is important to rely on memory and on personal discipline to write down and expand observation as soon and as completely as possible. Several scholars (Bryman & Bell, 2003; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Sanjek, 1990; Thorpe & Holt, 2008) have suggested and identified three classifications of field notes (mental notes, jotted or scratched notes and full notes). The mental notes are recorded when it may be inappropriate to take notes. The jotted or scratch notes are taken at the time of observation, which may consist of highlights that can be remembered for later development. The full field notes are written up as promptly and as fully as possible during observation or interview. These classifications suggest that researchers can rely on mental notes or scratched notes in order to catch up with the speed of speech. In a similar vein of criticism against the use of field notes, Ashmore and Reed (2000) suggested that a disadvantage of using field notes is the fact that the researcher cannot replay it. Also, Hamo et al. (2004) suggested that the use of field notes under-represents the participant's perspective because it allows the interpretation closer to the researcher's perspective to surface.

This study adopted the field note as one of the recording methods. The researcher used field notes to record observations made during group meetings and interviews with participants. The researcher also used field notes to record important quotes by participants. This was to minimize losing a large part of the speech and behaviour of participants during observation. However, in light of the criticisms of using field notes, the researcher supports suggestions by scholars (Bertrand et al, 1992; Button & Lee, 1987; Kieren & Munro, 1985) that the field note should not be used solely as a recording data method. Thus, this study also adopted a video recording method to triangulate the use of field notes.

#### **4.7.2 Video Recording Method**

Visual data is very useful for the researcher to develop and interpret the behaviour of participants. The behaviour of participants is not only visible in their talk but includes the interaction between participants and the objects around them, the cultural moments and the temporal flow of events (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Elliot & Jankel-Elliot, 2003). There is a growing interest in using video data by researchers, whether with respect to the use of video in the classroom (Derry et al., 2010), in workplace studies, (Heath et al., 2010) in education research (Goldman et al., 2014), to explore children and young people's identities, their media practices and digital cultural production (Marsh, 2004; Domingo, 2011; Gilje, 2009), or in social research in general (Haw & Hadfield, 2011; Jewitt, 2012).

There are five ways of using video to record data, namely, participatory video approach, videography approach, video elicitation, the use of existing videos, and video-based fieldwork (Jewitt, 2012). In participatory approach the participants are given control of the camera to make their experiences visible to the researcher. The reason for this is to reduce the 'gap between the concepts and models of researchers and those of

individuals and communities' (p. 3). Videography is an audiovisually based ethnographical approach. It is suggested to be the 'product of a participant-observational research, which records interviews and observations of particular peoples, groups and their cultural artefacts, and utilizes them as data' (Jupp, 2006). The primary aim of this approach is to gather 'non-verbal cues to stimulate critical reflection' (Jewitt, 2012, p. 3). The use of existing videos for research purposes includes the use of videos like YouTube videos (Adami, 2010), CCTV recordings (Goodwin, 1994) etc. Video elicitation is an approach used to stimulate discussions, make participants recall events or as a basis for reflection (Jewitt, 2012). Finally, the use of video-based fieldwork involves the use of video to collect naturally occurring data (Jewitt, 2012). The rationale behind the adaptation of the video graphical approach was because it was suitable for the researcher as a participant observer. Thus, the researcher's adaptation of this approach was to critically reflect on non-verbal cues by participants, on the other hand giving the observer the opportunity to record naturally occurring data.

The rationale for adopting video recordings is because it has given linguists access to speech, voice and non-verbal behaviours, which has supported and demanded the development of linguistic theories and methods as well as entire sub-disciplines like phonetics (Jewitt, 2012). Therefore, it has enabled the expansion of the repertoire investigated by researchers. Video-recording as a method of data collection and means of data analysis has allowed significant methodological improvements to the study of verbal and non-verbal behaviour (Bloor & Wood, 2006). It is also used as a real-time sequential medium (Jewitt, 2012; Knoblauch et al., 2006). This attributes to how videos can be used to reawaken the memories and experiences of both the researcher and participant. Another potential of using video recording is it provides a detailed record of verbal talk and non-verbal cues like gesture, posture, intonations and expression (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Crichton & Childs, 2005; Jewitt, 2012; Tessier, 2012). Video

recordings are also very durable and can be shared (Jewitt, 2012). However, like every form of data recording method, the use of video recordings also has its constraints. One such constraint is that it can lead to the collection of large data, which can be overwhelming for the researcher. Not managed well, this can amount to an overly descriptive analysis of events (Jewitt, 2012; Snell, 2011). To minimise this constraint, the researcher went through a process of preliminary analysis and a repetitive cycle of data analysis. Another constraint is in relation to ethics and anonymity (Jewitt, 2012). This concern was dealt with by giving out consent forms to participants to fill in before taking part in the research.

The next section explores the sampling methods of the data for this study.

#### **4.8 Sampling Methods and Data Analysis**

Sampling is the process of selecting a sample from a wide population. A sample is ‘a smaller (but hopefully representative) collection of units from a population used to determine truths about that population’ (Field, 2005, p. 1). Researchers are expected to make sample choices that helps in an in depth understanding of events or phenomenon studied (Blackstone, 2016). As a qualitative research, this study adopted non-probability sampling to choose participants for this study (Blackstone, 2016). Non-probability sampling suggests that the researcher was particular in choosing participants. More specifically, this research adopted purposive sampling, which is a type of non-probability sampling method. Purposive sampling was used in this study to help ensure that key research themes were addressed and that diversity in each CofP was explored.

The first stage of purposive sampling was to identify the community within the Igbo tribe to explore, bearing in mind that the tribe is vast (Lizzie, 2008). The researcher had to consider the limitations that can arise as a result of time and resources, and the accessibility of the community to be observed, especially because of ethical reasons.

Thus, the researcher used a sampling method to choose a small community (Ute-Okpu) to represent the Igbo tribe. The last census conducted in Nigeria in 2006 did not specify the official figure for ethnic groups (Esogbue, 2017); however, Appendix 1 presents a map for visual clarity. The second stage was to narrow the area of investigation further, by locating CofPs within the community that represented the focus of my research (generational representation). I contacted the head of the community, told him about my research with specifics on finding CofPs that represented two generations and he was kind enough to help connect and introduce me to three CofPs. On the other hand, the sampling process for the interview took place after observing each CofP for the first time; however, I noticed that not all members were receptive to the idea of an interview. Thus, after the meeting in each CofP, I informed participants that I was interested in interviewing anyone who was willing to participate in the interview. More importantly, I knew I had to balance out the data across each CofP, so I selected the first 4 participants to approach me from each group and interviewed a total of 12 participants for this study. The limitation to 4 participants was because only 4 participants expressed willingness to be interviewed in the first CofP I observed.

For analysis of the data, cultural ideas that arise during active involvement ‘in the field’ were transformed, translated or represented in a written document. It involved immersion in the transcripts (written document); thus, I undertook all transcription of the interviews and observation carefully. I sifted and sorted through pieces of data to detect, interpret thematic categorizations, tag them manually to search for consistencies and contradictions (see Appendix 5), and to generate conclusions. Although a lengthy process, this enabled me from the beginning to get a sense of the interactions and how they were told. The transcription of the interview was verbatim, including all utterances by both the participant and myself. Most of these included utterances, such as ‘oooo’ ‘ehmmmm’ and ‘yeah’, used to encourage the participant to continue with her story

and indicate that the listener was following what she was saying (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Also, all forms of body gestures including places where the interviewee and myself sighed, laughed or paused were also noted. For the analysis, the sections of the transcribed data relating to the themes of proverb use and the research questions (Section 1.2) were taken note of and an inductive analysis was used, which incorporated immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover the important categories, dimensions and interrelationships (Patton, 1990). The analysis resulted in identifying extracts that related to the theme of proverb use in interactional space and the research questions posed.

The next section presents the demographic details of community chosen for this research (Ute-Okpu).

#### **4. 9 Demographic Details of Ute-Okpu**

The Ute-Okpu kingdom is one of the 12 clans that make up the Ika community (Onyeche, 2002). During the colonial rule in Nigeria, the kingship systems were created in order to make administration easier for the colonial administrators (Denton, 1937; Marshall, 1936), hence kingdoms were created whenever a king was appointed. Ute-Okpu is made up of eight villages namely: Ute Ibi-Agware, Ute Owele, Ute Ogbe, Idumu Eze Aje, Odah, Aliheme, Alumu, and Ute Enugu (Marshall, 1936). Chiefs that are known to be custodians of the culture of the Ute people head these villages and these chiefs report directly to the king who oversees everything in the kingdom. Ute-Okpu shares common borders with Agbor and Otolokpo in the north, Ekuku Agbor in the south, Idumuesa and Owa in the west and Ute-Ogbeje in the east. It is located in the north west of Delta State (refer to map in Appendix 1) in Nigeria (Onyeche, 2002).

The kingdom is made up of people of different age groups as it is expected of every community i.e. elders, youths, adolescents and infants. However, there is no record of

the population of Ute-Okpu except for that of the Ika community, which Ute-Okpu Kingdom is a part of. It has a total population of about 240,000 people according to the last census in Nigeria, which took place in 1991 (Delta State Government website, 1999). This record of 240,000 could be more because of the intervening period of 25 years. However, that is the last recorded census in Nigeria until the present day. In Ute-Okpu Kingdom, the major occupation is farming. As such they are well known in Nigeria for the production of palm oil (Ika weekly, 2014). Therefore, every family in the community has at least a palm plantation to themselves. However, in pursuit of education, jobs, a better life and development, most of the youth have moved away from the kingdom and are now spread across the globe.

Language plays a vital role in every community. It serves as a vehicle for recording the history of a people, facilitating interactions between people and preserving the culture of communities. Language easily stands out as one of the characteristics of a community, which can be used in the identification of such community. As part of Ika clan, the major language used in communication in Ute-Okpu is called Ika (Denton, 1937; Marshall, 1936; Whiting, 1936; William, 1968). Both the young and the old use Ika in Ute-Okpu. However, the elders are expected to use Ika more than the youths use it in conversations. Ika is used in everyday interaction like meeting places, market places, in some schools, and in the production of proverbs, storytelling and folklore. Aside from the Ika language, members of this community also communicate in English and Nigerian Pidgin English. The educated members of this community speak the English language, while some members of the community who may not be able to speak English communicate in Pidgin English. Also, members of this community rely on the use of Pidgin English as well for informal communications with friends and family members.

#### **4.10 Demographic Details of the CofPs**

In 1875, the Friendly Societies Act enacted the definition of old age as, ‘any age after 50’, although pension schemes mostly used age 60 or 65 years for eligibility (Roebuck, 1979). The United Nations (hence forth UN) generally use 60+ years to refer to the older population (UN, 2001). In the view of the researcher it is important to note that, although the process of ageing is a biological reality, the particular age at which a person can be referred to as an elder is subject to what different communities make of it (Kowal et al., 2002; Togonu-Bikersteth, 1987). This is because what each society may refer to as elderly depends on the beliefs, norms, values and socio-economic patterns of such society. For the purpose of this study the researcher chose 50 years and above. Further enquiry by the researcher also suggested that members of this group perceived themselves as elders, mainly because of their beliefs, norms and values. In a similar light, the definition of a youth also varies across cultures and organisations. The age definition of a youth by UN (2016) is 15-24, while the African Youth Charter states 15-35 (Union, 2006), and officially in Nigeria it is 18-35 (National Youth Policy, 2000). With this policy in mind, the researcher chose to refer to individuals between the ages of 21-35 as youths. Further investigation also suggested that youths observed referred to themselves as youths.

The elderly men CofP consisted of 30 members between the ages of 59 to 85. The common goal of this group is to promote peace by serving as the justice system in the community, thus the agenda of the meetings was to settle disputes in the community. As a group, they meet once every month, they have developed a shared and distinctive repertoire and membership is for a lifetime. The language of interaction during meetings is Ika, despite the fact that half of the members are speakers of the English language. However, in the course of initial enquiry there was a realization that this group of elders consisted of male elders and female elders were not admitted into the group. Further



enquiry suggested it was due to the customs and traditions of the Ute-Okpu people, which restrict female elders from attending such meetings. With this development, the researcher decided to observe an elderly female group to compensate for this cultural practice.

The elderly female group observed for the purpose of this research had 15 members between the ages of 55 to 76. Just like the elderly men's group there was a restriction to female membership. They consisted of women from the community or those married into the community. As a group, the common goal was to support each other. Their meetings were a forum, where problems were presented for a collective solution hence they have become a group of friends. They talk about events to attend, i.e. wedding ceremonies, burial ceremonies, birthday ceremonies of children and relatives of the members. They meet face-to-face once every month at the leader's house, and have a common repertoire. For example, at the beginning of their meeting they have a way of greeting themselves. Their leader or whoever opens the meeting says 'Dynamic ladies', while the rest would respond by saying 'we are the women of dynamic.' Unlike the elderly men's group, members of this group are allowed to exit the group or retire at any time. The language of interaction is Ika, even when more than half of the group spoke English fluently.

The composition of the youth group was quite different from the elderly groups. This difference was due to the presence of both males and females in the youth group. So, there was no need to have a separate group observation for both males (youths) and females (youths) like the elderly groups, which the researcher had to observe separately. The youths that were observed and interviewed for this research, comprised of the youths of the village of Ute-Okpu. Most of the youths were not born in Ute-Okpu. However, they have visited Ute-Okpu from time to time. They were between the ages of 25 to 32. And these meetings were held in Agbor, a town close to Ute-Okpu. In this

group, communication was done in Ika, English and Pidgin English. Members of this group were educated, with each possessing a minimum of an undergraduate degree, which is why the agenda of the group was about job opportunities, empowerments and the way forward after graduation.

#### **4.11 Ethical Approval**

The researcher submitted the required ethical approval forms to the ethical board at the University of Central Lancashire before proceeding with the study. The ethical board reviewed and approved the study protocol. There was no foreseeable harm to participants as a result of their participation. The researcher made sure confidentiality of participants was maintained through the use of anonymized codes to represent each participant. Also, the researcher did not include the specific names of the groups observed and the address of the meeting place. Before observing each group and interviewing participants, the researcher made sure each member of the different groups was given consent forms to complete. The researcher explained the content of the consent form to participants, making sure they understood the contents before signing. The researcher then also signed it and as soon as was possible made a photocopy. The original informed consent forms, with the interviewees' real names on them, were kept separate from the transcripts of interviews with which interviewees could potentially be matched.

#### **4.12 Audit Trail**

The researcher designed the observation and interview questions for this study. The initial time frame for the collection of data was nine weeks. However, this time frame was reduced to 6 days by the end of the research. This was due to the meeting time of each group. The elderly groups met once every month at different times of the month

and the youths met twice every month. Therefore, although the researcher spent two months in the community (February-March 2013; July-August 2014), the researcher was only able to observe each group once a month. Before travelling to Nigeria, the researcher contacted each of these groups through emails and phone conversations to find out if it was acceptable to observe the groups. After getting positive replies from each group the researcher travelled to Nigeria in February 2013 to conduct interviews and observe the group.

#### **4.13 Pilot Study**

The first visit to the elderly men's group was productive. The researcher observed and interviewed members of this group. It was during this visit the researcher realized the group consisted of only male elderly participants and female membership was not accepted. The researcher had to search for another group to observe, which consisted of elderly female participants. The observation and interview of the female elderly group during this first visit was not possible, since their meeting for that month had already taken place. Also, the researcher could not meet with the youth group due to the loss of some members of the group in a car accident at the time of the researcher's visit to Nigeria. The observation of the youth group was rescheduled for the next visit; the researcher was, however, able to conduct interviews for the preliminary report with members of the youth group that were available. More specifically, the preliminary studies raised questions about gender and the role it plays in proverb use during interaction.

#### **4.14 Summary**

This chapter examined the methodology of this study. It illustrated the research perspective, frameworks, significance of the methodology, research design and

sampling methods. It also explored the processes of data analysis that was adopted in this study. It gave a variety of data-gathering techniques the researcher used in the study. A combination of the CofP and narrative framework was suggested as appropriate for this study. The researcher also illustrated the rationale behind decisions taken for the purpose of this study. The next chapter of this research is presentation and analysis of data.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **Identifying Ute-Okpu Proverbs and their function in Conversation**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents and analyses data on the frequency of proverb use, discussing how the researcher was able to identify proverbs produced by participants, and how participants in each CofP were able to identify the production of proverbs in conversation. It also presents and analyses data on the types and functions of proverbs across the different CofPs studied. In this way, the chapter explores variation within a culture to identify intergenerational differences in terms of identification, use and function of an important cultural tool, which is associated with the construction and expression of identity.

#### **5.2 Identifying Ute-Okpu Proverbs in Conversations**

This section briefly summarizes and presents data on the frequency of proverb use across each CofP. Furthermore, it discusses the ways participants were able to signal, and how listeners were able to identify, the production of proverbs during interaction. Thus, the rationale for this section is to identify recognizably distinct actions, how participants managed their relation to the utterances produced, the rules that govern such conversation, and their intention for such utterances (Arewa & Dundes, 1964; Muhawi, 1999).

During the fieldwork in Ute-Okpu, participants produced a total of 64 proverbs. However, it is important to note that during observation for this study, it was very obvious that participants were aware of the presence of the researcher and significantly oriented to it. Their orientation to the presence of the researcher, no doubt was reflected

in the participants' keen use of proverbs and traditional styles of producing proverbs during their interaction with one another. As such they may have produced more proverbs than they usually would have produced in an interaction where an observer was absent. This was evident especially in the elderly CofPs as they were keen on indexing themselves as people who respect traditional styles.

Table 5.1 shows how many proverbs each group produced during this study.

**Table 5.1 Number of proverbs produced by each Community of Practice**

<b>CofP</b>	<b>Impromptu proverbs</b>	<b>Elicited proverbs</b>	<b>Total</b>
Elderly men	20	10	30
Elderly women	7	12	19
Youths	9	6	15
			64

Table 5.1 suggests that while participants produced proverbs impromptu, the researcher elicited some of the proverbs during interviews, by asking them directly to produce a proverb in the language of their choice. Each group was observed for 30 minutes, but the duration of the interviews varied because they were open-ended and depended on how much each participant had to say or the direction each question took. Furthermore, it is important to note that while some of the proverbs were produced during group observations, some were produced during interviews and the language of production was English, Ika and Nigerian Pidgin. However, to explore how the researcher and participants identified proverbs in conversation across each CofP, the researcher observed naturally occurring speech. The rationale behind this was to identify how

participants implicitly signalled a shift from ordinary speech to producing proverbs during interaction. Therefore, Section 5.2.1 examines imagery as a type of proverb that signalled the shift in discursive style. It was found to be a common type of proverb, which is why it will be analysed first.

### **5.2.1 Imagery as a signal for Proverb production**

A careful study of the 64 proverbs produced by all CofPs studied suggests that some of the proverbs had attributes of using animals, substance or objects to equate human behaviours, by mapping familiar animal, substance or object characteristics to human beings. Thus, among the 64 proverbs produced, some had imagery of animals and their characteristics projected, some had objects and their characteristics, while some projected substances and their characteristics. It can be argued that imagery indicates a type of proverb; however, in this case, it was rather an indication to the researcher when the participants produced some proverbs. Thus, Section 5.2.2 provides an illustration of proverbs produced by participants in the elderly men CofP that were based on imagery.

### **5.2.2 Elderly Men CofP**

Imagery (e.g. animals, objects) as a signal for proverb production was predominantly used in the elderly men's CofP, as 15 of the 30 proverbs produced by members of this group relied on the use of these familiar animal characteristics. For a detailed illustration, Extract 1 provides an example of a proverb, which mapped animal characteristics with human characteristics in this CofP.

#### Extract 1: Human is animal; animal is human

Proverb: *That a male goat is matured does not mean that it is older than a very old female goat.*

E.M.F, who is 80 years old, produced the proverb above. The context of use was during the first observation in which an elderly man (identified as E.M.F) was rebuked for objecting to authority and interrupting the meeting because he suggested that the agenda for the meeting was not focused. With the proverb, E.M.F insinuates that although he may not be the recognized authority (male goat) in the CofP, he is in some way entitled to his opinion as one of the oldest in the group. Therefore, the characteristics of a goat (male and female) are applied in the proverb to reflect the situation on the ground and persuade co-participants of his action. On the other hand, Extract 2 illustrates an example of a proverb that portrayed ‘humans as substance; substance as human’ in this CofP.

Extract 2: Human as substance; substance as human

Proverb: *Our forefathers said that the river had its source a long time ago.*

The proverb in Extract 2 was also used in the same group meeting as Extract 1; however, a different situation prompted its use. E.M.E produced the proverb in Extract 2 to express his concerns about not knowing the particular area in Ute-Okpu where a new member of the group was from (the observer, whom they were told was from Ute-Okpu). He starts off with a tale of how a chief came to his house to visit him, and he served the chief kola nuts as a welcoming gesture. The chief uses the kola nut to pray, and one such prayer was that they (the visitor and the owner of the house) would not be chiefs that go for gatherings in the king's palace and forget what was said in the palace. So much so, that when they are asked by their children what was said at the king's palace, they will not be able to give a response. Though it is unlikely that his children would ask him how the meeting went, he uses the tale as an introduction to his enquiry of where the new member of the group is from and produces the proverb to add understanding to his question. One of the physical characteristics of a river is a source



or the original point from which the river flows (e.g. a lake or spring). Thus, E.M.E applies this physical characteristic of the river having a source to a human being (the observer) to explain that the observer has a source (the part of Ute-Okpu she was from) and this source should be made known to the members of the group. Additionally, Extract 3 presents a proverb that is based on the imagery ‘human is object; object is human’.

Extract 3: Human is object; object is human

Proverb: *A broom may be considered ugly, but every morning you will always go back to the corner where you left it so that it can perform its duties.*

The proverb in Extract 3 was produced towards the end of the second group observation with this CofP. The proverb was produced to describe the essential nature of the CofP to the researcher. Brooms are indispensable in homes as they are used to brush out dirt and no matter how unkempt they look, they are always needed to tidy the house. Thus, suggesting that the elders are the ‘brooms’ that the researcher cannot do without during her study of Ute-Okpu traditions. Also, after this proverb was produced, the elder who produced it stated, *‘As you have come to us old men to learn about our culture, you have done well.’*

In sum, half of the proverbs produced by this CofP projected the characteristics of animals, objects or substances. These served as contextualized cues that signalled a shift from ordinary speech to the use of proverbs, especially for the researcher. Section 5.2.3 provides an illustration of proverbs produced by participants in the elderly women CofP that had imagery.

### 5.2.3 Elderly Women CofP

Most of the proverbs produced during observation with this CofP did not fall into the use of imagery as a signal for co-participants to identify the use of proverbs. Thus, the researcher observed that out of the seven impromptu proverbs produced by members of this group (interviews and observation), only one proverb contained an image of animals and their characteristics, which is presented in extract 4.

#### Extract 4: Human is animal; animal is human

Proverb: *What is to be done must be done, that is why the fowl bends down when it is entering through the door.*

The proverb in Extract 4 was used by the leader of this CofP as an indirect device to illustrate that members have no choice but to adhere to the rules and regulations of the group. Furthermore, among the 12 elicited proverbs produced by this group (both during observation and interview), six proverbs had images of animals, which is not as many as were produced in the older men CofP. Finally, proverbs that projected personification were not produced in this group. Section 5.2.4 provides an illustration of proverbs produced by participants in the youth CofP that had imagery

### 5.2.4 Youth CofP

Proverbs produced during observation of this group mainly did not portray the imagery of animals or objects. Rather, one proverb projected the use of personification.

#### Extract 5: Personification

Proverb: *The ear when no dey hear, them dey cut am together with the head.*

The proverb in Extract 5 was used to caution a member of the CofP over her ambition of becoming the first lady of the United States, which was perceived by the rest of the

group as unrealistic. The above proverb was produced in Nigerian Pidgin (the ear that does not hear, is cut together with the head). Personification in the proverb implies how parts of the body can be used to explain the consequences of not listening when advice is given.

Furthermore, Section 5.2.5 explores formulaic turn of phrase as another signal used in identifying a shift from ordinary speech to proverbs by co-participants.

### **5.2.5 Formulaic Turn of Phrase as a Signal for proverb production**

A careful study of the proverbs produced during interaction in the CofPs also suggests the use of formulaic turns of phrase by speakers to signal the production of proverbs to listeners across each CofP. Section 5.2.6 explores the elderly men CofP.

### **5.2.6 Elderly men CofP**

During group meetings, the researcher observed that participants from the elderly men group produced 30 proverbs during interactions (both elicited and impromptu production of proverbs). The researcher observed that 14 of these proverbs could be identified from ordinary speech by a participant's use of the formulaic phrases like '*Our people say*', '*Our ancestors say*', '*Our fathers say*' and '*Our old men say*'. On one occasion, a speaker indicated his use of proverbs by stating '*I can only caution you through the use of proverbs*'. However, 5 of the proverbs produced had no formulaic turn of phrase to identify them as proverbs. Table 5.2 illustrates the frequency of use of these formulaic phrases by participants in this CofP.

**Table 5.2 Formulaic Turns of Phrase used by Participants in Elderly Men CofP**

Formulaic turn of phrase	Our people say	Our ancestors say	Our fathers say	Our old men say	I can only caution you through the use of proverbs
Frequency of use	8	3	2	1	1

Table 5.2 suggests that the more frequently used formulaic turn of phrase within this CofP is ‘our people say’. I argue that the reason for this may be because it is more inclusive than the rest. Thus, while the word ‘people’ indicates a ‘we’ identity, the other formulaic phrases have words such as ‘ancestors’, ‘fathers’ and ‘old men’ that are not inclusive or indicative of a collective tradition. However, their use of ‘fathers’, ‘old men’ in some way reflects gender bias or indexes their CofP as a men-only membership CofP and at the same time it indicates assumptions that men produce proverbs more. Their use of ‘our people’, ‘our fathers’, ‘old men’, and ‘ancestors’ to index a men-only CofP, may have been influenced by the presence of the researcher, who although is considered an insider because of her connection to Ute-Okpu is also considered an outsider because she is not a member of the CofP.

Section 5.2.7 examines data to analyse the use of formulaic turn of phrase by the elderly women CofP during interaction.

### **5.2.7 Elderly Women CofP**

On the other hand, during interactions within this CofP, the researcher observed that eight proverbs were produced altogether. Seven of these proverbs produced had indications of the formulaic turns of phrase such as ‘*Our people say*’ and ‘*Our ancestors say*’ to signal the use of proverbs in the interaction. However, one of the

proverbs produced had no indication of a formulaic turn of phrase. Table 5.3 illustrates the frequency of use by participants in this CofP.

**Table 5.3 Formulaic Turns of Phrase used by Participants in Elderly Women CofP**

Formulaic turn of phrase	Our people say	Our ancestors say
Frequency of use	4	3

Similar to the data from the elderly men CofP, Table 5.3 also suggests that the formulaic turn of phrase ‘our people say’ was also used more in this CofP, although the difference in use was not as noticeable as that of the men CofP. Similar to the older men CofP, there is no doubt that this CofP may have used the formulaic turn of phrase ‘our people’ because of the presence of the researcher, to highlight their respect for traditional styles of saying proverbs. However, participants in this CofP did not use the gender-biased cues that were noticeable in the formulaic turn of phrases used by the elderly men CofP. This may be an indirect way of rejecting such assumptions that exclude women, thus instead of ‘our old men’ or ‘our fathers’, they used the more inclusive ‘our people’ and ‘our ancestors’ formulaic turns of phrase.

Section 5.2.8 examines data to analyse the use of formulaic turn of phrase by the youth CofP during interaction.

### **5.2.8 Youth CofP**

Participants in the youth CofP signalled their shift from ordinary speech to the production of proverbs by using formulaic turns of phrase as well. The formulaic turn of phrase used in the youth CofP was ‘*Our people say*’, unlike the elderly CofP that used

quite a number of these phrases to signal their use of proverbs. Table 5.4 illustrates the frequency of use by participants in this CofP.

**Table 5.4 Formulaic Turns of Phrase used by Participants in the youth CofP**

Formulaic turn of phrase	Our people say
Frequency of use	8

Table 5.4 suggests that the only formulaic turn of phrase used within this CofP was ‘our people say’, thus indicating a collective identity as well.

Finally, the data presented in Tables 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 suggests that members across each CofP applied the use of formulaic expressions to signal to co-participants that they were about to shift from ordinary speech to produce proverbs. It also suggests that the most used formulaic turn of phrase by participants across each CofP was ‘*Our people say*’. Moreover, these formulaic expressions were well known to the people in general, and signalled to the researcher that participants produced proverbs. More specifically, I argue that the difference in use distinguished each CofP and reflected attempts by youths and elderly women CofPs to reappropriate (reappropriation of traditions will be discussed further in Chapter 6) assumptions that mostly elderly men produce proverbs.

Section 5.2.9 further explores how the researcher was able to identify proverbs produced during interaction by participants through switch to local language.

### **5.2.9 Switch to local language as a signal of proverb production**

During observation and interviews with participants, the researcher observed that participants switched or tried to switch to the native dialect of Ute-Okpu when they were produced proverbs. Section 5.2.10 examines the elderly men CofP.

### 5.2.10 Elderly Men CofP

During the first observation of the elderly men's CofP, the researcher observed the anger of members of this CofP because of a participant's decision to produce proverbs in English. Extract 6 was taken from the recording of the elderly men's CofP and illustrates.

#### Extract 6: (Speak our language)

1. E.M.A:     *(An introduction of the interviewer/observer to the group)*
2.             *the interviewer is a student in research. [0.5] she has come to know*
3.             *our ways and have a first-hand experience of our ways like*
4.             *how we express ourselves, especially we the elders of this*
5.             *community.*
6. E.M.B:     *umhhh (smiling and waving his hands in the air) when a lizard falls*
7.             *down from a tree (audience chorus: speak Ika), he looks left and right*
8.             *(demonstrating with action of the lizard with his body moving left to*
9.             *right), if nobody praises him he will praise himself [clapping in the*
10.            *background/pauses for a bit]. So we praise you for coming back (faces*
11.            *the observer) home to this culture... (Pause) to add to your knowledge*
12.            *(Ehhh). Though education is additional knowledge, we are here to*
13.            *teach you more of our culture.*
14. E.M.H:     *(ehmmm) our sister that has come to learn our culture, it is*
15.            *important for you to know that 'words come with words' (nodding*

16. *of heads by others in the audience in agreement of what Elder B*
17. *said). I have just told you a wise word.*

Extract 6 contains the response by the other elders to E.M.B who tries to produce proverbs in English, as they point out the need to represent the culture of the Igbo people through language. E.M.A initiates the conversation in Ika in lines 1 to 5, and as the next participant to contribute to the interaction, E.M.B continues in Ika in line 6. However, in line 6, E.M.B switches to English to produce proverbs, and this attracts a negative response from co-participants, and as a result, E.M.B switches back to Ika. E.M.B's switch from Ika to English points to his orientation of the presence of an observer, but also signals his manipulation of a local language and a global language to benefit the observer and members of his CofP. More significantly, E.M.B's switch to English to produce proverbs was his attempt to signal to the observer (a UK student) that he had just produced proverbs (contextualization cue). Also, during interviews with participants in this group, which were conducted in English, three participants of the four interviewed switched to the native dialect to produce proverbs. Furthermore, participants in this CofP were asked during interviews if it was mandatory to produce proverbs in the native dialect. Their replies suggested that they preferred to produce proverbs in the native dialect. This finding may not be noticeably used to identify proverbs in interaction across all groups, but for this CofP, it was important for participants to switch to the native dialect when producing proverbs if the interaction was in English. This in a way signalled the production of proverbs by participants, especially during interviews with participants and the use of 'we' identity (Gumperz, 1982).

Section 5.2.11 explores the elderly women's CofP's language switch to produce proverbs.



### 5.2.11 Elderly Women CofP

On the other hand, switching to English when producing proverbs was not observed during observation of the elderly women's CofP. This is because the language of interaction during meetings was the native language, although it was also the same in the elderly men's CofP. Unlike the participant who switched to English to produce proverbs in the elderly men's CofP, members of this CofP strictly adhered to the use of Ika as the language of interaction. However, during interviews, which were conducted in English, participants who produced proverbs were observed to have switched to Ika. For example, E.W.D during an interview switched to Ika to produce the proverb 'our people say *it is the light shown to a stranger that will guide him to know something*', even when the interview was conducted in English. Similarly, E.W.I switched to the native dialect to produce the proverb '*after a visitor finish eating to his satisfaction, he realizes that the rain has stopped falling*'. The other two participants interviewed from this CofP did not produce proverbs spontaneously during interviews; however, they produced proverbs in Ika when the researcher elicited the production of proverbs at the end of the interviews with participants. As was observed with the elderly men's CofP, findings from this group also suggests that members of this group preferred to use the native language to produce proverbs. However, when asked during interviews what language they preferred to use when producing proverbs in interaction, their response mostly suggested they were indifferent about the language of production. This finding was quite different from what the researcher observed from their switch to Ika during interviews with participants.

Section 5.2.12 explores the youth CofP's language switch to produce proverbs.

### **5.2.12 Youth CofP**

During observation with this group, the researcher did not observe any emphasis by members of this CofP to switch to the native dialect before producing proverbs. The researcher observed that members of the group manipulated linguistic resources during interaction, which did not lead to negative responses by co-participants. However, during interviews, 3 (Youths B, C, and D) of the 4 participants interviewed switched from English, which was the language used during interview, to the native language to produce proverbs. Immediately after the proverbs were produced, they switched back to English. More significant was the effort and difficulty experienced by one of the participants (youth B) who tried to switch from English to Ika to produce proverbs. Therefore, although the participant was not fluent in speaking his native dialect, he tried to produce proverbs in Ika until the researcher suggested he could produce it in English if he wanted. However, when asked their preferred language to produce proverbs, the response by the participants in this CofP suggested they were also indifferent about the language of production.

Section 5.2.13 examines performance as a signal to differentiate proverb production from ordinary speech during interaction.

### **5.2.13 Performance as a signal of Proverb Production**

During observation of each CofP, the researcher observed that apart from the signals mentioned, sometimes there were performances like clapping, laughter, gestures and chorusing of the proverbs together by members of some CofPs to signal a shift from ordinary speech to proverb.

Section 5.2.14 presents data on performance by the elderly men CofP.

#### **5.2.14 The Elderly Men's CofP**

The researcher observed that the production of proverbs in this CofP also included some form of performance. The gesture of speakers heightened when they produced proverbs, e.g. they gesticulated more, and they smiled more, as a way of expressing their rapport. Also, sometimes when a member of this CofP produced proverbs, it evoked some response from co-participants: one such response was that members chorused the proverbs along with the speaker. For example, co-participants joined E.M.H when he produced the proverb '*he who does not know when a ditch was dug* (the audience chorus the remaining of the proverb along with the speaker), *falls into the ditch*'. Another such response involved members clapping or nodding in agreement and this suggests that members of this group responded differently, when proverbs were produced during interaction. However, participants' response to proverbs may have also heightened as a result of the researcher being present to observe their use of proverbs and their awareness that the researcher was a student abroad.

Section 5.2.15 presents data to explore performance as a signal that indicates a shift from ordinary speech to proverbs during interaction in the elderly women CofP.

#### **5.2.15 The Elderly Women's CofP**

Similar to the researcher's observation in the elderly men's CofP, members of this group also responded to the production of proverbs. Most often this was in terms of body gestures or clapping. The researcher observed instances where members of this group laughed after proverbs were produced. Also, just like the elderly men's CofP, members of this group also chorused proverbs along with the speaker. Similar to the elderly men CofP, the elderly women CofP may have also oriented to the presence of the observer.

Section 5.2.16 presents data to explore performance as a signal that indicates a shift from ordinary speech to proverbs during interaction in the youth CofP.

#### **5.2.16 The Youth's CofP**

Performance in this CofP was not obvious to the researcher. Contrary to the elderly men's CofP, the youths did not react to the production of proverbs during interaction. As mentioned earlier, elders reacted by clapping, nodding, and chorusing proverbs along with members who produced proverbs, which made it obvious that the speaker said something different from the ordinary line of conversation. But the youths did not react in this regard to the production of proverbs.

#### **5.2.17 Discussion**

A consideration of the above findings suggest that the researcher was able to identify the shift from ordinary speech to proverb through a type of proverb (imagery), participants' use of formulaic turns of phrase, performance and code-switching between English to the local language to produce proverbs during interaction.

Indeed, imagery was reflected in the proverbs produced by participants observed for this study. One of the schemas used in illustrating meaning through proverbs is the mapping of animals and their characteristics to humans, the physical features of things and substances mapped to the characteristics of humans to convey the abstract through the production of proverbs and personification. Some of these proverbs had well-elaborated schemas, which projected imageries such as personification, the characteristics of animals, substances and objects, which were used to understand human beings metaphorically. This finding coincides with the cognitive interpretation of proverbs as suggested by Lakoff and Turner (1989), which they referred to as The Great Chain. The Great Chain suggests that the hierarchical order of existence is from substance and

animate objects to plants, animals and humans, the latter being the highest level of hierarchy. Lakoff and Turner suggest that the higher the order of existence, the more characteristics it has. Thus, they suggest that although it might seem as if proverbs are about objects and animals, its major aim is to illustrate and expose human experiences using the characteristics of animals, plants, objects and substances that are also a part of human characteristics. The Great Chain also suggests that this role is vice versa in the sense that transfer mappings represent non-human beings, i.e, animals, plants, objects and substances as humans and a transfer mapping that represents human beings as animals (Krikmann, 2007). More specifically, the above findings project proverbs as metaphorical utterances, where the concrete is used to explain abstract situations, and this concurs with Mieder's (1993) definition of a proverb as a metaphorical expression. As Finnegan (2012) rightly pointed out, the figurative properties of proverbs set proverbs apart from everyday speech. Indeed, the above finding is similar to Finnegan's suggestion that one of the most used forms of identifying proverbs in interaction is the use of animals to comment on human life. It suggests that the reliance on metaphorical comparisons identify proverbs used in interaction from ordinary speech.

On the other hand, the data presented also suggest that participants used formulaic turns of phrase to signal their shift from ordinary speech to proverbs, which may have been influenced by the presence of the observer. However, it is important to note that the elderly men's CofP used the formulaic turn of phrase more than the other groups to signal the production of proverbs and in particular, the formulaic phrase 'Our people say' was used more across each CofP. Although participants did not directly suggest that the use of the formulaic phrase 'Our people say' had any implication, I argue that the frequency of its use highlights that it is an important contextualization cue. This contextualization cue indexes affiliation to a particular CofP since there is a specific type of formulaic phrase used more across every generation. Also, a consideration of the

use of these formulaic turns of phrase suggests that the use of this discursive style by speakers signals to co-participants that they were about to produce proverbs. Thus, it served as a marker to signal the upcoming use of proverbs by the speakers during interaction. This finding in some way concurs with Peek and Yankah's (2004) suggestion that proverbs can be identified in interaction through the participants' use of formulaic turns of phrase during interaction. However, Peek and Yankah's suggestions on how proverbs are identified from ordinary speech were generalized as they suggested that many communities can identify and differentiate proverbs from ordinary speech by using formulaic phrases like 'our ancestors said' or 'in the past' without specific studies conducted in any community. Contrarily, the findings in this section suggest that although some communities may have phrases that mark the use of proverbs as different from ordinary speech as Peek and Yankah indicated, however, variations could occur in these formulaic turns of phrases. On the other hand, the youths only made use of the formulaic phrase 'our people say'. This analysis does not aim to discredit Peek and Yankah's works; rather, it is a further development of their work as a result of an ethnomethodological approach which interrogates actual context and naturally occurring speech to analyse how participants do what they do by exploring variation within one single community. Thus, investigating variations that occur in a language can show how language use can index groups.

Again, data presented from each group suggest that some members of the youth and elderly women CofPs unknowingly switch to their native language before producing proverbs. Thus, although they claim to be indifferent about what language is used in producing proverbs during interaction, instinctively they switched to the native language. On the other hand, members of the elderly men CofP seem to prefer using the native language to produce proverbs. This finding corresponds with comments on how proverbs are connected with local languages (Echeruo, 1971; Finnegan, 1970;

Nussbaum, 1998; Okpoku & Mbiti, 1997). Okpoku and Mbiti (1997), for example, suggest that African proverbs are ‘interwoven to the local languages’ (p, ix). More specifically related to the context of this study, Echerulo (1971) explains that understanding Igbo proverbs requires an understanding and knowing of the language. Although these comments do not emphatically state that the switch from English to local languages during conversation signals the production of proverbs by participants, they suggest that local languages are a part of producing and understanding proverbs. Indeed, switches to the native language also signal to co-participants to let them know there is a shift in the patterns of interaction.

Furthermore, the findings concur with Mieder’s (1993) suggestion that proverbs are ‘short generally known sentences’ (p. 24). Mieder explains proverbs are well-known utterances by members of the community or group, or interactions that are produced to teach truth, wisdom or traditional beliefs. Thus, it explains why members of the elderly CofP sometimes uttered the proverbs alongside the main speaker. Also, the performance by speakers in the elderly CofPs when they produced proverbs is consistent with Finnegan (2012) and Herzog’s (1936) suggestion that identifying proverbs in interaction can be achieved through the performance of the speakers. Finnegan suggests that it is possible to find societies that have no highly developed form or fixed way of producing proverbs. Therefore, they depend on actual performance and picturesque forms, which may not be significant stylistics devices for identifying proverbs in interaction. Similarly, Herzog (1936) suggests that the rhythm for producing proverbs is different from ordinary speech. For members of the elderly group, this may not have been a signal to them that the conversation was about to shift from ordinary speech to the use of proverbs. However, it cannot be denied that performance signalled a shift from ordinary speech to proverbs to outsiders or new members of the group (i.e. the researcher). More significantly, performance mattered more to the elderly CofPs, than it

did the youth CofP; this is because the elders were more focused on the self-esteem that comes with producing proverbs since it is used to measure the wisdom of an individual who uses it. According to Nwonwu (2014), membership in groups in Igbo communities is based on the ability of individuals to produce proverbs fluently and frequently in conversation. Nwonwu also suggests that the production of proverbs can boost the self-esteem of individuals as the production of proverbs by speakers is seen as significant. Thus, it is not surprising that the production of proverbs in a CofP made up of elders, who are considered custodians of proverbs (Musere, 1991; Oduaran & Oduaran, 2006) leads to such responses from the audience. Elders as custodians was also clearly indicated by Man C as he stated in his interview that the CofP ‘is a meeting of chiefs and they are custodians of our culture’. However, this is not to say that since the youths did not chorus proverbs along with speakers that they were not familiar with the proverbs. Therefore, although performance may not have signalled the production of proverbs all the time to members of these CofPs per se, it was obvious to the researcher that these were proverbs because of the reaction of the elders whenever they were produced.

In sum, section 5.2 illustrates that each CofP signal their use of proverbs differently and this distinguishes each of them. Section 5.3 further develops this chapter by exploring the function of proverbs across different CofPs during interaction, which will further explore the difference between CofPs.

### **5.3 Functions of Proverbs**

This section presents and discusses data to explore why participants across each of the CofPs use proverbs during interaction. Thus, the researcher examines the reason participants produced proverbs by analysing observations across each group and the



interviews carried out (four interviews in each group). Section 5.3.1 explores the function of proverbs within the elderly men CofP.

### 5.3.1 Elderly Men CofP

During the group meetings with the elderly men's CofP (spontaneous speech), 17 proverbs were produced. For each of these proverbs, it was assumed that speakers had an intention behind their shift to proverbs from ordinary speech and, more specifically, that speakers used proverbs for socio-pragmatic (interactional/interpersonal) purposes. These socio-pragmatic functions related to teaching, saving face, maintaining social hierarchy and expressing positive and negative forms of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1999) including, for instance, rapport and respect. Therefore, proverbs, when used to teach or advise, constitute an indirect way of advising, and therefore do not constitute direct orders but are an indirect way of expressing a directive. Hence, their use constitutes an act of negative politeness used to redress a potentially face-threatening act.

Thus, the first function of proverbs observed by the researcher was that members of this group used them to teach one lesson or the other. Out of the 17 proverbs produced by participants in this CofP during interaction, 8 were used to teach or illustrate a point. For example, the first proverb that was produced during the first observation of this group was the proverb 'words come with words' (Line 15 of first observation with elderly men group). E.M.H, at the beginning of the first meeting observed by the researcher, produced the proverb, and his intention was to teach the rules that govern the production of proverbs in interaction. Before producing the proverbs, he laid emphasis on how important what he was about to say was and ended his suggestion by stating he had just produced a wise saying. Thus, E.M.H states, *'(ehmmm) our sister that has come to learn our culture it is important for you to know that words come with words*

*(nodding of heads by others in the audience in agreement of what Elder H said). I have just told you a wise word.*’ It is no coincidence that he mentions this at the beginning of the observation; it was to give background knowledge to the researcher as to how proverbs are produced in conversation. Therefore, teaching that the content of a conversation, or what is being discussed, determines the proverb to be produced or if a proverb needs to be produced during an interaction. At the same time E.M.H’s statement exemplifies the fact that participants in this CofP were fully aware of the presence of the observer in the meeting and the reason for the observation. Thus, it becomes obvious that E.M.H oriented to the presence of the observer by producing the proverbs *‘words come with words’* and he negotiates his identity as one who uses proverbs in his daily interaction.

The researcher also observed that participants in this group produced proverbs to present the CofP in a good light. As stated earlier in the methodology chapter, this group consisted of male elders and, as a group; they negotiated their identities and identified themselves as the custodians of the culture and customs of the Ute-Okpu community. Therefore, they used proverbs as a tool to convince the observer that the CofP was knowledgeable when it came to the production of proverbs in interaction. For example, during the first observation with this CofP, the first 10 minutes of interaction were used by participants to describe how they felt about the presence of an observer in their midst, and they expressed this feeling through the use of proverbs. This also evidently points to the effect an observer can have on participants. It was obvious members of this CofP keenly produced more proverbs than they would have if the researcher was not present to observe. Proverbs were used to convince the observer that the decision to join the group to learn about their ways of communication was a right decision, e.g. the proverb *‘it is from the bottom you go up: one lays foundation on the ground; for one does not lay foundation in the air’* was produced by elderly man C as a

form of advice to the observer. It was his way of persuading the observer that the group was the right place to start from if one wanted to study language of interaction in Ute-Okpu. He justified this by proceeding with another proverb '*wisdom is not money*' and stating that it was a good thing the observer was in the meeting. These utterances function to establish rapport and introduce the observer into the community and their use constitutes an act of positive politeness.

The third function of proverbs by participants in this group was the use of proverbs by speakers to maintain social hierarchy (control hierarchy or save face in violation of social hierarchy). While some participants produced proverbs to maintain social hierarchy and control, proverbs were also used to save face in violation of authority. Literally speaking, all the proverbs in this section can be used as a form of advice in interaction, but mapping these proverbs with the context of production suggests they were used to maintain social hierarchy. For example, to maintain social hierarchy in this CofP, E.M.G used the proverb '*our people say a child does not show his forefathers where they lived in the olden days*'. The context that provoked the production of this proverb was a situation where a member (E.M.F) of the group expressed dissatisfaction as to how the meeting was going. Thus, E.M.G in an attempt to maintain social hierarchy produced the above proverb to emphasize that the group had an authority figure that was the only one authorized to change the course of the meeting. Subsequently, E.M.F to save face also relied on the use of the proverb '*That a male goat is matured does not mean that it is older than a very old female goat*' to explain his understanding of the social hierarchy of the group. His understanding draws from the fact that he is one of the oldest members of the group (aged 80), who is older than the leader of the group and as such should be respected by even the leader of the group. Thus, this is a socio-pragmatic function of proverbs, which indicates participants' need for pragmatic clarity and non-coerciveness to maintain politeness.

However, during interviews with participants, the researcher asked participants a general question – ‘what are proverbs in Ute-Okpu?’ - in order to understand their functions. The answers given by those who participated from this group suggest that proverbs were relied on to communicate effectively, to advise and to restrict conversation to a targeted audience. Extract 7 presents E.M.C’s response to the question.

Extract 7: (functions as a way of interaction)

16. Interviewer:       What are proverbs in Ute-Okpu?
17. E.M.C:               *if you were listening during our meetings you will realize that*
18.                       *some of us used proverbs. Proverbs is a way of interacting in*
19.                       *Ute-Okpu.*

In extract 7, E.M.C makes reference to the use of proverbs by members of his CofP during their meeting. He further suggests that proverbs are a way of communicating within the Ute-Okpu community. However, the above answer gives a more generalized function of proverbs.

Extract 8: (proverbs are used to give advice)

11. Interviewer:       You just used a proverb for me. So what are proverbs to the
12.                       Ute-Okpu people
13. E.M.B:               [....] It is a simple mode of expression. Like the one I just used
14.                       for you now, it was a way of telling you to be patient and take
15.                       it easy with your research. You will get to your desirable

16. destination soon.

In line 11, the interviewer acknowledged E.M.B's use of proverb earlier and asked the participant what proverbs are? The participant in line 13 agrees with the interviewer by also making reference to the proverb '*They do not hurry to the front to enjoy longevity*' that he produced earlier. He explained that the production of that proverb was a way of saying and advising the researcher that patience was required to conduct the study.

In Extract 9, the participant suggests that producing proverbs can function as a way of speaking to a targeted recipient, especially when the speaker of such proverbs wants a conversation to be private.

Extract 9: (Proverbs are used as a means of restricting conversation to a targeted audience)

5. Interviewer: Okay. What are proverbs?

6. E.M.A: proverbs is ehnnn, let me put it like this. Proverbs is a way of

7. speaking (...pauses for 10 seconds) that's what I will say. When

8. you don't want to bring, you know the meaning of something to the

9. fore for everybody to understand.

Similarly, E.M.H also suggests the use of proverbs as a means of restricting conversation to a targeted audience. According to E.M.H, 'if we are like in the midst of all that people in this room right now, and I use a proverb that you understood properly and I tell you that you need to leave this room within a jiffy, immediately I will need to spoke that word that you will understood and people would not know that I was talking directly to you and you will just take your leave.'

Section 5.3.2 presents the response by participants in the elderly women CofP to the question ‘what are Ute-Okpu proverbs?’ to explore their opinions on the functions of proverbs.

### **5.3.2 Elderly Women CofP**

The data collected suggests that, like the elderly men CofP, participants in the elderly female CofP also mostly produced proverbs to teach moral lessons and to maintain social hierarchy during meetings. The total number of proverbs produced during the two meetings observed was 9. However, 7 of these proverbs fell into two functions of proverbs within the CofP. In this group, most of the proverbs (5 out of 9) produced during the group meetings were used to teach patience and solidarity in terms of relationships within the group. For example, the proverb ‘*The dance that will be appreciated outside most first starts inside*’, was produced by the leader of the group to support her argument as to why the group should visit a member of their group who had had surgery and was unable to attend the meeting. Thus, with this proverb she illustrates that appreciation should start from within the CofP and that the group is supposed to appreciate a member of their group before outsiders can do the same.

The second function of proverbs within this group was the use of proverbs to maintain social hierarchy. Just like the case of the elderly men CofP, proverbs were used to support the maintenance of social hierarchy in one context and in another context a proverb was used to help solve problems caused by questioning the authority in the CofP. For example, E.W.A questioned the Vice President of the CofP concerning the amount of money spent to purchase the uniform, and this caused a series of side talks and arguments. Thus, E.W.E produced the proverb ‘*There is no more respect for seniors because all of us are now eating from the same plate right*’ as a way of instructing E.W.A that she was in no position to question the cost of the uniform and the

production of the proverb stopped the argument. On the other hand, the leader of the group produced a proverb to support the maintenance of social hierarchy. The proverb *'no matter how young a king must be, his subject must bow down to him'* was produced by the leader of the group to express her feelings concerning the attitude of some members towards coming to group meetings. The leader's expression of disapproval or complaint was a face-threatening act used to minimize the impact of the above proverb. Mapping the context that provoked the production of this proverb to the literary meaning of the proverb suggests that the leader produced this proverb to convey a criticism indirectly, but also at the same time explicitly, to maintain social hierarchy in the group. In the leader's opinion, if the members of the group respected her enough as their leader they would come to meetings regularly to prevent undermining her authority.

However, during interviews, although the researcher interviewed both E.W.E and the leader, the researcher did not ask them directly the reason why they produced the above proverbs. As with previous CofPs, the participants were asked what proverbs meant to them. Their answers suggest the following:

Extract 10: (proverbs are used as a means of restricting conversation to a targeted audience)

- 13. Interviewer:        So I want to find out what proverb is to the Ute people?
  
- 12. E.W.I:                ... *it is not everything*
  
- 14.                         *you say a visitor is supposed to understand. At least if you and*
  
- 15.                         *your children are discussing, there is how you will speak*
  
- 16.                         *proverbs for them that they will know what you said.*

In Extract 10, the participant suggests that proverbs can be used in situations where the speaker has a targeted audience. Similarly, E.W.E also suggested the use of proverbs for a targeted audience. This finding is similar to what was suggested by a participant in the elderly men CofP (Extract 9).

Extract 11: (proverbs are used to foster effective communication)

10. Interviewer:       okay. So What are proverbs to the Ute-Okpu people?
11. Leader:            It is a tool of communication used to summarize a lot in smaller
12.                       sentences. You know during the meeting we just finished I used
13.                       proverb as a communication tool to pass my messages across. I
14.                       didn't talk a lot rather I just expressed myself using proverbs.

In Extract 11, the participant refers to her use of proverbs during group meetings to communicate concisely and effectively. Similarly, E.W.D states 'Proverbs is what we use to talk clearer'.

Section 5.3.3 presents the response by participants in the youth CofP to the question 'what are Ute-Okpu proverbs?' to explore their opinions on the functions of proverbs.

### **5.3.3 Youth CofP**

The data collected during the two group meetings observed by the researcher suggest that proverbs in this group were produced during interaction to advice and caution co-participants. In the two meetings, participants produced eight proverbs during interactions, two of which functioned as a tool for giving advice. Youth C, for example, produced the proverb 'they do not meet up the person that left yesterday' during the second meeting to support his argument that hard work pays and one who wants to achieve anything in life must start from somewhere to get to the desired destination.



Extract 12 also illustrates Youth C is explicitly stating that he produced proverbs to advise his friends during interaction.

Extract 12: (function of proverbs to advise and as a rhetorical strategy)

23. Interviewer: so you as a youth do you use proverbs in your daily interaction  
24. with friends and family?  
25. Youth C: yea, I don't really... I won't say I use it daily or in my daily  
26. interaction but sometimes I use it, you know when I really need  
27. to use it. You understand me? Sometimes when I try to interact  
28. with my friends to make them see some things from my stand,  
29. Youth C: understand? I, I, I, I, express it in proverbs. Like when I am  
30. trying to actually advice my friends about friendship, oneness,  
31. and unity I use proverbs like this kind of proverb, *it is when the*  
32. *two lips come together that they whistle* and our people still say  
33. ***nah co-operation make pot fill with rice***. You understand me?

In Extract 12, Youth C (male participant) explained the function of proverbs during interaction. Stating an example and producing two proverbs '*it is when the two lips come together that they whistle*' and the Nigerian Pidgin '***nah co-operation make pot fill with rice***', the participant explained a scenario where proverbs can be used to advise friends on unity, cooperation and oneness that should exist among friends. Also, Extract 12 portrays the use of proverbs as a rhetorical tool. In line 26-28, Youth C states, 'I use it, you know when I really need to use it. You understand me? Sometimes when I try to interact with my friends to make them see some things from my point of view.' Thus, Youth C suggests that proverbs aid his goal of effective communication during interaction.

The second function of proverb during interaction in this group was the use of proverbs to caution a participant over her ambition of becoming the first lady of the United States, which was perceived by the rest of the group as unrealistic. In the process of ongoing arguments (lines 1-18), Youth C produces the proverb '*The ear when no dey hear, them dey cut am together with the head*' (The ear that does not hear is cut together with the head) to warn Youth D of the dangers of not listening to comments made by co-participants. Also, to emphasize this function during the interview, Youth A (Extract 13) tells a narrative of how her mother produced proverbs when she was younger, and the rationale behind her mother producing such proverb. According to Youth A,

Extract 13: (function of proverbs to caution)

15. different types. When I was growing up, my mum used to say a lot.
16. And they are very meaningful. She used to say this one. (Laughing)
17. when you are trying to save a chicken it will be running away. In
18. effect it means when they are trying to help you, instead of you to
19. accept the help; you will be shying away from it. She normally says it
20. if we are about to take medications for ill health and will don't want to
21. take it. She is like you can't get better unless you take medications. It
22. is a very meaningful way of communicating among our people.

Extract 13 suggests that Youth A's mother relied on the use of proverbs during interactions with her daughter to caution her concerning her refusal to take medications, which were aimed to make her feel better. Also in line 21, Youth A suggests that proverbs are used for effective and efficient communication.

In sum, during interviews with participants from this group, they suggested that proverbs were used in interaction to give advice (Youth C), to caution (Youth A), to make a point (Youth E) and to aid effective communication (Youth B).

### **5.3.4 Discussion**

Analysis of the above data across each CofP suggests that proverbs are used to facilitate communication during interaction, and this is obvious in the fact that in each CofP, speakers who produced proverbs relied on them to facilitate understanding. Whether speakers produced proverbs to teach, as a rhetorical strategy, to negotiate social hierarchy or caution co-participants, proverbs were skilfully employed to facilitate effective communication during interaction. Also, this relates to the use of proverbs as concrete expressions to explain more abstract concepts. Thus, the finding agrees with comments that suggest proverbs are metaphorical (Miedier, 1993; Seifel, 1976). More specifically, the findings suggest that proverbs constitute a powerful socio-pragmatic (interpersonal) tool used for protecting the face of speakers and others, and enabling the speaker to maintain and promote social hierarchy and rapport. Speakers can be said to assume a 'second voice' (see Kulick & Stroud, 1990) when uttering proverbs, a form of shift of authorship which further functions to disassociate the speaker with the utterance and hence mitigate the directness of the act.

Also, the above finding coincides with suggestions that to understand the social function of proverbs, one must map these proverbs with the social context of use (Finnegan, 2012; Van Der Geest, 1996; Hasan-Rokem, 1982; Obiechina, 1967; Oduaran & Oduaran, 2006; Penfield & Duru, 1988). Thus, the researcher's interpretations of the function of these proverbs were based on the social context, which they were produced. Indeed, most of the proverbs used to maintain social hierarchy, strengthen group identity, advice, warn, etc. if placed in another social context can function as something

else in an interaction, which is why proverbs are referred to as flexible and ambiguous in nature (Van Der Geest, 1996; Muhawi, 2001). Therefore, some proverbs that teach respect can also teach discipline or can be used as way of advising an individual, depending on the context of use and how it is used to make connections to the topic of discussion. By mapping these proverbs to the social context of production, the intention of the participants who produced these proverbs was identified, which made the function of such proverbs apparent within the CofPs. Again, one of the elderly men produced the proverb ‘words bring words’ to suggest that proverbs are not just produced in interaction without a situation calling for them, rather the production of proverbs must be provoked by a social situation. Thus, this section adds to the growing literature that supports the exploration of context in interpreting proverbs and their functions during interaction. It also explores in greater depth the interpersonal functions of proverbs, which are further explored in Chapter 6.

#### **5.4 Summary**

This chapter explored the function of proverbs in interaction and how co-participants were able to identify the production of proverbs during interaction. According to Muhawi (1999), ‘if the proverb is to have its import, both the speaker and audience must be aware that the speaker is assuming a different voice than his or her own, a collective voice whose archetypal style represents an idealized form of the speech of the community’ (p. 266). Muhawi suggests that both the listener and speaker in any interaction should be able to recognize when a particular speech act is used in conversation to know how to interpret it. Thus, the researcher explored specific ways by which members of each CofP signalled their shift from ordinary speech to the use of proverbs.

Section 5.2 of the chapter explored the notion that proverbs are influenced by the linguistic and socio-geographical experience of each culture, and they reflect the social environment through imagery from things that they see around their community (Yoneoka, 2002). The analysis suggests that speakers who produced proverbs during interaction signalled the production of proverbs by mostly depending on formulaic expressions to signal their shift from ordinary speech to proverbs. It also suggests that some of the ways in which co-participants could identify the use of proverbs in interaction differed across CofPs. For example, the elders always reacted when co-participants produced proverbs by chorusing the proverbs together, while within the youth CofP, there was no such reaction when proverbs were produced although, as we will see in Chapter 6, other discourse types accompanied proverbs in the interactions of youths including for example, teasing sequences. Therefore, it suggests that identifying the shift from ordinary speech to the production of proverbs can be different in different localities (Finnegan, 2012). Therefore, proverbs in South Africa, Ute-Okpu or Ghana are not different from English proverbs or Thailand proverbs, in the sense that they are abstract expressions used to explain concrete situations. What makes them different is the use of imagery in ways that capture their linguistic and socio-geographical experiences. Therefore, this chapter further developed and added to the literature that the meaning of proverbs should be mapped to context of use.

On the other hand, Section 5.3 interrogated the function of proverbs across the three CofPs observed by the researcher. An analysis of the functions suggests proverbs generally served as metaphorical utterances used for effective communication. Speakers produced proverbs to teach, negotiate or maintain social hierarchy, or caution co-participants. They relied on proverbs as concrete resources applied to negotiate social relations to mitigate directness and enhance rapport.

In sum, this chapter investigated variables in language use that illustrated and identified linguistic styles that indexed each group. It was important to identify generational differences in style (signalling proverb production) and their frequent use of proverbs to explore differences relating to the production of proverbs across each CofP. The next chapter will further develop this research by using the research questions posed earlier in this study to further explore generational difference in style, and attitude towards different styles.

## **CHAPTER 6:**

### **Constructing Identity in Talk**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The previous analysis chapter provided an initial analysis of the frequency and types of proverbs used in each CofP, and identified how speakers and co-participants in interaction signalled and identified the use of proverbs. It also provided an initial analysis of the socio-pragmatic functions of proverbs in interaction. The current chapter further develops this analysis by presenting findings that address the following research questions: (1) Can traditions (and, in particular, the use of proverbs) that serve as the identity of the Ute-Okpu people, survive with globalization? (2) Do younger speakers provide new variations on proverbs as a way of reappropriating this inherited and culturally significant practice? More specifically, this chapter will focus on stylization and identity construction during spontaneous speech, and on interview responses. The analysis will focus on proverb production in a globalized world, and seek to identify new practices adopted during their production, including code-switching.

#### **6.2 The production of proverbs in daily interaction in a changing world**

Section 6.2 will present and analyse data from interviews and group observations across each CofP observed, to address the research question ‘Can traditions (and in particular the use of proverbs) that index the identity of Ute-Okpu people, survive with globalization?’ Analysis of data will explore language use in each CofP to determine whether proverbs have survived the effect of globalization within each of these CofP. As was seen in section 5.2 (Chapter 5, pp. 125-126) there was an initial presentation of the frequency of proverb use (quantitatively) in each CofP. This section in some way presents and analyses data on the frequency of proverb use; however, it does not explore

frequency in terms of numbers, but it analyses natural occurring speech and interviews to examine whether proverbs were used by participants impromptu (quantitatively) considering the language situation of the community.

Section 6.2.1 explores the use of proverbs by members of the elderly men CofP during interaction.

### **6.2.1 Elderly Men CofP**

This section discusses the language practices of the elderly male speakers, including a discussion of interview data, which includes overt responses to the question whether they produced proverbs in their daily interaction. This is to ascertain if within the male CofP the tradition that serves as the identity of Ute-Okpu people survived the effect of globalization.

### **6.2.2 Observation of Elderly Men CofP**

As discussed in Chapter 5 (Table 5.1), members of this group produced the highest number of proverbs during interaction: 30 out of 64 proverbs produced across all groups. The researcher also observed that members of this CofP explicitly insisted on adhering to the norms that were stipulated to produce proverbs within the CofP. This was apparent in the language choices of participants in this CofP during interaction, and the disaffiliative responses of co-participants to deviations from inherited structures of production (e.g. Extract 6, Chapter 5, pp. 134-135). The elder in question who deviated from the norms of this CofP with regard to repertoire, was advised to use the appropriate language of interaction, especially when producing proverbs in the CofP. To keep the attention of his co-participants, the speaker had to adhere to the rules of the CofP. Thus, there were indications that even with the multicultural diversity of languages in the larger community, members of this CofP still produced proverbs, and felt that it was vital to adhere to the traditional ways of producing these proverbs. Also,



although the interviews were mostly conducted in English, participants in this CofP were observed switching from English to Ika when they produced proverbs.

Section 6.2.3 presents and analyses data from the interview with four participants from the elderly male CofP, to explore overt opinions on their use of proverbs during interaction.

### **6.2.3 Interviews of Elderly Men CofP**

To further explore the use of proverbs by the older generation, the researcher asked participants from this CofP during interviews whether they indeed produced proverbs in their daily interactions. As mentioned in section 5.2, members of this CofP oriented to the presence of the researcher and this may have influenced their use of proverbs and their style of proverb production during the interviews. More specifically, the interview questions posed in this section suggests that the interviewer was interested in their use of proverbs, which may have influenced their response and at one point they may have oriented to the interview as a research event.

Extract 6.1 is from the interviews with E.M.A, one of the four participants interviewed in this CofP.

#### Extract 6.1 (I Use proverbs for those who understand it)

25. Interviewer: do you use proverbs for your daily interactions?

26. E.M.A: (smiles) oh yes!! Only for those that I know we understand it.

27. Interviewer: do you speak proverbs to your children?

28. E.M.A: I speak in proverbs and they understand, and they also speak in

29. proverbs to me and I understand. In the issue of who speaks

30. proverbs there is a saying that *they do not meet up the person*

31. *that left yesterday* It goes to mean that somebody who left

32. since you can never meet up with that person, provided both of

33.                               you did not leave at the same time. You cannot draw level  
 34.                               with that person. So that is what am saying. Sometimes  
 35.                               situations call up proverbs.

Extract 6.1; line 25 serves as a preface, where E.M.A is asked if he uses proverbs in his daily interaction. In line 26, he responds excitedly ‘(Smiles) Oh yes!!’ and in line 28, he confirms his use of proverbs during interaction with his children, as they reportedly understand proverbs. Interestingly, his use of the proverb ‘*they do not meet up the person that left yesterday*’ uttered in Ika (lines 30-31) to illustrate why he produces proverbs during interaction with his children, further indexes his use of and reliance on proverbs. However, the interview questions in line 25 and 27 makes it a little obvious that the interviewer is interested in proverbs. As such, it can be said that E.M.A may have been influenced by the interviewer’s questions, thus, he produce proverbs to highlight his use of proverbs in his daily interaction. Importantly, he switches to Ika to produce the proverb, thus, indicating his adherence to the traditional ways of producing proverbs. Therefore, E.M.A in Extract 6.1 directly and indirectly points towards his use of proverbs in his daily interaction and his adherence to traditional ways of producing proverbs in a diversified environment. Also, E.M.A suggests that this traditional use of proverbs is directly transmitted to the younger generation.

Extract 6.2 is from E.M.C's interview where he was asked the same question as E.M.A, and he explicitly suggested he produced proverbs in his daily interaction.

Extract 6.2 (Because I speak proverbs daily, my children know proverbs)

34. Interviewer:           So do your children know how to produce proverbs?  
 35. E.M.C:                 *they know how to speak to some extent because they are not old*  
 36                               *enough. The more they get old, the more it comes.*  
 37. Interviewer:           do you speak *proverbs* in your daily interaction

38. E.M.C: *yes of course. I use proverbs every day in my interactions with*  
 39. *people. Always [...] like I said my children know how to speak*  
 40. *and it is because I always speak proverbs to them.*

In line 37, the interviewer asked E.M.C if he produces proverbs in his daily interaction himself, to which he replies ‘Yes, of course’, a response designed to frame the question as a redundant and obvious one, thus stressing the extent of his use of proverbs, and their significance for the culture of the Igbo people. He uses the word ‘always’ twice, also alluding to the ‘everyday’ use of proverbs in his interactions. Similar to E.M.A, E.M.C may have also oriented to the interview as a research event about proverbs, which may have influenced his response. In line 34, E.M.C is asked if his children know how to produce proverbs. He responds to the question in line 35 and suggests that there are limitations to their knowledge of proverbs. E.M.C attributes their inability to produce more proverbs to their age rather than to the fact that the world they live in is different due to globalization. Therefore, his assumption is that youths will use proverbs when they got older. This suggests that E.M.C also advocates that any ‘change’ or ‘loss’ observed (for example loss of proverbs) is the reflection of ‘apparent’, rather than ‘real-time’ change. Therefore, it is his assumption that youths will become more ‘fluent’ in the production of proverbs in Ika once they reach a certain age. This also makes associations between the production of proverbs, age, and a ‘rite of passage’ into the world of the older, and wiser, generation. At some level, it is also reminiscent of the ‘Myth of Return’, with the older generation firmly upholding the belief that the younger speakers will ‘return’ to the use of proverbs, as each generation does, and continue this practice in the future.

In extract 6.3, E.M.B also explicitly suggests he produces proverbs in daily interaction, but that the use of proverbs has to be prompted.

### Extract 6.3 (Proverbs has to be called for to be used)

45. Interviewer: so do you speak proverbs in your daily interaction?
46. E.M.B: yes I do but it has to be called for before I can use it
47. Interviewer: Do you speak proverbs to your kids?
48. E.M.B: Yes I do oooo, to my grandkids. I make them aware of our
49. culture.

In Extract 6.3, E.M.B is also asked if he produces proverbs in his daily interaction in line 45. His response in line 46 indicates that he does, though he also explains that his use of proverbs is dependent on whether it is necessary for him to produce proverbs during the interaction. This is an interesting observation, as it hints towards a slight ‘demotion’ of proverbs from a more naturalized everyday use, to one that occurs when it is ‘called for’. Furthermore, the researcher asked him if he produces proverbs when interacting with his children. His response was ‘Yes I do oooo’, also suggesting that his use of proverbs extended to his grandchildren (line 48), thus implying that his production of proverbs has contributed to the transmittance of this practice to the next generation, although he does not allude to whether they produce proverbs themselves. His initial aim seems to be to ‘make them aware of our culture’, with no reference enabling them to act as cultural insiders.

Similarly, in Extract 6.4, E.M.H suggests that he produces proverbs in his daily interaction and specifies that his production of proverbs is determined by the context of interaction.

### Extract 6.4 (I use proverbs among my people)

165. Interviewer: (→) I think it will be fine for now (laughing)
166. E.M.H: (laughing) can you imagine the one I just said to you now? You,
167. yourself think within yourself, your heart of heart, you will be
168. happy. Saying that don't look back, a little drop of water makes

169. a mighty ocean. And I can advise you as well about the group
170. you are working with. I can say Mary "show me your friends
171. and I will tell you the son of whom you are or know the
172. daughter of who you are
173. Interviewer: (→) okay, that's fine. so
174. E.M.H: (→) That is be watchful. Don't just follow them eyes closed.
175. know what you are doing, know the purpose of why your
176. parents sent you to this school to learn. You know like your
177. weekend you want to go clubbing etc., I might find you in the
178. Street and said" oh! wait a minute, are you not the daughter of
179. Chief Nwachukwu of Nmulanga? You would say yes. Oh!
180. Look at the type of people, you are working with? "*Know the*
181. *daughter* of whom you are"Immediately you will take a
182. redressing, knowing that the word has been spo.
183. Interviewer: (→) so you use proverbs in your daily interaction with people?
184. E.M.H: yes ooo! I use it when am among my people. I cannot use it
185. When travelling out of this locality because it will not be
186. understood by others.

Extract 6.4 starts with the interviewer trying to end the turn of E.M.H by suggesting that the number of proverbs already produced by E.M.H (line 165) was sufficient for the purposes of the interview. E.M.H ignores the signal by the interviewer and laughs. E.M.H uses laughter as a contextualization cue to avoid overtly disagreeing with the interviewer and hence to protect the interlocutor's face, thus eliciting a more relaxed interaction so that ignoring the request of the interviewer to stop producing proverbs does not become offensive. His continuous use of proverbs could be an indication of his

orientation to the presence of the interviewer, and the purpose of the interview. Thus, he tries to highlight his use of proverbs in his everyday interaction by producing as many proverbs as possible. He immediately poses another question to the interviewer to gain full control of the turn so he can continue explaining and producing proverbs (lines 166-172). In line 173, the interviewer re-attempts to take her turn in the conversation, but is once again interrupted by E.M.H (line 174). E.M.H continues to explain and produce proverbs (174-182) until the interviewer is finally able to produce her next question without interruptions (183). E.M.H's continued interruptions to produce proverbs index his interest, excitement and commitment to producing proverbs during interaction. Thus, even before he is asked if he produces proverbs in his daily interaction, he identifies himself as one who is always using proverbs during interactions. Finally, when he is explicitly asked if he uses proverbs in interactional situations, E.M.H responds with the phrase 'yes ooo', which signals excitement (184). He also indexes membership by suggesting he only produces proverbs among his people (line 184) and that he does not produce proverbs outside his locality because those who are not members of his locality (others) will not understand them. This shows that he associates with the use of proverbs to index the cultural identity of a particular people, which he refers to as 'his' people. Thus, he indicates an association between proverb use and in-group/out-group membership.

The above findings suggest that members of this CofP explicitly and implicitly illustrate that they produce proverbs in their daily interaction. One of the characteristics of a CofP is that its members share a common repertoire. As established in Chapter 5, members of this group indexed themselves as custodians of their culture, which is why it is no surprise that they were observed producing proverbs during their interaction with one another, and during their interview with the researcher. Also, it should be noted that their production of proverbs might have been influenced by the presence of the

researcher and their knowledge that it was a research event. Thus, they indexed their identity as people who still produce proverbs in their everyday interaction, notwithstanding how much the world has become globalized. More specifically, their strict adherences to the traditional style of producing proverbs suggests their refusal to officially and overtly accept or acknowledge any form of change. Thus, members of this CofP indexed their identity as people who affiliate with the core traditions that existed before the onset of globalization. Participants were generally very expressive in their responses to the question: while some interrupted the interviewer because they had too much to say, others responded to the question starting with phrases like ‘yes ooo!!’, ‘yes of course’ or ‘yes I do oooo’. In this midst of this commitment to the significance and use of proverbs, however, at times we can identify an intimation that change may have started to seep through. Despite expressions of excitement when producing proverbs, and denials that proverb use is diminishing amongst the younger generation, there were also discrete allusions to change, whether change was disguised as ‘apparent’ and ‘temporary’, or whether these allusions were transmitted through associating proverbs with ‘cultural awareness’, instead of alluding to ‘actual use’.

The next section focuses on presenting and analysing data from the elderly women’s CofP.

#### **6.2.4 Elderly Women CofP**

Section 6.2.4 discusses the use of proverbs by the elderly female speakers during interaction, including a discussion of interview data, which includes overt responses to the question relating to whether they produced proverbs in their daily interaction. This is to ascertain whether within the female CofP, the tradition that serves as the identity of the Ute-Okpu people survived globalization.

### 6.2.5 Observation of Elderly Women during Interaction

As indicated in Table 5.1, participants in this CofP did not produce as many proverbs (17 proverbs) compared to the proverbs produced by members of the men's CofP. Also, although speakers were expressive to some extent when producing proverbs, the enthusiastic nature of responses from the male participants was not mirrored in this CofP. Furthermore, I observed that members of this CofP interacted in Ika, which was their group repertoire and participants adhered to speaking Ika all the way through the process, unlike E.M.B who switched to English during interaction in the elderly male CofP.

Section 6.2.6 presents and analyses data from the interview with four participants from the elderly women CofP to explore overt opinions on their use of proverbs during interaction. Similar to the elderly CofP, these questions revealed the rational behind the interviews, which may have influenced, the response of the participants.

### 6.2.6 Interviews of Participants from the Elderly Women CofP

Participants in this CofP were explicitly asked during interviews if they produced proverbs during their daily interaction. Extract 6.5 is from the interview with E.W.I, whose response to the question suggests that she does indeed produce proverbs in her daily interaction.

#### Extract 6.5 (I use proverbs with my kids, friends, and colleagues)

12. E.W.I:                   Emmm... the importance of proverbs in my place, the  
13.                           importance of proverbs in my place is that it is not everything  
14.                           you say a visitor is supposed to understand. At least if you and  
15.                           your children are discussing, there is how you will speak  
16.                           proverbs for them that they will know what you said. Maybe like  
17.                           for example, if you want to tell someone to leave this place, I  
18.                           don't want to see you here again, you can say *after a visitor finish*



19. *eating to his satisfaction, he realizes that the rain has stopped*
20. *falling. (Explains the meaning of the proverb with a smiling face)*
21. Interviewer: so what do you think about now, do people still use proverbs?
22. E.W.I: yes, yes, yes, most places, in my village, in particular, we still
23. use it. I myself I use it most times
24. Interviewer: ok! Ok! Do you use proverbs during interactions?
25. E.W.I: yes!! I use them for my kids
26. Interviewer: just your kids?
27. E.W.I: for my friends, my colleagues, I use it, sometimes we joke with
28. it.

In Extract 6.5 the main question analysed in this section is asked in line 24. However, before that question, prior responses from E.W.I suggest that she produces proverbs in her interaction. From lines 12 to 20 the participant narrates the importance of proverbs in her community and cites examples of such situations where she can use proverbs, including the use of proverbs to communicate discreetly with family members so that outsiders cannot understand. From lines 14 to 16, the participant suggests that she uses proverbs in interactions with her children: ‘At least if you and your children are discussing, there is how you will speak proverbs for them that they will know what you said’. Each question asked by the interviewer focused on proverb, which makes it impossible not to notice that the research event focused on proverbs. As such, like the elderly men CofP, E.W.I may have been influenced by the research focus to highlight her respect to traditional styles, indexing herself and negotiating her identity as one who uses proverbs in everyday interaction. Furthermore, she gives an example of a proverb she produces during interaction with her children (lines, 18-20). Interestingly, she switches from English to Ika to produce the proverb, thus indexing her affiliation to the

traditional styles of producing proverbs. Furthermore, E.W.I between lines 24-27 suggests that she produces proverbs in her daily interaction generally, as she lists people she is likely to come in contact with in her daily activity. In line 27, E.W.I suggests that proverbs are used to joke within the group, thus indicating they are used to index and enhance in-group rapport. This association of proverbs with non-serious discourse was not identified in the elderly male CofP. E.W.I indexes herself as an individual who produces proverbs in interaction, adheres to the traditional style of producing proverbs and her use of proverbs is not affected by the encroachment of globalization. She also makes an explicit association between the use of proverbs and humorous discourse, which, as we will see, is very common in the interactions of the younger speakers.

Extract 6.6 is from the interview with E.W.E, who is also asked if she produces proverbs during interactions.

Extract 6.6 (I produce proverbs to friends and family during interactions)

35. Interviewer:       so do you use it during interaction?
37. E.W.E:             yes I do, with friends and family.
39. Interviewer:       and they understand you?
42. E.W.E:             yes, fine
44. Interviewer:       but do they speak, do they use these proverbs?
45. E.W.E:             yes
46. Interviewer:       they do?
47. E.W.E:             yes, their own level too.

In Extract 6.6, she replies to this question by stating that she produces proverbs in interactions with friends and family. Her simple, direct response to the questions does not indicate a lack of cooperation, but it signals her direct affirmation that she produces proverbs in interaction and her production of proverbs is not affected by the social

changes around her. She does, however, finally admit to the younger generation producing proverbs at ‘their own level’ (line 47) following a sequence of questions relating to the understanding and use of proverbs.

Extract 6.7 is from the interview with the leader of the CofP.

Extract 6.7 (yes I do, especially with my kids)

9. Interviewer: okay. So what are proverbs to the Ute-Okpu people?

10. Leader: *proverb (Atutu elu) is a way of communication in Ute-Okpu. It is a tool*

11. *of communication used to summarize a lot in smaller sentences.*

12. *You know during the meeting we just finished I used proverbs as*

13. *a communication tool to pass my messages across. I didn’t*

14. *talk a lot rather I just expressed myself using proverbs.*

15. Interviewer: Do you use proverbs in your daily interactions with people?

16. Leader: yes I do. I use them especially for kids to advise or warn

18. them against bad behaviour.

At the beginning of Extract 6.7, the interviewer asks the leader to explain her understanding of Ute-Okpu proverbs. She responds using the local variety (Ika) immediately she is asked in line 9 to describe a traditional style (proverbs) and this signals familiarity to the topic of discussion and her solidarity to the traditional style in question. Also, she narrated a shared past experience, which occurred during the meeting that was observed by the interviewer a few hours before the interview: ‘*You know during the meeting we just finished I used proverbs as a communication tool to pass my messages across. I didn’t not talk a lot rather I just expressed myself using proverbs*’ (lines 12-14). Her use of ‘you know’ is used to prompt the memory of the researcher, and highlight the validity of her statement, as the researcher witnessed the spontaneous production of proverbs. The speaker thus uses this to explicitly index

herself as one who spontaneously produces proverbs in interaction, which adds weight to her claim here in the interview that she can and does produce proverbs. Finally, her response to the question (line 15), directly suggests that she indexes herself as an individual who produces proverbs in her daily interaction and the importation of other cultural values into the larger community has not affected the traditional style, which she affiliates to.

Extract 6.8 is from the interview with E.W.D and it presents her response to the question of whether she produced proverbs in her daily interaction.

Extract 6.8 (I use proverbs to talk with everybody, family and friends)

3. Interviewer: So am researching on proverbs, the use of proverbs in Ika  
4. Land, particularly Ute-Okpu. So I want to find out what  
5. proverb is to the Ute people?  
6. E.W.D: *(laughing) our people say it is the light shown to a stranger that*  
7. *will guide him to know something'* am not saying you are a  
8. stranger. I just used the proverb to let you know you have done  
9. the right thing. So I will answer you. proverbs is what we use  
10. to talk clearer in my village.  
11. Interviewer: So do you use this proverb in your daily interaction?  
12. E.W.D: I use it in talk with everybody, with family and friends. It  
13. makes interaction easier.

The extract begins with an introduction by the researcher, who explains to the participant the focus of the interview. This particular action by the researcher reviews that this interview is a research event, as such it may influence the response given by the participant. Thus, E.W.D, in Extract 6.8, relies on the use of proverbs to address the question posed in line 3. The interviewer did not directly elicit the proverb produced in

lines 6-8; rather the interviewee spontaneously produced it. Also, E.W.D used Ika to produce proverbs and switched back to English, which indexes her adherence to the traditional style of producing proverbs. Therefore, discursively E.W.D affirms solidarity to Ika, emphasizing its association with an in-group identity, although the language of interaction is a global variety. She doesn't explicitly construct the interviewer as the 'other', but this is implied both through her switch to Ika, and her choice of proverbs: one that refers to 'strangers'. Her laughter is used to mitigate the directness of her proverb and ensure rapport is maintained. It is interesting that E.W.D starts her response in line 6, but only officially responds to the question in line 9 where she utters, 'So I will answer you'. The lines prior to this statement constitute a precursor to her answer and are used to set the scene for highlighting the significance of proverbs for her cultural identity, and for establishing the relationship with the interviewee: she indirectly identifies the interviewee as an outsider, but also appeals to her positive face by suggesting that the researcher has 'done the right thing'. Once her introduction is complete, she proceeds to officially recognize and answer the interviewer's question. Furthermore, E.W.D's response to the question suggests she indexes herself as one who produces proverbs in her daily interaction with everybody, which includes her family and friends. In the above extract, E.W.D directly admits to her use of proverb, discursively indexes her use of proverbs in interaction, how the pervasiveness of English and the importation of cultural values other than those of the Igbo have not influenced her perception of the importance of tradition and proverbs. She alludes to proverbs making interactions 'easier', which can include reference to both the clarity of the message conveyed, but also the socio-pragmatic function of proverbs as a mitigating strategy (further explored below).

A consideration of the observation of this CofP suggests that its members did not produce proverbs as often as the older men did during interaction. However, during

interviews, their responses to the questions posed suggest that they indeed indexed and negotiated their identities as people who produced proverbs in their daily interactions. Members of this CofP did not interrupt the interviewer as much as the men did, or use expressive phrases like ‘yes oooo’ or ‘yes of course’. Their allusions to their use of proverbs in daily interaction were portrayed and indexed through references to past uses of proverbs during the meetings (e.g. Extract 6.7) and their production of proverbs (e.g. Extract 6.8). More specifically, they discursively indicated their affiliation to the local language in the production of proverbs by intentionally switching from English to Ika to produce proverbs during interviews. Therefore, it is the opinion of the researcher that members of this group indexed themselves as a CofP who still produce proverbs during their daily interaction and adhere to traditional ways of producing proverbs. Thus, this finding suggests that globalization has not affected the use of proverbs within this CofP in this respect.

#### **6.2.7 Youths CofP**

This section will explore the use of proverbs by youths in their daily interaction by presenting data from observation and interviews of participants from the youth CofP. Thus, it interrogates the existence and importance of proverbs amid globalization within the younger generation.

#### **6.2.8 Observation of Youth CofP**

Observation of this CofP suggests that this group did not produce as much proverbs as the elderly CofP produced during interactions with each other: a total of 15 proverbs (Table 5.1). Also, observed in this CofP was a difference in their style of producing proverbs, compared to the older generation. This style, as shall be shown (section 6.3), is indicative of a variation, which reflects the linguistic situation in the wider community. This style is different from the traditional forms, and the response to this

style in this CofP was that of affiliation and acceptance. Thus, the effect of globalization on the use of proverbs was not only indicative of the frequency of their production, but also of the styles of production adopted.

Section 6.2.9 explores the interviews of four participants from the youth CofP.

### **6.2.9 Interviews with Participants from the Youth CofP**

The researcher also asked participants who participated in interviews from this CofP if they produced proverbs during their daily interaction with people. In the extract below, Youth A explicitly and discursively constructs her affiliation to the traditional style of producing proverbs. However, when asked if she produces proverbs in her daily interaction, her response suggests that her production of proverbs is restricted to the context of interaction

#### Extract 6.9 (I produce proverbs not as often as I would like)

23. Interviewer: This interview started with English as our medium of exchange  
24. but when you wanted to produce proverbs, you just switched  
25. over to Ika. Is there any significance to that change?
26. Youth A: Definitely I really believe that it has more emphasis. Even the  
27. intonation you use can go a long way in explaining yourself  
28. better. Because there are just certain things that English (...)  
29. English is good in expressing general conversations but there  
30. are certain things the message is not going to convey as well as  
31. if it was in your native dialect. I think it is, I really think is ehnn  
32. (smiling) very essential for one to understand how proverb work  
33. and it is also a good way of making extra communication.
34. Interviewer: Do you use it in your daily interactions?
35. Youth A: (Laughing) Well...., not very often, not as often as I would like,

36. because another thing is for the people around you to  
37. understand. This is because if you start saying proverbs you  
38. have to be explaining every time.... ehnn. So maybe if I have  
39. more people that understand my dialect it will be easier to  
40. communicate. Maybe if I am at home with family but not on  
41. daily interactions to be honest with you.

Extract 6.9 is from the interview with a female member of the youth CofP. It is important to note that she produced spontaneously two of the four proverbs produced by the speakers in this CofP, and during these occasions switched from English to Ika to produce proverbs. This indicates her awareness of the norms that are generally adhered to when producing proverbs in Ute-Okpu, and also reveals her competence in the local dialect. The above extract starts with an eliciting question from the interviewer for the participant to explain her reason for switching to produce proverbs. The participant explains that Ika is more effective in transmitting meaning when used to produce proverbs: 'English is good in expressing general conversations, but there are certain things the message is not going to convey as well as if it was in your native dialect.' Furthermore, in line 31 Youth A relies on repetition for emphasis: 'I think it is' and 'I really think it is ehnn (smiling) very essential for one to understand how proverbs work.' The inclusion of the word 'really' to the phrase the second time she produces it, adds further emphasis to her response. Thus, she explicitly and discursively constructs an affiliation to the traditional style of producing proverbs. However, when asked in line 34 if she produces proverbs in her daily interaction, her response in line 35 suggests that her production of proverbs is restricted to the context of interaction. Also in line 35, Youth A discursively conveys a positive attitude towards the use of proverbs, noting that she does not produce them 'as often as I [she] would like' because of the need to



explain them. Furthermore, in line 38 she emphasizes the inconvenience experienced whenever she must explain proverbs to co-participants, by dragging the pronunciation of the word 'time' and in line 39, she explains that producing proverbs would only be possible at home with family but not in daily interactions. Also, her use of 'my' at the beginning of line 39 indicates her affiliation to the use of the local dialect to produce proverbs. Therefore, although she may not produce proverbs as much as she wants to during interaction, the above analysis suggests Youth A's use of proverbs and attitudes towards proverbs is still in line with the traditional styles of producing proverbs, and it has not been affected by the multilingual situations.

The extract below is from the interview with a male member of this CofP referred to by the researcher as Youth B. The extract is Youth B's response to the question if he used proverbs in his daily interactions.

Extract 6.10 (I produce proverbs on very rare occasions)

25. Interviewer:       so your parents or grandparents did they use proverbs, what are  
26.                       Ute-Okpu proverbs?
27. Youth B:           I don't...know...much but I know that yea there are some  
28.                       proverbs in my language they use, my grandparent's use  
29.                       proverbs especially when they have friends together, like  
30.                       meetings of their own friends and mates and all that or in a  
31.                       meeting or something they speak
32. Interviewer:       what of with you?
33. Youth B:           yea, with meeee at times they do, and I don't understand what  
34.                       they mean (laughs) so it's so strong, I go and ask, I go back to  
35.                       them and say I don't understand what you mean by that
36. Interviewer:       do you use proverbs with in your interactions with

37. other people?
38. Youth B: ehmmm, the few ones I have heard my grandparents spoke with
39. me and I have asked them the meanings and interpretation, yea I
40. do. Yea I do but very rare occasions. Yea.

Extract 6.10 starts with a preface, where the interviewer poses a question that explores the transition of proverbs by Youth B's grandparents and his knowledge of Ute-Okpu proverbs. In line 27-31, Youth B explains that his parents and grandparents produce proverbs in his language during interaction; more specifically, he describes the context of their proverb use. Interestingly, while the older generations seem to suggest that proverbs produced in the local variety are used in the home domain with family and children, this youth suggests that mainly the elders in official contexts such as meetings use them. Also, it is noticeable how he specifies his parents' and grandparents' style of producing proverbs with the phrase 'in my language' (line, 28). Youth B's use of 'my' is significant as it points to a contradiction between him perceiving the local dialect to indeed be 'his', but him admitting that he doesn't really 'get' proverbs. Thus, Youth B indexes his parents and grandparents as individuals who adhere to traditional styles to produce proverbs. Furthermore, in his description of his grandparents' use of proverbs, Youth B does not make mention of a context where his grandparents and parents produce proverbs in interaction with him he excludes himself. Thus, the interviewer elicits this information by asking if Youth B's grandparents and parents use proverbs to interact with him. In response, Youth B explains that they sometimes produce proverbs and that when they do; he is not able to understand them. Also, he explains that most of the time he would have to ask them to explain the proverbs and, by describing his parents' and grandparents' style of producing proverbs, Youth B indirectly explains why he finds it difficult to understand proverbs. Finally, in response to the question which

explores his use of proverbs in daily interaction (lines 36-37), Youth B implicitly suggests that he rarely produces proverbs in interaction and associated the use of proverbs with the older generation when asked earlier in the interview what proverbs are. A consideration of Youth B's responses indirectly alludes to his rare use of proverbs.

Extract 6.11 below starts with a question from the interviewer asking Youth E (male) about his knowledge of proverbs. His explanation suggests he is aware of what proverbs are (lines 24-28).

Extract 6.11 (it is very unlikely I use proverbs during interaction)

24. Interviewer:        what do you think about proverbs?
25. Youth E:            proverbs are just ways of...like I said bringing two ideals
26.                        together (claps both hands to demonstrate the idea of bringing
27.                        two ideas together) or making a sense out of them. That is if you
28.                        can process the meaning.
29. Interviewer:        okay. do you use proverbs in your interaction with others?
30. Youth E:            Sometimes I use it if we are in a serious debate and I want to
31.                        make a point I can use a proverb, but it is Most: un: likely
32. Interviewer:        Yea
33. Youth E:            It's very unlikely. I will use proverbs (Nodding his head)
34. Interviewer:        Okay. But you know any proverbs? Can you tell me one?
35. Youth E:            The ear that does not listen will be chopped off with the head.

In lines 29, the researcher asks Youth E if he produces proverbs in his interaction with people. Youth E's response to the question suggests that he does not produce proverbs in interaction very often. He indexes the use of proverbs in a formal context in line 30, 'sometimes I use it if we are in a serious debate and I want to make a point' and

explicitly admits to his rare use of proverbs through the phrases ‘it is Most: un: likely’ (line 31) and ‘it’s very unlikely I will use proverbs’ (line 33). Thus, Youth E describes a context that may prompt his production of proverbs during interaction. Youth E’s pronunciation of the words ‘Most: un: likely’, the nodding of his head and his repetition of the word ‘unlikely’ (lines 33) lays emphasis on his use of proverb during specific interactions. The researcher further elicits a proverb from Youth E in line 34, which he produces in line 35 in English. The fact that Youth E did not switch to Ika to produce the elicited proverbs like the elders interviewed, indicates his inability to speak Ika. Furthermore, Youth E’s lack of fluency in Ika may also account for why he is most unlikely to produce proverbs. Also, when asked about proverb use, Youth E explicitly attributed the use of proverbs to the older generation: ‘Proverbs are used by elderly people’, thus alluding to an ‘us’ (younger generation) vs ‘them’ (the older generation) identity.

Extract 6.12 was from the interview with Youth C, a male member of the youth CofP. The extract presents his response to the question relating to whether he produced proverbs in his daily interactions.

Extract 6.12 (I produce proverbs when I really need to)

15. Interviewer: Youth C, so do you mean that proverbs reflect your  
 16. cultural background? What I mean is do proverbs reflect  
 17. traditions in your culture?  
 18. Youth C: Yes. As we all know, Nigeria, Africa is a traditional place. (0. 5  
 19. ) We all have diverse culture and ehnn traditions. Proverbs has  
 20. a lot to actually do with our traditions and as a typical African  
 21. man, I actually hold my tradition to high esteem that’s why I  
 22. feel we can’t do without it because that is our identity.  
 23. Interviewer: so you as a youth do you use proverbs in your daily interaction

24. with friends and family?
25. Youth C: Yeah, I don't really... I won't say I use it daily or in my daily
26. interaction but sometimes I use it, you know when I really need
27. to use it. You understand me? Sometimes when I try to
28. interact with my friends to make them see some things from
29. my point of view, you understand? I, I, I, I, express it in
30. proverbs. Like when I am trying to actually advise my
31. friends about friendship, oneness and about unity I use
32. proverbs like this kind of proverb, *it is when the two lips*
33. *come together that they whistle* and *we still talk say nah co-*
34. *operation make pot fill with rice.* You understand me? Thank 35.
- you very much.

Youth C produced four proverbs spontaneously during interactions and the interview with the researcher. In lines 15-17 the interviewer tries to get a reaffirmation from Youth C who has suggested that proverbs reflect tradition. Youth C reaffirms his suggestion with the response in lines 18-22 where he makes a firm association between his identity as an 'African man' and the significance of proverbs for African traditions and values, which he holds in 'high esteem'. With this response, Youth C discursively constructs a collective (the phrases 'we all know', 'our tradition' and 'because that is our identity') and individual identity ('as a typical African man I actually hold my tradition...') that affiliates him to the traditions of Nigeria. Thus, his use of the word 'we' and 'our' signals a collective perspective of tradition and his use of the word 'I' in the above phrase signals his individual perspective on traditions in Nigeria. In line 23, the interviewer poses a question to elicit his opinion on his use of proverbs in interaction. Youth C explains that he produces proverbs, but not very often. However, he indexes his ability to produce proverbs by producing two proverbs spontaneously in

lines 32-34 in Ika and Nigerian Pidgin, while describing a context where he could produce proverbs in interaction. Also significant is the fact that he switches to Ika in lines 32-33 to produce the proverb '*it is when the two lips come together that they whistle*' and switches to Nigerian Pidgin English in lines 33-34 to produce the proverb '*nah co-operation make pot fill with rice*'.

A consideration of the above suggests that although Youth C explicitly states he uses proverbs sometimes in interaction, discursively he indexes an identity that still affiliates to the tradition of producing proverbs in interaction, at the same time signalling other variations in the production of proverbs, such as producing proverbs in Nigerian English Pidgin, a practice not observed in the interactions of members of the older generation. In addition to the contradiction between proverbs used in formal and informal situations, there is another 'contradiction': a distinction between 'proverbs' and 'the local dialect'. Whereas traditionally they are both used together (proverbs produced in Ika), the youths indicate that they want to use proverbs, but are less fluent in the local variety. So, they need to somehow find a solution amidst this tension between language variety and cultural value. Thus, Youth C draws from a range of identities and varieties, expressing an affiliation to all identities, both national and local. This way, he carves out a new space, which can be referred to as a third space (Bhabha 1994), to construct and express his own cultural identity and affiliations. This will be discussed in greater detail below where a more in-depth micro-level analysis of the socio-pragmatic significance of language use is carried out.

#### **6.2.10 Discussion**

The findings in this section answer the research question: 'Can traditions (and, in particular, the use of proverbs) that index the identity of Ute-Okpu people, survive with globalization?' Researchers have previously raised the question of whether

globalization affects identity construction (e.g. Bauman 2001; Kerimova 2009) especially with the issue of generational transition of discursive patterns (Obadan, 2015). Therefore, they suggest it is the duty of older generations to pass down this means of expression (i.e. proverbs) to the younger generation. More specifically, these researchers have indicated that the influence of globalization on the use of proverbs and traditional forms of identity is portrayed in the frequency of proverbs used in daily interaction by the youths. Thus, there were no restrictions on the use of proverbs to a particular group in a community, since those who are said to be the custodians of proverbs (elders) suggests they form intergenerational relations with the younger generations by communicating with proverbs.

According to Musere (1991, p.1), 'African proverbs have continued and would continue to be a wealth of oral wisdom and tradition frequently used in proverbial literature. However, such literature is generally communicated and retained by the elderly in philosophical discourse situations in metaphorical contents.' Therefore, the findings from these CofPs concur with Musere's suggestion that proverbs are seen as a natural part of everyday speech, and believed to be used more by a particular people who are referred to as elderly and wise. Similarly, it also concurs with Oduaran and Oduaran's (2006) suggestion that a dying elderly African can be compared to a burning library with its wealth of resources. However, a consideration of the above findings in section 6.2 suggests that the observer's paradox (Labov, 1972) was exemplified during interviews with participants. As the researcher interviewed participants, the participants were aware that the research was likely to adopt a formal register, which produced talk that may not typically be used by participants if the interviewer was not present. It was clear that the participants in each CofP, especially the elderly CofP were keenly aware of the researcher's presence and significantly oriented to. Thus, this influenced their use of proverbs during interviews, where older speakers appeared to keenly use proverb to

highlight their use of proverbs in everyday interaction and the younger speakers indexed their identity as people who respected the traditional styles. The interview findings from the older CofPs suggest that the older generations indexed their identity as a CofP that still produce proverbs in their daily interactions and the observation of the older CofPs also concurred with the findings from the interview. On the other hand, findings from the interviews with youths suggest they are unlikely to produce proverbs in their daily interaction, and this finding concurs with comments that globalization is a threat to every society and that no society is immune to it (Awonsi, 2006; Brodie, 2013; Rhoads, 1993).

Therefore, in a country like Nigeria that has three ethnic groups (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba) and within these groups there are different dialects, it can be a struggle to use one's native language in the production of proverbs in an interaction that is made up of diverse participants. The findings in Section 6.2 suggest that participants fostered intergenerational relationships, where the younger generations are made to appreciate, know and use proverbs in their daily interaction to ensure that proverbs are sustained (Oduaran & Oduaran, 2006). Interestingly, most participants suggested they use proverbs mostly with their children, which indicates that proverbs have something special (their association with advice and guidance) that make them more targeted towards children. So, proverbs are not only used to create in-group identity and rapport (they are associated with family, humour, etc.) but also used as a persuasive tool, marked out by a switch in languages to the local language. Thus, proverbs in this study are allegedly still used with children, and when a language dies, it is used less with children. However, proverbs are a language variety, and findings from this section suggest that the use of the in-group (Ute-Okpu) variety is diminishing with the advancement of globalization within the youth CofP, which concurs with Obadan's (2015) study of proverbs use and the in-group (Ogwashi-uku) variety. The use of



proverbs is diminishing in the same way minority languages gradually die when migrant groups settle in new locations, and new generations come along exposed to the majority language and the opportunities that come with it. Indeed, it is apparent that the use of proverbs in interaction is declining within the youths' CofP but that is not to say that they do not affiliate themselves to this traditional style. As seen in Section 5.2.8, just like the older participants, participants from the youths' CofP used the formulaic turn of phrase 'our people say' to signal the production of proverbs, they made use of possessive pronouns like 'my', 'we' and 'our' (p. 176) and sometimes produced proverbs in Ika to signal their affiliation to traditional style. However, since the frequency of proverb production in the youth CofP is obviously low, it is important to find an appropriate response to the wave of globalization, which is affecting the use of proverbs.

Thus, the findings have suggested that traditions (and, in particular, the use of proverbs) that index the identity of Ute-Okpu people are not well used by the youths in the wake of globalization, it is important to explore if these youths have reappropriated the use of proverbs among themselves.

### **6.3 New variations and style of interaction within the Youth CofP**

In the previous section, it was established that the elderly CofP adhered to traditions and norms that are acceptable within their CofP. Failure to adhere to these norms and traditions attracted reactions from co-participants, which indicated that deviations from the norm were not acceptable within the CofP. To answer the second research question 'Do younger speakers provide new variations on proverbs as a way of reappropriating this inherited and culturally significant practice?', this section will focus more on the Youth CofP, to explore new variations in the production of proverbs and other forms they have reappropriated as a way of identifying and indexing membership to their

community. Thus, Section 6.3.1 presents and analyses data to explore code-switching during interaction in the youths' CofP.

### **6.3.1 Code-switching as a variation and style of interaction within the Youth CofP**

This section explores code-switching and aims to identify whether members of this CofP switch between varieties to construct and index their identity and reappropriate inherited cultural traditions. Thus, it presents data from observations of this CofP and the interviews of participants.

### **6.3.2 Observation of Youth CofP**

An observation of this group indicated a different pattern in the language used in the production of proverbs. Youths were observed to use Ika, English and Nigerian Pidgin English during interaction and to produce proverbs, with the majority of the conversation nonetheless being in English. Contrary to the observation in the older CofPs, some speakers in this CofP were observed to maintain the use of English or switch between English, Nigerian Pidgin and Ika. More frequent was the switch from English to Nigerian Pidgin English during interactions.

Extract 6.13 is from observations of spontaneous interaction between 5 youths. The extract is from the second meeting of the youth CofP, which was observed by the researcher and it features a range of interactional patterns, including teasing sequences and responses to mock criticism.

#### Extract 6.13 (Switching from English to Nigerian Pidgin language)

1. Youth C: Youth A have you been able to get a job since you applied?
2. Youth A: my brother I have not heard anything from them ooo
3. Youth H: I think it is time we take up this matter of unemployment to those of us
4. who have high places of authority in this state.

5. Youth C: ehnn, it's important that the Nigerian youths come to the reality that our  
6. unemployment situation is not going to get better in the nearest future  
7. to make ends meet, let everyone think of relevant skills to acquire even  
8. as a graduate. ***Our people say advice no be curse oo!*** (Audience laugh)
9. Youth B: (→) ***wait make I tell you something*** (trying to get the attention of his  
10. audience), Acquisition of these skills are not cheaper either, Abi you  
11. want to be a shoe shiner? The society does not provide menial jobs you  
12. can responsibly do and earn something to sponsor yourself to get the  
13. extra skill. ***And me when be doctor, I don pass that level nah!!!***(As a  
14. doctor I should not be on that level). Not as easy as said.
15. Youths: (audible voices in the background, laughter, hails)
16. Youth H: He has a point, my brothers, and sisters
17. Youth C: My guy...My guy (trying to get the attention of Youth A)
18. Youth A: yesss, talk ooo I can hear you
19. Youth C: I really understand your perspective on this matter, but you know there are  
20. no substantial excuses for not being successful in life. So every man must  
19. look inward and see what is suitable for his status. There are a lot of  
20. opportunities in Nigeria....

The discussion was centred on how difficult it was to find suitable employment and included suggestions from members of this CofP relating to action that needs to be taken. The language of interaction was predominantly English. However, members of this CofP switched from English to Nigerian Pidgin during their interaction. In line 5, Youth C voices his opinion on the discussion that is taking place, suggesting it is important for the youths to face the reality that good paying jobs are hard to find. Thus, they should look for lower paying jobs in order to survive. He emphasizes his opinion, and at the same time signals the end of his turn, by producing the proverb '***Our people***

*say advice no be curse oooo*’ in line 8. Interestingly, Youth C switches from English to Nigerian Pidgin English to produce the proverb, and the switch does not signal any form of divergence or disaffiliation from members of the group. Instead, it evokes laughter from the audience. Therefore, the elders laughed and smiled when proverbs were produced. In both cases, the production of a proverb, in a local variety (Ika in the case of the older speakers, and Nigerian Pidgin English in the case of the younger speakers), can function as a mitigator of directness and enhancer of rapport. However, in the interactions of the older speakers, proverbs are also associated with ‘serious’ contexts including giving advice and guidance, maintaining hierarchy and conveying the importance of showing respect. The older speakers show their approval with the production of the proverb itself, and the content. As we shall see, in the interactions of the younger speakers on the other hand, the use of Nigerian Pidgin itself, so closely associated with proverbs in this CofP, directly evokes solidarity by indexing the onset of non-serious discourse. Hierarchy is less important for the younger generation, and proverbs are used to maintain an egalitarian atmosphere, rather than preserve an existing social structure.

In Extract 6.13 above, the next speaker continues the conversation in the same language (line 9), thus signalling the acceptance of the Nigerian Pidgin English as an unmarked choice in the production of proverbs and interactions within the CofP. Also, by converging to and maintaining the same variety, the next speaker is able to seamlessly obtain the floor without threatening the face of the previous speaker. The speaker also uses the phrase ‘*wait make I tell you something*’ (line 9) to indicate that he now wants the floor. Subsequently, he switches back to English (lines 10-12) affiliating to a global means of communication but also brings the conversation back to a local variety (Nigerian Pidgin) in line 13. This demonstrates a skilful manipulation of language varieties by the speaker, enabling him to participate in the use and understanding of

familiar and common cultural frames, while also ensuring rapport is maintained. The above findings suggest that members of this CofP discursively construct their identities and index their affiliations to local and global discourses, by using Nigerian Pidgin English to produce proverbs amidst English utterances. They also use code-switching as a discourse tool, to differentiate meaning and reference in their interactions, and claim the floor. At the same time, the direction (and not just the juxtaposition) of the switch in language is important, as the Pidgin variety is more informal and achieves rapport, which is evidenced through the laughing that accompanies the use of the local variety. Members of this group also sometimes switch to Ika during interaction, especially to produce proverbs. Extract 6.14 below is an example of this in lines 27-28.

Extract 6.14 (Switching from English language to the Ika Language)

19. Youth C: I really understand your perspective on this matter, but you know there are  
 20. no substantial excuses for not being successful in life. So every man must  
 19. look inward and see what is suitable for his status. There are a lot of  
 20. opportunities in Nigeria....
21. Youth E: look at youth C talking as if he can bring himself down to do these  
 22. entire menial jobs. Have you forgotten the family you come from?
23. Youths: (some youths chorus in agreement but an audible voice says ‘*abeg*  
 24. remind *am for me*’)
25. Youth C: See, as an individual I know the kind of jobs I did in 2007 to meet up  
 26. with what I wanted to do back then. Do you think I am where I am  
 27. today because of my family? Our people say you no *they do not meet up*  
 28. *the person that left yesterday*. It is a fact of life, so it is better you realise  
 29. it today and find something to do.
30. Youth A: Anyway I get the point both of you are trying to make sha. This life is not  
 31. easy but as Youth C have said we have to start figuring it at an early stage.

32. *I dey sure say people when make am today no start their journey today*
33. (Does making it today did not start their Journey today).
34. Youths: (audible voices and laughter in the audience).

Extract 6.14 above is also from the second observation of meetings of the youth CofP. It is a continuation of the discussion as presented in Extract 6.13. Youth C (male member) is of the opinion that starting from small paying jobs is better than waiting for years in search of a good paying job. However, Youth E (male participant) is of the opinion that Youth C is from a privileged background, and will not be able to apply his own advice. In the above extract, the switch from English to Ika occurs from lines 26 to 27, ‘Do you think I am where I am today because of my family? Our people say *they do not meet up the person that left yesterday*.’ Youth C starts his response to his co-participants in English; however, he switches to Ika in line 27 to produce the proverb ‘*they do not meet up the person that left yesterday*’. His use of Ika and the production of a proverb enables him to highlight his in-group identity, almost acting as a defence strategy against the claim that he is privileged. He was not interrupted during his whole turn, which also shows that his use of Ika arguably stimulated some form of deference. Thus, although co-participants did not object to the use of Ika to produce proverbs, the production of proverbs in Ika did not evoke laughter from the audience like it did in the older CofPs, or when younger speakers produce proverbs in Nigerian Pidgin English. This shows that the younger speakers possibly have access to a wider range of socio-pragmatic strategies, which are accomplished through a more diverse ‘proverb repertoire’. In line 30, Youth A signals her affiliation to both sides of the argument by stating that she understood the points both youths were making. In sum, Youth C's strategic switch to Ika before producing proverbs, indexes his affiliation to the norms and traditions of the wider society, thus identifying himself as a member of that wider society (Ute-Okpu).

At the same time, the response by co-participants during Youth C's switch to Ika signals acceptance and alignment to the use of Ika to produce proverbs.

Section 6.3.3 presents and analyses interview data to explore if participants switched between Ika, English and Nigerian Pidgin.

### **6.3.3 Interview with Youth Participants**

During interviews, participants from this CofP also code-switched between these three languages. The language used during interviews was English, but some participants switched to Nigerian Pidgin and Ika to produce proverbs. For example, as illustrated in extract 6.12, Youth C code-switches between English, Nigerian Pidgin English and Ika (lines 32-33). However, during interview with Youth B, the researcher experienced a situation whereby Youth B attempted to produce proverbs in Ika, even when the rest of the interview was in English.

Extract 6.15 presents Youth B's attempt to switch from English to Ika.

#### Extract 6.15 (A youth trying to produce proverbs in Ika)

44. Interviewer:       so, can you give me one proverb?
45. Youth B:           okay. Ehmmm... ehmmm (0.4 and (rolls his eyeball)). Yea, I
46.                       can. I can give you. Let me quickly remember one. Ehmm.
47.                       Okay, ushe... ushe... (Trying to speak in his native language)
48. Interviewer:       (cross talk by the interviewer) you can use English.
49. Youth B:           one of the proverbs means ehmmm, it goes like this (puts his
50.                       hand on his neck) ehmmm, ehmmm, Am sorry I can't think of
51.                       anyone at the moment.

Extract 6.15 illustrates Youth B's struggle to produce proverbs in Ika because he is not fluent in speaking Ika. When Youth B is asked to produce a proverb, he responds 'okay. Ehmmm... ehmmm (0.4 and (rolls his eyeball)) Yea, I can. I can give you. Let me

quickly remember one. Ehmm', which indicates his struggle to produce proverbs in the first instance. He utters 'okay', 'I can' and 'Let me quickly', which are employed by the speaker to establish himself as a fluent producer of proverbs. The reality of his lack of fluency in Ika is almost suspended, but only momentarily, until he finally admits that he cannot recall any proverbs. Furthermore, in line 47 he tries to produce proverbs using the local language variety 'ushe...ushe', but his failure to do so indicates his attempt to affiliate himself with the traditional styles and also his lack of fluency for Ika proverbs. He is unable to produce proverbs all through the interview even after the researcher suggested he could produce proverbs in English.

In sum, the younger participants can sometimes indeed produce proverbs in Ika for specific purposes. However, there is an informal agreement in the youth CofP (unlike the CofPs of the older generations) that speakers can produce proverbs in other varieties, which includes the Nigerian Pidgin and English. The choice of variety to use depends on the content of situation and intention of the speaker. The use of each variety carries additional socio-pragmatic consequences, which speakers can manipulate at specific times during the interaction to achieve their communicative and interpersonal goals. Section 6.3.4 explores humour as a linguistic style employed by speakers during interaction, as this was a frequently occurring discourse type in the interactions of the youths. Specifically, the section presents and analyses data to examine the use of humour by participants in the youths' CofP to reappropriate proverbs.

#### **6.3.4 Humour as a variation and style of interaction within the Youth CofP**

Humour was observed to play a prominent role in the practice of reappropriating identity within the CofP. The researcher observed that members of this CofP depended on humour as a way of making meaning and illustrating their points. Humour in this CofP was visible in their interaction as a way of responding to comments, but more specifically in the reappropriation of proverbs by producing proverbs in Nigerian Pidgin



English. Thus, there were situations when a switch to Nigerian Pidgin English to produce proverbs created laughter from co-participants. Extract 6.16 is from the first meeting observed, and it presents data to illustrate how participants skilfully employed humour during interaction.

Extract 6.16 (Humour in Conversation)

1. Youth D: I have a dream that one day, I will be the first lady of the USA and
2. Youth B: (→) Nice dream but very tall dream
3. Youth C: correct, *but make you drink alomo bitters first* (audience laughing)
4. Youth D: (→) *na you get your mouth* (laughs) and yes of cos I am tall
5. Youth E: your typhoid is 1/180 while the malaria is 1/160. So please take Alamo
6. Youth A: good one dear dreams do come through when efforts meet opportunity
7. Youth C: *she be female Joseph nah* (laughter in the audience)
8. Youth B: (→) D, *That Fellow dey wait for you to ripe make him for marry you*
9. *con make you full-time housewife. Igbo man for that matter* (laughter)
10. Youth C: (→) Hey girl this typhoid fever is turning into acute malaria. Start this
11. treatment now before it develops into kidney damage. *Do quick take*
12. *that drink when youth C say make you drink oooooo*. In fact after
13. drinking it just for a day Obama will call you and ask you to marry
14. him so you can be the first lady (Laughter in the audience)
15. Youth D: Youth B, gone are those days women are seen as people who
16. end up becoming housewives. Please I am allowed to talk about my
17. aspirations and Youth F, who is talking about Obama? (Laughing) Am
18. allowed to dream big jor.

The discussion in Extract 6.16 was based on Youth D's statement in line 1 that she has a dream of getting married to the president of the United States one day. This statement

constitutes a hypothetical event that stirs up different reactions from co-participants, who in turn employ a range of tools throughout their responses to carry out identity work, including proverbs, humour and stylistic language. In line 1, Youth D uses English to make reference to an international context, which resides outside the local context of interaction, by stating her dream of becoming the first lady of the USA. This statement triggers a barrage of teasing sequences, which are used as a way of negotiating identity amidst competing local and global discourses. In line 2, Youth B uses the empty adjective ‘nice’ to describe her friend’s dream, proceeding to claim that it is also a ‘very tall’ dream. She highlights her perception that the fantasy is unobtainable through choice of words, repetition and structure. More specifically, she produces a contrastive structure (‘nice’ dream vs ‘very tall’ dream), achieved through the use of the conjunctive ‘but’, which includes repetition of the term ‘dream’. Youth C continues to frame the dream as unrealistic, through initially indicating affiliation with Youth D, by uttering ‘correct’ in the same language (English), then proceeding to highlight a contrast achieved through a switch to a different variety, Nigerian Pidgin, to suggest that Youth D should consume medication to recover from her fantasy. The switch to Pidgin English is used both for the emphasis that it creates through juxtaposition and divergence, but also it arguably constitutes the variety which speakers associate with humour; a variety that attenuates the ‘bite’ of humour (Cortes-Conde, 1997), ensuring the maintenance of rapport. Youth C’s utterance in line 3 elicits laughter from co-participants, which signals that in this CofP, members can tease each other if this is achieved through a combination of English and Nigerian English Pidgin in a humorous context. The use of Nigerian Pidgin also creates juxtaposition between the global (American politics and the glamour of being the first lady) and the local context, grounding the fantasy within the cultural reality of the local interaction. In line 4, Youth D interrupts the audience and converges to Youth C by stating **‘na you get your**

**mouth**' (you own your mouth, so you can say whatever you like), skilfully proceeding to switch to English to, in turn, converge to the variety used by Youth B who commented on her ambition being 'tall' in line 2: 'And yes of course I am tall'. Use of convergence in both cases (to Nigerian Pidgin English, and then English) demonstrates her skilful manipulation of language for discourse purposes (so that she can clearly indicate which interactant/utterance she is responding to), and for social meaning: to ensure the maintenance of affiliation amidst the sequence of teasing 'attacks'. Out of context, the content of her utterances ('na you get your mouth' and 'And yes, of course, I am tall') is face-threatening; but her skilful manipulation of switching, alongside her laughter, mitigates the directness contributing to the establishment of rapport.

In line 5, Youth E becomes an active participant in the 'attack', by referring to the medication that Youth C suggested should be taken by Youth D. The teasing sequence is temporarily suspended in line 6, where Youth A shows support for her friend's dream to become the first lady of United States. Her use of 'dear' at the beginning of her utterance evokes a stereotypical British English style, used to reduce social distance. In the same line, Youth A proceeds to produce a proverb in English, which is a direct translation from Ika. Youth A's employment of an English term of endearment, alongside her use of English to produce a proverb, point towards an outward-facing perspective; however, at the same time, the fact that the speaker employs a proverb, a symbol of local identity, also enables her to maintain a connection to her inherited cultural background. Youth A thus skilfully manipulates a variety of styles (proverbs, English stylisations) which combine both local and global structures, to express both her membership of, and also disagreement with, the community of practice. In line 7, the teasing sequence is resumed as Youth C affiliates Youth D to Joseph, a biblical character who is known for his dreams that seem outrageous to others 'you be female Joseph nah', which elicits laughter. Youth C's specific use of Pidgin English to pass his

message across contributes to the humorous tone. Youth B continues the stream of teasing in Nigerian Pidgin English suggesting ‘That Fellow (referring to her future husband) dey wait for you to ripe make him for marry you con make you full-time housewife. Igbo man for that matter’, which brings to the forefront cultural traditions and perspectives contributing to the local vs global tension. In lines 10-14, Youth C further contributes to the general theme of the conversation (Youth D's dreams of becoming the first lady of US) by employing yet another style, ‘Hey girl’, which is stereotypical American English used to reduce social distance. In lines 10-14, using an American stylization, and a switch to Nigerian Pidgin English, Youth C manages to dampen directness and ensure her utterance is taken as humorous. She finally switches to English to extend Youth D’s fantasy (originally produced in English) by suggesting that Obama will call Youth D and ask her to marry him, further ridiculing the dream. In lines 15-18, Youth D chooses to respond to Youth B’s utterance (from line 8) in English, with the statement ‘gone are those days women are seen as people who end up becoming housewives’. This utterance is intended to contrast with youth B's suggestion (in Nigerian Pidgin English) that ‘That Fellow dey wait for you to ripe make him for marry you con make you full-time housewife, Igbo man for that matter’. Youth D’s use of formal English arguably elevates the register and importance of her utterance over Youth B’s use of Nigerian Pidgin. One could argue that she adopts a second voice, one that transcends local consideration, cultural values and unwritten rules, a global voice: through the use of English, a more modern thinking of equal opportunity between men and women emerges.

In Extract 6.17 below, co-participants (Youths A and C) show their dissatisfaction with the direction the conversation is going because Youth H in line 33 deviated from the initial interaction, which was about getting jobs to survive.

Extract 6.17 (Nigerian Pidgin English and humour)

33. Youth H: when will you all have the time to come out so will can start up  
34. negotiations on that land for the games field will are building?  
35. Youth A: I think that discussion should be made with the men in this group. We  
36. do not have any use for a games field.  
37. Youths: (background talk)  
38. Youth I: How can you say you have no use for a games field? You can always  
39. use it for exercising if you want  
40. Youth A: sorry to disappoint you but I have already registered in a gym for one year  
41. Youth C: see Youth H, they are talking about important issues of life, you are  
42. busy talking about game field. Will game field put food on your table?  
43. Youth H: *you see this man? you don see me finish abi, no be your fault sha. Na*  
44. *condition make crayfish bend.*  
45. Youths: (laughter in the audience)  
46. Youth A: (still laughing) *where you dey bend dey go?* You are very funny oooo  
47. Youth B: it is okay ooo, before this joke turns into a serious matter.

In response to the dissatisfaction signalled by Youth A and C (lines 35-42), Youth H in line 43 switches to Nigerian Pidgin English, evoking laughter from the co-participants. The proverb produced in Nigerian Pidgin '*You don see me finish abi, Na condition make crayfish bend*' can be compared with the proverb 'Our people say there is no more respect for elders because all of us are eating from the same pot' (which was produced by a participant from the elderly women CofP). The proverbs mean the same thing (as they both refer to disrespect as a result of overfamiliarity) and can be used interchangeably depending on the context of use. Thus, through the use of Nigerian Pidgin, the participant reappropriates this proverb to suit the context of interaction, and co-participants respond to this attempt by Youth H by laughing. The production of any

proverb during interaction with the elderly CofP undoubtedly evoked laughter, and performance from co-participants. However, laughter in the youth CofP seems to be more about the language used in the production of proverbs than an expression of agreement and satisfaction with the proverbs themselves. Also, Youth H arguably must have sensed the tension that was arising as a result of the topic being discussed, obviously offended '*you don see me finish abi*' by Youths A and C's comments, he skilfully employs the use of Nigerian Pidgin English to produce the proverb and mitigate the situation. Subsequently, in line 46, Youth A still laughing, converges to Youth C's switch to Nigerian Pidgin to ensure the maintenance of a less face-threatening atmosphere.

A consideration of the above extract suggests that members of this CofP discursively constructed their identities through employing a range of language varieties, styles and stylizations during interaction. More importantly is how co-participants laughed any time speakers in this CofP communicated using Nigerian Pidgin English. The use of this language created a relaxed atmosphere for participants, and it was used to mitigate directness, protect the face of interlocutors, and establish rapport. Thus, where elders relied solely on proverbs to dissuade co-participants from taking a particular course of action, youths relied on the use of humour during interaction with each other to illustrate meaning. The youth CofP also infused humour into proverbs by producing proverbs in Nigerian Pidgin English, thus reappropriating proverbs to suit the linguistic situation within the CofP.

### **6.3.5 Discussion on code-switching as a variation and style of interaction within the Youth CofP**

A consideration of the above findings in Section 6.3 suggests there are reappropriations of proverbs and new ways of making meaning among the youth CofP during

interactions. This reappropriation was visible within the youth CofP in their style of producing proverbs, which was different from the older CofPs. Most especially, youths were observed to have new variations in the language used in producing proverbs as well as their infusion of humour through the language choices they made in interaction. This research concurs with studies on ‘doing style’ as indexing social meaning and identity (De Fina, 2007; Coupland, 2001; Rampton, 1999; Meeuwis & Blommaert 1998; Nakassis, 2016). It particularly agrees with studies on narratives and identity that emphasize the importance of focusing on styles or semiotic resources in the analysis of identity through narrative: studies that focus on detailed talk to present deeper understandings of identity work (Blommaert, 2001; De Fina, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2007; Weber & Horner, 2012). Thus, the focus was on semiotic resources employed by participants during interaction, stylization, and styles of telling, including code-switching and teasing sequences employed by participants to index their identities through narratives.

Members of the youth CofP code-switched between Ika, English and Nigerian Pidgin English, and reflected these languages in their production of proverbs. The response of the youths to producing proverbs in these languages was different from the response from co-participants in the older CofPs. The responses from co-participants signalled their affiliation to all language choices made by speakers. Through the practice of code-switching, participants negotiated and indexed the CofP identity as flexible and dynamic. Therefore, in the process of negotiating their identity as flexible, members of this CofP could be described as creating a third space (Bhabha, 1994; Finnis, 2014), reified by a style unique to this CofP. Thus, participants in this group produced proverbs in Ika, English and Nigerian Pidgin without being seen as having claims to any particular language. Contrary to opinions that there is endangerment in the use of proverbs especially among the youths because of the language of delivery (Obadan,

2015; Nwonwu, 2014; Echeruo, 1971), the findings here suggest variations in the languages used by youths to produce proverbs, underpinned by a deep-rooted respect for the origins and cultural significance of proverbs. This finding concurs with suggestions that, in order to achieve effective communication, languages go through processes of indigenization (locals take a language style from the outside world and make it their own), which encourages the emergence of new linguistic variations (Fabin, 1991; Jowitt, 1991).

Researchers have argued that the inability of youths to speak the local languages are indications that they do not know how to produce and interpret Igbo proverbs (Balogun, 2013; Holmes, 1992; Nwonwu, 2014; Echeruo, 1971; Woodbury, 2006). According to Woodbury (2006), a language is considered dead if such a language is no longer spoken in the form in which they were used in the past, and if speakers of such a language fail to pass it on to the next generation. Similarly, Balogun (2013) suggested that the Yoruba language is endangered because the younger generation is finding it more convenient to use English in their interactions, instead of the indigenous Yoruba language. Both these comments suggest that the adoption of another language different from the native language to produce proverbs is as inappropriate as not knowing how to produce proverbs at all. Similarly, Nwonwu (2014) in his book *Philosophy of Proverbs in Igbo Culture: The Chicken Metaphor*, explains that his work acts ‘as a prelude to the revival of Igbo language, a wake-up call to get back the Igbo roots and pick up their values, a plea for the Igbo people to seek the black goat in the daytime and not wait till nightfall when everywhere will be dark’ (p, 119). He uses the proverb ‘seek the black goat in the daytime and not wait till nightfall when everywhere will be dark’ (p, 119) to state the urgency of what needs to be done by the people of Igbo in his opinion, exemplifying the use of proverbs as a rhetorical strategy. Also, Obadan (2015) in her study of the production of proverbs in the Ogwashi community in the Igbo tribe of



Nigeria, suggested that such loss is evident in the unlikelihood of youths to produce proverbs in daily interaction without code-switching during the production of proverbs and strictly adhere to using local dialects to produce proverbs. Thus, the common factor used to identify language death as suggested by these scholars is the lack of use of proverbs and the inability to produce proverbs in native languages by the younger generation.

Contrary to these comments by Woodbury, Nwonwu and Obadan, the current study suggests that these new styles signal reappropriations of proverbs by the youths and not language death. Indeed, the findings of this study are similar to Obadan's findings in the sense that youths suggested they were unlikely to produce proverbs in daily interaction and the number of proverbs produced spontaneously varied from that of the elderly group within the same frame of time. Also, the style of proverb production in the youth CofP varied from the norms and traditions accepted in the community as a whole, thus indicating that the youths did not adhere strictly to the norms and traditions of producing proverbs. However, while Obadan suggests that her findings, including the inability of the youths to produce proverbs in the local dialect, are a sign of language endangerment, I argue that these younger speakers have reappropriated proverbs to suit the linguistic situation of their environment. Proverb use amongst the younger speakers still has vital socio-pragmatic value and cultural significance. Although the youth participants had the lowest production of proverbs, findings in Section 6.3.1 suggest that participants in this group reappropriated these proverbs within the CofP to suit the acceptable means of expression within the group. They found ways of making these proverbs acceptable locally and globally, by using language variations known to participants within their group. Also, at the same time, they skilfully employed varieties in their linguistic repertoire to convey and negotiate meaning, establish rapport and protect each other's face. Since a participant like Youth B was not fluent in speaking the

local language (Extract 6.15), the option was open for them to use the Nigerian Pidgin or English. Therefore, I argue that this reappropriation does not diminish the importance of proverbs for the construction of an Ute-Okpu identity; rather the co-existence of these language varieties in the production of proverbs makes available a wider set of resources for further articulation of proverbs. This was evident in the youths' production of proverbs as opposed to the outcome Obadan (2015) had of youths not producing proverbs in their interactions during her investigation of the proverbs used by youths in Ogwashi-uku community (Igbo tribe). This is an indication that more attention should focus on spontaneous language use and investigating the possibility of a new variation of proverbs used by the youths to give social meaning within their interactional circle. Therefore, although these proverbs and their traditional styles of production may not be perceived as surviving in a changing world, youths have reappropriated proverbs to be more acceptable and accommodating within their CofP during conversations in a new world.

The youths' choice to produce proverbs using a variety of languages that are mostly used in interaction within Nigeria (English and Nigerian Pidgin English) should not be viewed as a lack of competence in Ika. Rather, the code-switching of languages, which were used in interaction by the youth CofP should be viewed as a means of accommodating their social reality. This accommodation does not stop a proverb from portraying the realities of life or performing its function. Thus, the endangerment of proverbs should not be measured by the inability of individuals to produce proverbs using the local languages, as these proverbs are still used in interactions and have been expanded to encompass and mirror a changing world. Therefore, the availability of varieties of languages to produce proverbs and the choices made by the youths to use these languages opens an opportunity for the reappropriation of proverbs within the younger generation. Although the older generations suggested they could also produce

proverbs in English if the need arises, their actions as observed by the researcher during interviews and observation, suggest that they prefer the use of the local languages. This unconscious limitation to a particular dialect in the production of proverbs may account for reasons why it is assumed that proverbs face endangerment especially because the local language is not known to the younger generation. Thus, the researcher agrees with Onwuemere's (1999) suggestion that ethnic particularism poses a threat to the national survival of proverbs in the Igbo tribe in general. The link between Ika and proverb use by Obadan (2015) is not persuasive, as it does not consider the language contact situation in the Igbo tribe. The code-switching practices of members of the youth group indexes their sociolinguistic and cultural background. Therefore, code-switching as a style or linguistic practice in this CofP was employed to negotiate the complexities within the CofP, bringing together the multiple spaces that have been created as a result of multilingualism and globalization. If every tribe is particular about using their local dialects in the production of proverbs in a changing world, then there is a high risk of losing proverbs entirely.

The writer Chinua Achebe created a possible way out in his works (for example in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*) by creating examples of the possibilities of expanding the African thought patterns. Achebe was successful in expanding the comprehension of Igbo proverbs through his use of English and Nigerian pidgin in his novels. Through the use of transliteration, Achebe gave an expanded view of the Igbo society (Larsson, 2007), by making his work locally and globally comprehensible. Another example of language change in a changing world is the American multilingual situation. The dawn of globalization resulted in a shift from an English-only speaking country to an English-plus country in America, and its advantages have been documented by researchers and scholars (e.g. Fishman, 1991; Hakuta, 1986).

### **6.3.6 Discussion on humour as a variation and style of interaction within the Youth CofP**

Members of the youth CofP frequently produced humorous exchanges during interaction as a linguistic style. A consideration of the findings in Section 6.3.4 suggests that humour was employed by participants to index their identity as a group. The act of laughing together created a sense of in-groupness, community affirmation and acceptance of their shared linguistic practices. Interactants reappropriated pre-existing identities by expanding the norms and in the process produced new variations that index them as a group. This finding concurs with the suggestion that participants do not employ humour to accomplish a social function alone, but they also employ humour to accomplish cultural reappropriation (Bakhtin, 1990). According to Bakhtin (1990), ‘laughter is not only socially but also culturally purposeful: comicality (especially satire) determines renewal of genres and literary language – liberates people from stiff canons, adds modernity and live actuality to any literary genre’ (p, 12). Thus, the researcher observed that the youths reappropriated the use of proverbs during interaction by framing them as humorous interactions. Youths were observed to use humour to tease and disagree with co-participants (Habib, 2008).

The findings also concur with suggestions that a switch from one language to another language perceived as informal can be considered humorous (Siegel, 1995). The youths sometimes switched from English to Nigerian Pidgin English to produce proverbs, thus reappropriating the norm of producing proverbs in their local dialect. It is also consistent with the suggestion that a particular variety of language can be considered a language ‘appropriate for humour’ (Apte, 1985, p. 190), which is mostly considered an informal variety (Ferguson 1959). Nigerian Pidgin English is an effective way of

speaking in Nigeria, which ranges from expressing emotions to breaking communicative barriers and creating a neutral platform. As Asemota (2015) states. ‘I mean let's be frank! If someone greets you after a long day at work with “I welcome you” you might just frown, but if someone greets you with “I throway salute” you might just end up smiling or burst into laughter’ (p. 50). Asemota’s statement suggests that the Nigerian Pidgin English is considered a language variety appropriate for laughter, which closes the social distance between speakers. The researcher observed that using Ika to produce proverbs did not evoke laughter in the youth CofP, as it did in the older CofPs. However, the use of Nigerian Pidgin English to produce proverbs evoked laughter in the CofP of the youths, just like the production of proverbs in the native language evoked laughter in the older CofP. For co-participants, the use of Nigerian Pidgin English is a signal that the speaker is joking. On the other hand, to the speakers who use Nigerian Pidgin English, it is a means of indicating the informality of the context and emphasizing solidarity with the co-participants and affiliation to the style within the CofP. Thus, it affirms that the speaker is in a social relationship with co-participants who allow the use of humour within the youth CofP.

This finding also concurs with studies on the role of humour within groups to negotiate sexist positions and identities within groups (Kehily & Nayak, 1997; LaFrance & Woodzicka, 1998; Thomae & Pina, 2015). One of the participants (Youth B) used humour to position a co-participant into a stereotype, a woman whose full-time jobs are to be housewives. However, contrary to the suggestion that women view sexist humour as harassment (Bell et al., 2002), the woman in question who the sexist humour was directed to did not view the joke as harassment as she laughed in response to the joke by co-participants, which also defuses and dismisses the meaning of the joke itself. Interestingly, when she does re-enter the conversation, she does not contribute in Pidgin to the banter. Her message is clear, albeit mitigated via the use of laughter. According to

Hussein (2005, p. 60), in 'African societies, gender ideology figures large in proverbs'. Hussein also focuses on the use of proverbs to appropriate gender roles by describing the social and ethnocultural construction of masculinity and femininity in African proverbs. Hussein analyses the role of African proverbs in creating a gendered culture, suggesting that men are believed to be more intelligent than women. Women are thought particularly to be incapable of foresight and to lack the ability to make and carry through sensible and realistic plans. The adoption of humour within the youth CofP as a repertoire or linguistic style also reflects these ideologies. But humour was also used to deflect and destabilize inherited sexist social structures. This gave the female speakers the opportunity to deflect the teasing, as they can respond through humour, thus not explicitly attacking the speaker, but reappropriating inherited sexist beliefs and values. Having access to a wider repertoire of varieties empowers the female speakers who, in this study, destabilized tradition by using styles, stylizations and switching practices strategically to indirectly readdress attitudes and behavioural patterns.

Thus, it is the opinion of the researcher that the youths succeeded in reappropriating proverbs to accomplish different goals by infusing humour into their interaction while still not completely parting with their pre-existing cultures (proverbs). Associating the coexistence of traditions and reappropriations of such traditions with language death is not insightful or productive. But more importantly, studies should pay more attention to the micro-level of language use and further explore these reappropriations, which signal the creative response to the world as it is, by the youth CofP. A consideration of language use shows that traditions are maintained in a manner that incorporates both the old and the new, and that does not eradicate the old entirely. Thus, findings suggest that the ability of youths to select from the variety of languages used in the interactional space increased the number of proverbs they could produce during interactions. Also,

the findings illustrate that coexistence of these language varieties with traditional values in the production of proverbs can project the use of proverbs in daily interactions, especially among the youths, which will, in turn, foster the transition of proverbs from the older generation to the younger generation in a changing world. Thus, it is the opinion of the researcher that such studies on new variations create an atmosphere for learning, not only about traditional proverbs but also about other variations of proverb production and out of such studies, new norms evolve, and new opportunities for identities emerge.

Also, humorous exchanges assisted both male and female participants in negotiating their identities in a less serious manner. In line 8 (Extract 6.16, p. 189), Youth B through the use of humour '*That Fellow dey wait for you to ripe make him for marry you con make you full-time housewife. Igbo man for that matter* (laughter)' negotiates and indexes the female participant as an entity that should not have such dreams as being married to the president of the USA. But at the same time, draws attention to, and thus indirectly attacks, the restrictive and outdated nature of this cultural attitude by producing it in Nigerian Pidgin English. Participants employed humour in teasing and disagreeing with Youth D, thus using it as a persuading tool rather than an indication of conflict, humour opens up space for speakers to negotiate gendered identities and reappropriate traditional beliefs of gender.

#### **6.4 Summary**

This chapter explored the research questions posed in this study: (1) can traditions (and, in particular, the use of proverbs) that index the identity of Ute-Okpu people, survive with globalization? (2) Do younger speakers provide new variations on proverbs as a way of reappropriating this inherited and culturally significant practice?

Thus, analysis of data in Section 6.2 suggests that proverbs are used more among the older generations during interaction and that members of the older generation try to transfer them to the younger generation in their traditional forms. While on the other hand, analysis of the data suggests that the use of proverbs by youths during interaction is on the decline when compared to the use of proverbs by the older generation during interaction.

However, through close analysis of interactions within the youth CofP, the researcher explored new variations within the CofP. Thus, Section 6.3 examined how the youths indexed their identities through language choice used to reflect a social phenomenon, while achieving multiple social purposes, such as identifying with Ute-Okpu traditions through their use of Ika, marking urban youth subcultural participation by their use of English and Pidgin. Thus, discursively they positioned themselves as Ute-Okpu youths and Urban Youths.

This chapter was not an attempt to eradicate the use of local languages in the production of proverbs. It was an attempt to identify and create awareness of new language variations in the production of proverbs. Thus, emphasis was laid on the fact that the reappropriation of proverbs by the youths should not be viewed as ‘a bad thing’, but should be explored in more depth by researchers to create awareness of these variations that emerge as a result of language contact (Blommaert 2010). By exploring the reappropriations of proverbs by the youths, this study further develops studies on proverb use in the Igbo tribe in particular, by progressing studies on proverbs towards what Blommaert refers to as the sociolinguistics of globalization (Chapter 3). The next chapter explores attitudes of each CofP towards reappropriation of proverbs.



## **CHAPTER 7: Attitudes towards reappropriations of Cultural expressions**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter further develops the study by exploring the attitudes of the older and younger generations towards reappropriations and shifts from traditional norms by the youth CofP, enacted in order to accommodate diversity (as seen in chapter 6). It presents data and analysis of spontaneous speech (narratives) and analysis of content (including direct statements produced during interviews designed to convey an attitude). During spontaneous speech, attitudes were deduced from participants' patterns of language choice, use, intention of use and responses of co-participants to language choice during interaction. Also, to ascertain attitudes towards reappropriation of proverb use in a changing world, questions that elicit information on participants' feelings towards the styles, more flexible approach to the production of proverbs and their opinions towards globalization were asked. The questions were:

1. Which language do you prefer to use to produce proverbs?
2. Do you think globalization has an effect on proverbs?

The first question was asked to explore if members of this CofP strictly adhered to the traditions of producing proverbs during observations with them. The purpose of the question was to investigate their reaction to members who tried to deviate from the linguistic repertoire of the CofP. On the other hand, the second question elicits their overt feelings towards globalization with regard to language contact and changes that can occur to perceptions and expressions of identity and cultural belonging as a result of globalization. Section 7.2 presents and analyses data to explore attitudes of the elderly male CofP towards reappropriations of proverb use.

## 7.2 Elderly Men CofP

This section presents data from the observations of the elderly male CofP and responses to interview questions to further explore the participants' attitude towards reappropriations. It will discuss perceptions of styles, language choices, intention of use and responses of co-participants to language choice during interactions. On the other hand, the interview questions as presented above will further interrogate overt attitudes towards the reappropriations as was seen in the youth CofP.

### 7.2.1 Observation of Elderly Men CofP

The attitudes of members of this CofP towards reappropriations were obvious during observation of this group and, as was mentioned earlier, members of this CofP portrayed themselves as the custodians of the norms and traditions of Ute-Okpu. During meetings, participants in this group gave descriptions of when to use proverbs in interaction, how to use proverbs and what provokes the use of proverbs during group meetings. Thus, they indicated that they are profoundly aware of proverbs and the importance of proverbs during interactions with each other. More specifically, the researcher observed their responses to styles that deviated from the acceptable repertoire of the CofP (Extract 6, in Chapter 5). Co- participants interrupted a speaker who code-switched from Ika to English during interaction, and proposed that the speaker switch back to the native dialect. Extract 7.1 illustrates another example of this behaviour.

#### Extract 7.1 (Response to re-appropriations of style in the Elderly men CofP)

1. Observer: *good afternoon Chi-fe, chi-ef. ...*(Greetings) I am back ooo
2. E.M.B: (laughing) *you remember her?*
3. Elders: (→) [audible voices at the background saying '*why is she speaking to*
4. *us in English?*]
5. E.M.B: She came here last in July for research in proverbs. *So that is*

6. *what sh*
7. E.M.C: (→) *Elderly Man B, Why are you speaking in English? Is she not*
8. *from Ute-Owerri? You are speaking English for what? (↑). And you*
9. *were her in July (audible voices in agreement)*
10. E.M.B: *It is okay. She was brought up in English so it will always come out*
11. *from her mouth. It will enter her mouth. That is what she is used to*
12. E.M.D: *This child that has come to seek for our proverbs has done well,*
13. *may God bless you. This proverb we are talking about was*
14. *missing but now our youth has come in search of it. It is what the*
15. *western world told them that it is forbidden, that they should not*
16. *eat it so they can live long. Since they do not hurry to the front to*
17. *enjoy longevity, you will go well in your research.*
18. Elders: *[nodding their head in agreement]*
19. Observer: *I am sorry chiefs.*

At the beginning of Extract 7.1, the observer greets members using the acceptable greeting style adopted by the CofP ‘*good afternoon Chi-fe, chi-ef*’ (line 1), but switches to English ‘I am back oooo’ (line 1) to announce her arrival to the group for her second observation of the group. E.M.B, in line 2, introduces a shared event by asking the question ‘*you remember her?*’ The speaker to indicate that the observer is not a stranger to the CofP uses this shared event. In addition, E.M.B produces laughter in response to the phrase ‘I am back oooo’, as a way of converging towards the researcher and acknowledging her use of the ingroup marker of solidarity ‘Ooooo’. This establishes rapport and recognition from the outset. However, in line 3, co-participants interrupt E.M.B and they redirect the conversation to address the code-switch by the observer who addressed the CofP in English ‘I am back ooo’ (line 1). In line 5, E.M.B switches to English and attempts again to introduce the observer to the CofP by making reference

to their shared knowledge of the observer's last visit to the CofP. It is important to note that E.M.B is the same elder that was attacked by co-participants for switching from Ika to English to produce proverbs during the first observation of this CofP. E.M.B's continuous attempt to switch to English when the observer is present alludes to his desire to be associated with a global variety and this indicates his positive stance towards the use of this global variety. E.M.B's attempt to redirect the conversation is stopped by E.M.C's interruption in line 7 to address once again the use of English. His disapproval of this switch is emphasized in line 8 by the use of a heightened intonation to utter '*you are speaking English for what?*' E.M.C makes reference to the fact that the observer is a local, who attended a previous meeting and is expected to use the acceptable repertoire of the CofP. Thus, alluding to the fact that the observer is perceived as a member of the CofP and as such should express her collective identity through her language choices. In line 10, E.M.B takes the floor and attempts to placate the audience '*it is okay*', this time maintaining the acceptable style of interaction within the CofP. To further mitigate the situation, E.M.D converges with E.M.B by continuing the conversation in Ika to maintain rapport, and praises the observer for her research: '*This child that has come to seek for our proverbs has done well, may God bless you*'. E.M.D's praise of the observer was an attempt to mitigate a face-threatening situation because of the switch and the response of the audience in line 18 indicates that E.M.D was able to restore rapport. Finally, in line 19 the observer apologizes for speaking in English instead of Ika during the interaction.

Conversational cues identified, including interruptions, repetitions and the refusal to acknowledge the attempts by E.M.B to redirect the conversation, clearly indicate that co-participants did not accept Elderly Man B's switch to English and the observer's use of English while addressing the CofP. Thus, a deviation from the norms and linguistic repertoire of the CofP by members elicited negative responses that indexed disaffiliation

from such deviations of norms by co-participants. The above extract does not specifically demonstrate a reaction of members of this CofP when speakers code-switch between English and Ika to produce proverbs (as we saw in Extract 6 of Chapter 6); however, it does highlight the reaction to language use and choices during interaction within the CofP.

To further explore this finding, the researcher interviewed four participants from this CofP and asked them the questions presented at the beginning of this chapter (Section 7.1). Thus, Section 7.2.2 presents and analyses the response of the four participants interviewed in the elderly men CofP.

### **7.2.2 Interview with Elderly Men CofP**

Extract 7.3 is from an interview with E.M.A, who is responding to the question ‘Which language do you prefer to produce proverbs?’ He is 55 years old and the leader of the CofP.

#### Extract 7.3 (I prefer to speak proverbs in Ika language, but can still speak using English)

36. Interviewer: all through this interview you spoke in English but when it got  
37. to your speaking proverbs you switched to Ika. So is it more  
38. effective when you speak it with the native language?
39. E.M.A: I interpreted it in English so it is one and the same. It is effective in  
40. both ways; however these proverbs were told to us by our fore  
41. fathers in our native Language
- 42 Interviewer: what language do you prefer to produce proverbs?
43. E.M.A: (laughing...) the truth is that I prefer to speak proverbs in my native  
44. language but if the occasion arises for me to speak it in English  
45. I will.

In Extract 7.3, the researcher expresses her observation that the participant switched from English to Ika when he produced proverbs. This elicited the need to ask the participant what language he preferred to use when he produced proverbs. In line 39-43, the interviewee's response suggests that although he prefers to produce proverbs 'in my native language', he does not mind producing proverbs in English if the need arises, suggesting that 'It is effective both ways'. Also, his response suggests that the context of interaction can affect his choice of language in the production of proverbs. E.M.A's laughter (line 43) before responding to the question indicates he is conscious of the potential 'contrast' if he admits to wanting exclusive use of Ika for proverbs. So while he expresses openness to the production of proverb in any variety, he reminds the interviewer that '[...] these proverbs were told to us by our forefathers in our native language.' This way, he manages to express understanding and acceptance of new variations in the production of proverbs, whilst at the same time conveying his understanding of the origin and cultural significance of this practice. The speaker uses the conjunctive adverb 'however' (in line 40) as a pivot to straddle both the new and also the old.

Extract 7.4 presents the response from this participant to the second question.

Extract 7.4 (Globalization does not affect proverbs)

17. Interviewer: globalization, do you think it has an effect on proverb use?
18. E.M.A: (looks confused) the use of proverbs? (!!). All I know is that
19. proverb is not for everybody, so the issue of globalization does
20. not affect proverb in the sense that proverbs is for a particular
21. segment of the society. It is just for those who are mature. Just
22. only for the mature. Younger people don't speak in proverbs.

In Extract 7.4, E.M.A in his response suggests that globalization does not affect the use of proverbs. In line 18, the participant repeats the question not because he did not understand the question but to express his surprise to the question. Thus, E.M.A does not wait for the response of the researcher, which suggests it was a rhetorical question used to highlight his attitude towards globalization and the effect it has, or not, on the use of proverbs in interaction. He makes reference again to proverbs being used by the matured or elderly man in line 21, which seems to be the most popular claims by participants interviewed for this study, thus, ascribing the use of proverbs to the elderly man, and the loss of proverbs amongst youths as ‘apparent’, rather than ‘real-time’ change. He makes an identity claim by stating ‘All I know is that proverb is not for everybody’. With this response, he indicates that the effect of globalization should be measured by how much it has affected the use of proverbs by those he refers to as ‘mature’ (line 21) not the younger speakers (line 22). An analysis of the above extract suggests that E.M.A perceives proverbs use to be associated with ‘age’, not ‘change’. E.M.A indirectly suggests youths will adopt the language of the elders when they themselves become older. In this way, he does not perceive globalization to be of any relevance.

The next extract presents the data of the second participant. E.M.C (88 years old) is one of the elders who firmly objected to a switch from norms and linguistic repertoires of the CofP by participants during interactions (Extract 7.1). This is why the interviewer had to take permission from him to interact in English during the interview, since she was not fluent in Ika (lines 1-3).

Extract 7.5 (I prefer to use Ika language when producing proverbs)

1. Interviewer: *I know you asked me to speak the native language of Ute-Okpu*
2. *during the meeting but I am not very fluent in it. Is all right for me to*
3. *mix it up with English?*

4. E.M.C: *yes it is okay. I only said that because it is important will portray*
5. *our cultural markers in our meetings. That is our language of*
6. *communication. So will expect anyone joining us to use it.*
7. Interviewer: So it was not because most of you are not fluent in English
8. *language?*
9. E.M.C: *I mean that could be a reason, however it is a meeting of chiefs*
10. *and they are custodians of our culture. After all if we wanted*
11. *English as a means of communication we would have used that why*
12. *asking for the help of someone to interpret for those who are not*
13. *fluent in English.*

Extract 7.5 unfolds with reference to a previous event (four hours before the interview) encountered by the interviewer during the observation of the elderly men CofP. The request by the interviewer to use English and Ika during the interview emphasizes her awareness of E.M.C's rejection of reappropriations of proverbs when it comes to the language of production. More specifically, the interviewer employs a politeness strategy (a request for permission to use Ika and English) to prevent a face-threatening situation, convey awareness and respect for hierarchy, and establish rapport. This request is granted in line 4, and E.M.C's approval for English and Ika to be used during the interview portrays his acceptance of a different language as long as it is not used within the interactional context of his CofP where the rules apply differently. He further explains the reason he reacted the way he did during the meeting, suggesting that it is important for members of the group to interact in Ika language within the group, due to their role as custodians of the culture. His utterances are heavily laden with indicators of ingroupness, including 'our cultural markers', 'our meetings', 'our language', 'joining us', and 'our culture'.



Extract 7.6 presents the response of this participant to the first question, which language do you prefer to produce proverbs? In the extract (line 26), the interviewer asks the participant a question to elicit his preferred language when producing proverbs.

Extract 7.6 (I prefer to use Ika language when producing proverbs)

26. Interviewer:        *so if you want to emm....speak* proverbs when you are with your  
27.                        *friends* and family, *which language do you ehn...prefer to*  
28.                        *speak? English or Ika?*
29. E.M.C:              (Laughing) *you should learn Ika ooo. I never* (moving his  
30.                        head from side to side) *use English*
31. Interviewer:        *Why do you prefer it that way?*
32. E.M.C:              *That is OUR way of life, OUR language. That is what our*  
33.                        *parents were brought up with and that is how they taught us*  
34.                        *too. We grew with it.*

The interviewer code-switches between Ika and English to ask the question (lines 26-28). In line 29, the participant laughs before saying ‘you should learn Ika ooo’. He uses laughter as a mechanism to maintain the rapport that was established by the researcher at the beginning of the interview, at the same time suggesting the need for the interviewer to learn Ika. Therefore, although he permitted the use of both Ika and English during the interview, he politely presents his disapproval of a switch between Ika and English. Furthermore, the participant’s body gesture (moving his head from side to side) to emphasize the phrase ‘I never use English’ (line 29), is indicative of the fact that his production of proverbs is ‘always’ in Ika. He continues to indirectly position himself as one who prefers the local variety by explaining that it is the language he was brought up with by his parents, which suggests he was taught to use proverbs by his parents in Ika. More specifically, he moves from a first singular pronoun to the

pronouns ‘Our’ and refers to ‘us’ instead of ‘me’ (lines 32-34), revealing a progression from his personal attitude, towards a more collective perspective and experience. E.M.C, in line 32, shows that he is associating language with life. Language is not something separate, but instead is perceived to index and construct his cultural world and this is very different to the younger generation. This also explains his attachment to the production of proverbs in Ika.

The next extract presents data for the second question relating to the effect of globalization on proverbs.

Extract 7.7 (No! No! No! Globalization does not affect proverbs)

19. Interviewer:        *do you know what globalization means?* (Explains globalization  
20.                                to him). *Does it have any effect on proverb use?*  
21. E.M.C:                *No! No! No! No!* (*Moves his head side to side*)  
22. Interviewer:        why do you think so?  
23. E.M.C:                Proverbs are still very much in use by us. Except you are talking  
24.                                of the youths. Ehnenn than you say it is affecting it.

In Extract 7.7, E.M.C answers the question by emphatically suggesting globalization has no effect on the use of proverbs. The participant is strongly of the opinion that globalization does not affect the use of proverbs, which is expressed by conversational cues such as his body language and repetition of the word ‘No’. However, his response ‘Proverbs are still very much in use by us, except you are talking of the youths. Ehnenn than you say it is affecting it’ (lines 23-24) explicitly suggests that he believes globalization negatively affects the use of proverbs by youths. Youths seem to hold an ambiguous place in ‘us’ (line 23) as they are constructed as constituting the exception to the norms of the ingroup. This participant’s attitude towards the reappropriation of proverbs in terms of style by the youths is negative. Although his reaction to the switch

by the participant was accepted in a lighter mood when compared to the reaction during observation of the official CofP meeting, his consequent reaction and suggestions signals his disaffiliation from a deviation of the linguistic style he grew up with.

Extract 7.8 is from the interview with E.M.B. It presents his response to the question of which language he preferred to use when producing proverbs.

Extract 7.8 (Producing proverbs in Ika is more satisfying)

39. Interviewer:       so when you want to speak proverbs which one do you prefer to  
40.                       use? English or Ika?  
41. E.M.B:             I use Ika  
42. Interviewer:       why?  
43. E.M.B:             Because it is more satisfying to me when I produce proverbs in  
44.                       Ika language.

E.M.B is the same elder who tried to switch from Ika to English to produce proverbs during the first and second meeting observed. However, when he was asked what language he preferred to produce proverbs in during interaction, his minimalist response suggests he prefers producing proverbs in Ika. His response to the question is contrary to his actions during his interaction with members of his CofP.

Below is an extract that presents the response to question two by E.M.B

Extract 7.9 (Globalization helps spread proverbs but...)

29. Interviewer:       so does globalization have any effect on the production of  
30.                       proverbs  
31. E.M.B:             of course it does!! (0.9, while moving his head from side to  
32.                       side) it helps, yes it helps to spread proverbs, but... it also  
33.                       makes it difficult for our younger generation to learn these

34.                                   proverbs because they may get carried away if care is not  
35.                                   taken.

In Extract 7.9, E.M.B responds to the question with the exclamatory sentence ‘of course it does’ (line 31). The participant pauses for 9 seconds, which could have signalled that he was through with his response. However, his response was accompanied with conversational cues (0.9 pauses and move of his head from one side to another), which signaled to the interviewer that E.M.B has not finished responding to the question. E.M.B continues the conversation stating that globalization ‘helps to spread proverbs’, which indicates a positive stance towards globalization (line 32). However, his production of the words ‘but...it also’ (line 32) shows that he perceives globalization to be a double-edged sword, also expressed in his response ‘[T]hey may get carried away if care is not taken’ (lines 34-35) acts as a warning, drawing attention to the fact that something needs to be done.

A consideration of E.M.B’s action during observation and his response to the questions suggest that because of the response of his co-participants to him switching, E.M.B felt inclined to strictly affiliate with the use of Ika during the interview to solidify his membership to the CofP. This action indicates his attempt to save face after his earlier action, which was perceived as inappropriate by co-participants in his CofP. The findings also suggest that E.M.B positions himself as one who has mixed feelings towards globalization between his constant attempts to affiliate with a global variety, his admission that globalization helps spread proverbs and his contradictory suggestion that it has a negative effect on youths.

Extract 7.10 is from the fourth participant, E.M.H. The extract presents the participant’s response to the first question ‘what language do you prefer to use when speaking proverbs?’

Extract 7.10 (I will speak proverbs in Ika language and translate into English)

186. Interviewer:      what language do you prefer to use when speaking proverbs?
187. E.M.H:            My dear at the beginning of this interview I explained to you
188.                      the importance of language. Language use in producing
189.                      proverbs is very important, so I prefer to speak proverbs using
190.                      Ika language ooo
191. Interviewer:      How about in situations were those you are interacting with
192.                      cannot speak Ika
193. E.M.H:            (laughing) oh my God, I will speak in Ika language and translate
194.                      in English.

In Extract 7.10, E.M.H reflects back on a previous response during the interview to back up his argument that he prefers to produce proverbs using Ika. More specifically, he points out he has already explained the importance of language, which should indicate that he prefers the use of Ika. His use of ‘My dear’ (line 188) reveals a subtle disappointment that the interviewer would ask that question after he had explained how important language is, though at the same time it is used to soften the directness of his reproach. The interviewer further asked him of situations where co-participants only understood English (Lines 191-192) and he responds with an exclamatory sentence, ‘(laughing) oh my God, I will speak in Ika language and translate in English’ (lines 193-194). The laugh at the beginning of line 193 dismisses the scenario described by the interviewer in line 192 (that not everyone speaks in Ika). His reaction to this question suggests that he is not very accommodating when it comes to producing proverbs in a non-native variety.

Extract 7.11 is also from the interview with E.M.H. The extract presents data for the second question.

Extract 7.11 (Globalization is good for telecommunications not for language)

68. Interviewer: so what do you think about globalization and the use of
69. proverbs? you have - ha
70. E.M.H: (→) yea! Globalization is good but it's only when you are
71. depriving others of their right concerning their languages and
72. culture that we need to talk into it or look into it. By the so
73. called western world dominating just like what is going on
74. within Russia and you know, name it. How can it be? The world
75. is *live and lets live*. There is freedom of individual rights,
76. freedom of speech. These are the things that we are talking
77. about. I don't see any reason why I cannot use my own mother
78. tongue in communicating with you in this country but
79. immediately we can have a lot of people coming in they we be
80. looking at you saying... instead of them to try and develop the
81. interest in learning such a language, they will now bring in the
82. issue of saying that you don't say that here. You need to
83. communicate in English. It's about superiority. You
84. understand? Trying to kill somebody's ideology, somebody's
85. interest, someone's culture and that is what we are talking
86. about. Globalization is very good to have a link of what is going
87. on in the United states of America: to know it now, to know
88. what is going on in Canada: to know it now. What are we
89. talking together in terms of science, technology, in terms of
90. maybe our finances? Look at what is going on, if not because
91. of globalization, Africa will not have what we call internet
92. or telecommunication today. Are you getting me? (0.2)

93. Interviewer: sur..
94. E.M.H: (→) But we have our own means that we use to communicate.
95. Somebody might be in Lagos and wants to communicate with
96. somebody in Quatergora. We have our means of
97. communicating and if you want me to go in details with that I
98. will tell you. But that is not what we are talking today. We are 99.
- talking of proverbs.

First of all, the length of the above extract suggests that this speaker had the most to say in response to the question, and was the most enthusiastic among all four participants interviewed in this CofP. He interrupted the interviewer at the start of the interview before she could finish asking the question (line 69). E.M.H responds to the question and suggests that globalization is ‘good’ (line 71). However, he slowly starts to reveal a less positive attitude towards globalization by pointing out that globalization deprives speakers of holding on to languages and cultures (lines 70-72). E.M.H’s use of the phrase, ‘by the so called western world’ (lines 72-73), reveals his negative attitude towards globalization, and a set of principles that have historically been associated with colonialism, and imperialism, which he continues to index in the remaining part of the extract. He further emphasizes his point by producing the proverb ‘live and let’s live’, which he produces in Ika (lines 74-75), thus also emphasizing his response to the first question, that he prefers producing proverbs in Ika. E.M.H tries to hold the floor longer and draws the attention of the interviewer at intervals by asking rhetorical questions like ‘you understand?’ (line 83) and ‘are you getting me?’ (line 92). The interviewer does not respond to the question ‘you understand’ in line 83 because the interviewee continues with the conversation. However, the interviewer tries to respond to the question ‘are you getting me?’ (line 93) because the participant pauses longer than usual, but in order to maintain control of the turn, the participant quickly interrupts the

interviewer (line 94) to continue holding the floor. E.M.H continues to portray a negative attitude towards reappropriations by explicitly indicating his affiliation to his local variety ‘(®) But we have our own means that we use to communicate’ (line 94), which he feels should be used instead of the global varieties. An analysis of these conversational cues suggests that the way E.M.H engages the interviewer is telling. He competes for the turn space to mark his enthusiasm relating to the current question by the interviewer (Yang, 1996). More specifically, the above analysis suggests while the speaker embraces many aspects of globalization, he opposes the sense of superiority and linguistic imperialism that accompany it, including the effect it has on the local variety and proverb use.

In sum, interview findings from participants in this CofP in general suggest that although they prefer to produce proverbs in Ika, they are also aware that the context of interaction can also shape the language participants choose to use during interaction or when producing proverbs. However, a consideration of the data from the observation of the CofP indicates that members of this CofP interact and produce proverbs in Ika, and a deviation from this evokes a negative response from co-participants. In Section 6.3, the response to style by members of the youth CofP was very different and their conversational cues indicate they were very accepting of these reappropriations. A comparison of reactions of the youths and elderly men during their meetings, suggests that members of the elderly men CofP will not easily accept a reappropriation of proverbs especially in terms of style.

Section 7.3 presents data and analysis of spontaneous speech and interviews to explore attitudes towards reappropriations of traditional styles within the elderly women CofP.

### **7.3 Elderly Women CofP**

This section will present responses to styles, language choices, intention of use and responses of co-participants to language choice during interactions in this CofP. On the



other hand, the interview questions as presented in Section 7.1 will further interrogate their overt attitudes towards the reappropriations as was seen in the youth CofP. Section 7.3.1 presents the analysis of observation of elderly women CofP.

### **7.3.1 Observation of the Elderly Women CofP**

The acceptable linguistic repertoire of interaction for this CofP was Ika. During interaction, the researcher observed that members of this CofP strictly adhered to interacting with each other using this local variety. These speakers did not switch from Ika to English, unlike the older male speakers. More importantly, an episode similar to what happened during observation with the elderly male group occurred, but the outcome and response was quite different.

Extract 7.12 is from the second observation of this group. Using ‘breaking news’ and references to a ‘shared event’, the leader of the CofP introduces a topic to members by recontextualizing a previous enquiry by a member in the previous meeting. The leader invites members to the wedding of a member’s daughter.

#### Extract 7.12 (Response to re-appropriations of style by the Elderly men CofP)

20. E.W.B: (E.W.B reads the minutes of the previous  
21. meeting)  
22. Leader: *So someone asked in our last meeting when we will be using  
23. our new uniforms? It is next week Friday. One of us has a  
24. daughter who will be getting married. She has invited us to  
25. come. So let everyone who is not here know.*  
26. Observer: Am I also invited for this?  
27. Elders: (side talks, laughter, audible voices saying yes)  
28. E.W.E: (walking into the meeting ground) *sorry I am late. I just  
29. came back from Benin and the traffic was something else.  
30. I didn’t intend for this to happen*

31. Leader: *what did you go to Benin for? You knew about our meeting*  
 32. *today.*  
 33. E.W.E: *my sister it's a long story.*  
 34. E.W.F: *Tell us the story later, but for now Let us move ahead with*  
 35. *today's agenda for the meeting nowww...I have to go very soon.*  
 36. Leader: *there is not a lot to discuss today oo!!! So you can give your*  
 37. *today's contribution (money for savings) to the treasurer.*  
 38. *Observer do you have anything to say?*  
 39. Observer: *Yes I do. As you all kn: ow I have been here before to ob: serve*  
 40. *your group. Is it all right for me to do the same thing again today*  
 41. *while you are having your meeting?*  
 42. Elders: *(audible voices saying yes)*  
 43. E.W.E: *the people of old say it is the height that a child's hand gets to*  
 44. *that he hangs his bag. It is all right with us, observer.*  
 45. E.W.M: *Woman E that proverb you just said reminds me of one my*  
 46. *mum used for us when talking to us. She would say 'our*  
 47. *people say They chew for the child but they do not swallow for*  
 48. *him.*

In line 26, the observer enquires if she is allowed to attend the wedding; her enquiry is in English, which is a deviation from the acceptable linguistic repertoire within the CofP. This is the only occurrence of English throughout the observation of the elderly women interactions. However, instead of reactions like interruptions, or negative gestures, co-participants signal acceptance (line 27). Furthermore, in line 39, the researcher code-switches between English and Ika, observing that members of this CofP continue to interact without reacting negatively to the switch. Since members of this

group did not code-switch while producing proverbs, it makes it difficult to know their reaction to reappropriations of proverbs in terms of style by core members. But if the analysis is to be done based on their reaction to the researcher's code-switching, members of this CofP may not react negatively to the style of production that has been adopted by the youths. At the same time, the reaction to the observer's switch may allude to the fact that members of the CofP still consider the observer an outsider, which is why they have accepted her language choice. Also, E.W.E did produce a proverb in Ika (line 43) after the observer's use of English (line 39), possibly as an act of strengthening Ika identity in the presence of the observer. The proverb alludes to being a child, so E.W.E is also constructing the observer as a member of the younger generation, a generation that needs support and advice. E.W.M also converges with E.W.E by producing a proverb that also alludes to being child but the proverb also emphasized that there is a limit to how much one is allowed to support a child. For further interrogation, the researcher interviewed four members from this CofP.

### **7.3.2 Interviews of Participants from the Elderly Women CofP**

Extract 7.13 is from the interview with Elderly Woman E in response to the question, 'Which language do you prefer to produce proverbs with?'

#### Extract 7.13 (language choice for producing proverbs depends on co-participants)

23. Interviewer: During the meeting you just attended I realized you  
 24. interacted in Ika language and produced proverbs in Ika.  
 25. Outside your meeting which language do you prefer to produce  
 26. proverbs during interaction?  
 29. E.W.E: ehnn...let's see eh (0.3, eyes rolling and hands on her chin) it  
 30. depends on who I am interacting with. If it is the person who  
 31. understands my language, I will prefer to use my language so

32. that it will be clearer to whoever I am talking to but if the  
33. person does not understand Ika very well? I will prefer to say it  
34. in English so that the person will understand me clearly.

In line 23, the interviewer introduces the question by referring to a previous observation few hours before the interview. In line 29, E.W.E's first response to the question signals to the interviewer that she is taking some time to think about a response and hold the talk turn 'ehnn...let's see eh', which is why the interview does not interrupt E.W.E to get an answer. Even when there was a pause for 3 seconds, the rolling of her eye and the position of her hand on her chin suggested she was not done with the response. She finally responds suggesting that her choice of language to produce proverbs depends on the language understood by co-participants and whether they understand 'my language' or not. The body language and conversational cues (holding of talk turn to give a response) signals E.W.E's dilemma and careful deliberation in responding to the question. This positions E.W.E's attitude and feelings towards what language to use in producing proverbs as neutral. The next extract presents her response to the second question.

Extract 7.14 (Some youths don't really use proverbs as frequently as the elderly ones)

66. Interviewer: what do you think about globalization? Do you think it has any  
67. effect on the use of proverbs?  
68. E.W.E: Yes it does!!. Because for instance **as I am if I travel out with**  
69. **my children or with any of my towns person and I want to**  
70. **talk and I don't want the next person to understand, I will**  
71. **speak deep proverb that you might that next person will not**  
72. **get by speaking it in my language**  
73. Interviewer: (→) ehnn

74. E.W.E (→) it has
74. Interviewer: (→) I mean has globalization affected the use of proverbs
75. generally in any way?
76. E.W.E: it has [nods her head],
77. Interviewer: okay?
78. E.W.E: it has because some of our youths now, some of them really
79. don't use it as frequent as the elderly ones because of travelling
80. and all that. When they do they don't use it the way they are
81. supposed. They change it, in the process will may lose our way
82. of producing it. Which is why they may not achieve the
83. example I told you earlier. You remember?

E.W.E responds to the question by narrating an invented scenario, one where she feels that producing proverbs using the local language in locations where Ika is not spoken can be beneficial, as interactions can remain private. The point of this hypothetical narrative by E.W.E was to emphasise the importance and need for members of Ute-Okpu community to hold on to the local variety of producing proverbs. The interviewer tries to interrupt her (line 73), because her response (lines 68-72) suggests she may not have understood the question, but fails to do so because E.W.E does not relinquish her turn in the conversation, thus signalling to the interviewer that she still has more to say. Again, in line 74, the interviewer interrupts her to further clarify the question posed earlier. However, her attitude towards using other languages to produce proverbs continued to develop and emerge from one turn to another. E.W.E starts portraying her attitude towards globalization and the use of proverbs through lines 68-78, by presenting the benefit of producing proverbs using native languages. Furthermore, in lines 78-84, E.W.E develops her attitude by suggesting that youths 'don't use it as frequent' (line 79) and that they "don't use it the way they are supposed [to]", that 'they change it' and

in turn will ‘lose’ mastery of this practice. So we see a shift from ‘youths not using proverbs, to losing ‘our way of producing it’. She concludes by suggesting that they may not be able to achieve a hypothetical scenario like the one she narrated at the beginning of the interview. A consideration of her response to both questions suggest that although E.W.E explicitly stated that her interactional context determines the language she uses to produce proverbs, her attitude towards globalization is unfavourable.

Extract 7.15 below presents the responses from the leader of the CofP on the two questions posed by the interviewer.

Extract 7.15 (Using Ika to produce proverbs has more impact)

33. Interviewer: so when you want to speak proverbs, which languages do you

34. prefer?

35. Leader: I use Ika all of the time!! (↑). Also my kids who are not fluent in

36. Ika, I speak proverbs using Ika. They have to learn to speak Ika.

37. Interviewer: Does it have anything to do with giving it more meaning?

38. Leader: The meaning does not change when I use English, (laughs)

39. however I feel it has more impact when I use my native

40. language.

The leader responds to the question posed by the researcher with a declarative sentence and creates emphasis by using a high intonation for the phrase, ‘I use Ika all of the time’. The leader, through intonation, positions herself as one who is adamant that she prefers to use Ika to produce proverbs and clearly states that her children “have to learn to speak Ika”. She explicitly affiliates to the use of the local variety by explaining to the interviewer that she also produces proverbs to her children using Ika, though they are not fluent speakers (lines 35-36). In line 37, the interviewer asked her if her use of Ika

to produce proverbs makes any difference. She explains that the meaning does not change and, laughing, expresses her opinion that proverbs have more impact when produced in the local dialect. The leader's laughter mitigates her disagreement with the interviewer, as she suggests that the meaning of proverbs does not change when produced in a different variety. Extract 7.16 presents the leader's response to the second question.

Extract 7.16 (Globalization brings exposure but affects the use of proverbs by youths)

19. Interviewer: Do your children use these proverbs in their conversations with  
20. you or themselves?
21. Leader: (laughs) (0. 5, moving head from side to side). I don't think I  
22. have heard them use proverbs before.
23. Interviewer: what do you think is the reason for this?
24. Leader: I guess you can blame it on globalization and civilization.
25. Interviewer: So globalization has effects on the use of proverbs?
26. Leader: Of course it does, (nodding her head from side to side) with  
27. globalization comes exposure. However it has also brought  
28. another side of it where the younger generations are not really  
29. making use of those aspects of our culture.

In Extract 7.16, the leader introduces the concept and issues of globalization before the interviewer was able to ask her the question on globalization and the effect it has on the use of proverbs. Her mention of globalization emerges from questions concerning her children's lack of use of proverbs during interaction: 'I don't think I have heard them use proverbs before' (lines 21-22) which she suggested has never happened. Her use of the word 'blame' (line 23) reveals her negative attitude but highlights the fact that it is not the older generation who is to 'blame' for not transmitting their language skills,

traditions and culture, but ‘globalization and civilization’. Extract 7.17 is a presentation of E.W.D’s response to the second question.

Extract 7.17 (Because Ika is our Language, I prefer to produce proverbs using Ika)

23. Interviewer: so what language do you prefer to use when speaking proverbs?
24. E.W.D: Ha (mouth open), It is Ika of course!! (↑)
25. Interviewer: why?
26. E.W.D: Because Ika is our language and we need to teach the next
27. generation everything about our language. So speaking these
28. proverbs in Ika helps to make this happen.

E.W.D responded to the second question, ‘Ha (mouth open), it is Ika of course!! (↑)’. With her mouth open while she produces the sound ‘Ha’, she signals surprise to the question posed by the interviewer. ‘It is Ika of course!! (↑)’, is said by the interviewee in a declarative manner and high intonation emphasizes her response. Through her dramatic response (intonation and open mouth) she clearly positions herself as one who is affiliated to the local language to produce proverbs. More specifically, in lines 26-28, she signals her affiliation to a collective identity by her use of the inclusive pronouns ‘our’ and ‘we’ and the need to protect such identity. The use of ‘we’ and her ‘our’ demonstrates the discursive construction of group membership, solidarity and participant alignment (see Goffman, 1981; Pyykko, 2002), and can be said to be a means of negotiating her identity as Igbo and that of others who are not members of their group.

Extract 7.18 presents her response to the second question.

Extract 7.18 (Globalization has a negative influence on the use of proverbs)

16. Interviewer: Do you think globalization has an effect on the use of proverbs?
17. E.W.D: True now (↑). Is that a question? It has a negative influence.



18.                   **The other day I was with my grandchild, he couldn't**  
19.                   **understand a proverb I spoke to him that the mother who is**  
20.                   **my daughter had to interpret it to English. Can you believe**  
21.                   **he cannot speak Ika? During our days everybody knew how**  
22.                   **to speak Ika. I don't understand what is going on these days.**

In Extract 7.18, E.W.D continues to position herself as one who does not favour the effect of globalization by producing a dramatic response as she did in Extract 7.17. She responds to the question assertively by using the phrase 'True now' using a high intonation. The utterance that follows, 'Is that a question?' further highlights the fact that globalization has an effect on the use of proverbs. E.W.D starts to narrate an event that took place: 'the other day I was with my grandchild, he couldn't understand a proverb I spoke to him that the mother who is my daughter had to interpret it to English' (lines 18-20). The point to the narrative was to elevate her opinion that globalization has negatively affected the use of proverbs, which is why her grandchild was not able to produce and understand proverbs during their interaction. Her dramatic way of emphasizing her feelings continues as she poses a rhetorical question, 'Can you believe he cannot speak Ika?' (lines 20-21) which functions to further emphasise the point to her narrative, at the same time revealing her surprise, disbelief and disappointment at the fact that her grandchild does not understand Ika. Thus, she implies that the grandchild's inability to speak Ika affects his interpretation and use of proverbs. E.W.D's continuous use of rhetorical questions indicates her use of this conversational strategy to have the attention of the interviewer, while also using it as a persuasive device to subtly influence and convince the interviewer of her response to the questions asked. Her appraisal of the story is that 'during our days everybody knew how to speak Ika. I don't understand what is going on these days' (lines 21-22). The phrases 'during

our days’ and ‘these days’ are very symbolic as they are used implicitly, as a representation of the older generation versus the younger generation. Thus, indicating that things are not the way they used to be before and creating a comparison between the two generations. In lines 19-20 the interviewee specifies that the mother of her grandchild is her daughter: “I spoke to him that the mother who is my daughter had to interpret” (lines 19-20). This is used to further highlight the speaker’s disbelief at her grandson’s lack of fluency in Ika, and also to remove agency on behalf of the interviewee relating to her grandson’s loss of Ika language. In her narrative, E.W.D constructs her grandchild as unable to understand proverbs because of the grandchild’s incompetence in speaking Ika, in this way supporting the agency relating to the loss of proverbs amongst younger speakers. The narrative functions to diminish the responsibility of the older generation in general in the loss of Ika amongst the younger generations. In this ‘taleworld, the interviewee is the producer of proverbs, with the daughter the translator into English: the person who complies with globalization. We therefore see macro-social structures and dominant discourses constructed through micro-discursive strategies.

A consideration of the above findings from the participants interviewed suggests that the overt feelings of members of this CofP towards reappropriations of proverbs are unfavourable. Although they did not react to the observer’s use of English during meetings, their response to the interview questions suggest that members of this CofP are mindful and critical when it comes to the language choice adopted for the production of proverbs. Thus, in their opinion it is not enough to understand and interpret proverbs produced in English or Nigerian Pidgin English; it is more acceptable if youths are able to produce proverbs in the native dialect. They understand that situations may arise when one needs to consider co-participants of an interaction before

making a choice of what language to produce proverbs. They suggest, however, that they prefer to produce proverbs in Ika.

Section 7.4 presents the data from observation and responses of the youths to the two interview questions (Section 7.1).

#### **7.4 Youth CofP**

This section will present responses to language choices, styles, intention of use and responses of co-participants to language choice during interactions in this CofP. Also, the interview questions as presented in Section 7.1 will further interrogate their overt attitudes towards their reappropriations of proverbs. Section 7.4.1 presents the analysis of observation of the youth CofP.

##### **7.4.1 Observation of Youth CofP**

Chapter 6, Section 6.3 suggests that members of this CofP reappropriated proverbs by adopting and accepting the use of English, Ika and Nigerian Pidgin English within their CofP. It also suggested that they reappropriated proverbs by infusing and introducing humour into proverbs by using Nigerian Pidgin English to produce proverbs. The researcher observed that the feelings of members of this CofP towards these reappropriations were favourable. More importantly their response to these reappropriations indicated it was an acceptable linguistic repertoire within the CofP. Below are presentations of extracts from the interview of four youth participants that answer the two questions.

##### **7.4.2 Interviews with participants from the Youth CofP**

Extract 7.19 is from the interview with Youth C, which also includes his response to the question, ‘which language do you prefer to produce proverbs with?’

Extract 7.19 (I use any language! I think it depends)

76. Interviewer:        what language do you prefer to use when you use proverbs
77. Youth C.            I use any language!!! I think it ehnnn, I think it depends oooo. *I*
78.                        *no fit lie you*. I mean if am with my guys I use anyone. But
79.                        when I am with my family I use Ika ooo.

In the above extract, Youth C responds to the question with the declarative sentence, ‘I use any language!!’ The declarative sentence emphasizes his confidence in admitting his affiliation to all language styles and varieties. However, he immediately conveys greater diffidence suggesting that ‘I think it ehnnn, I think it depends ooo.’ His diffidence is emphasized further as he explains that scenarios can influence his language use. He thus positions himself as one who is aware of the linguistic situation in the wider community and indicates that he understands that the linguistic dynamics of a conversational space can influence language choice. Interaction with his ‘guys’ (line 78) allows him the opportunity of using various styles to produce proverbs, while interaction with his family restricts him to Ika (line 79). Youth C employs slang (Crystal, 1997) by using the words ‘my guys’, which is associated with informal speech to signal group membership. Again, by employing slang he discursively portrays his favourable attitude towards non-traditional forms of speaking, also demonstrated in his Nigerian Pidgin English: ‘*I no fit lie to you*’ (I cannot lie), which asserts his claim that he uses any language variety, and also indicates his final resolution. Youth C clearly positions himself as one who accepts the reappropriation of proverbs by his peers through his manipulation of linguistic varieties (English, slang and Nigerian Pidgin) in his response to the questions, accepting that context of interaction influences his choice of language in the production of proverbs.

Extract 7.20 addresses Youth C’s response to the second question. In the extract, Youth C continues to portray a positive stance towards reappropriations of proverbs and

identity, suggesting that it is not globalization, but the choice of an individual that affects the use of proverbs.

Extract 7.20 (I don't really see much harm caused by globalization)

47. Interviewer: All right. Does globalization have an effect on the production of  
48. Ute-Okpu proverbs?  
49. Youth c: emmmmm (0.10) TO ME, TO ME I don't really see any harm  
50. that globalization has done. Because honestly I, I don't really  
51. see much harm that has been caused by globalization because  
52. TO ME it goes hand in hand, that's to ME PERSONALLY, IN  
53. MY OWN POINT OF VIEW globalization, ON MY OWN  
54. PART I don't really know about the second man. TO ME  
53. nothing wrong you know. It all depends on choice if you really  
56. want globalization to actually affect the way you see things,  
57. your cultural values and everything.

Youth C over-emphasizes that his own response to the question is his personal opinion, by frequently producing phrases that emphasize the fact that he is expressing his personal point of view. Youth C's frequent use of these phrases that insist on his personal opinions are indications that he feels guilty that his use of other language varieties to produce proverbs is a deviation from the core traditions. In sum, Youth C emphasizes his feeling towards reappropriation of proverbs is positive. Below is an extract from Youth E's interview.

Extract 7.21 (the language I use depends)

34. Interviewer: Okay. But you know any proverbs? Can you tell me one?  
35. Youth E: The ear that does not listen will be chopped off with the head  
36. Interviewer: which language do you prefer to produce proverbs?

37. Youth E: well...I think the language I use depend on the people am  
38. talking to. If am talking to my age mate, I mostly use English or  
39. Pidgin. You see if I use Ika for them, it is not all that know how  
40. to speak it.

Youth E, in Extract 7.21, suggests that his choice of language for producing proverbs depends on co-participants. Similar to Youth C, he explains that he uses English and Nigerian Pidgin English when he is interacting with his age group. Youth C further explains that his use of Ika in such interaction where co-participants are his age, may hinder communication because they may not understand Ika. Thus, he explicitly implies that the linguistic situations have encouraged the use of wider linguistic styles to accommodate speakers who are not in fluent in Ika. Extract 7.22 includes Youth C's response to the second question.

Extract 7.22 Globalization helps burst awareness of Ute proverbs

40. Interviewer: Okay. So does globalization affect the use of proverbs?  
41. Youth E: hmmm! Globalization to me ooo... (Moves his hands towards  
42. himself) has helped burst the awareness of Igbo proverbs in  
43. general and Ika proverbs in particular. Through the Internet one  
44. can easily access these proverbs.

In line 40, Youth E utters 'hmmm!' in response to the question. With the production of the sound 'ooo...' and the movement of his hands towards himself (line 41), he emphasizes his perception that globalization has created more awareness of Igbo proverbs. Similar to Youth C, Youth E is quick to indicate that his opinion is solely his. It is interesting that the younger speakers tend to emphasize that their opinions regarding globalization and proverb use are personal. This may reflect the cultural

values of the specific community relating to the need to maintain harmony and avoid conflict that may arise if younger speakers express disagreement or deviation.

Extract 7.23 addresses Youth B's feelings towards reappropriations of proverbs.

Extract 7.23 (I use English when am able to say the proverbs)

44. Interviewer: so can you give me one proverb?
45. Youth B: okay. Ehmmm... ehmmm (0.5 and (rolls his eyeball)). Yea, I
46. can. I can give you. Let me quickly remember one. Ehmm.
47. Okay *ushe... ushe...* (Trying to speak in his native language)
48. Interviewer: (→) you can use English.
49. Youth B: one of the proverbs means ehmmm, it goes like this (puts his
50. hand on his neck) ehmmm, ehmmm, Am sorry I can't think of
51. any one at the moment.
52. Interviewer: That is fine dear. So what is your reason for not making use of
53. proverbs in your daily interaction regularly?
54. Youth B: I use it, but like I said before modernism has changed lot of
55. things. We are now in a global world. And people don't
56. understand these things
57. Interviewer: which language do you prefer to produce proverbs?
58. Youth: (laughs) I use Pidgin when am able to say the proverbs at all.

In the above extract, the interviewer suggests that Youth B produce a proverb (line 44). The interview was in English; however, the speaker attempts to produce proverbs in Ika (lines 46-47). Lines 45-47 illustrate the struggle experienced by the interviewee to produce proverbs in the native language, manifested in the use of mannerisms such as 'ehmmm', pauses, and rolling of the eyes. In line 48, the interviewer interrupts Youth B, giving him permission to produce proverbs in English; however, he is still not able to

produce any proverbs regardless of the language, and apologizes to the researcher for his inability to do so. However, it is important to note that the researcher, during observation with the youth CofP, observed that Youth B produced proverbs in Nigerian Pidgin English, which shows that in a natural setting he is indeed able to spontaneously produce proverbs using a more informal language. Indeed, his response (line 58) when asked which language he preferred to produce proverbs with, suggests that he is more likely to produce proverbs in interaction using the Nigerian Pidgin English. In this extract, Youth B also acknowledges that, “Modernism has changed lot of things” (Lines 54-55), suggesting that proverbs, which he identifies as “these things” (line 56), are no longer understood because “We are now in a global world”. His use of ‘these things’ to identify proverbs further deepens the chasm between this practice, and the younger generation, dismissing them as different and useless.

Extract 7.24 presents his response to the second question.

Extract 7.24 (Globalization does not affect proverb production completely)

59. Interviewer: So does globalization affects the use of proverbs?
60. Youth B: I won't completely say it has an effect because ehmm..the
61. proverbs and the idioms, all those words spoken to us by our
62. parents or you know the older persons in the village or our
63. communities are not used now. They are not used because
64. (number one) it's boring, (number two) the word are too strong
65. for us to pronounce and because we find ourselves like modern
66. people and all that. So we don't use them so there is no, we
67. so ever because it has haven't even used them before so it has
68. no negative effect what not been used anyway. Most of us have
69. not been to the village for some time, we don't use these words
70. outside where ever we are in the cities because we don't see



71. people to even speak them with. Sisters, cousins, friends that we  
 72. have got, they hardly use them. **I tried some time to even use**  
 73. **such a proverb like a simple one while we were sitting**  
 74. **together as friends and there was a conversation and I**  
 75. **wanted to you know use that so that other people won't**  
 76. **understand what we were speaking the guy I was speaking**  
 77. **to didn't understand what I meant. You know he was**  
 78. **making me feel somehow that I said something that he**  
 79. **doesn't even understand and others were now curious about**  
 80. **what I was saying because he kept doing ehnn... ehnnn....**  
 81. He did not understand and stuffs like that. So it has no effect  
 82. actually. Basically it has nothing to really really lose there. And  
 83. we have other options of using any words that is more suitable  
 84. and understandable for us you know. It mustn't be those form  
 85. of proverbs spoken to us by our old parents and all.
86. Interviewer: Okay?
87. Youth B: I mean there are modified proverbs now.

The above extract presents Youth B's feelings towards globalization and the effect it has on the use of proverbs. His response suggests that he is of the opinion that globalization has no negative effect on the use of proverbs. In his opinion, these proverbs have always been used by the elderly anyway, and were not used by the youths. Similarly to E.W.D in extract 7.18, Youth B relies on a narrative to make his point. He continuously emphasizes a collective 'us' identity, the identity of the younger generation, and emphasizes his point by narrating how producing proverbs during interaction may defeat the purpose of interaction with his friends, and effective communication can only be achieved through understandable repertoires within the

interaction (lines 71-79). The speaker shifts between using ‘we’ and ‘us’, and using more objective references, including ‘*the* village’ (vs ‘*our* various communities’), to carve out an identity that emerges as different to the one in ‘the village’; one that moves away from what’s ‘boring’ (line 64) to the more ‘modern’ (line 65). More specifically, in lines 83-87, Youth B explicitly signals that there are other forms of proverbs, different from the traditional proverbs that could be used and understood during interaction. Youth B starts to narrate a recent event that took place (lines 72-80), which he uses both as a way of demonstrating the fact that using proverbs has “no effect” (line 81), and also as a way to activate a scenario that constructs a self-portrait (Schiffrin 2006) which diminishes his own liability in the demise of the use of proverbs. Youth B starts his narration in line 72. His use of ‘even’ (line 72) and his description of a proverb he produced as ‘a simple one’, function to further emphasise the point of his story, which is the futile nature of producing this linguistic practice. He shifts from an individual to a collective identity, expressed through the use of ‘we’ (line 73), proceeding to explain that he wanted to use a proverb so that the ‘collective’ (he and his friend) would be able to converse without being understood by others. His strategy backfired, as his friend, who now emerges as the individual ‘he’, “doesn’t even understand” (line line 79) and arouses curiosity in others due to the fact that ‘he kept doing ehn.... ehn...’. The interactional management of this short narrative serves to remove the responsibility of not being able to interact via the use of proverbs from the narrator, as his friend who ‘doesn’t even understand’, is directly responsible for the misfire (see also De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2013). Therefore, in this ‘taleworld’, he constructs himself as an agent in the production of proverbs; the antiparathesis between ‘I’ and ‘he’ (throughout lines 77-80) creates the fissure between the narrator and his friend, who was initially introduced with the phrase ‘we were sitting together as friends’ (line 73-74), but soon becomes ‘the guy I was speaking to’. Therefore circumstances

beyond his control, more specifically his fellow interactant's lack of knowledge, forces the narrator to curtail his use of these practices in his everyday interactions. His evaluation of the story is that "So it has no effect actually. Basically it has nothing to really really lose there" (lines 81-82) at which point he reverts back to the use of 'we' drawing the conclusion that the younger generation's parents should not use "those form of proverbs" (line 85). Speakers use narratives to negotiate personal and social roles (De Fina, 2003). In this narrative, the speaker constructs himself as 'disempowered', unable to converse by using proverbs despite his competence. This way, he is diffusing any agency relating to the loss of proverbs amongst the younger speakers. Similar to E.W.D in extract 7.18, Youth B uses this narrative, amongst other things, to remove agency in the loss of Ika. They both carry out discursive work to project their moral identities, negotiating space between their local identities (mother, grandmother, speaker of Ika) and global discourses (globalization and the dominance of English).

The next extracts present the response of Youth A.

Extract 7.25 (Certain things can only be explained by producing proverbs in Ika)

1. Interviewer: what is Ika language to Ute-Okpu?
2. Youth A: Language is an embodiment of one's identity. One of the ways
3. people within a group identify themselves is through their la
4. language. I had an experience one time I travelled abroad. I was
5. at the bus stop trying to figure out how to get to my destination,
6. when I heard a lady speak Ika language why she was on the
7. phone. Ehnnn...this made me more relaxed. After she was done
8. with her conversation over the phone I approach her and asked
9. for help and we became friends later in a country far from home.

10. Interviewer: (introductions) so what do you know about Ute-Okpu proverbs?
11. Youth A: Thank you for that question. What I know about proverbs is that
12. it's a very good way for our people to express themselves.
13. There are certain things you can't say in English or in Pidgin that
14. the easiest way and most convenient way is to make a proverb
15. out of it in Ika. There are so many different types. **When I was**
16. **growing up my mum used to say a lot. And they are very**
17. **meaningful. She used to say this one. (Laughing) *when you***
18. ***are trying to save a chicken it will be running away.*** In effect it
19. **means when they are trying to help, instead of you to accept**
20. **the help, you will be shying away from it. She normally says it**
21. **if we are about to take medication for ill health and will don't**
22. **want to take it. She is like you can't get better without**
23. **medication.** It is a very very meaningful way of communicating
24. among our people.
25. Interviewer: This interview started with English but when you wanted to
26. produce proverbs, you switched over to Ika. Why? Which
27. language do you prefer to produce proverbs?
28. Youth A: Definitely I really believe that it has more emphasis. Even the
29. intonation you use can go a long way in explaining yourself
30. better. Because there are just certain things that
31. English...English is good in expressing and general
32. conversations but there are certain things the message is not
33. going to convey as well as if it was in your native dialect. I
34. think it is essential for one to understand how proverbs work
35. and it is also a good way of making extra communication at

Youth A's feelings towards reappropriation of proverbs through language emerges throughout the extract above. She constructs a collective identity by employing the words 'our people', instead of using words like 'Ika people' (lines 12), to describe the use of proverbs. Similar to E.W.D in extract 7.18 and Youth B in extract 7.24, Youth A depends on the use of narrative to emphasis her feelings towards reappropriation of proverbs. In responding to the first question in line 10, Youth A clearly states that she prefers producing proverbs in Ika: 'the easiest and most convenient way is to make a proverb out of Ika' (line 14-15). Her narrative (lines 15-23) suggests her mother introduced her to producing proverbs in Ika at a young age. The point of this narrative was to emphasise her preference to the local variety in the production of proverbs. Thus, in this taleworld she positions herself as one who is fluent in speaking Ika and prefers to produce proverbs using this local variety. Once again, like Youth B, Youth A uses this narrative to remove agency on loss of Ika language. Youth A also indexes her preference to produce proverbs in Ika by switching from English to Ika to produce a proverb (lines 17-18). Youth A laughs (line 17) before producing the proverb in Ika, which is reminiscent of the interactions of the elders, and which contrasts with the younger speakers who only laughed when proverbs were produced in Nigerian pidgin, not in Ika. It is important to note that the researcher also observed that, during interactions within the youth CofP, Youth A did spontaneously produce proverbs in Ika. In line 23, the interviewer made reference to the switch in lines 16-17, while asking the interviewee what language she preferred to produce proverbs (lines 23-24). Her response suggests that her overt feeling towards reappropriations of proverbs, by producing proverbs in a different language apart from Ika, is not appropriate. Youth A's openness to the use of Ika to produce proverbs is not surprising. She mentions that her mum used proverbs extensively when she was growing up and these proverbs are more

likely to have been said in Ika. Youth A is also fluent in Ika, thus making it easier for her to produce proverbs in this local variety. However, during the observation of the youth CofP, reappropriation by other members of this group did not elicit any form of negative response, thus, indicating her acceptance of such appropriations by other members of the CofP. The next extract presents her response to the second question.

Extract 7.26 (I think it has a massive effect on the use of proverbs)

34. Interviewer: Do you use it in your daily interactions with friends?

35. Youth A: (Laughing) Welllll, not very often, not as often as I would like,  
36. because another thing is for the people around you to  
37. understand. This is because if you start saying proverbs you  
38. have to be explaining every timeeeee ehnn. So maybe if I have  
39. more people that understand my dialect it will be easier to  
40. communicate. Maybe if I am at home with family but not on  
41. daily interactions to be honest with you.

42. Interviewer: So debates are going on of how globalization affects person  
43. identity. Does it affect the use

44. Youth A: (→) Exactly

45. Interviewer: (→) the use of proverbs?

46. Youth A: Well to be honest I think so. I think it has a massive effect on  
47. the use of proverbs because ehmmm, a lot of youths now are  
48. going abroad to study, get an education. And some of our  
49. people when they go there, I mean Nigerians in general am not  
50. restricting it to Ute-Okpu, they tend to want to pick up the way  
51. a British person talks for example they are in Britain. This is all  
52. right if you are communicating pre-dominantly among British  
53. people. But they tend to want to use it, to take it back home and

54. in the process they lose the ability to speak their own native  
55. dialect 1, the ability to speak in proverbs too, which is  
56. important. So at the end of the day globalization, interacting  
57. with other people from different cultures, with different people  
58. also affects the way we use our proverbs and the way we  
59. communicate with our dialect, which is not good. We need to  
60. work on that. We should always be (laughing) very happy, very  
61. proud of our heritage because there are no two people like you.  
62. And where you come from makes you special. We should  
63. always try to keep our culture relevant, keep it alive.

In responding to the first question in the above extract, Youth A suggests that her use of proverb production is limited due to language barriers (lines 38-38). Her elongation of the word 'time' (line 38) emphasizes and illustrates the frustration she experiences every time she has to interpret proverbs during interaction with co-participants who are not fluent in Ika. In line 43, she quickly interrupts the interviewer to answer the question of whether globalization affects the use of proverbs, revealing an underlying anxiety relating to expressing her overt feeling towards globalization. The interviewer interrupts her in line 44 to complete the question. In lines 51-55, Youth A, knowing that the interviewer is a student in Britain, makes reference to Nigerian youths who go to Britain to study and in the process may drop traditional styles to adapt to the British way of doing things. Thus, Youth A indirectly positions the interviewer as the "other" who may neglect traditional styles to adopt a more global outlook. Her response to the question suggests that she clearly has negative feelings towards globalization and the effect it has on the use of proverbs. She explains that globalization has affected the use of native dialects and the production of proverbs, as youths are seen adopting the other languages,

which affects the traditional ways of producing proverbs, suggesting that ‘we need to work on that’ (lines 59-60).

## **7.5 Discussion**

The analysis of the data from the older CofP suggests that they disaffiliated themselves from the reappropriation of proverbs. More specifically, members of the older men CofP portrayed their negative feelings towards reappropriations by responding negatively towards any participant who tried to produce proverbs in any other language other than Ika. During interviews, most of them indexed that they preferred to produce proverbs in Ika; and even in situations where co-participants were not fluent in Ika, participants from this CofP insisted they would produce proverbs in Ika language before interpreting them in English language. On the other hand, the response towards reappropriations by members of the elderly women CofP was not as negative as that of the elderly men CofP. It was less negative in the sense that, although most of the participants suggested they preferred to produce proverbs in Ika, they also suggested they were willing to produce proverbs in a different language if co-participants were not fluent in speaking Ika, which contrasts with the claims of the older men CofP. Finally, although Youth A was pro-Ika, most of the youths were indifferent about reappropriations, as they suggested they were happy to produce proverbs in any language, as they strived to accommodate to a changing world. Also, to reflect their attitudes towards reappropriations of proverbs, participants like E.W.D, Youth B and Youth A used narratives. The findings concur with De Fina’s (2003, p. 23) statement ‘I explore the extent to which common uses of narrative resources [...] points to the existence of shared ways of telling and of constructing personal experience’. It was obvious that the rationale for these narratives was mostly to make a point (Polanyi, 1985) and negotiate personal and social roles (De Fina, 2003). These participants relied



on the use of narratives to affiliate to, or deaffiliate from, identities. Most especially, they used narratives to remove agency of loss of Ika (Youth A and Youth B) and effective intergenerational transition of proverbs in the part of the older generation (E.W.D).

A consideration of the findings suggests that the attitudes of the elderly CofPs towards reappropriation of proverbs, correspond to those expressed by scholars (Balogun, 2013; Obadan, 2015; Oduaran & Oduaran, 2006; Woodbury, 2006). Woodbury (2006) suggested that a language is considered dead if such language is no longer spoken in the form in which it was used in the past, if speakers of such language fail to pass it on to the next generation. Similarly, Balogun (2013) suggested that the Yoruba language is endangered because the younger generation is finding it more convenient to use English in their interactions, instead of the indigenous Yoruba language. The above statements by Woodbury and Balogun are indicative of the feelings expressed by the elderly men CofP. Thus, their responses to interviews, their conversational cues and observation by the researcher suggests that most participants within the elderly men CofP were not pleased when proverbs were produced in a different language from Ika language.

Also, Oduaran and Oduaran's (2006) opinion on the effect of globalization concurs with the feeling of the elderly men towards reappropriations of proverbs. Oduaran and Oduaran suggest that colonialization fostered and encouraged the imbibing of European/western culture into the lives of the African people. In Oduaran et al.'s opinion, the latter began to adopt the former's ways of life and gradually it was fused into the culture of the African people. Thus, a range of substitutes became available for what was formerly known to them as their way of life and their cultural heritage. According to Oduaran and Oduaran (2006, p. 217-218)

In a changing world, where Africans in cities and villages drink Coca-Cola in preference for the fresh palm wine and repudiate the eating of

roasted yam or plantain together with palm oil in preference for hamburgers rolling off the ovens of McDonald's? Or Kentucky Fried Chicken; the effect of globalization can be imagined.

In their opinion, there is a replacement of that which is unique to the African culture, with that which was introduced into their society through globalization. They explain that this change is inherent in the switch from traditional foods that were unique to the African people to the language used during interaction by the African society. Therefore, in their opinion, the peculiarities of African countries, these things that were a part of their culture, are gradually fading away because of globalization. In the same light, the older generations studied for this research expressed similar feelings towards these new variations used by youths. Oduaran et al (2006, p. 227) state that, 'African proverbs are under grave attack from cultural globalization.' Their opinion is that access to the outside world through the Internet or telecommunications innovations has taken a toll on proverbs, in particular and especially their transmission from one generation to another. They state 'there are many people of African origin or those who reside in the continent that are almost completely novices when it comes to the cultural exchange of using proverbs' (ibid 2006, p. 227).

On the other hand, the youths' feelings towards reappropriation concur with Friedman's opinion on globalization. According to Friedman (2000):

Globalization can be incredibly empowering and incredibly coercive. It can democratize opportunity and democratize panic. It makes the whales bigger and minnows stronger... While it is homogenizing cultures, it is also enabling people to share their individuality farther and wider. It makes us want to chase after the Lexus (the essence of modern life) more intensely than ever and cling to our olive trees (our traditional ways)

more tightly than ever. It enables us to reach into the world as never before and it enables the world to reach into each of us as never before (p. 406).

The youths place themselves in a space where they affiliate to every structure and component of the society, which has come to be as a result of globalization. Members of the youth CofP discursively signal their affiliation to the reappropriations of proverbs. These reappropriations of proverbs give the youths the opportunity to accommodate, and build on, the linguistic situation in Nigeria. It is the opinion of the researcher that these linguistic forms or reappropriation of proverbs by the youth CofP reflect a range of variations, which index contextual and social differences in the participants' production of proverbs across all CofPs in a changing world.

## **7.6 Summary**

This chapter explored the research question, 'How do speakers of different ages feel about these acts of reappropriation of cultural traditions?' Thus, it explored how speakers of each CofP felt towards the reappropriation of proverbs. The analysis of data suggested that the older generations do not affiliate themselves with the reappropriations and, in situations where co-participants were not fluent in speaking Ika, the older women were more accepting of these reappropriations. In contrast, members of the youth CofP positioned themselves as people who recognized the traditional styles but who also are welcoming of linguistic varieties that further aid effective communication, interpersonal relationships, and explore socio-cultural identities and affiliations, within a diversified interactional space. Also some participants employed the use of narratives to negotiate their personal and social role.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

This study investigated language variation within three different communities of practice (CofPs): the elder males, the elder females and the younger members of the Ute-Okpu Igbo tribe of Nigeria. More specifically, it explored the linguistic and social practices of two different generations, illustrating how change and variation in the production of proverbs, and other language practices (including code-switching and use of stylizations), can signal affiliation, disaffiliation and reappropriations to inherited cultural practices and identities during talk in interaction. Speakers were observed expressing their identity preferences through language, narratives and stylistic choices, including signalling affiliation or disaffiliation through their responses to such choices during interaction. Language use was considered in two separate interactional contexts: (a) interviews, and (b) spontaneous interactions during meetings. This enabled access to a wider array of tools for identity construction, including a consideration of participant responses and reactions to co-participants, and responses to direct questions relating to language use.

The current research is firmly rooted in the anti-essentialist view on identity, one that sees identity, not as a biological or inherited trait, but as a construct that, more specifically, emerges through talk (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). Identity is not seen as a tangible permanent possession, but as something speakers discursively orient towards during interaction. And this orientation is achieved differently in the different CofPs observed. A range of relatively new terms becomes relevant when discussing constructions of identity, especially amongst the younger generation, including superdiversity (Blommaert, 2010).

## **8.2 Implications of the Study**

There are several research areas where this study can be distinguished to have made significant contributions. Therefore, the implications of this study are discussed below.

### **8.2.1 Proverbs**

An investigation of language change in Ute-Okpu was timely, considering the socio-economic transformations that have been affecting the Igbo tribe region as a of globalization. Indeed, an initial motivation for carrying out this study was based on the idea that linguistic change is inevitable in light of the current socio-economic landscape of Nigeria in general and the Igbo tribe in particular, which is marked by increased mobility, language contact and easy access to the popular media.

One primary aim was to investigate the effect of globalization. An exploration of the research question, ‘Can traditions (and, in particular, the use of proverbs) that index the identity of Ute-Okpu people, survive with globalization?’ led to discussions relating to the relationship between proverbs and globalization in this research. Discussions have focused on language death, or more specifically ‘proverb death’ (Obadan, 2015). This study took a sociolinguistic perspective, exploring new variations in the production of proverbs in the Igbo tribe: the production of proverbs was metamorphosed to cater for the younger speakers’ new social reality, a reality which combines a deep-rooted respect for inherited cultural structures and values, but also one that embraces a more accessible international context. Co-participants relied on linguistic resources such as imagery, formulaic turn of phrase, code-switching and performance to signal their use of proverbs during interactions. The analysis of functions of proverbs suggested that the proposed function across the three CofPs was generally to facilitate understanding during communication. Whether speakers produced proverbs to teach, negotiate social

hierarchy or caution co-participants, proverbs were perceived by the speakers to facilitate effective communication in the interaction process. More specifically, the researcher analysed the function of proverbs as a socio-pragmatic and interpersonal tool during interaction.

The study, in an attempt to answer the second research question, ‘Do younger speakers provide new variations on proverbs as a way of reappropriating this inherited and culturally significant practice?’, explored how linguistic variation in the production of proverbs functioned as a core part of a speaker’s construction of their identity on a number of levels, especially in the youth CofP. By conceptualizing style as a speaker-derived phenomenon, the researcher was able to explore how speakers used linguistic resources, with other contextual resources, to create styles that indexed their membership of a CofP. Thus, this stance to view style as a speaker-derived phenomenon moved away from conceptualizing the speakers’ identity as static in conversations, to active constructors of social meaning. As Eckert (2000) argues, linguistic resources function as part of the wider repertoire of social practices, and the results presented in this thesis suggest that within Ute-Okpu, the younger generation depend on the use of linguistic resources to construct their social identities. Therefore, this study adds an extra layer of social description that has allowed us to not only see individual patterns of variation, but also how an apparently homogeneous group can actually have different patterns of linguistic variation. In explaining the patterns observed, I argued that the changes in the use of proverbs by the younger speakers are attributed to the social changes in the community.

However, it is important to note that the older CofPs used proverbs more during interaction than participants in the youths CofP. This was no surprise as it is generally suggested that elders, who are perceived to be the custodians of proverbs, mostly use proverbs (Oduaran & Oduaran, 2006). Also, an analysis of the results suggested that

one of the reasons for the decline in proverb use by the youths was their lack of fluency in Ika. Some of the results obtained in this study are applicable to past literature on language change in times of globalization, especially in the context of proverb use; however, it further develops the literature on proverbs by exploring non-standard varieties of proverbs. Thus, the researcher showed that the global processes are negotiated and made sense of in local contexts by speakers during interaction. Whereas global processes might not have a direct influence on language variation and change, they cause a local reaction, which can be reflected linguistically. Attention to the local context of interaction to investigate language variation is one such reaction, which I demonstrated contributed to the increase in frequency of the use of proverbs by youths during interaction. Because of the affiliation by co-participants in the youth CofP to other language varieties during interaction, members of this group felt more relaxed producing proverbs in other languages apart from Ika. This created an opportunity for participants who are not fluent in Ika to produce proverbs using other language varieties. Therefore, although this study illustrated that there is indeed a change in the use of proverbs by the youths, which is evident in the amount of times proverbs were used by participants in the youth CofP, it also suggested that one way of analysing this interesting pattern might be to relate it to the local changes as a result of language contact, and attitudes to the local variety by the youths. Most importantly, the patterns observed were an indication of the youths reappropriating the traditional form of proverb production to index a different social meaning. This social meaning indicates their effort to create a variation, which accommodates both their traditional values and a globalized world. This study also explored the fact that the use of proverbs is often linked with solidarity, or in-group marking.

Furthermore, this study filled in a gap within sociolinguistic researches on proverbs. The function of proverbs as a socio-pragmatic or interpersonal tool has not been studied

from a sociolinguistic perspective. Researchers have explored various aspects of proverbs such as types of proverbs (Finnegan, 2012), proverbs as a collective identity (Bascom, 1965; Dagneu & Wodajo, 2014; Ifesieh, 1985; Ikenga-Metuh, 1983; Kizza, 2010; Mieder, 2004; TaeSang, 1999), the cognitive aspects of proverbs (Barley, 1972; Norrick, 1985), and proverb death (Obadan, 2015). However, the use of proverbs as an interpersonal tool during interaction has not been the focus of research on proverbs.

### **8.2.2 New Spaces**

The study also looked at narratives produced by speakers, which are considered as constructive tools of interpretation (De Fina et al., 2006). Some of the narratives included small stories (for example, ‘projections’ and breaking news) and some were jointly constructed, enabling the study of patterns of interaction, including teasing sequences, which contributed towards constructing new positions vis-à-vis local and global identities.

Narratives can be considered as sites of identity work where individual stories index subjectivities (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). In this study, references to past events (for example, Extracts 7.18, 7.24, 7.25, where speakers made reference to a previous events), were used to express affiliations directly (in the case of the elders) or negotiate a more complex identity (in the case of the younger speakers). It is the collective use of identity affiliations and disaffiliations, with both inherited identities and projected identities, the everyday practices, that indexes a new space for the younger speakers, which could be identified as a third space (Bhabha, 1994), which caters for the younger speakers’ location in between two realms of existence. It is through relational activity (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008) that a sense of self is tried out.



Observations of spontaneous interactions between these speakers reveal identity ‘in the making’. Therefore, as we saw in Extract 6.16, interactive engagement is key in constructing the content of stories, but also in negotiating situated identities. At times, they manifest compliance with cultural traditions, including the use of proverbs, but at the same time they allude to possibilities and realities outside the context of their locality. There is no one-to-one correspondence between a variety, or language patterns, and one identity. Rather, through the teasing, humour, banter, challenges and mock challenges, identities/positions are constructed.

### **8.2.3 Methodological Implications**

This research, to the best of my knowledge, is the only sociolinguistic work to combine the CofP and narrative frameworks in the analysis of the production of proverbs dealing with a Nigerian context. This study supports the body of research, which brings together ethnomethodology, and frameworks that uncover the subtle dynamics reflected in the patterns of language variation and change in different groups. It presents an ethnomethodologically inspired sociolinguistic study to examine the production of proverbs in a globalized world by focusing on local interactions within CofPs to explore variation in the production of proverbs. A combination of the methodology and frameworks has not been applied to explore Igbo proverbs or Nigerian proverbs to the best of the researcher’s knowledge.

### **8.3 Limitations and Future Research**

For the purpose of this study, three CofPs were investigated. The youth CofP consisted of both female and male participants; on the other hand, two separate CofPs, one consisting of elderly women and the other of elderly men, had to be used for the purpose of this research. Although this study was able to compare the frequency of

proverb use between each of these CofPs, the combination of both male and female participants in the youth CofP made it possible and easier to observe and investigate roles played by gender in the production of proverbs during interaction. Therefore, although the researcher was able to compare the effect of gender between elderly male and female participants, a major limitation to this study was the inability of the researcher to find a CofP comprised of elderly men and women. Therefore, balancing out the sample to guarantee that each CofP consisted of male and female participants, so that the gender stratification could be analysed equally, is one area where this study could have benefited more.

Another area of improvement is in the area of data collection methods for the current study (participant observation and interviews). For the purpose of this study, each CofP was observed twice, which was as a result of different factors beyond the control of the researcher. One such factor was that these CofPs met once every month, which made it quite difficult to observe them more than twice. Also, the first meeting with the youth CofP was postponed as a result of a tragedy that occurred within the group. Therefore, with the time scheduled for the field trip, it was not possible to observe more than two meetings of each CofP during the time frame of a PhD thesis.

Also, some comments by participants interviewed during this study point to a number of new avenues of research. Areas that can be explored include the use of proverbs by children. This new avenue for future research arose during interviews with participants in the elderly CofPs and it concerns their continuous reference to producing proverbs to their children. The youngest speakers in my sample were 21 years old. The sample was so designed with the intention of including adult speakers and youths only. During my field trip to Ute-Okpu, I had an opportunity to observe and listen to children at play just outside the meeting place with the elders, but did not have a chance to record any of the interactions, as that was not the focus of my research at the time. Very little work has

been done that explores the use of proverbs in interactions between children. Since the elderly participants interviewed in the current research already identified how children are socialized in the use of proverbs, one interesting aspect of such a study would be to investigate whether children use proverbs in interaction; and, if they do, whether they adhere to the traditional ways of producing proverbs or start reappropriating these proverbs at a young age. Also, how do proverbs function in child-child interactions? There are no studies, to the best of my knowledge that have analysed the use of proverbs in the speech of children.

#### **8.4 Summary**

The section above showed that, regardless of its limitations, the study offers several opportunities for further research. It fills gaps in the research on proverbs as well as extends and deepens our understanding of Igbo proverbs by exploring the reappropriations of Igbo proverbs. Despite its small size as a representation of the Igbo tribe of Nigeria, Ute-Okpu shows an astonishing rate of sociolinguistic diversity, which makes it a fascinating context for an analysis of language variation and change. I hope that in the process of uncovering and interpreting the variable patterns of proverb use and other linguistic resources, this study has provided a valuable contribution not only to research on Igbo proverbs, but to the fields of language variation, and sociolinguistics more generally.

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## APPENDIX 1

### A Partial Map of Ute-Okpu



## APPENDIX 2

### SPONTANEOUS AND ELICITED PROVERBS PRODUCED BY ELDERLY MEN COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

- Proverb 1. Ndi oye e se mgbaye a ri zia makeni eyi le re eri nni okpan ohu.  
Translation. Our people say there is no more respect for elders because all of us are eating from the same pot.
- Proverb 2. Ndi eye e se uwohi we sini we papuha mbeku yak e gi marin ni nsin re esi ime olu o ri ushi.  
Translation: Our people say the day they agreed to lift tortoise from the pit was the day he asked them to hurry because the pit has the smell of faeces.
- Proverb 3: Ndi oye e seO wen oku we ku ni mkpisin eka weri iroro ku oku, onye we ku a marin o le.  
Translation: Our people say there is a saying that if the fingers speak with signs the person they are talking about will know.
- Proverb 4: otumunye ri gwo ke miri e bi.  
Translation: It is when a visitor eats to his satisfaction that he realises that rain has stopped falling.
- Proverb 5: u we kunru onye buli unyahun.  
Translation: They do not meet up with the person that started the journey yesterday
- Proverb 6: ikien uzun jen mbia ye ke okpu.  
Translation: It is what a blacksmith saw in a foreign land that he fabricated.
- Proverb 7: Ezi e si nwa jenkerin ni o de buru okpokoro imi.  
Translation: A mother pig advises a piglet to grow up quickly to inherit big nose.
- Proverb 8: Anu a gbaa mmaka, anu ke we gi a wa gi.  
Translation: The animal is running for its dear life in vain because it is the animal that they will use for sacrifice.
- Proverb 9: Eletu wama hin onye Ozara, o ghani Ozara pu.  
Translation: If a rabbit escapes from an Ozara person it does not mean the rabbit has escaped from Ozara land.
- Proverb 10: U we zi Isani ozi wa ju ke ndi enya we sha hua.  
Translation: They do not ask Isani the squirrel on an errand to be looking for those with big eyeball.
- Proverbs 11: sani e si ese ntin ya e gbu odafin.

- Translation: Isani the Squirrel said that it is the little trouble that kills a wealthy man.
- Proverbs 12: we e bu okpu e che mkpu uku mmaka, isi ke we kwani a
- Translation: They put the hat on the kneel for formality otherwise the hat is meant for the head.
- Proverbs 13: U wa gbaa si ihun da a to o.
- Translation: They do not hurry to the front to enjoy longevity.
- Proverbs 14: Ndi nadi oye e si ni iyi pu ha mbu.
- Translation: Our fore fathers said that the river had its source a long time ago.
- Proverbs 15: Ndi nadi oye U wa ghu elu gbehe ulo, ali ke we gha gbhe ulo
- Translation: Our fore fathers said they do not lay the foundation of a house in the air, it is on the ground that the foundation is laid.
- Proverbs 16: I ma su, ya su odo, I maleni su, ya su akpaka ali.
- Translation: If you know how to pound, you pound inside the mortal, if not you pound on the ground.
- Proverbs 17: Nwata a ghosi nedi egedi ebe we bi mbu.
- Translation: A child does not show his fore fathers where they lived in the olden days.
- Proverbs 18: Mkpoko ulo e si ni ihien o gi e me gi wuni a noke we iden enya koria ni ndi me le ni gi.
- Translation: The soil where buildings collapsed said that the reason why it produces yams very well is because many people blamed the soils that did not produce well in its presence.
- Proverbs 19: U wa no enye nkite si charin nni e.
- Translation: They do not completely cook a dogs meal in its presence.
- Proverbs 20: Ndi ikenye oba si ni onye nokume okun ya huto gi e.
- Translation: Our old men say it is he who is close to the heat that turns his yam to enable it roast well.
- Proverbs 21: Ndi eye e si we si ni oroni le we re ni isi osolo ke ori
- Translation: Our people say that all the noise being made is on the man of the house
- Proverbs 22: Ndi mbu e sini I dino gwu le ni ali, ya dinne ko ali
- Translation: Our ancestors say you cannot lay down without first sitting down
- Proverbs 23: Miri ahua a took igwere make ni o ke zue uwohin ohu
- Translation: The first rain of the year most not remain in the atmosphere forever
- Proverbs 24: Egba we yi eka, uwe gi ughegbe lee

- Translation: You do not need the mirror to feel the ring on your finger
- Proverbs 25: Ntin ghaleni a nnu ihien we be a gwa ni isi
- Translation: The ear that does not hear is cut together with the head
- Proverbs 26: Eziza jonjo, mmaka eki fon wa a cho a
- Translation: The broom may be considered ugly, yet every morning they still swipe with it
- Proverbs 27: Asaka e si ni ebe we duru ogo ya we duru ogo yah an oru onu ite o kin azon
- Translation: Asaka the ant says there is an extent to which an in-law is escorted, hence it does not follow the palm fruit into the pot
- Proverbs 28: Mkpodun jonjo, o maman okuru hun enya
- Translation: The net for drying meat whether it is beautiful or not should hang beside the meat
- Proverbs 29: U wa kato, da nwu tani
- Translation: They do not pre-arrange to die today
- Proverbs 30: we si eziza we gbe efi, eki fon ututun we hu a cho a
- Translation: They say the broom is not important whenever it breaks they start looking for it

#### **SPONTANEOUS AND ELICITED PROVERBS PRODUCED BY ELDERLY WOMEN COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**

- Proverbs 1: ndi eye e sini ya naban hang u onye obia ikebe a jua ki me enya
- Translation: Our people say u should welcome a visitor before asking him what happened to his eyes
- Proverbs 2: Ndi eye e sini Ukpe we gi zi me ni onye obia, ya ke o gi marin ihien
- Translation: our people say it is the light shown to a stranger that will guide him to know something
- Proverbs 3: Eze kpoka onuma, oturu ke obi
- Translation: If a king creates an avenue for enmity to thrive he stands alone like a standing stick
- Proverb 4: Eze a gwaa lem oku ya e bu ibe okuru e jen ogwa
- Translation: It is a king that does not listen to his subject that goes to an important gathering with pieces of okra on his lips

- Proverbs 5: Ndi eye e si ni mbeke gwaa nwa ni oku we bu uzo ku ya yime enya, hun we kpazu ku ya yime enya
- Translation: Our people say the tortoise told his son to pay special attention to what was said first and what was said last in a discourse
- Proverbs 6: I yha kpo nwata iyi ni okpo gwari, ya marin ni e be nedie ri e te ni
- Translation: If you abuse a child and he retaliates, you should expect that his father is not far away.
- Proverbs 7: U we ehu enyi we hu a cho ekoro
- Translation: They do not get to the body of an elephant and be looking for lice
- Proverbs 8: Ndi eye e se ni u we ru Esan we hu a chon di efa
- Translation: Our people say they do not get to Esan land and be looking for fortune tellers.
- Proverbs 9: we si o jeni o teke ihian ke o gi enwen nkanka ekwa
- Translation: It does not depend on how old one is to own a number of rags
- Proverbs 10: O teke mkpi, ele ya jan ohumede
- Translation: That a male goat is matured does not mean that it is older than a very old female goat
- Proverbs 11: Ebe eka nwata ru ke o konto ekpa
- Translation: it is the height that a child's hand gets to that he hangs his bag
- Proverbs 12: wa hun a hanchelem, u wa hun a hansolem
- Translation: It is normal to say do not choose before me, it is abnormal to say do not choose after me
- Proverbs 13: O nweni ihien onye enya isi gi ukpe e me
- Translation: There is nothing that a blind person has to do with light
- Proverbs 14: ke eze me le nwata ru wa kpona isi ali
- Translation: No matter how young a king most be, his subject most bow down to him down to him
- Proverbs 15: Omeni u le ihian a no oken ugbo ni unu asuoni, unu a suo zi jenri ejen
- Translation: if you have a common boundary with somebody in your farm and you do not live as friends, you will never be friends forever
- Proverbs 16: ndi elu nbu e si we lie lia nwa ite, ogbo yun okun
- Translation: Our ancestors say if they look down on a small pot the water from it will quench the fire.
- Proverbs 17: Ihien we eme ya ke we eme, ya ha ohuhu ru onu uzo o hulua ali

Translation: What is to be done must be done, that is why the fowl bends down when it is entering through the door.

Proverbs 18: Onye bu jen miri ugbo, yaw a a ghosi ogi ri uzo ugbo.

Translation: It is the child that agrees to carry water to the farm that they show kolanuts along the footpath to the farm.

Proverbs 19: Ndi elu nbu e si nwata nwen okpa kani ezi onye ka ehuru ke one a kwaa

Translation: Our ancestors say the cock belongs to a child but it is in an elderly person's house that it Crows.

### **SPONTANEOUS AND ELICITED PROVERBS PRODUCED YOUTH COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**

Proverbs 1: Nwata kpaka ebu o ri nsi

Translation: if a child roams around too much, he is likely to be bewitched

Proverbs 2: Nwata gbu eworo o si idu

Translation: If a child kills a lion he must go to Benin

Proverb 3: U we gi agbun ghi ogede.

Translation: They do not use climbing rope to climb the plantain tree.

Proverbs 4: Nwata e gbu Oke o huni Okun hu ma, o si we a ni le etekunle laa.

Translation: A child killed a rat he could not get fire to roast it but he is saying that they should not allow a very big animal to escape.

Proverbs 5: U wa marin nwa e me nwa.

Translation: They do not know the child that will become somebody in the future

Proverbs 6: Wa tani nwata u we lunie yaa.

Translation: They chew for the child but they do not swallow for him.

Proverbs 7: We si nwata de a kpoha nedie o sini egun a nika, kani nedie puha le ni o riko nni.

Translation: when a child is asked to call his father he will complain that he was too hungry to call him, but without his father they cannot eat the food.

Proverbs 8: Ndi eye e si ni nwata seri o seri nedie.

Translation: Our people say when a child involves himself in trouble he will drag his father into it.

Proverb 9: Ndi eye e si ni onu kokome ogbu ofifi.

Translation: Our people say It is when two lips agree to come together that they whistle.

Proverbs 10: Our people say advise no be curse oo

Translation: Our people say advise is not a curse oo

Proverb 11: You don see me finish abi, Na condition make crayfish bend.

Translation: It is because you know me too well right. However situations make one frustrated.

Proverb 12: Our people still say nah co-operation make pot fill with rice.

Translation: Our people say it is co-operating together that makes a pot of rice full.

Proverbs 13: ke eze me le nwata ru wa kpona isi ali.

Translation: No matter how young a king most be, his subject most bow down to him down to him.

Proverb 14: Our people say the ear when no dey hear, them dey cut am together with the head.

Translation: Our people say the ear that does not hear follow the head to the grave.

Proverbs 15: Ndi eye e si u wa kato, da nwu tani.

Translation: Our people say they do not pre-arrange to die today.

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **First Observation with Elderly Men Community of Practice**

Meeting Location: Ute- Okpu council

Cadre: elders of Ute-Okpu

Date: 13th of February 2013

Number of Attendees (30):

Number of VCDs: (1)

Time of recording (30 mins)

### **Second Observation with Elderly Men Community of Practice**

Meeting Location: Ute- Okpu council

Cadre: elders of Ute-Okpu

Date: 28th of July 2014

Number of Attendees (30):

Number of VCDs: (1)

Time of recording (30 mins)

### **First observation with Elderly Women Community of Practice**

Meeting Location: Ute-OKPU

Cadre: Female elders of Ute-Okpu

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2014

Number of Attendees (15):

Number of VCDs: (1)

Recording time: (30 mins)

### **Second Observation with Elderly Women Community of Practice**

Meeting Location: Ute-Okpu



Cadre: Female elders of Ute-Okpu

Date: 29th of August 2014

Number of Attendees (15):

Number of VCDs: (1)

Recording time: (30 mins)

### **First Observation with Youth Community of Practice**

Meeting Location: Youth C'S House

Cadre: Ika youths

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2014

Number of members (17):

Recording time (30 mins)

### **Second Observation with the Youths Focus Group**

Meeting Location: Youth C'S House

Cadre: Ika youths

Date: 19th of August 2014

Number of members (17)

Recording time (30 mins)

## APPENDIX 4

### Consent Form

Full title of Project: Language and Identity: Generational transition and discursive patterns between the elders and youths of Nigeria in general and the Igbo tribe of Nigeria in particular, in trying to make meaning

Name, position and contact address of Researcher: Anthonia Onyeibe, Research student at department of Language Literature and International Studies, University of Central Lancashire.

Please read the following statements and initial the boxes to indicate your agreement

Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet, dated ..... for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

☐

I agree to take part in the above study.

☐

I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research.

☐

I understand that it will not be possible to withdraw my data from the study after final analysis has been undertaken

☐

I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being audio recorded

☐

I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being video recorded

☐

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

☐

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Name of Participant

---

Date

---

Signature

Anthonia Dumebe Onyeibe

---

Name of Researcher

---

Date

---

Signature

### **List of Interview Questions**

1. Introductions
2. Have you read the consent form?
3. What is Ika language to you?
4. So where you brought up speaking your native language?
5. What are proverbs in Ute-Okpu?
6. So do your parents or grandparents use proverbs during interaction with you?
7. Do you use proverbs in your daily interaction?
8. So can you produce one proverb?
9. Which languages do you prefer to produce proverbs?
10. So does globalization affects the use of proverbs?

## APPENDIX 5

### CODING OF DATA

#### Tags for coding data

TP	Type of proverb
FP	Function of proverb
FPP	Frequency of proverb production
CS	Code-switching
H	Humour
A	Attitudes
BV	British variety
AV	American Variety
SV	Slang variety
I	Ika
NPE	Nigerian Pidgin English

## APPENDIX 6

### Sample Transcribed Interview

1. Interviewer: Hello
2. Youth B: Hi
3. Interviewer: Just wanted to ask you, uhmm have you been able to go through
4. your information sheet, consent form and are you okay with
5. everything that has been written there?
6. Youth B: (nodding) yea! Positive
7. Interviewer: What are proverbs in Ute-Okpu?
8. Youth B: This is a jamb question (laughing). Well proverbs are used
9. in interactions in Ute-Okpu, most especially among elders. The
10. use of proverbs in discussions is identified with wisdom. So
11. when one uses proverbs they are seen as wise and intelligent.
12. Interviewer: ehmm, Okay. So what do you think about language
13. Youth B: Language portrays ones identity. Yaaa! It does, yea it does in
14. many cases. It portrays me as someone from Ute-Okpu but uhm
15. modern age people don't see it as something that represents
16. their culture. They feel (0.3) you know English is what has been
17. taught you know by their parents or in their schools and all that.
18. So, some of them are of the opinion that they are okay speaking
19. English not really seeing that as part of their identity and all
20. that.
21. Interviewer: So where you brought up speaking your native language?
22. Youth B: Yes. Ehmmm partly, yea. Partly my parents used to speak my
23. language with me and yea. But on my own I have not really
24. gone so deep to know how to speak it yea too far.
25. Interviewer: so your parents or grandparents did they use proverbs, or do you
26. know something about proverbs?
27. Youth B: I don't...know...much but I know that yea there are some
28. proverbs in my language my grandparents use my proverbs
29. especially when they have friends together, like meetings of their
30. own friends and mate and all that or in a meeting or something
31. they speak

32. Interviewer: what of with you?
33. Youth B: yea, with meeee at times they do and I don't understand what
34. they mean (laughs) so it's so strong, I go and ask, I go back to
35. him and say I don't understand what you mean by that
36. Interviewer: so as a youth do you use proverbs with your age groups when you
37. are talking with them?
38. Youth B: ehmmm, the few ones I have heard my grandparents spoke with
39. me and I have asked them the meanings, yea I do. Yea I do but
40. very rare occasions. Yea
41. Interviewer: so on normal conversations with your house mates, friends,
42. relatives do you use proverbs?
43. Youth B: ehmm, not regular, it's not really regular.
44. Interviewer: so can you produce one proverb?
45. Youth B: okay. Ehmmm... ehmmm (0.5 and (rolls his eyeball)). Yea, I
46. can. I can give you. Let me quickly remember one. Ehmm.
47. Okay *ushe... ushe...* (Trying to speak in his native language)
48. Interviewer: (→) you can use English.
49. Youth B: one of the proverbs means ehmmm, it goes like this (puts his
50. hand on his neck) ehmmm, ehmmm, Am sorry I can't think of
51. any one at the moment.
52. Interviewer: That is fine dear. So what is your reason for not making use of
53. proverbs in your daily interaction regularly?
54. Youth B: I use it, but like I said before modernism has changed lot of
55. things. We are now in a global world. And people don't
56. understand these things
57. Interviewer: which language do you prefer to produce proverbs?
58. Youth: (laughs) I use Pidgin when am able to say the proverbs at all
59. Interviewer: So does globalization affects the use of proverbs?
60. Youth B: I won't completely say it has an effect because ehmm..the
61. proverbs and the idioms, all those words spoken to us by our
62. parents or you know the older persons in the village or our
63. communities are not used now. They are not used because
64. (number one) it's boring, (number two) the word are too strong
65. for us to pronounce and because we find ourselves like modern
66. people and all that. So we don't use them so there is no, we

67. so ever because it has haven't even used them before so it has  
68. no negative effect what not been used anyway. Most of us have  
69. not been to the village for some time, we don't use these words  
70. outside where ever we are in the cities because we don't see  
71. people to even speak them with. Sisters, cousins, friends that we  
72. have got, they hardly use them. **I tried some time to even use**  
73. **such a proverb like a simple one while we were sitting**  
74. **together as friends and there was a conversation and I**  
75. **wanted to you know use that so that other people won't**  
76. **understand what we were speaking the guy I was speaking**  
77. **to didn't understand what I meant. You know he was**  
78. **making me feel somehow that I said something that he**  
79. **doesn't even understand and others were now curious about**  
80. **what I was saying because he kept doing ehnn... ehnnn....**  
81. He did not understand and stuffs like that. So it has no effect  
82. actually. Basically it has nothing to really really lose there. And  
83. we have other options of using any words that is more suitable  
84. and understandable for us you know. It mustn't be those form  
85. of proverbs spoken to us by our old parents and all.
86. Interviewer: Okay?
87. Youth B: I mean there are modified proverbs now

