

## Indigenous Igbo endearment names for wives as communicative acts in socio-cultural contexts

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### Aaron Nwogu

Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages,  
University of Calabar, Nigeria  
[aaron.nwogu@gmail.com](mailto:aaron.nwogu@gmail.com)

### Ogbonna Anyanwu

Department of Linguistics & Nigerian Languages,  
University of Uyo, Nigeria  
[ogbonna@uniuyo.edu.ng](mailto:ogbonna@uniuyo.edu.ng)

### Eunice Osuagwu

Department of Linguistics & Communication Studies,  
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria  
[eunice.osuagwu@uniport.edu.ng](mailto:eunice.osuagwu@uniport.edu.ng)

### Abstract

One way in which the culture of a people is reflected in language use is through their personal naming patterns, which often express a network of inter-cultural connections and communicate beliefs, historical antecedents, values, intentions, experiences, and cultural practices. In traditional Igbo society, it was a socio-cultural norm for a newly married man to give his wife an indigenous endearment name as a form of identification and affection. However, as reported by respondents during the course of this research, this linguistic and cultural practice is rapidly changing, likely due to shifting attitudes influenced by contact between Igbo language and culture and those of other linguistic communities within the Igbo-speaking regions. This paper examines indigenous Igbo endearment names for wives as communicative acts situated within socio-cultural contexts. The names studied are characterized by a structural pattern in which a chosen nominal element combines with the attributive compound morpheme *diya* ('her husband'). These names were elicited from

purposively selected participants, both the name-givers (husbands) and the bearers (wives), within the study area. The data were analyzed in terms of communicative act types and speech act categories. Findings reveal that each endearment name functions as a socio-cultural communicative act that positions the wife as an integral part of her husband. These names are locutionary acts imbued with illocutionary and perlocutionary forces, primarily derived from their initial nominal components. They also fall within the declarative and expressive categories of speech acts. Furthermore, the study shows that these names have a strong interface with the social and cultural identities of the Igbo people. They play a vital role in reinforcing husband-wife interpersonal relationships within the marital context. The names also serve as reflections of traditional socio-cultural history, illustrating how naming practices evolve over time and how they encapsulate hierarchies and power dynamics embedded in the social structures of Igbo communities.

**Keywords:** endearment, naming, practice, attitude, locutionary, expressive

## **1.Introduction**

Names are crucial to bearer's self-definition and future expectations, as well as the re-negotiation of locally applicable values principles. Names can be used to convey information about a person's background, culture, and, most likely, character. Naming has been recognized as a vital aspect of the language of any community in any given society. As a result, names are considered to be a component of the culture that is reflected in people's language behaviour. This demonstrates that names cannot be excluded from speech or language use in general in society. Names have essential relevance regardless of their types involved. As the case may be, names have vital relevance and uses. This is further backed by the argument that "personal names like *John* and *Brown* are the clearest linguistic identifiers of social relations" (Hudson 2001: 122). And, as is general knowledge, everyone has a variety of names which

may be long or short, by which they might be identified or addressed by others. The act of naming is extremely important in the lives of both children and parents.

Names are a component of every culture, and they are of immense importance both to the people who acquire names and to the societies that grant them. Personal names are an anchor that locates a person or an entity in the world and as a result, the initial names given to children may reflect the special interest or concern of three groups- the child, the parent(s), or community. Parents can assert their experiences before and after childbirth, their religious ideas, and the connection or lifestyle they want for themselves and their children by identifying them in naming their children and these kinds of feeling have been referred to as longings and beliefs (Hudson 2001). Naming has a much broader function than simply labeling and discriminating between entities. Most significantly, naming reveals the name giver's thoughts on the circumstance and feeling about the one he or she names, in addition to depicting the description of the name-receiver. Apart from divergent and extensive cultural information embedded in most African first names, and the fact that names are primarily used to identify the bearers, *speaking (speech) acts* are also represented by names. Thus, proper names are not just expressions to describe a person, place, or object; they implicate more attributes than the 'referent they designate in the real world. The concept of naming expands to include the act of giving a name under particular specified circumstances by one with authority over the name-receiver, whose authority is acknowledged by the name receiver and others. Thus, identification as a serious goal of a personal naming, whether first, middle, or last, cannot be dismissed as incorrect. However, as observed by Eggins (1994), who believes that names have functions, the question "What is in a name?" suggests that there may be more to names of individuals than

simply identification. As a result, names can be categorized based on the roles they play or translate to.

People's names and naming processes have been observed in many African communities, and the Igbo people are no exception. Personal names in Igbo are alternative types of tales that depict the name giver's past experiences or expectations. Within the Igbo socio-cultural setting, names serve as expressive acts that reflect a wide range of human experiences. In this paper, we focus on the indigenous Igbo endearment names for wives as communicative acts in socio-cultural contexts. The names under study are those in which the first constituent is a chosen nominal element combining with the attributive compound morpheme *diya* 'her husband'. The names were elicited from the name-givers and bearers through elicitation oral interviews and were analyzed using the speech act theory (Austin 1962) which examines the functions that utterances can perform in influencing the behaviors and attitudes of speakers and listeners in interpersonal communicative discourse (Udoh, Anyanwu & Osuagwu 2019). It views the contextual use of language as a communicative process (a locutionary act) described in terms of speakers' intents (the illocutionary power of their utterances) and listeners' reactions (the perlocutionary effect of the speaker's utterances on the listener). Searle (1969: 27) gives what he describes as "a reasoned" classification of illocutionary acts into five basic speech act categories or types as follows.

i. Representatives: These are utterances that talk about the state of affairs by representing reality in a positive or negative way.

ii. Commissives: These refer to the acts that commit the speaker to a certain future course of action in the form of promises, offers, threats or vows.

iii. Directives: These are speech acts by which a speaker persuades a hearer to carry out a verbal or non-verbal action. This is seen in utterances that express inquiry, command, request, plea, etc.

iv. Expressives: These refer to speech acts in which the speaker expresses his or her attitude/feeling towards a situation or state of affairs. This type of speech act is observed in expressions used for apologies, condolences, greetings, appreciations, etc.

v. Declaratives: These are types of speech acts by which the speaker's utterance can bring about a sudden change in the state of affairs in the world. This can be achieved through christening, pronouncements, resignation, etc.

In line with the speech act theory, we assume and analyze the indigenous Igbo endearment names for wives as locutionary acts with both illocutionary and perlocutionary effects. We shall also in line with speech act assumptions note that the names fit into one or a combination of speech act categories. This study is significant in that it not only analyzes the socio-cultural communicative import of these names but also documents this aspect of Igbo traditional naming system which is fast going extinct.

Igbo language is one of the three major Nigerian languages. It is spoken in the south-eastern part of Nigeria. According to the 2006 Nigerian national census, Igbo is indigenously and predominantly spoken by about seventeen million people in the

south-eastern states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo in Nigeria. The variety of Igbo used for this study is the Ngwa-Igbo. Ngwa-Igbo is spoken in seven Local Government Areas (Isi-ala Ngwa North, Isi-ala Ngwa South, Obingwa, Ugwunagbo, Osisioma, Aba North and Aba South) in Abia State, Nigeria. These seven Local Government Areas constitute the study area for this study. The second and third authors of this paper speak Ngwa-Igbo with native speaker's competence.

The data (the indigenous endearment names for wives) for this study were collected by elicitation and oral interviews from March to June 2024 from purposively selected five adult males (who had christened their wives the indigenous endearment names for wives) and five adult females (who were christened the indigenous endearment names for wives by their husbands). Both sets of respondents were aged 70 years above and had largely lived their lives within their communities in Isi-ala Ngwa North, Isi-ala Ngwa South, Obingwa, Ugwunagbo, and Osisioma Local Government Areas. The male respondents were asked to provide the indigenous endearment names for wives they gave to their wives when they married them and other indigenous Igbo endearment names for wives which they were aware other men gave their wives within their community. The female respondents were requested to provide the indigenous Igbo endearment names for wives their husbands gave them and to also provide other indigenous Igbo endearment names for wives other married women were given by their husbands. Both the male and female respondents were requested to provide their opinions about the meanings and socio-cultural implications of the names; their responses were incorporated in the analysis of the names. The 17 indigenous names collected were descriptively analyzed socio-culturally within the speech act theory.

The remaining part of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides an overview on the classification of Igbo names while section 3 presents and analyzes data on the indigenous Igbo endearment names for wives. In section 4, we discuss the findings from the analysis of the data presented while section 5 is the conclusion.

## **2. Overview on Classification of Igbo Names**

Igbo names generally reflect the cultural practices of the Igbo people. They also reflect the name givers' aspirations, religious inclinations, physical and emotional struggles, the historical and philosophical ideas of the Igbo people and even their psychological disposition. On the classification and analysis of Igbo names, there is an extensive literature (e.g., Ukaegbu & Okon 2024, Dioka, Iwunna & Alison 2021, Cyril 2020, Nkamigbo 2019, Onumajuru 2016, Emeka-nwobia 2001, Anyachebelu 2015, Anyachonkeya 2014, Mbonu 2010, Ezeude 2000, Iwundu 2000, Iwundu 1994, Ezeanya 1994, Ubahakwe 1981, etc.) and the different studies have diverse classificatory nomenclatures ranging from morph-syntactic structural patterns to sociolinguistic, pragmatic and semantic implications. The following are some of the socio-cultural, semantic and pragmatic classifications of names in Igbo.

### **Names Based on Physical Appearance**

Nwauhie	a red-like child
Nwaoji	a dark child
Nwaqcha	a light complexioned child
Nwaoma	a beautiful or handsome child
Nwokoukwu	a huge male child

### **Family Names**

Ogbonna	a child name after the father
Obonne	a child name after the father

Adanna	a female child dearly loved by the father
Nnenna/Ogbonnene	a child named after the grandmother
Nnanna	a child named after the grandfather

### **Names Based on Birth Places**

Nwauzo	a child born on the road
Nwaoha	a child born in the bush
Nwahia	a child born in the market
Nwaoru	a child born in the farm
Nwankpa	a child born in the forest
Uzoahia	child born on the road to market

### **Names Based on Days of the Week**

Nwankwo	a male child born on Nkwo market day
Nweke	a child born on Eke market day
Nwaorie	a child born on Eke market day
Nwafo	a child born on Afo market day

### **Names Based on Animals/Birds**

Agu	a tiger (one who looks strong person)
Ugo	eagle (one who is beautiful/handsome)
Nwannunu	baby bird (a child who has strength)
Oji	a person named after Oji tree
Apu	a person named Apu tree
Ojiugo	eagle's name (a beautiful fair person)
Okoko	flower (beautiful person)



### **Names Derived from Value of Life**

Iheakaghindu	nothing is more than life
Ndukaku	life is more wealth
Ndubuihe	life is light
Ndubuisi	life is the main thing
Ekereuwem	they think of life above everything else
Ndudirim	if I live on I shall accomplish our goals
Ndubuaku	life is wealth

### **Names Portraying Value for Female Child**

Egobure	money is pride
Nwaayibuaku	a female child is wealth
Nwaanyibunwa	a female child is a child
Akunna	father's wealth
Akubure	wealth is pride

### **The Order of Birth Names**

Nwanbu	first born
O(k)para	first son
Ada	first daughter
Ułumma	second born (daughter)

### **Names Related to Season, Weather or Event**

Ujunwa	a child born in plenty
Okochi	a child born in the dry season
Uguru	a child born during the harmattan period
Nwaubochi	a child born during day
Uchichi	a child born at night

Omenuko a child born in time lack

### **Names Related to the Parts of the Body**

Obichi God's heart  
Akachi God's hand  
Akajiaku hand that holds the wealth of his family  
Ukwuoma good leg (a child that brings good fortune to the family)  
Anyia eye (a child who is expected to be a source of light for the family)  
Onuiri tenth mouth (a child who is meant to speak for the family)  
Ohuonu twentieth mouth (a child who is meant to speak for the family)  
Onumma good mouth (a defender of his people)  
Azunna father's back (a child born to stand for the family)  
Azuka the back is greater/supreme (the back figuratively represents a brighter future)  
Isikaku head is more than wealth

### **Currency and Trade Names**

Nwashini a child is a source of fortune  
Nwaikpei a child that is a source of wealth  
Nwaego a child that is a source of money  
Egobure money is pride  
Egobumma money is beauty

### **Conflict Names**

Ochiegbu laughing and killing (someone)  
Ogugbuaja innocence  
Ironyioba enmity does not extend to one's yam barn  
Onyegbulam no one should kill me  
Egesiauka immune to people's gossip

### **Consolatory Female Names**

Mbeodichi (mma) when it pleases the Lord

Obumneke I am not the one that creates

Otuomasirichi as it pleases God

Chinenye it is God that gives

Nkechinyere this what the Lord has given

### **Title Names**

Ezeji king of yam

Ohuṣba twenty barns of yam

Okunko a great personality

Igwe a king

Dike a strong man

Dimgba a great wrestler

Dinkpa a great man

Ogbuagu a lion killer

Ogbuehi a cow killer

### **Names Showing Gratification to God**

Chiemela God has done well

Chidinma God is good

Chibuike God is strength

Chijindu God holds life

Chibuisi God is the head

Nnabuihe God is light

### **Names Based on Supreme Being**

Nwachukwu child of God

Okechukwu God's inheritance

Chukwueze God is King

### **Names Based on Lesser Deities**

Osuagwu a child named after a god known as Osuagwu

Njoku a child named after a god known as Njoku

Amadioha a child named after a god known as Amadioha

### **Names Related to Artefact/Precious Stone/Utensils**

Ojiegbe a child that holds gun

Nwauasi a child named after a precious stone

Nwangaji a child named after a precious spoon

Nwaefere a child named after a precious plate

### **Names Based on Common/ Abstract Nouns**

Anuri joy

Olileanya hope

Ndidi patience

Ike might

Udo peace

Ihunanya love

Ala land

Ohia forest

Nkuma rock

### Names after Body Ornaments

Ola ornament

Olaedo gold

Olaocha silver

Olamma beautiful ring

### 3. Indigenous Igbo Endearment Names for Wives

In the Igbo (South-Eastern Nigeria) traditional society, it was a vibrant socio-cultural norm for a newly married man to name his wife with an identificational indigenous endearment name which was (socio-culturally) used by such a husband to extol his wife as his integral part of his body. Morphologically, the first constituent of such indigenous endearment name for a wife is a chosen nominal (e.g. *ugwu* ‘respect’, *ulo* ‘house’, *ogbo* ‘mate’, *enyi* ‘friend’), etc. combining with the attributive compound morpheme *diŋya#* ‘her husband’. The practice of giving these types of names is almost extinct as newly married men in contemporary Igbo society now give endearment names that are assumed to be classy and modern (e.g. honey, darling, babe, pie, sweetie, etc.) to their wives. These indigenous Igbo endearment names for wives have not been extensively studied. The only study so far related to it is that by Anyachebelu (2015) who lists what he refers to as spousal *names* (names which husbands and wives call one another). He lists names which include the following (i-vii) and only notes without further analysis that they are names shared between husband and wife

(i) *Omasiri* ‘my delight’

(ii) *Obim* ‘my heart’,

(iii) *Nnamukwu* ‘my master’

(iv) *Mmadiya* ‘her husband’s honour,’

(v) *Ahudiya* ‘the husband’s body’,

(vi) *Mmamma* ‘my beauty’

(vii) *Nnamukwu* ‘My lord’

The present study therefore, is a pioneering research in the aspect of providing a socio-cultural analysis of the indigenous Igbo endearment names for wives as communicative/locutionary acts (with illocutionary and perlocutionary forces). The names can also fit into speech act categorization as presented and analyzed (1-17) in the table that follows.

### 3.1 Data Presentation and Analyses on the Indigenous Igbo Endearment names for Wives

Presentation below are data on the Indigenous Igbo Endearment names for Wives and their analysis.

Name /Locutionary act	Meaning	Illocutionary	Perlocutionary	Speech act category
1.Nwannediya	her husband's sibling	The husband wishes that his wife by this name, will exhibit the characteristics of a <i>sibling</i> .	The wife is also expected to provide a sense of <i>sibling bond</i> by bonding with her husband.	Declarative & Expressive
2.Mmadiya	her husband's beauty	The husband intends his wife to reflect her 'beauty' ( <i>good character</i> ) on him.	It is expected that the wife should reflect her beauty ( <i>good character</i> ) onto her husband.	Declarative & Expressive

3.Oladiya	her husband's ring	The husband imagines that his wife will be his symbolic <i>ornamental ring</i> which he should always wear to appear gorgeous before his wife and others.	The wife is expected to be a symbolism of <i>decorative ornamental ring</i> to her husband.	Declarative & Expressive
4.Oyìridiya	her husband's resemblance	The husband intends that his wife should be <i>his perfect resemblance/replica</i> in marriage.	The wife is expected to see herself in behaviour as a <i>vivid resemblance/repli ca</i> of her husband.	Declarative & Expressive

5.Ugadiya	her husband's bosom friend	The husband imagines his wife as a <i>bosom friend</i> .	The wife is expected to be a <i>trusted partner</i> of her husband	Declarative & Expressive
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6.Ikodiya	her husband's concubine	The husband wishes his wife to also be an <i>extra marital lover/concubine</i> in addition to being his lovely wife.	The wife is expected to provide <i>all round satisfaction</i> to her husband.	Declarative & Expressive
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7.Urediya	her husband's pride	The husband intends his wife to be <i>his reflection and source</i> of his pride.	The wife is expected to be a <i>source of pride</i> to her husband.	Declarative & Expressive
8.Omasiridiya	her husband's choice	The husband wishes his wife to be his primary <i>desire/choice</i> .	The wife is expected to behave in such a way that shows that she is the number <i>one choice</i> for her husband.	Declarative & Expressive



9.Ugodiya	her husband's eagle	The husband wishes his wife to be <i>a reflection of his strength</i> .	The wife is expected to provide her <i>unwavering support to her husband</i> .	Declarative & Expressive
10.Ahudiya	her husband's body	The husband intends his wife to be <i>his body's desire</i> .	The wife is anticipated to be happy knowing that she is <i>her husband's bodily desire</i> .	Declarative & Expressive

11.Enyidiya	her husband's friend	The husband intends his wife to be his <i>closest friend</i> within the community.	The wife is anticipated to be her <i>husband's confidant</i> .	Declarative & Expressive
12.Okwerekedi ya	one who submits to the will of her husband'	The husband wishes that his wife will be <i>a reflection of his desire/will</i> .	The wife is expected to be <i>respectful (with a listening ear) to her husband</i>	Declarative & Expressive

13.Ogbodiya	her husband's associate	The husband expects his wife to be <i>his associate</i> .	The wife is expected to be her husband's <i>associate/ confidant</i>	Declarative & Expressive
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14.Ugwudiya	her husband's respect	The husband expects his wife to be a reflection of his respect in the community.	The wife is expected to be her husband's source of primary respect.	Declarative & Expressive
15.Ulodiya	her husband's house	The husband expects that his wife will <i>be a source of protection</i> .	The wife is expected to be a <i>source of cover and protection</i> for her husband.	Declarative & Expressive
16.Nnediya	her husband's mother	The husband intends that his wife will as well provide <i>motherly care</i> to him.	The wife is anticipated to also play the role of a <i>mother</i> to her husband.	Declarative & Expressive
17. Obidiya	Her husband's heart	The husband intends his wife to be his heart desire.	The wife is expected to be a passionate lover to her husband	Declarative & Expressive

#### 4. Discussion of findings

In (1) on the table, the husband expects his wife to be like his *sibling* hence the name *nwannediya* ‘her husband’s sibling’. In the socio-cultural setting of the Igbo people, there is a sibling hierarchy which is based on the order of birth and personality. Older siblings are role models to their younger ones, shaping their values, behaviour and attitude. Siblings also provide emotional support for one another, engendering a sense of belonging. By naming his wife *nwannediya*, a husband expects his wife to exhibit to him (and also expects to experience) the socio-cultural characteristics associated with siblinghood.

In (2), a wife is named *mmadiya* ‘her husband’s beauty’. *Beauty being in the eyes of the beholder* is a popular saying which entails that beauty is a subjective phenomenon and is also a matter of personal opinion and perception. Within the Igbo socio-cultural setting, the beauty of a woman is not just about her physical appearance (healthy body, elegance and refinement) but also about good character and skills in cooking, child-caring and home management. In naming his wife as *mmadiya* ‘her husband’s beauty’, the man is expecting, affirming and claiming ownership of the holistic concept of beauty of his wife (that encompasses both inner and physical virtues) which his wife in turn is expected to reflect on him in their marital union.

In (3) a newly married wife is named *Oladiya* ‘her husband’s ring’. In the Igbo culture, ornamental *rings* have important cultural symbolism where they can reflect status, wealth, and marital status. The ring in the Igbo culture is also a symbol of pride which one can wear on the body to showcase affluence. In naming his wife *Oladiya*, a man intends his wife to be a symbol (one whose fate and destiny will bring marital fortunes) of wealth, affluence and pride which he expects to reflect in all aspects of his marriage.

In (4), a husband names his wife, *Oyiridiya* ‘her husband’s resemblance’, an endearment name that a husband gives to encapsulate his perception and intention about his wife as his

replica in the socio-cultural context of reciprocal and mutual possession of positive traits. It also expresses a husband's innate and self-belief of equality in marriage partnership which he believes is a condition for unity, bonding, shared identity, respect, affection and marital harmony. The name thus, implicates the assumption that a husband wholeheartedly accepts his wife as being part of him and such a wife is expected reciprocate her husband's acceptance by putting up her best character.

The name in (5) *Ugadiya* 'her husband's bosom friend' is a name which reflects the importance of friendship and partnership in the Igbo culture. A husband names his wife as such, to express his intention and expectation of mutual intimacy and closeness, partnership and friendship, as well as trust and loyalty. The name also emphasizes mutual companionship, support, affection and love which a husband and a wife exhibit to each other and it is a husband's expectation that his wife's character will model that of a best friend.

In (6), a husband names his wife *Ikodiya* 'her husband's concubine'. This name has socio-cultural implications and reflects the historical antecedents of the Igbo traditional marriage system where a husband could have a wife or wives and yet would have a concubine or concubines. Such concubines were not hidden from the legally and traditionally married wives and yet there was relative harmony between such a husband and his wives. This scenario reflects the historical and traditional social hierarchy and power dynamics in the marriage system where there was a prioritized male dominance and a husband was culturally endowed with more authority with a consequent female subservience. However, in naming his wife *Ikodiya*, a husband intends his wife to be the totality of a wife and concubine to the extent that he expectedly, would not be involved in extramarital affairs. Thus, the name is reassuring to a wife that in addition to being a wife that she is also concubine to her husband hence, there is no need for the man to cheat on her with other women and the wife is expected to be ready to provide all-round satisfaction for her husband.

Name (7), *Urediya* 'her husband's pride' is a name that expresses a husband's intention of admiration and affection for his wife because he feels and expects that his wife would be a

source of pride based on her personality and inner qualities. The name thus, culturally reflects a man's respect, love and appreciation for his wife which his wife is expected to reciprocate. It also highlights how emotional connections are expressed in names.

The name, *Omasiridiya* 'her husband's choice' in (8), encapsulates a husband's public declaration and expectation of his thoughtful, intentional and deliberate choice. It is a name given out of love and commitment which empowers a wife as a valued partner in marriage to exhibit equal love and commitment towards her husband. The name culturally signifies a deep sense of admiration and respect for a wife; recognizing her as person of value and worth within the Igbo socio-cultural setting.

As can be observed in (9), a husband names his wife *Ugodiya* 'her husband's eagle'. The symbolism made with an eagle in the name is quite striking and interesting. In the Igbo culture, the eagle is highly revered because of its characteristic features of strength, agility and power. These features make the eagle a symbol of courage and resilience. The eagle is also inherently and naturally endowed with the qualities of freedom and independence; qualities manifested in its ability to soar very high and navigate extensive territories. Eagles have very sharp vision which intuitively aid their wisdom in discernment. By naming his wife *Ugodiya*, a husband imagines and attributes all the virtuous qualities of an eagle to his wife. Thus, the name *Ugodiya* in the socio-cultural context of the Igbo people, signifies respect with admiration, strength, resilience and a great sense of independence which a husband expects his wife to reflect onto him in their marital home.

In (10), a husband names his wife *Ahudiya* 'her husband's body' a name which is also symbolic, implying that there is a sense of unity and oneness. It also suggests a feeling of inseparability and interconnectedness. The name suggests a very high level of desire, closeness and intimacy because a wife is intended as expressed in the name, to be an integral and inseparable part of her husband's life. The name implicates a sense of interdependence where the husband understands and expects to have a mutual support emotionally, physically and even spiritually in his marriage relationship with his wife. In line with the belief of the

Igbo people, the name *Ahudiya* is a cultural expression of deep desire, love, emotional connection and appreciation from a husband which his wife is expected to acknowledge with happiness.

In (11), a husband names his wife *Enyidiya* ‘her husband’s friend’, a name which, in the context of the Igbo socio-cultural setting signifies partnership and equality of which friends are known for. In naming his wife *Enyidiya*, a husband imagines his wife as a confidential and trusted companion. The name encodes a sense of mutual respect, admiration, strong emotional connection, a deep understanding and empathy for a wife because in giving his wife the name, a husband expresses the fact that he values his wife’s feelings, opinions and thoughts. The name is socio-culturally significant among the Igbo people because they value friendship which is important in building strong and beneficial relationships. Within the marital setting, the name culturally expresses love, companionship and emotional connection which a wife and her husband are expected to nurture in marital relationships.

A husband in (12), names his wife *Okwerekediya* ‘one who submits to the will of her husband. The name culturally reflects the patriarchal traditional Igbo society where family authority lies with men and women are culturally bound to defer to men’s authority and be obedient and subservient to their husbands. Thus, the name underpins male dominance which also captures unequal power dynamics within the Igbo socio-cultural traditional setting. It further highlights and prioritizes gender role differences where husbands are supposed to be decision makers for the family while their wives are expected to obey such decisions. In naming his wife *Okwerekediya*, a husband affirms his belief in his wife anticipated obedience, an indispensable ingredient for a successful marital union.

In (14), a husband names her wife *Ugwudiya* ‘her husband’s respect’, a name with a deep sense of cultural implication. In the Igbo culture, an adult man who has reached the age of marriage is only assumed to be *complete* and respected when he is married. Within this context, a husband who names his wife *Ugwudiya* is expressing his status as fulfilled man

who should be accorded the respect that goes with the status of a married man. The name also suggests mutual partnership and emotional connection based on respect which a wife is primarily expected to give her husband.

As can be observed in (15), a wife is named *Ulodiya* ‘her husband’s house’ by her husband. The name is symbolic, reflecting the Igbo traditional and cultural practice where a woman upon being married leaves her parents’ home to go and live with her husband in her husband’s home. As a husband welcomes his new wife, he christens her *Ulodiya*, a name which emphasizes his wife’s anticipated protective cover, where he, the husband is the head of the household. Thus, the name is a reflection of the patriarchal Igbo traditional society where husbands are household heads and their wives are an indispensable part of the household and are expected to take charge of domestic affairs, caring for the domestic needs of the family. The name, also suggests that a married woman’s identity is deeply tied to her husband home.

In (16) a husband christens his wife *Nnediya* ‘her husband’s mother’ with the expectation that his wife will also play a motherly role of providing unconditional love and care for him in addition to a wife’s roles. Giving that elderly women in the Igbo culture are respected for their experience and role in handling family matters, a husband in naming his wife *Nnediya*, affirms the importance of mothers’ role within the socio-cultural setting and a wife so named, is honored by her husband. The name signifies the importance of family connections where respect and recognition for elderly women is prioritized.

Name (17) *Obidiya* ‘her husband’s heart’, encapsulates the totality of strong emotional expression, love/affection as well as intimacy and closeness. In the Igbo culture and as in most cultures, the heart is a symbol of intuitional, emotional and spiritual connection. Thus, the name, *Obidiya* is a cultural expression of love expectation in a marital union within the Igbo socio-cultural setting. It also expresses a sense of an interdependent bonding relationship and connection where a husband and a wife are bound to each other in love, care and support. In christening his wife *Obidiya*, a husband wishes for a wife who will be his

heart desire and in turn intends his wife to provide a mutually reciprocating passionate love and support.

From the discussion of the data on the indigenous endearment names for wives presented in (1-17), it obvious that each time an endearment name was given to a wife, a locutionary act was performed which, as can be noted from each name, is a morpho-syntactically, semantically, pragmatically and socio-culturally well-formed expression. For instance, in data (1-3), *Nwannediya*, *Mmadiya* and *Oladiya* are speech acts with the interpretations, *her husband's sister*, *her husband's beauty* and *her husband's ring* respectively. This is also the case for those in (4- 17). They are speech acts with socio-cultural implications as each name can only be given to a wife by her husband and can only be borne by a married woman. As can be observed from the morphological form of each name, the compound morpheme, *diya* 'her husband' is a common component/denominator to each of the names, also confirming that these endearment names are exclusive for only married women.

Similarly, as can be observed from the data, each endearment name has a communicative intention (the illocutionary act, which the name giver expresses through the name) and also an embodiment of expectations from a wife (the perlocutionary act). Both the intention and expectation are encapsulated and verbalized in the name a husband gives to his new wife. The intention as can be observed from the first component of each name, varies from one husband to another and the expectation (effect) from the name bearer is generally that of acceptance with joy for a successful marital home.

The indigenous endearment names for wives can also be categorized with respect to speech act categories (Searle 1969). Every indigenous endearment name given to a wife is a declaration from her husband and from the moment such a wife is christened, she immediately begins to answer the name given to her by husband within her husband's community. The name also overrides her maiden name to the extent that everyone in the community begins to address her by husband's given name. In official documents, for government and religious purposes the husband's given endearment name is used. Thus, the



act of being giving a name by a husband is declarative act that takes effect immediately it is made. The names therefore belong the *declarative speech act category* since they bring about a sudden change in the state of affairs in the world. Each name replaces whatever maiden name a wife had before marriage and she immediately adopts the new name within her husband's community. In addition to being declaratives, each of the endearment names for wives represents a husband's pleasant self-wish and an expression of happy and memorable expectation in marriage. The endearment names are given at the point when a woman has just been married and a new marriage is about to begin. The names are thus, expressions of the feeling that *all will be well* in the marriage. In the context of this implication, the names are also *expressives* and thus belong to expressive speech act category.

## 5. Conclusion

Names can communicate information about a person's history, culture and probably character. The Igbo indigenous endearment names for wives in (1-17), each, constitutes a locutionary act (a well-formed expression with a semantic and socio-cultural value), an illocutionary act (the name giver's intention) and a perlocutionary act (perceived effect of the name on its bearer). Interestingly also, each of the endearment names can, on the basis of the socio-cultural contexts that they are given, be pragmatically interpreted as expressing speech act categories such as declarative and expressive. The indigenous endearment names for wives as can be noted from the analysis and discussion, have strong connection to social and cultural identities of the Igbo people because the names play significant roles in influencing husband-wife interpersonal relationships within the community. The names mirror traditional and socio-cultural history of how certain names evolve and also reflect hierarchies and power dynamics based on the social structures within the Igbo communities.

The choice of a particular name by a husband is a reflection of the attitudinal disposition of that husband towards his wife. The first component of each names varies based on the

symbolic choice of a husband. The fact that a husband could choose and give his wife a name which replaces her maiden name is a reflection of the patriarchal Igbo society where men exact authority over women. In the contemporary Igbo society however, the practice of giving these indigenous names for wives is almost extinct to the extent that husbands no longer view it as an obligatory traditional responsibility to change their wives' maiden name. What is generally obtainable contemporarily is that wives still retain their maiden first names while they use official means to align their surnames with those of their husbands. Instead of giving indigenous endearment names that can be recognized as official names, husbands resort to the use of pet names for their wives and such pet names are not officially recognized beyond the husband's use. These interesting dynamics point to the fact that names are not just linguistic labels, but an integral part of the socio-cultural expression of identity

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