

## PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SOME SELECTED IGBO RIDDLES BY

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### Abstract

This study examines Igbo riddles in relation to the values and images created in the mind when riddles are presented. A riddle belongs to the class of oral literature that appeals to everyone irrespective of age. They make use of figurative language to present or evoke the rich imagery. Riddles require critical thinking or reasoning as well as being familiar with the environment before one could respond correctly to it. This study aims at the pragmatic analysis of Igbo riddles and the imagery in the riddles. This study identifies some of the Igbo riddles and analyzed them from the pragmatic view point and the imagery created when they are made. The study is basically descriptive with qualitative approach as the data for the study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected through oral interviews which were conducted with competent Igbo people. The secondary data comes from published materials such as Ngoesi (2004), Onuora (2015), and Ofomata (2019). The data for the study were categorized into five: riddles associated with: food (fruits inclusive), animals, human beings, nature, and other things that were not captured in the other categories. The study reveals that each riddle describes characteristic of a thing which is observable by the members of the community and one is expected to supply the answer based on shared knowledge.

**Keywords:** Riddle, Igbo, Pragmatics, metaphor, and language

### Introduction

Riddle according to Oxford Dictionary is a question or statement phrased so as to require ingenuity in ascertaining its answer or meaning. It is a kind of game that requires critical reasoning, good knowledge of the people, culture and totality of the environment, mostly among the children. Adegboodu (2021:15) described riddle as, "... a knotty question that is asked to test someone's intellectual capacity." Miruka (1999) and Gachanja & Kebaya (2013) see riddles as word puzzles in which familiar objects or situations are referred to in figurative terms for us to work out what is actually meant. For Taylor (1951), riddles consist of two descriptions of an object: figurative and literal which challenges the hearer in identifying the object in the riddle. The object in the riddle symbolizes something among the people. Riddles for Guma (1990: 39) are, "... a test of wit and are a game which contains a grain of truth in that they are based on something that actually exists and whose form and shape is immediately recognized as soon as the appropriate answer is given. Bryant (1990:5) defines riddle as, "... a question or statement intentionally worded in a dark or puzzling manner, and propounded in order that it may be guessed or answered, especially as a form of pastime, an enigma, or a dark saying.

For Malema (1997) and Wedoba (2000), riddles are specifically a domain of children and are mainly used for entertainment in the evenings with folktales and other children's games. Also, riddles that are well written help with vocabulary development and understanding among the children. The riddle is often used in assessing the children's knowledge of their environment, which boost creative thinking and logical reasoning. Riddle is a *puzzle* question that people pose as a problem to be solved. Among the children, it is a kind of game to boast the creative thinking

and expression of one's knowledge of his culture and environment. The riddle question is filled with clues to help the child move in the right direction. According to Mohammed (2017), riddles inculcate critical thinking into the users of the language as meanings of the riddles are hidden and need one to think deeply before providing a correct response. For Miruka (1999), riddling presents characteristics of a concept which require the unravelling of the concealed literal reference.

Riddling has to do with both imagery and contextual meanings. Imagery is a significant and prominent characteristic of riddle in general and Igbo riddles specifically. According to Agyekum (2013), imagery is a way by which oral and written literatures employ words to point mental pictures that appeal to our feelings and understanding. He states further that imagery is basically based on comparison of items by listing their specific attributes and lining them up to see areas of resemblance and contrast.

### Previous Studies

There are number of studies previously conducted on riddles. Some of these studies includes; Malema (1997), Wedoba (2000), Magachi (2015), among others. While Wedoba (2000) discussed some of the latent roles of riddles in African communities using the Kasena as a case study, Malema (1997) discussed imagery as evoked by figurative language in Southern Sotho proverbs and riddles (that is, he compares the two genres). Some of the riddle images identified in the work includes symbolism, personification, animation, contrast, repetition of corresponding syllables and satire. According to Wedoba, riddles teach logic, and compel audiences to engage in the contemplation of a variety of paradoxes and enigmas, and also teach about the social and cultural environment, about social norms, about history and biology.

Magachi (2015) identified, classified and analysed fifty Ekegusii riddles according to their nature. The selected riddles were qualitatively analysed according to the tenets of relevance theory. The findings of the study reveal that the Ekegusii riddles can be classified into literal and metaphorical riddles. The study observed that in this cultural context, riddles involve both social and natural phenomena. Most of them are designed in form of statements and questions. They are concerned with selected images of natural phenomena, objects, roles, and structures of some social institutions. Literally, the riddles are interpreted from their words and their simplicity in linguistic and logic. Metaphorically, they are expressed symbolically in line with the value system of Abagusii. They are interpreted and understood in the basis of context and background information. Magachi (2015) study also revealed that both children and adults take part in the riddling process. In addition, the study observed that, context and cultural information were required in the interpretation and understanding of Ekegusii riddles.

However, Saad and Obied (2022) assessed the pragmatic analysis of selected riddles in English. The study aimed at: revealing the most frequent floated maxims by the riddlers in English; finding out the pragmatic aspects that are found in those texts so that the riddlee will be able to comprehend and understand riddles. Four riddles randomly chosen and analyzed, were taken from some books of riddles and web sources. The model of analysis adopted is an eclectic one. It is based on Grice's theory of co-operation. The quantitative analysis shows that the most frequent floated maxim is the maxim of manner, which constitutes 50% while the maxim of quality constitutes 37.5%. The maxim of quantity is the least floated which is about 12.5% while the maxim of relation has not been floated in the selected riddles. The study also reveals that linguistic context, situational context, cultural context and cognitive context are the remaining pragmatic aspects that help the hearers to recognize and arrive at the intended meaning of the riddler.

Mohammed (2017) assessed riddling among the Dagbamba (northern region of Ghana).

The objectives of his study were to analyze the structure of the Dagbani riddle, describe the types of riddles, and investigate the importance of Dagbani riddles to real life situations of the Dagbamba. Mohammed employed interviewing and observation techniques in his data collection. Thirty five riddles out of the lot recorded were used for the study. The age limit of the interviewees was between 19-45 years. Mohammed study identified three types of Dagbamba riddles: the simple riddle, the tone riddle and the song riddle. The song riddle is peculiar because, apart from it being sung as a song, it is also accompanied with gestures and dance during its enactment. The study also revealed that the Dagbamba riddle has various stylistic properties which include alliteration, metaphor, parallelism, imagery, idiophones, symbolism, personification, repetition, and assonance. The Dagbamba riddle has a structure which usually has an antecedent and a response. The antecedent is very simple but the response may vary from one word to a sentence. It is also argued that Dagbamba riddles violate societal norms as some of them employ the use of profane language, insulting individuals and despise persons as they are used to speak ill about persons with different forms of disabilities freely in public.

Adegbodun (2022) analysed the use of Yoruba riddles in promoting human and environmental security in primary education system. The study was motivated by different security challenges people experienced ranging from individual to societal at large. The study reveals that Yoruba riddles are used to teach children how to be security conscious. According to the study, when children are taught properly, they will hardly forget; which goes a long way in making them aware of how to tackle some problems relating to security matters.

Akporherhe and Udi (2023) examined various methods of preservation and transfer of riddles in Urhobo traditional society. Interviews were conducted to obtain information from respondents, who were purposively selected. The data were qualitatively analyzed using descriptive and analytical methods. Findings reveal that riddles perform utilitarian functions like entertainment, education, knowledge transfer, coping and distractive strategies. These linguistic resources should be preserved and documented due to their cultural values. The most known method of riddle preservation is through the use of popular music so that it will not go into extinction.

## **Methodology**

The data for this study is collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected from native speakers through oral interview. Twenty two (22 people) were interviewed who were between the ages of 37 to 74 (12 males, 10 female). Ten of this people reside in the city while 12 live in their villages. Focus group discussions (FGD) were also adopted in the collection of the data; the target for FGD is students with the aim of assessing the explanation of the values and images created in the mind when riddles are presented. The students involved are senior secondary school and university students, between the ages of 12 and 19 years. The total of 32 students participated. The Secondary data were drawn from published materials that contain Igbo riddles: Ngoesi (2004), Onuora (2015), and Ofomata (2019).

## **Theoretical Framework**

Relevance theory according to Fodor (1989:67) is an attempt to work out in detail Grice (1989)'s central claim, that an essential feature of most human communication, both verbal and non-verbal is the expression and recognition of intentions. Grice's claim laid the foundation for an inferential model of communication. Relevance theory argues that for communication to take

place, the communicated information should attract the hearer's attention in an attempt to process it.

According to relevance theory, utterances raise expectations of relevance not because speakers are expected to obey a cooperative principle and maxims or some other specifically communicative convention, but because the search for relevance is a basic feature of human cognition which communicators may utilize (Sperber and Wilson, 2004), and they state further that cooperative principles are enough on their own to account for the interaction of linguistic meaning and contextual factors in utterance interpretation. Their claim is that the expectations of relevance raised by an utterance are precise enough, and predictable enough, to guide the hearer toward the speaker's meaning. Riddles are difficult to understand from their literal meanings. They are metaphorically expressed and require critical thinking in order to understand and interpret each of them. The meaning of riddle is totally different from the individual words that make up the riddle, and it is cultural specific. These culture specific items have a great influence on comprehensibility of the riddles (Magachi, 2015).

### Data Presentation

The data for this study were classified into five tables. They are riddles associated with: Food (which is 19 in number), Animals (11), Human person (9), Nature (16), and other things (10). In all, there are sixty five (65) proverbs selected for this study.

**Table 1: Riddles Associated with Food and Fruits**

|    | <b>Igbo Riddles</b>                                         | <b>English Translation</b>                                                                           |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | <b>Qwa m Qwa m Qwa m</b>                                    | <b>Tell me Tell me Tell me</b>                                                                       |
| 1  | Ihe Kuru aka "Kpam" gbabaa oha: <b>Ukpaka</b>               | What clapped its hand "kpam" and entered bush: <b>Oil bean seed</b>                                  |
| 2  | Ihe ru ru ulo n'elu, ma biri n'ala: <b>Ji</b>               | What built house up above and lives down below: <b>Yam</b>                                           |
| 3  | Ihe no n'azu ulo nne gi na-agbo gi "taa": <b>Ukpaka</b>     | What barks at you at your mother's backyard: <b>Oil bean seed</b>                                    |
| 4  | Atupuo ala, ahu mmuo: <b>Odu ji</b>                         | What penetrated the soil: <b>Yam tail</b>                                                            |
| 5  | Ihe a nuru ka o dara ma a nughu ka e gburu: <b>Isi ukwa</b> | What the sound was heard only when it fell and not when it was cut out: <b>The breadfruit's head</b> |
| 6  | Ihe gba aka banye oha chiri umu puta: <b>Ede</b>            | What entered the bush empty handed but came out with children: <b>Cocoyam</b>                        |
| 7  | O nwere uru, e nweghi okpukpu: <b>Ji</b>                    | What has flesh but has no bones: <b>Yam</b>                                                          |
| 8  | Nwata gba oto gaa ubi, mara akwa lota: <b>Oka</b>           | The child that entered the farm naked but returned clothed: <b>Corn/Maize</b>                        |
| 9  | Agbogho oma a na-ama ura n'ahia: <b>Akpu</b>                | A beautiful damsel being slapped at the market: <b>Fufu</b>                                          |
| 10 | Ihe kpu okpu noro n'ohia: <b>Ero</b>                        | What wears hat in the bush: <b>Mushroom</b>                                                          |
| 11 | Aku nwata na agba ya anya mmiri: <b>Utaba</b>               | Wealth of a child that causes him tears: <b>Tobacco</b>                                              |
| 12 | Agbogho toro n'afu laa n'afu: <b>Oka</b>                    | A young girl that grows and dies within a year: <b>Corn</b>                                          |

|    |                                                               |                                                                                 |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 13 | Agboghọ otu ntụ ime: <b>Osisi unere</b>                       | A young girl with only one child birth: <b>Plantain tree</b>                    |
| 14 | Ihe na-efere gi aka n'ubi nne gi: <b>Akwukwọ akpu</b>         | What is waving to you in your mother's farm: <b>Cassava leaf</b>                |
| 15 | Nwa Agboghọ abụ na-agba n'isi: <b>Udara</b>                   | The young girl that pus comes out of her head: <b>African Apple/Red Cherry.</b> |
| 16 | Nwaanyị oborodo ara: <b>Okwuru</b>                            | A woman with big breasts: <b>Paw-Paw</b>                                        |
| 17 | Ihe mere eze jiri rachaa ntụ: <b>Ube</b>                      | What made the king lick ash: <b>Pear</b>                                        |
| 18 | Ihe kuru mmiri rigoo elu: <b>Akị oyibo</b>                    | What carried water and went up: <b>Coconut</b>                                  |
| 19 | Nwaanyị ku nwa n'aka, diri ime, sekpuru nwa n'aka: <b>Ose</b> | A woman that is carrying a baby, is pregnant and holds a baby: <b>Pepper</b>    |

Every culture has their food, especially the ones which are unique to that particular culture. The following are common Igbo food mentioned in the selected riddles for this study: Yam, cocoyam, breadfruit, maize/corn, pears, and oil bean seed. However, the fruits mentioned in the selected riddles are: *udara*, *okwuru*, *ube*, *ose* and *akị oyibo*.

Riddles give the children the ability to critically assess the environment. From the riddles associated with different kinds of foods/fruits among the Igbo, we observed that two different riddles have similar descriptions and the same answer: *Ihe Kuru aka "Kpam" gbabaa ohia* (what clapped its hand "kpam" and entered bush) and *Ihe nọ n'azu ulọ nne gi na-agbọ gi "taa"* (what barks at you at your mother's backyard). The response of the two riddles is *ukpaka* (Oil bean seed). Children are expected to observe the major feature of *ukpaka*, the explosive sound it makes: *kpam* or *taa* which is onomatopoeic depicting the sound made from the seed (as it reaches its maturity) causes the breaking up of the pod to expose or let out the seeds. The failing to make this sound is an indication that the oil bean seeds are not yet mature. However, during FGD, the students were not familiar with *ukpaka* and its feature of explosive sound.

This riddle, *nwa agboghọ abụ na-agba n'isi* (the young girl that pus comes out of her head) describes the most common physical feature of *udara*, and paints the picture of a beautiful young girl with sore. Among the Igbo, *udara* (cherry) is a fruit which symbolises beauty, fruitfulness and elegance according to our respondents; *abụ* (pus) refers to the whitish substance or sap that comes out of the cherry's head when detached from the tree or when you break it for consumption. *Agboghọ* (young girl) is used metaphorically. Psychologically, a human and a fruit (*udara*) have no correlation but yet in the riddle, the representation of the cherry fruit with human is symbolic, and one needs to identify this common feature of *udara*.

Another riddle: *ihe mere eze ji rachaa ntụ* (what made the king to lick ash), the response is *ube* (pear). *Ube* is a common fruit among the Igbo which is best eaten roasted. For the king to eat this pear, ash must touch his mouth as washed roasted pear has lost some of the sweet natural taste. According to one of our respondents, "licking of ash" applied not only to kings, but also to the elders, the chiefs and title holders.

The physical features of an item helps in identifying the object once described. For example, *ihe kpu okpu nọrọ n'ohia* (what wears hat in the bush), points to the image of a man with hat and helps in identifying *ero* (mushroom) with similar feature. Though, there is no correlation (between a man wearing hat and *ero*), but the familiarity of unharvested mushroom points to the object, *ero*. The same also with the riddle, *ihe na-efere gi aka n'ubi nne gi* (what is waving to you in your mother's farm). The physical feature of *akwukwọ akpu* (cassava leaf is similar to waving of hand) helps in identifying it according to Nwokeobia (one of our respondents).

**Table 2: Igbo Riddles Associated with Animals**

|    | <b>Agwugwa (Riddles)</b>                                                    | <b>English Translation</b>                                                         |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 20 | Ihe nọ n'elu ụlọ nne gị na-agọrọ gị ọfọ: <b>Ngwere</b>                      | What is praying for you at your mother's roof top: <b>Lizard</b>                   |
| 21 | Ihe otu onye nwe ma ọha nwe olu akwa ya: <b>Oke Ọkpa</b>                    | What one person owns but the entire community owns it's voice: <b>Cock/Fowl</b>    |
| 22 | Ihe mara ka o jọrọ were abali na-aga: <b>Ụsụ</b>                            | What knows how ugly it is and moves only at night: <b>Bat</b>                      |
| 23 | Otu onye anaghị enye onwe ya nri mana ọ na-ebuga nri na ahịa: <b>Agbụsị</b> | A person that doesn't give itself food, but carries food to the market: <b>Ant</b> |
| 24 | Osepuru nwata aka n'ọkụ nri: <b>Agbụsị</b>                                  | What removes child's hand from the plate of food: <b>Ant</b>                       |
| 25 | Ihe buru gị ụzọ were oke n'ọha: <b>Ijiji</b>                                | What eats your food before you in public: <b>Fly</b>                               |
| 26 | Ọgba aka ari elu: <b>Agwọ</b>                                               | A climber without legs: <b>Snake</b>                                               |
| 27 | Ihe bu ụlọ ya aga njem: <b>Mbe/Ejjula</b>                                   | What travels with its house: <b>Tortoise/Snail</b>                                 |
| 28 | Ihe na-aga ije mana o nweghi ụkwụ: <b>Agwọ</b>                              | What walks without legs: <b>Snake</b>                                              |
| 29 | Onye na-arụ ọrụ n'ugbo oge niile mana ọ naghị akụnye ihe n'ubi: <b>Ezi</b>  | Someone that always farms but never sows: <b>Pig</b>                               |
| 30 | Kporọkpọtọ na obi be ọgaranya: <b>Ọgbiri aturụ</b>                          | What is common and rampant in a rich man's house: <b>Tether</b>                    |

Lizard, cock, bat, snake, ant and goat are the animals mentioned in the selected riddles. They are common animals in the environment and the children are expected to know them and their characteristics. This is where the power of observation is exercised. Snake (agwọ) has one feature (legless, therefore cannot walk) which is observable. Here, we have two riddles that points to snake: *ogba aka ari elu* (a climber without legs), and *ihe na-aga ije mana o nweghi ụkwụ* (what walks without legs). There are some animals with observable common features. For example, tortoise and snail (mbe na ejula) have shell as a common feature. They are exemplifies in this riddles: *ihe bu ụlọ ya aga njem* (what travels with its house), and any of the answers (tortoise or snail) is correct.

Lizard is seen almost at everywhere with frequent nodding. The riddle, *gwa m ihe nọ n'elu ụlọ nne gị na-agọrọ gị ọfọ* (Tell me what is praying for you at your mother's roof top) describes one of the activities of the lizard (praying). Traditionally, the riddle gives people especially the younger persons the strong strength of cultural values such as praying always. The *na-gọrọ gị ọfọ* (praying for you) creates the image of prayers.

The riddle, *Onye na-arụ ọrụ n'ugbo oge niile mana ọ naghị akụnye ihe n'ubi* (someone that always farms but never sows), create the image of work. The pig is personified. It is assigned human role, "work", an activity that is carried out by man. This riddle creates a mental picture of work firstly and then the confusion of how someone would work in a farm without planting anything (abnormal situation). Also it also creates the imagery that shows that outside farming implements, animals can perform other functions.

**Table 3: Riddles Associated with Human Being**

|    | <b>Agwūgwa (Riddles)</b>                                                                                   | <b>English Translation</b>                                                                                                                     |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 31 | Igba chukwu kwere anaghị awa awa: <b>Afọ</b>                                                               | The drum that God sealed that doesn't break: <b>Stomach</b>                                                                                    |
| 32 | Akwa Chukwu sūrū na adighi akọ akọ: <b>ire</b>                                                             | The cloth washed by God that doesn't dry: <b>Tongue</b>                                                                                        |
| 33 | E jewe ejewe o bute ụzọ, a lawa alawa o kpere azụ: <b>Onyinyo</b>                                          | What is at the front when going and at the back when coming back: <b>Shadow</b>                                                                |
| 34 | Mmadu abụọ na-aga n'ụzọ, mmiri na ama otu, ma ọ naghị ama nke ọzọ: <b>Nwaanyị di ime na nwa o bu n'afọ</b> | Two people walking on the road under the rain, but the rain is only beating one and not the other: <b>A pregnant woman and the unborn baby</b> |
| 35 | Anụ a kpụ n'ọnyụ mana anaghị eri ya eri: <b>ire</b>                                                        | The meat that is inside the mouth but cannot be eaten: <b>Tongue</b>                                                                           |
| 36 | Ọ bịawa ọ maa mma, ọ lawa ọ jọọ njọ: <b>Mmadu</b>                                                          | What comes into the world beautiful, but leaves ugly: <b>Human being</b>                                                                       |
| 37 | E nwere otu osisi na-eto oge niile mana o nweghi mgborogwu: <b>Mmadu</b>                                   | There is a certain tree that grows but does not have a root: <b>Human being</b>                                                                |
| 38 | E jewe ejewe o kpere azụ, a lawa ala, o kperekwa azụ: <b>Ikiri ukwu</b>                                    | What stays at the back when going and also stays at the back when returning: <b>Heel</b>                                                       |
| 39 | Ihe bu gi ụzọ gaa mba: <b>Uche</b>                                                                         | What went to a country ahead of you: <b>Thoughts</b>                                                                                           |
| 40 | Ihe mmadu niile ji egbu osisi: <b>Eze</b>                                                                  | What everyone uses to cut tree: <b>Teeth</b>                                                                                                   |

Human body parts mentioned on the selected riddles are; ire (tongue), ikikiri ukwu (heel), *afọ* (stomach) and eze (teeth). Although there is freedom of thought, but on riddling, one should give response and wait for confirmation or objection from others which must be according to shared knowledge. In the riddle, *Gwa m mmadu abụọ na-aga n'ụzọ, mmiri na ama otu, mana ọ naghị ama nke ọzọ* (tell me the two people walking on the road, the rain is beating one but not the other) creates the image of two persons under rain, while one is drenched, the other is not. The riddle according Mrs Odimfe paints the picture of protective nature of a mother over their children.

Tongue is a part of the body that characterized with wetness leading to the riddles: *Akwa Chukwu sūrū na adighi akọ akọ* (the cloth washed by God that does not dry) and can also be described as a meat: *anụ a kpụ n'ọnyụ mana anaghị eri ya eri* (the meat that is inside the mouth but cannot be eaten). The knowledge of the feature of tongue helps in identifying it.

**Table 4: Riddles Associated with Nature**

|    | <b>Agwūgwa (Riddles)</b>                       | <b>English Translation</b>                                           |
|----|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 41 | Ọ dara olulu, e reghi ure: <b>Okwute</b>       | What enters beneath the soil but doesn't decay: <b>Stone</b>         |
| 42 | Nwa mara mma anaghị eku na ahụ: <b>Oku</b>     | A beautiful child that cannot be carried on the body: <b>Fire</b>    |
| 43 | Nkụ di na mba, na-eghere mba nri: <b>Asusu</b> | The firewood that only cooks for its people: <b>Language</b>         |
| 44 | Otu ibe ji zuru uwa ọny: <b>Qnwa</b>           | The slice of yam that is enough for the whole world: <b>The moon</b> |

|    |                                                              |                                                                                       |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 45 | ti nwata n'ihu nne ya: <b>Agụụ</b>                           | What beats up a child in the presence of the mother: <b>Hunger</b>                    |
| 46 | Ama Chineke zara na adighi eru ahijia: <b>Eluigwe</b>        | The compound swept by God that doesn't grow weed: <b>Sky</b>                          |
| 47 | Ihe di n'ulo nne gi, o maghi ebu, o reghi ure: <b>Okwute</b> | What is in your mother's house, that doesn't grow mould, doesn't rotten: <b>Stone</b> |
| 48 | O baforo be onye: <b>Onwu</b>                                | What enters every home: <b>Death</b>                                                  |
| 49 | O no n'elu abara ala mba: <b>Egbe eluigwe</b>                | He stays up and scolds the earth: <b>Thunder</b>                                      |
| 50 | Umunne abuo ihu obodobo obodobo: <b>Elu na ala</b>           | Two siblings with broad faces: <b>Heaven and earth</b>                                |
| 51 | Okoroocha na-eti Igba n'okwu: <b>Ide</b>                     | Fair young man that drums at the mountain: <b>Flood</b>                               |
| 52 | Nwoke gba aka wuo ogige: <b>Imi</b>                          | The man that jumped the fence empty handed: <b>Phlegm</b>                             |
| 53 | Ihe no n'ezi be nne gi eche gi aka mgba: <b>Apiti</b>        | What is outside your mother's house, waiting to fight you: <b>Mud</b>                 |
| 54 | Nwa so gi baa ohia ma o soghi gi puta: <b>Nsi</b>            | The child that entered the bush with you but did not come out with you: <b>Feaces</b> |
| 55 | Ite dochiri uzo onye puta o gbunye aso: <b>Nsi</b>           | The pot that block the road, anyone that comes out spit in it: <b>Faeces</b>          |

There are images of hunger, thought, moon, stone, sky, hearthstone, millstone, language on the above table. They are all natural to the people, and everyone is expected to have some level of knowledge, understanding, experience and their features. For example, *Oti nwata n'ihu nne ya* (what beats up a child in the presence of his mother) personified hunger. Hunger is portrayed as a very brave and fearless being having courage to beat a child in the presence of his mother. *Apiti* (mud) is also personified in this riddle, *Gwa m ihe no n'ezigbe nne gi na-echere gi aka mgba* (Tell me what is outside your mother's house challenging you to a fight). *Apiti* creates the image of a challenger "chere gi aka mgba" (challenge you to a fight). Challenging to a fight here shows the slippery nature of the mud and what it is capable of doing. By its slippery nature, it can cause a person to fall and cause a very serious injury to the person's body.

However, there are some riddles that have the same answer or response. For example, *Ite oku zuru uwa onu, uwa ji ahụ uzo* (The pot of light that is enough for the whole world to see with), and *otu ibe ji zuru uwa onu* (The slice of yam that is enough for the whole world) have the same response, "Onwa" (moon).

**Table 5: Riddles Associated with Other Things**

|    |                                                         |                                                                     |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 56 | Agbogho ara anọ: <b>Ikwe (odo)</b>                      | A young lady with four breasts: <b>Mortar (pestle)</b>              |
| 57 | Ihe jiri ikpere gazuo ubi nna gi: <b>Ogu</b>            | What used it's knee and walked round your father's farm: <b>Hoe</b> |
| 58 | Ihe nwere ukwu ma o naghị aga ije: <b>Oche</b>          | What has legs but can't walk: <b>Chair</b>                          |
| 59 | Ihe bu nri gbakuta ala azu: <b>Ikwe</b>                 | What carries food and back the ground: <b>Mortar</b>                |
| 60 | Ihe anaghị ere ure, o naghị esi isi: <b>Ugwọ (debt)</b> | What doesn't rotten, doesn't smell: <b>Debt</b>                     |

|    |                                                                                     |                                                                                           |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 61 | Ude a sụrụ na mba nū ya na mba: <b>Egbe</b>                                         | The breathing that is heard in another community: <b>Cannon</b>                           |
| 62 | Ozu lili onwe ya: <b>Ukwara</b>                                                     | The corpse that buried itself: <b>Phlegm</b>                                              |
| 63 | E nwere ụmụaka atọ, ọ bụrụ na otu anọghị ya, abụọ ndị ọzọ enweghị ike ịrụ ọrụ: Ekwu | There are three children, if one is not around, the other two cannot work: Hearthstone    |
| 64 | E nwere otu nne, ọ bụrụ na nwa ya anọghị ya nso, ọ gaghị eri ihe ọ bụla: Nwa igu    | There is a certain mother, when the child is not around her, she cannot eat: Millstone    |
| 65 | Akwụkwọ kirikiri mgbada anaghị ata: Nwanne anaghị alụ nwanne                        | The tiny leaves that the antelope doesn't eat: A person cannot marry their blood relation |

The riddle, *Gwa m nwa agboghọ ara anọ* (Tell me a young lady with four breasts), and the response is Ikwe/odo (Mortar/pestle), the Ikwe/odo is personified. *Ikwe* here is both imagery and symbolic. *Ikwe* (Mortar) is lifeless object that has been given a human body part, “ara” (breast). This goes ahead to show the use of imagery and personification in Igbo riddles.

Igbo lives a communal life and it is very much active in most communities till date. Some of the riddles portray this trend. The following riddle, *e nwere ụmụaka atọ, ọ bụrụ na otu a nọghị ya, abụọ ndị ọzọ e nweghi ike ịrụ ọrụ* (there are three children, if one is not present, the other two cannot work) creates the picture of unity, dependent and joint - cooperative effort. This is also applied to this riddle, *e nwere otu nne, ọ bụrụ na nwa ya a nọghị ya nso, ọ gaghị eri ihe ọ bụla* (There is a certain mother, when the child is not there, she cannot eat). The two riddles express the importance of unity and team work, when one is absent, the other cannot work alone. In other words, there is strength in unity. This is evident in the fact that the Igbo society as portrayed by the riddles is found and built on communal life. When there are lapses as regards the joint efforts, there will be failure of different kind.

The riddle, *akwụkwọ kirikiri mgbada anaghị ata* (the little leaves that are not eaten by antelopes) exemplifies the image of sexual abstinence among the siblings. This means that the blood relations cannot get married to each other no matter how much they like themselves. This is also one of the core values of the Igbo. It is a taboo for one to get married to their blood relation. Mgbada (antelope) is used metaphorically in the riddle to represent human beings.

## Conclusion

The riddle is an oral art which is used to stimulate a child's imagination and his spirit of observation and to identify the items named in the riddle as well as their characteristics. From the examination of some selected Igbo riddles, one would conclude that among the Igbo, the riddle is not just for entertainment, but also plays a major role in assessing the children mental creativity, knowledge ability, familiarity and reasoning skills as well as alertness within the environment. The data for this study were classified into various categories: riddles associated with food, animals, human being, nature, and others.

Having examined the pragmatic aspect of Igbo riddles, one would have no hesitation in drawing the conclusion that the main purpose of the Igbo riddles and the imagery is entertainment and testing of one's knowledge of the environment. In the Igbo society, riddles constitute a strong and formidable moral, cultural and intellectual exercise. The Igbo riddles are used to develop the people's reasoning power and give them the needed skills in making decisions on what each description stands for.

It is of no doubt that riddles empower the people, the Igbo society with analogical and inferential reasoning ability, power, knowledge, understanding which serve as a tool for creative thinking. Also, the Igbo riddles create imagery by associating ideas, objects and actions to what is obtainable from ones environment. The study is of the view that the Igbo riddles are not literal, hence they make use of symbolic languages and the imagery of what is obtainable from the environment and the meanings are cultural bound.

The knowledge of the young ones is tested to ascertain the level of their knowledge of their environment, to mention the images, and in some cases, defend their answers. The descriptions given for each of the riddles helps one in identifying the correct response to the riddle. The meanings of riddles to create image in Igbo riddles draw it's meaning from larger cognitive, cultural and environmental context. In this regard, contexts help to fix meaning. In the work of Webster (1980) context was seen as the whole situation, background or environment relevant to some happening or personality. The question in each of the riddle above is mostly a statement and it refers analogously to something else which respondents are asked to identify. This analogy is based on image drawn through metaphor, and personification among other figurative expressions.

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