



## COMMUNICATIVE VALUES OF SOME SELECTED OBJECTS AMONG THE AWGBU IN ORUMBA NORTH OF ANAMBRA

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### Abstract

*Communication entails acquiring and sharing with either individual or group. There are some communicative objects, which only have meaning as ascribed to them in the society. The mode, form and manner of communication vary from age to age and from culture to culture. Igbo culture is filled with objects of varying significances. It is generally believed among the Igbo that there is an erosion of cultural values since the inception of modern technology and mass media. The study identifies some of the non-verbal means of communication among the Awgbu (in Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra, Nigeria). The data for the study were collected through primary and secondary sources. The study employed interview and focus group discussion in the collection of primary data, while the secondary data were collected from some selected published materials: Anyanwu (2005), and Ogbu (2013). The participants for this study were between the ages of 16 and 81 years. The study is anchored on the symbolic interactionism by Blumer (1969) which states that human life is based on symbols which are culturally derived social objects that have meanings which are created and maintained by individuals in the society through social interaction. The study reveals the traditional modes of communication such as *omụ nkwụ* (palm frond), *Udala* (African cherry), *Mkponana* (canon explosive), *ogene* (gong), and *nzu* (white chalk) are still in use and very effective in disseminating information among the people with some modifications in some instances. The study recommends the teaching of non-verbal means of communication to younger people not only informally but also in schools for preservation and continuity.*

**Keywords:** *Non-verbal communication, symbols, objects, information, interaction, mass media*

### Introduction

Language is an important medium for social interaction. Okolo and Ezikeojiaku (1999) are of the opinion that language is the medium through which we establish our most important human relations. According to Sapir (1921, p. 8), language is defined as “a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols”. It is observed that communication can take place without one necessarily uttering a word (that is non-verbally). That is, the absence of words or utterances does not mean an absence of communication. It is equally observed that without making any conscious effort, we constantly receive messages from the environments we find ourselves in, and in the same way, we communicate or pass-across several messages whether we mean it or not.

What then is communication? Communication according to *Merriam-Webster dictionary* is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of



symbols, signs and behavior. The process of communication is a system comprising the sender, receiver, signal, as well as the context. Each has role for effective communication. The signal is the link between the sender of the message and the receiver; while the context of the message is everything not belonging to sender, receiver, or signal. Context according to *Oxford dictionary (Concise Oxford Dictionary)* is the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood. Therefore, we must use the meanings of the words, the context in which they occur, and some pre-existing knowledge of what would be a likely message as we work toward a reasonable interpretation of what the producer of the sign intended it to convey. Our interpretation of the “meaning” of the sign is not based solely on the words, but on what we think the writer intended to communicate (Yule, 2010). In other words, the meaning is based on shared knowledge. Context contributes to a better understanding of messages by creating a mutual harmonic atmosphere, or it may disturb the relationship between people involved. Sending and receiving the message can be achieved through both verbal and non-verbal methods. While verbal communication is identified with speech, non-verbal communication is identified with symbols, signs and sounds. The mode, form and manner of communication vary from age to age and from culture to culture. Yet, the concept is universal as it is intended to share our ideas and feelings, verbally or non-verbally with as many people as possible (Anyanwu, 2005), but culturally bound.

We communicate far more information to other people through non-verbal means than what has been conveyed by our words alone. Some of this communication is fully conscious while others are not. Many behaviors are not deliberate, nor are we aware of performing them. Likewise, while we are all affected by the behavior of others, we do not fully appreciate how it shapes our own perceptions and emotional state. When people talk, the content of what they say usually corresponds to the tone of their voice, the posture and gesture. When they feel that there is a discrepancy between verbal and non-verbal messages, the communicator tend to give more weight to the non-verbal cues. We can classify communication into three: verbal, non-verbal, and a combination of verbal and non-verbal (Anyanwu, 2005). This study focuses on the second type: non-verbal. Non-verbal communication is a system consisting of a range of features often used together to aid expression. The combination of these features is often a subconscious choice made by native speakers or even sub-groups/sub-cultures within a language group. Non-verbal communication has not been explored like other areas of linguistic study, yet, very relevant in information dissemination.

Non-verbal communication is often regarded as the process of communication through sending and receiving wordless messages. It is the act of conveying a thought, feelings, gesture, posture and facial expressions. People act towards things based on the meaning those things have for them, and these things are derived from social interaction and modified through interpretation. Studies such as the work by Albert Mehrabian (a psychologist) have revealed that less than 10% (ten percent) of communication takes place verbally, while other non-verbal takes the rest percentage and form part of our language and culture. It seems reasonable that more studies should be conducted on this great aspect of communication. Always consider cultural differences when you send or receive non-verbal messages. A message that has a particular meaning in one society can have a completely different meaning in another society. The same also applies to objects which rely heavily on shared meanings. There is no direct relationship between objects and what they symbolise. Symbols are completely interrelated through analogical bonds, hence, the relationship between objects and their meaning is arbitrary. Any understanding of language use requires knowledge of the peripheral systems of human communication. Just as the language system itself must be learned so these other systems of communication must be learned. Communication involves a social act of sharing concepts, ideas, emotions through the use of signs and symbols – images, which by convention evoke a complex of meaning. The agreement among members of a particular social group as to what signs and symbols represent sustained its shared meaning.

The scope of non-verbal means of communication is extremely vast. The study takes varied perspectives: gender studies, sociology, anthropology, history, religion, and literature, among others.



The linguistic treatment of this problematic is also strongly solicited, especially those that examine the linguistic encoding of some selected objects. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to identify various non-verbal means of communication and their uses among the Awgbu people. The study also assesses if these communicative objects and their various interpretations or meanings are understandable by younger students (who have responsibility to promulgate this culture). Awgbu is an autonomous community (with five villages) under Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria.

### Previous studies

Quite a good number of scholars have contributed to the study of non-verbal communication, among them are: Anyanwu (2005), Ukpokolo (2011), Ekeke (2012), Ogbu (2013), and Udechukwu (2019).

Ukpokolo (2011) examines the perception that women have nothing to do with *oji* (kolanut) and *ofò* (staff of authority and justice), the two symbols of peace among the Igbo. It identifies the place of the Earth goddess in *oji* and *ofò* ritual performances. As a key participant in these rituals, gender is mainstreamed in the usages of *oji* and *ofò*. According to the finding of the study, the kolanut is not presented to women in any gathering, but after the ritual performances, the kolanut plate can be passed round for people to take a piece including a woman. “A woman also does not climb the kolanut tree. The reason is that kolanut is used to communicate with the deities and shrines, and the woman does not feed the deities”. The *ofò* cannot be possessed by a woman. According to Uwalaka (1996, p. 5), “*ofò* is associated with maleness while *ogu* is associated with femaleness”.

Similar to the study was a study by Ekeke (2012), who examines *Ofò* as one of symbols in African traditional religion among the Igbo people. The paper analyses the relevance of symbolism in African Traditional Religion with special focuses on the functions and types of symbols. The paper concludes that *Ofò*, the symbol of sacred authority and lineage headship among the Igbo remains an instrument of both blessings and curse depending on the usage.

Ogbu (2013) investigates the issue of the essence of symbols on Igbo modern thrones. Her attention centred on the symbolic motifs on Igbo modern thrones in Anambra State, specifically in Onitsha, Awka and Nri which statistics show have modern throne with hybrid symbolism. The symbols are classified into: (a) human symbols (b) animal symbols (c) emblems (d) geometric and floral designs. The study further interprets the individual symbols as well as providing the iconographic and functional analysis of the interpreted motifs in the peoples’ context using field information to cross-check the available literature. Photographs of the thrones and their associated symbolic motifs were provided. The study also showed a shift and elaboration of symbolism as a result of change in ideology, occupation and general worldview. Christian motifs and some emblems on the thrones reveal the impact of Christianity in Igbo culture; others serve as a reflection of modern concept of power with its political shift and values.

Anyanwu (2005) assessed modes of mass communication in traditional Igboland. According to Anyanwu (2005), the world over has modes of communicating their ideas, feelings and messages, which Igboland is not an exception. Traditional Igboland employed several modes of verbal and non-verbal communication and a combination of both. His study revealed some of Igbo traditional objects of mass communication which include; *Ogene* (metal gong), *Ekwe* (wooden gong), *Ikorò/Igba* (talking drum), and *Opi* (horn). According to him, despite the assault of modernism, these modes of communication are still being used. The paper attempts to show that, with the modern means of mass communication, the Igbo traditional modes of communication share a common aim (to affect others).

Udechukwu (2019) gives clear identification and definition of Igbo cultural symbols and their significance to Igbo modern life. A descriptive method of research was adopted where she interacted and interviewed some Igbo people across age, class and gender. The result obtained from the study lends insight into the significance of symbolism in Igbo everyday existence. The study classified Igbo symbols into: animal symbols, ritual symbols, number symbols, royal symbols,



ancestral symbols and cultural symbols. According to Udechukwu (2019) these groups of symbols have their significances and effects in Igbo and African culture. For example, one animal or the other have helped them in time of need and trouble which made them to start venerating them, and any violation in the veneration of these animals in the olden days or killing them affects the defaulter(s) and sometimes the whole community.

The study by Ukpokolo (2011) focuses on inactive role of female gender to *oji* (kolanut) and *ofọ*; that of Ekeke (2012) examines *Ofọ* as one of the symbols in African traditional religion among the Igbo people. Anyanwu (2005) assessed modes of mass communication in traditional Igboland in general while this present study assesses communicative values of some selected objects among the Awgbu, a community which is located in Orumba North Local Government of Anambra State, Nigeria.

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework employed in this study is the symbolic interactionism, which was coined by Blumer (1969). This framework is of the belief that the meaning of a thing or object is dependent on the agreement between the people of that community. That is, if a community agrees that an object signifies something, then, that is the meaning of such object. Blumer (1969) specified three basic premises with regard to symbolic interactionism, according to him: (i) Humans act towards things on the basis of the meaning those things have for them (ii) The meaning of things is derived from social interaction (iii) These meanings are dependent on, and modified by an interpretive process of the people who interact with one another.

In accordance with George Mead and other pragmatists, symbolic interactionism is based on sociological perspectives on self and the society. The main idea of symbolic interactionism is that human life is based on symbolic domain. These symbols are culturally derived social objects that have meanings which are created and maintained by individuals in the society through social interaction. Symbolic interactionism proves that the meaning of a symbol is conventional and culturally based, and this message is maintained through social interaction. Blumer (1969) focused on the meaning of objects which are more defined in terms of its actions and consequences in relations to its context. The meaning of a thing according to Blumer is based on the action that thing performs.

The symbolic interactionism of George Mead explains that once we have conceptualized an object we can now think of that object even when that object is invisible. Therefore, the object is thought of symbolically. Mead explains that symbolic conceptions and thought reduce the shortcomings of limited experience of human beings to what we actually see, hear, or fear. He concludes that almost all interactions between and among human beings are dimensions of exchange of symbols by presenting four primary and interrelated stages. The first stage is impulse and that “impulse which involves an immediate sensuous stimulation, the need to do something about it” (quoted in Ritzer, 2000, p. 208). He sees the second stage as “Perception”. Meads sees perception as involving incoming stimuli as well as the mental images they create. People do not simply respond immediately to external stimuli but rather think about and assess them through mental imagery. They also actively select characteristics of a stimulus and release among sets of stimuli. That is, a stimulus may have several dimensions, and the actor is able to select among them (quoted in Ritzer, 2000, p. 208). Mead calls the third stage “Manipulation”. He argues that sequel to the manifestation of the impulse with the object perceived, what follows immediately is action – taking with regard to the conceptualized symbol. The fourth and last stage according to Mead is “Consummation” and at this stage that the actor in symbolic interaction particularizes the specific aim of his choices of the many possible meanings of the object, towards satisfying the original impulse (Ekeke, 2012).

This theoretical framework perfectly fits for this research work due to the fact that it seeks to explain the meaning of objects in relation to their context.



## Methodology

The data for this study were collected through primary and secondary sources. The primary source was through interview (face to face and phone calls) and focus group discussion. According to Patton (1990), a combination of different methods provides a cross-data validity checks and therefore reduces errors that can be experienced when one particular method is used. This study uses the descriptive research design which is largely meant to describe the state of affairs as it exists in a given place. Descriptive research according to Okolo (2009, p. 221) “is that research which specifies the nature of a given phenomenon”. Descriptive design helps to find out more about the phenomena and therefore captures it in a detailed way (Wisker, 2001). A total of fifty-eight (58) people participated in the study. The participants were between the ages of 16 and 81. For the interview, twenty-eight (28) people were interviewed (comprising of 19 males and 9 females). For focus group discussion, a total of five group interviews were organized, with participants numbering thirty (30). Each group had between four and eight participants. The first group was with a group of five (5) married women. The second group was a group of four (4) elderly men conducted after one of the clan’s general meetings. The third group was the group of six (6) secondary school students (3 males and 3 females), in the school compound, while the fourth group was with eight (8) adults (5 men and 3 women) who are traders from Awgbu and reside in Benin. The fifth and last group was a group of seven (7) university students (4 females and 3 males). The focus of interview and focus group discussion is to solicit information on objects that communicate to the people and the kind of information each of them communicates.

The interview and focus group discussions were tape recorded and played back for analysis. The study was conducted between December 2022 and June 2023. The secondary data were collected from published materials which include Anyanwu (2005), Ogbu (2013), and Nwokoye & Eze (2017).

## Some Selected Objects and Their Communicative Values among the Awgbu People

This section presents data from the study. The objects names and the meaning attached to each are given below:

**(1) *Oji* (Kolanut *Acuminata*):** *Oji* is a bitter brown seed containing caffeine, and a source of cola extract. It is the most important object in Igbo tradition; it is revered, respected and adored. *Oji* according to Nwadike (2007) means custom; that is, *omenaala jikotara Igbo onu* (the custom that unites the Igbo people). *Oji* is an all important symbol associated with *ndi Igbo* (the Igbo). It is celebrated and forms the basis or bedrock of Igbo traditional ceremonies. *Oji* is used in varied traditional ceremonies. In the Igbo traditional settings, *oji* permeates all aspects of life: political, social, economic, and religious. A lot of respect is accorded to it for its diversified importance. According to one of our respondents, the sacredness of *oji* and its tree are one of the reasons why the dry wood of the tree is not used as firewood. In its unique position in the cultural life of Igbo in general, *oji* symbolizes: life, communion, hospitality, reconciliation, unity, peace, sealing of covenant, among others. Osuji (1998, p. 44) affirms this when he says: “Kolanut symbolizes peace, respect, goodwill, acceptability, settlement of quarrel and in fact anything that stands for love and unity”. That is why *oji* is used for every occasion not just among the Awgbu community but among the Igbo in general and it is one of the most surviving cultural practices of the Igbo race, and sustaining of the language leading to saying that, “*oji anaghi anu oyibo*” (*oji* does not hear English). In accordance with the tradition and custom of the Igbo, the prayer over the *oji* was always performed in the Igbo language, but inter-relationship between the Igbo and other people from varied linguistic background in different ceremonies people sometimes recently add English in consideration with non-Igbo guests. The kolanut is a symbol of life and for this reason many profound and mysterious interpretations and formalities are accorded to it. *Oji* is an item that must be presented in any occasion such as birth, death, wedding, meetings of any kind, ceremonies, etc. Its presence signifies peace and hospitality for the presenter and acceptance from the person to which the kolanut is presented to. Its presence also signifies life leading to the saying, *onye wetere oji, wetere ndu* (he who brings kolanut, brings life).



***Oji and their numbers among the Igbo:*** The study reveals that *Oji*'s cotyledon and their numbers signify something among the Awgbu people. *Oji* with one cotyledon is not divided into pieces. According to one of our respondents, culture demands that such *oji* (with one cotyledon) is label "dumb kolanut" (*oji dara ogbi*) which should not be eaten, and it is a bad omen to have such. *Oji* with two cotyledons signifies bad omen and must not be eaten as well. This kind of *oji* is known as "*oji kuru aka*" (*oji* that clap hands), and it is an abominable kolanut. People believe that once *oji kuru aka*, people must find out the reason for that bad omen. *Oji* with three cotyledons is called *oji Ikenga* or *oke oji* (great kolanut). *Oji* with four cotyledons represents completeness, as well as the four market days in Igbo land: *Eke, Orié, Afo, Nkwó* and that is an indication that it is a good one representing the four economic days of the people. There is also *oji* with five cotyledons, which according to Okekenta (2012) symbolizes procreation, good luck and useful abundance (*oji uba* and *omumu*). Lastly, *Oji* with seven cotyledons (though not common) signifies abundance, excess, extreme and celebration. According to one of our respondents, once *Oji* is with seven cotyledons, it calls for celebration; the host will look for any available animal, kill and celebrate with his guests. Among the Igbo, number seven is not an ordinary number and as such should not be joked with or neglected. This belief is in line with Blumer (1969) that social objects have meaning which are created and maintained by individuals in the society through human interactions. However, it is disheartened that secondary school and university students during focus group discussions were not aware of varied *oji* cotyledons and what they signify among the Igbo. It is also surprising that 75% of these students could not differentiate *Oji* Igbo from other kind of *Oji*, and 82% of the learners that participated do not know the interpretations and importance of different cotyledons.

**(2) Palm leaves:** Palm tree is one of the most important economic trees among the Igbo. The leaves of this tree are classified into two: (2a) *Omú Nkwú* (the plume of palm tree) and (2b) *igu Nkwú* (Palm Leaf).

**(2a) *Omú Nkwú* (the plume of palm tree)** is generally recognized as a symbol of non-verbal means of communication among the Awgbu people. It is a part of palm tree used in different occasion with varied communicative functions. According to one of our respondents, *omú nkwú* has ordinary and sacred functions. The ordinary functions of *omú* from the study include; (i) tying small pack of things (such as *ogiri* and *ukpaka*); (ii) *Omú* is often placed in the farms, lands, trees which are under dispute. One of the respondents, Maazi Akunwanne states that when *omú* is tied round the land or at the four corner of the land, it means that the land is on dispute and everyone should stay away from the land. It is an indication that if anyone ventures to go there, trouble will ensue. Therefore whoever sees where *omú* is used to make barricade should not trespass for the avoidance of trouble. (iii) If any *omú* is on a lorry or bus, it means the lorry or bus is conveying home a corpse. (iv) If the *omú* is tied round the *Udala* (African cheery), cashew, *ube* (local pears) and mango trees, it means that no one is allowed to climb the tree or pluck the seed. The study reveals that there is always repercussion for anyone that goes contrary to this. (v) *Omú* is used in taken possession of a portion of communal land for the year farming. One of our respondents (Ugonnanyere) states that they have communal lands, they as kinsmen have where they farm every year, and any part of the land where *omú* is placed from the chosen land indicates that that particular portion of the land has been taken by someone, and other people should stay away from that portion. (vi) The *omú* placed on any item in the open market means that the said item is not for sale. (vii) If a knot of it is in any person's mouth, it means he will neither talk nor will he be talked to. (viii) *Omú* is also used to show sacred places or trees, as well as forbidden places of entry. (ix) When *omú* is tied round the compound, it means that no one is allowed to enter the place. (x) *Omú* symbolizes peace. For example, when a community and another community are at war with each other, the one on the part of peace often sends the other *omú*.

**(2b) *Igu Nkwú* (Palm Leaf):** Palm leaf is a branch of palm tree with many uses. It is used as a shade. Once it is used to make shade in the forest or farm, it means that some people have their rest there. Since it signifies the presence of human, anybody that sees it from afar and needs help comes to the place. Also, if someone is missing his way and sees it, the person goes there to meet whoever takes shade there for direction. Also, if one is in dare need of water, matchstick and like, the person



knows that someone is there and might get help from such person. Another importance of *igu nkwu* among the Awgbu people is its usefulness during funeral. Before the advent of canopy, *Igu Nkwu* is used as a shade in front of the house of the bereaved. If it is used as a shade in front of a person's compound, it signifies that someone dies there. Though canopy has taken over most of this recently but among the Awgbu people, they still raise at least one shade with *igu nkwu* where they are performing funeral, or place the *igu nkwu* on top of a canopy, especially the one where the family of the bereaved stays.

**(3) *Udala* (African cherry):** *Udara* grows and provides popular fruits which everyone both old and young enjoys. This tree is not ordinary tree among the Awgbu people. It is a tree believed not to be planted by anyone, the seed germinates and grows where the gods of the land chooses. It symbolizes heart of the children, fertility, procreation and abundance. According to one of our respondents (Akunwafo), "there is a spirit behind the *udala* tree, the spirit of procreation, the spirit of children". He states further that barren women are encouraged to frequent the *udala* tree especially during the mid-day to attract the spirit of children. The study also reveals that there are consequences (to the person, family as well as the clan) of cutting down *udala* tree without performing proper sacrifices, and appeasing the spirit of the children. Another elder (Maazi Okoyendukwe) notes that it is near abomination to defecate under the *udala* tree. According to him, the environment of *udala* tree is sacred; it attracts the spirits especially during the night and mid-day.

**(4) *Mkponana* (gun/canon explosive):** Another instrument of non-verbal communication is the gun and canon type of explosive known in most parts of Igboland and Awgbu specifically as *mkponana*. The tip of this canon is buried beneath the surface of the earth and detonated with a flame to produce a heavy and far-reaching sound. A gun shot at night sends message that an important person is dead and burial rites are to begin the next day. The sound communicates or sends a message to near and distant communities or villages especially regarding death and burial/funeral. On the day of burial, the first *mkponana* announces the arrival of the corpse, while the second indicates that the corpse has just been lowered to the grave. During funeral, when an important people (such as the in-laws) come for condolence visit, *mkponana* announces their entrance and also to welcomes them. In addition, people that come for condolence visit with masquerade or dance group are always welcome with *mkponana*, even when the gun powder finished, they have to wait as people run round and get it and properly welcome them. Also, *mkponana* is used to announce the close of daily receiving of visitors during funeral ceremonies. In addition, when a married woman dies, her spirit is escorted back to his father's family by his paternal people within the period of funeral. *Mkponana* is used not only to announce the return of the people from their in-laws, but also welcoming back the spirit of the late Ada (daughter of the family) back to her paternal home, without this, the rite is not complete according to one of our respondents (Maazi Onyiruka). Also, during new yam festival, *Mkponana* is used not only to announce the end of new yam rites, but also to inform the people that they can begin to eat the new yam.

**(5) *Ogene* (metal gong):** The *Ogene* is a metal disc with a folded rim which when struck with a stick or a piece of metal produces a resonant sound. The function of these instruments, especially when beaten in an area of the community at night, is to attract and hold attention for verbal communication. Among the Awgbu, *ogene* is used for announcement not only in the market place, but also round the village. The sound of *ogene* draws people's attention to the person striking it. After striking the *ogene* (and gotten the attention of the people), the person makes the announcement. Also, when this instrument is sounded depending on the time and tone, the people is reminded of the meeting, burial or marriage to attend, rehearsal, etc. It can also mean that a member of a group is dead. According to one of the respondents (Mrs Ibeachu) "majority of our people often know the message delivered by this *ogene*, but some especially the young maiden do not" (my translation). According to her, if one is not sure of the particular message, such a person asks her neighbor(s), or the two can walk to the announcer.

**(6) *Nzu* (white chalk):** *Nzu* is very important symbol in Igbo culture because it signifies some of the most important and spiritual attributes of Igbo worldview such as purity, clean heart, justice, sincerity, truth and faithfulness. It is offered to a guest to rub on his wrist or foot as a mark of



welcome. A host can draw a single vertical line on the ground for his guest which signifies peace. The visitor can draw four vertical lines which signify four Igbo market days (*Eke, Orie, Afo, and Nkwo*) and crosses them. This means unity or togetherness every day according to one of our respondents. When *nzu* is rubbed across the left eye by native doctors or juju men, it conveys the message that these men have the ability of detecting hidden mysteries. It also conveys the message that these men can remove evil spirits either by remote control, herbal medication or by talisman or sacrifices. A woman visiting another woman who had just put to bed shows her joy by rubbing *Nzu* on her face (powder has however replace this). If a community declares war on another community, they send such a community a black chalk; but a messenger of peace clutches a white chalk. When it is used for sacrifice, it signifies justice, equity, and purity. When it is used to welcome visitor, it signifies that the visitor is well received with open and clean heart. This means also that both the visitors and the host will never hurt each other or keep malice or be silent if any of them sees or hears of any evil against each other. The host and visitor can use *nzu* to draw parallel line on the floor. If *Ozo* draws line, it symbolizes *igba ndu* (covenant) – an indication of absolute trust against poisoning and evil plot. The ritual is an offering to life and concrete evidence that one is innocent and calls on the mother goddess, *Ani* as witness to open hands and clean hands. This particular means of communication according to our respondents (Maazi Onyiruka) is fading.

**(7) Leaves hang on the entrance door of someone's house.** According to one of our respondents, when a person visits another and he/she did not meet anyone at home, the visitor usually plucks any leaf around the compound, and attaches it to the entrance door handle. When the occupant(s) comes back, they automatically know that someone visited while no one was at home. However, this mode of communication according to our respondents is eluding with the advent of mobile phone, but still most effective till date with the elderly people.

**(8) The appearance of tortoise/ bees at one's home:** The study reveals belief among the people that some animals (such as tortoise, snake and bees) are messengers. People do not eat them and their appearance at one's home signifies warning or danger. Anytime one sees these at their home, they know there is danger and have to make inquiry to abate any evil occurrence. According to one of our respondent (Mr Ukwuego), once you see these in your home, you immediately go and ask the message they come to deliver. According to him the message is often from a deity, either someone has reported the person to the deity. For example if you owe someone and refuse to pay or you took someone's land among others, ignoring the warning often leads to pre-mature death, or a kind of accident (my translation).

**(9a) *Nkwu enu* (Palm wine):** This is used in virtually all occasions and celebrations. According to one of our respondents, breaking of calabash of palm wine on the way for marriage ceremony indicates something about the marriage. The family of the man has to turn back and inquire from the ancestors for the reason. Here either some rituals are performed before or immediately after the marriage or the marriage is cancelled.

**(9b) Also, a gourd-cup of palm wine** is given to the bride-to-be during the marriage ceremony; whoever she gives the wine indicates her choice of husband. However, if the cup of palm wine falls down from her hand (that is, the bride-to-be) when she is going to give her husband-to-be the wine during marriage ceremony, it means that the marriage should be suspended or totally cancelled to find the cause according to one of our respondents. The finding reveals that if the bride-to-be finished the cup of wine, it indicates she rejects whoever her people want to impose on her.

**(9c) Palm wine and *Ube* leaf:** If a man does not want to continue marrying his wife, he buys palm wine and puts *ube* (local pear) leave inside the calabash of the wine and sends the wife to her parents. When the in-laws start drinking the wine and see the *ube* leave, it indicates that the marriage of their daughter has collapsed and she has been sent back to her parents.

**(10) Striking of one's Foot:** The study reveals that striking your foot on a stone or any hard object along the road while going to an important occasion communicates something to the victim. Striking the **left foot** means misfortune, or that the person is going to meet trouble, harm among others. Often when this happened, the person has to turn back and make inquiry on the reason for the bad omen. However, striking the **right foot** means good fortune, favour, success, etc. According



to a respondent, “It is very difficult for me to continue where I am going once I strike my left foot on anything because I know that I will not get good result from the place. For example, if I am going to see someone, I know that either the person will not be at home, or the purpose will not be in my favour”. The students interviewed were not aware of this communication and belief among the people.

### Recommendation

From the study and findings, the following recommendation was made; that teaching of non-verbal means of communication to younger ones. There is need to incorporate the teaching of this nature to our young ones through the incorporation of this to the curriculum. In the words of Maazi Iloegbu (one of the respondents), “majority of our children do not know about *oji* and their different numbers and what these numbers signifies and as such could make mistake eating the ones that are forbidden to be eaten. Also, *nzu* is very important symbol among the Igbo culture. Also, the objects and their communicative values are vanishing because of intercultural interferences and neglect by Igbo people themselves. The values are very much needed in our society today, and therefore, it is good that younger ones should always be trained to acquire these values.

### Conclusion

Communication is the exchange of information or ideas. Acquiring information and being able to give information is the key to a successful living. Objects do not have meanings in themselves but have meanings as confirmed to them in the society, the reason why one symbol can mean different thing to people from different linguistic background. The mode, form and manner of communication vary from age to age and from one culture to another, which Igbo is no exception. Objects used in communication according to Okolo and Ezikeojiaku (1999) include all intentional and non-intentional display of material things such as implements, clothes, art objects, sticks, leaves of various kinds and so on. Most of these things communicate a lot to us. It seems that most traditional mode of communication is vanishing from our people in preference to western systems of life in recent time. In other words, there is a belief among the Igbo that there is an erosion of cultural values (communication inclusive) since inception of modern technology and mass media, especially those that constituted a veritable source of human existence in the past.

The study identified some objects of mass communication among the Igbo with focus on Awgbu people. The objects identified include, *oji*, *omu nkwu* and *igu nkwu*, *udala*, *mkponana*, *ogene*, *nzu*, leaves hang at the entrance of someone’s house, the appearance of tortoise/ bees at one’s home, palm-wine, as well as striking one’s foot while going to an important place. Although there are phenomenal changes in the Igbo traditional society due to colonisation, modernisation, education, information technology, population growth, modern economic activities, infrastructure and human resources development, these modes of communication are still in operation. This confirms the study conducted earlier by Anyanwu (2005) that despite the assault of modernism on Igbo culture, these modes of communication are still in use.

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