

## SECONDARY ORALITY IN THE DIGITAL ADAPTATION OF IGBO FOLKTALES

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### Abstract

The rapid expansion of digital communication technologies has created new opportunities for the preservation and transmission of indigenous oral traditions. Although traditional storytelling practices have declined in many African communities due to social and technological transformations, digital platforms have emerged as alternative spaces through which oral narratives are performed, preserved, and disseminated. This study examines the manifestation of secondary orality in the digital adaptation of selected Igbo folktales. Anchored in Walter J. Ong's theory of secondary orality, the study investigates how the defining features of traditional oral performance are reconstructed within contemporary digital storytelling environments. The study adopts a qualitative research design and draws data from three digitally narrated Igbo folktales: *Ihe Mere Okuko Ji Abọ Ala*, *Ihe Mere Nwologbo Ji Egbu Oke*, and *Ihe Mere Mbe Ji Nwee Okpokoro Mpekele Mpekele*. Data were collected through observation, translation, and textual-performance analysis. Particular attention was given to narrative structure, formulaic expressions, repetition, song performance, linguistic creativity, symbolic representation, and other features associated with traditional oral performance. The findings reveal that the selected folktales retain significant elements of Igbo oral tradition despite their adaptation to digital media environments. The narratives preserve conventional storytelling formulas, direct speech, repetition, musical performance, indigenous symbolic systems, and culturally embedded communicative practices that have historically characterized Igbo oral storytelling. The study further demonstrates that digital storytelling platforms function as contemporary sites of oral performance, where traditional narrative techniques are reconstituted through technologically mediated communication. The study concludes that the digital adaptation of Igbo folktales represents not merely

**Keywords:** Secondary Orality, Igbo Folktales, Digital Storytelling, Oral Performance, Digital Adaptation.

### Introduction

Oral literature constitutes one of the oldest forms of human communication and cultural expression. In many African societies, oral traditions have historically served as repositories of collective memory, indigenous knowledge, moral values, and social experience. Through folktales, songs, myths, legends, and other verbal art forms, communities have preserved and transmitted cultural heritage across generations. Among the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria, folktales occupy a prominent place within oral tradition and continue to function as important instruments of education, entertainment, and cultural socialization (Finnegan, 2012; Umeasiegbu, 1982).

Unlike written texts, folktales derive much of their significance from performance. Storytelling events are characterized by verbal artistry, repetition, direct speech, songs, audience participation, and other communicative strategies that enhance both meaning and audience engagement. These performative features contribute to the vitality of oral narratives and enable them to serve as effective vehicles for the transmission of cultural values and indigenous worldviews. Consequently, the study of folktales extends beyond narrative content to include the communicative processes through which stories are performed and interpreted.

The emergence of digital communication technologies has, however, transformed traditional modes of storytelling. While factors such as urbanization, formal education, and globalization have contributed to the

decline of communal storytelling environments, digital media have simultaneously created new avenues for the circulation of oral narratives. Through platforms such as YouTube, podcasts, and other digital storytelling channels, traditional narratives are increasingly being adapted and disseminated to audiences beyond their original cultural and geographical settings (Ogbonna-Oluikpe, 2021). These developments have generated renewed scholarly interest in the interaction between oral traditions and digital media.

The adaptation of oral narratives to digital platforms raises important questions regarding continuity and transformation. Although the medium of transmission has changed, many digital narratives continue to exhibit features traditionally associated with oral performance. This phenomenon resonates with Ong's (1982) notion of secondary orality, which explains the re-emergence of oral modes of communication through electronic and digital technologies. Secondary orality suggests that technological media do not necessarily eliminate oral expression; rather, they provide new environments within which oral forms can be recreated and sustained. Despite increasing scholarly attention to digital storytelling and African oral traditions, limited research has examined how oral-performance features are preserved and reconstructed in digitally narrated Igbo folktales. Much of the existing scholarship has focused on documentation, preservation, and textual analysis, with comparatively less attention given to the performative and linguistic dimensions of digital adaptations. Consequently, there remains a need to investigate how contemporary digital storytellers negotiate traditional narrative conventions within technologically mediated environments.

This study therefore examines the manifestation of secondary orality in the digital adaptation of selected Igbo folktales. Drawing on three digitally narrated folktales, the study explores the ways in which traditional oral-performance features are retained, transformed, and recontextualized within digital storytelling platforms. By doing so, the paper contributes to broader discussions on the relationship between oral tradition, language, performance, and digital media in contemporary African societies.

### **Background to the Study**

Folktales have traditionally served as important vehicles for the transmission of indigenous knowledge, cultural values, and communal experiences in African societies. Among the Igbo, folktales function as instruments of education, entertainment, and socialization, while their performance is characterized by features such as repetition, songs, direct speech, and formulaic expressions (Finnegan, 1970; Umeasiegbu, 1982). However, social and technological changes have contributed to the decline of conventional storytelling practices, thereby reducing opportunities for face-to-face oral performance (Ong, 1982).

Despite this challenge, digital technologies have created new avenues for the preservation and dissemination of oral traditions. Through digital storytelling platforms and online media, folktales are increasingly documented, adapted, and circulated to wider audiences beyond their original cultural settings (Ogbonna-Oluikpe, 2021; Heritage, 2024). This shift has generated new forms of oral expression that combine traditional storytelling practices with contemporary communication technologies. Consequently, questions arise regarding the extent to which oral-performance features are preserved and reconstructed within digitally adapted narratives. It is within this context that the present study investigates the manifestation of secondary orality in the digital adaptation of selected Igbo folktales.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The decline of traditional storytelling practices in contemporary Igbo society has raised concerns about the continuity of indigenous oral traditions. Although digital media platforms have increasingly become alternative spaces for the preservation and dissemination of folktales, existing studies have focused largely on documentation, digitization, and cultural preservation (Ogbonna-Oluikpe, 2021; Heritage, 2024; Habibie & Malik, 2026). Comparatively little attention has been devoted to the ways traditional oral-performance features such as formulaic expressions, repetition, songs, and direct speech are retained and reconstructed within digitally adapted Igbo folktales. Furthermore, despite the growing relevance of Ong's (1982) concept of secondary orality in contemporary media studies, its application to digitally narrated Igbo folktales remains underexplored. Consequently, there is limited understanding of how digital storytelling platforms facilitate the continuity of oral traditions through the preservation of indigenous narrative conventions and performance strategies. It is this gap that the present study seeks to address by examining the manifestation of secondary orality in the digital adaptation of selected Igbo folktales.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the manifestation of secondary orality in the digital adaptation of selected Igbo folktales.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the oral-performance features retained in the digital adaptation of selected Igbo folktales;
2. Examine how digital storytelling platforms reconstruct traditional Igbo storytelling conventions and narrative techniques;
3. Analyse the linguistic and cultural elements embedded in the selected digitally adapted Igbo folktales;
4. Investigate the extent to which the selected digital folktales exemplify Walter J. Ong's concept of secondary orality.

### **Review of Related Literature**

This section reviews relevant literature related to the study. The review is organized into three parts: conceptual review, theoretical review, and empirical review. The conceptual review examines the key concepts underlying the study, namely Igbo folktales, digital adaptation, and secondary orality. The theoretical review discusses Walter J. Ong's Theory of Secondary Orality, which provides the framework for the study. The empirical review examines previous scholarly works on oral literature, digital storytelling, and secondary orality with a view to identifying the gap that the present study seeks to fill.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **Igbo Folktales**

Folktales are traditional oral narratives that embody the experiences, beliefs, values, and worldview of a people. According to Finnegan (2012), folktales constitute one of the most widespread forms of oral literature through which societies transmit cultural knowledge across generations. Okpewho (1992) views folktales as imaginative narratives that combine entertainment with moral instruction, while Umeasiegbu (1982) notes that Igbo folktales serve as important instruments of socialization and communal education. Characterized by features such as repetition, songs, direct speech, and formulaic expressions, Igbo folktales occupy a significant position within Igbo oral tradition. In this study, Igbo folktales are conceived as traditional oral narratives that preserve and communicate indigenous cultural values through performance.

#### **Digital Adaptation**

Digital adaptation refers to the transformation and dissemination of cultural materials through digital technologies and media platforms. Bolter and Grusin (1999) argue that digital media often remediate existing cultural forms by reconstructing them within new technological environments. Similarly, Jenkins (2006) observes that digital technologies facilitate the circulation of cultural content across multiple platforms and audiences. In relation to oral traditions, Ogbonna-Oluikpe (2021) notes that digital platforms have become important spaces for the preservation and transmission of folktales. In this study, digital adaptation refers to the process through which traditional Igbo folktales are transferred from conventional storytelling settings to digital storytelling platforms.

#### **Secondary Orality**

Secondary orality is a concept developed by Ong (1982) to describe forms of oral communication that emerge through electronic and digital technologies. Unlike primary orality, which exists in societies without writing, secondary orality depends on literacy and technological mediation but retains important oral characteristics such as participation, immediacy, and audience engagement. Berry (2016) argues that contemporary digital platforms continue to reproduce oral modes of communication through technologically mediated interaction. The concept therefore explains how traditional oral forms survive and evolve within modern communication environments. In this study, secondary orality refers to the reconstruction of oral-performance features within the digital adaptation of Igbo folktales.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on Walter J. Ong's Theory of Secondary Orality as presented in *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982). The theory explains the emergence of a new form of orality through electronic and digital technologies. Ong (1982) distinguishes secondary orality from primary orality, noting that while primary orality characterizes societies without writing systems, secondary orality develops within literate societies and is mediated by technologies such as radio, television, and digital communication platforms.

According to Ong (1982), secondary orality retains important features of traditional oral communication, including immediacy, participation, audience engagement, and reliance on sound. Although technologically mediated, it recreates aspects of communal interaction commonly associated with face-to-face oral performance. Berry (2016) further observes that contemporary digital platforms facilitate the resurgence of oral forms of

communication through technologically mediated interaction, thereby extending the relevance of Ong's theory to the digital age.

The theory is relevant to the present study because the selected Igbo folktales are disseminated through digital storytelling platforms while retaining oral-performance features such as formulaic expressions, repetition, songs, direct speech, and dramatic narration. Secondary Orality therefore provides an appropriate framework for examining how traditional oral forms are preserved, reconstructed, and communicated within contemporary digital environments. The choice of the theory is justified by its emphasis on the continuity of oral traditions through modern communication technologies (Ong, 1982; Berry, 2016).

### **Empirical Review**

Finnegan (1970), in her seminal work *Oral Literature in Africa*, examined the nature, forms, functions, and performance traditions of African oral literature. The study sought to document the richness of African oral traditions and to demonstrate their literary significance within African societies. Employing descriptive and ethnographic approaches, Finnegan analysed diverse oral genres, including folktales, myths, legends, songs, and proverbs across different African cultures. The findings revealed that oral literature is a complex artistic system characterized by performance, audience interaction, repetition, formulaic expressions, and other communicative strategies. The study was conducted before the emergence of digital storytelling technologies and therefore does not address the adaptation of oral narratives within digital environments.

Berry (2016), in his study titled *Podcasting: Considering the Evolution of the Medium and its Association with the Word "Radio"*, investigated the development of podcasting as a contemporary communication medium and explored its relationship with traditional oral forms of communication. Using a qualitative analytical approach, the study examined the characteristics of podcasting and its capacity to facilitate audience engagement through sound-based communication. The findings indicated that digital audio media recreate important features associated with oral communication, including immediacy, participation, and interpersonal connection. The study concluded that contemporary digital platforms contribute to the resurgence of oral forms within technologically mediated environments. However, the study was situated within media and communication studies and did not focus on African oral narratives or folktale adaptation. Consequently, it did not address how traditional oral-performance features are reconstructed within digitally adapted Igbo folktales.

The reviewed studies demonstrate growing scholarly interest in digital storytelling, oral communication, and the preservation of cultural narratives through technology. However, there is limited research on how oral-performance features are retained and reconstructed in digitally adapted Igbo folktales from the perspective of secondary orality. It is this gap that the present study seeks to fill.

Ogbonna-Oluikpe (2021), in a study titled *Digitising Folktales: Cultural Remediation and Children's Participation*, examined the role of digital media in the preservation and dissemination of folktales. The study sought to investigate how digital platforms facilitate the transmission of folklore and encourage audience participation among younger generations. Adopting a qualitative approach, the researcher analysed digitally mediated folktale performances and their interaction with audiences. The findings revealed that digital technologies provide effective platforms for preserving folktales and extending their accessibility beyond traditional storytelling settings. The study further found that digital media contribute to the continuity of cultural narratives through technological remediation. While the study focused on the digitisation and preservation of folktales, it paid limited attention to the oral-performance features retained within digitally adapted narratives. The present study differs by specifically examining the manifestation of secondary orality in digitally adapted Igbo folktales.

Heritage (2024), in a study titled *Folk Tales in the Digital Age: New Perspectives on Storytelling and the Oral Tradition*, examined the evolution of folk tales from traditional oral forms to contemporary digital storytelling environments. The objective of the study was to investigate the continuing relevance of folk tales in modern society and to explore how digital technologies influence their preservation and dissemination. The study adopted a qualitative approach based on the analysis of storytelling practices, digital platforms, and a case study of the Kyrgyz folktale *Mother Deer*. The findings revealed that folk tales remain important instruments of cultural preservation and moral education despite technological changes. The study further found that digital platforms and interactive storytelling technologies provide new opportunities for preserving and transmitting folk narratives to wider audiences. However, the study focused primarily on storytelling evolution and digital preservation rather than on the oral-performance features retained within digitally adapted folktales.

Habibie and Malik (2026), in their study titled *From Oral Tradition to Digital Preservation: A Systematic Review of Efforts to Sustain Local Literatures in the Modern Era*, investigated contemporary efforts aimed at preserving oral traditions through digital technologies. The objectives of the study were to identify dominant themes in digital preservation research, examine how scholars conceptualize the transition from oral to digital forms, and analyse the educational impact of digitization within local communities. The findings revealed that digital technologies enhance documentation, accessibility, dissemination, and educational engagement with indigenous narratives. The study also established that digitization plays a significant role in sustaining local literary traditions in the modern era. Nevertheless, the study concentrated on preservation strategies and did not specifically examine the manifestation of secondary orality in digitally adapted folktales.

The reviewed studies demonstrate that existing scholarship has paid considerable attention to oral literature, digital preservation, and storytelling practices. However, limited attention has been devoted to the examination of oral-performance features in digitally adapted Igbo folktales through the lens of secondary orality. It is this gap that the present study seeks to fill.

### Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design because it is concerned with the interpretation of oral-performance features and their reconstruction within digitally adapted folktales. The qualitative approach is considered appropriate for examining the linguistic, cultural, and performative elements embedded in oral narratives and for understanding how such features are preserved in contemporary digital storytelling environments.

The data for the study consist of three selected Igbo folktales obtained from YouTube digital storytelling channels: *Ihe Mere Okuko Ji Abọ Ala*, *Ihe Mere Nwologbo Ji Egbu Oke*, and *Ihe Mere Mbe Ji Nwee Okpokoro Mpekele Mpekele*. The folktales were purposively selected because they are representative of traditional Igbo oral narratives and contain significant oral-performance features suitable for the investigation of secondary orality. In addition, the selected narratives are presented through digital media platforms, making them relevant to the study's focus on the adaptation of oral traditions within technologically mediated environments.

Data were collected through repeated viewing, listening, and translation of the selected folktales. Relevant narrative segments containing oral-performance features were identified and documented for analysis. Particular attention was paid to formulaic expressions, repetition, songs, direct speech, linguistic creativity, audience-oriented expressions, and other communicative devices associated with traditional oral performance.

The study employs textual and performance analysis as methods of data analysis. Textual analysis is used to examine the narrative structure and linguistic features of the selected folktales, while performance analysis focuses on the oral and communicative strategies employed in their digital presentation. The analysis is guided by Walter J. Ong's *Theory of Secondary Orality*, which provides the analytical framework for understanding how traditional oral forms are reconstructed and sustained through digital communication technologies.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Folktale One: *Ihe Mere Okuko Ji Abọ Ala*

#### Igbo Narrative Excerpt

Otu mgbe n'obodo umu amumamu, umu anumanu kpebiri itunye ego onu maka ihe mberede puru idakwasị ha n'odinihu. N'ih i ntukwasị obi ha nwere n'ebe okuko no, ha nyefere ya ego ahụ ka o debe. Mbe, bu onye a maara maka aghughọ ya, gwara ọsa ka o soro okuko hụ ebe e zoro ego ahụ. Mgbe e mesiri, mbe zuru ego ahụ n'amaghi okuko. Mgbe umu anumanu chorọ ka e weghachite ego ha, okuko gara icho ya ma o hughi ya. Kemgbe ahụ, okuko na-abo ala mgbe niile ka o na-achọ ego umu amumamu furu efu.

#### English Summary

Once upon a time, the animals in a community decided to contribute money for future emergencies. Because they considered the hen trustworthy, they entrusted the money to her for safekeeping. The tortoise, known for his cunning behaviour, instructed the squirrel to observe where the money was hidden. Later, the tortoise stole the money without the hen's knowledge. When the animals requested their savings, the hen searched for the money but could not find it. Since then, the hen has continued to scratch the ground in search of the missing money.

### Analysis

This folktale exhibits several characteristics of traditional Igbo oral narratives. First, the story employs anthropomorphism, a common feature of African folktales in which animals are endowed with human attributes and social responsibilities. The animals organize themselves into a community, contribute funds, and establish systems of trust and accountability. Such characterization enables the narrative to communicate moral lessons through symbolic representation.

Second, the narrative foregrounds the recurring figure of the tortoise (mbe), a prominent trickster character in Igbo folklore. The tortoise's deception functions as a moral commentary on greed, dishonesty, and the abuse of communal trust. Through this characterization, the folktale reinforces ethical values that are central to communal living.

From the perspective of secondary orality, the digital adaptation preserves the narrative and auditory qualities of the traditional folktale while extending its accessibility beyond the physical storytelling environment. The story is communicated through voice narration and digital audio production, thereby recreating the oral experience within a technologically mediated space. YouTube format allows contemporary audiences to engage with the folktale despite the decline of traditional moonlight storytelling sessions. This demonstrates how digital media facilitate the continuity of indigenous storytelling traditions while simultaneously transforming their modes of transmission.

Folktale Two: Ihe Mere Nwologbo Ji Egbu Oke

### Igbo Narrative Excerpt

N'obodo Iduu na Oba, otu nwoke a na-akpọ Okoite biri. Aha ahụ adighị ya mma, ya mere ọ gwara ndị ya na ha akwụsị ikpọ ya aha ahụ. Nwologbo na oke bụ ezigbo enyi ya ma ha rịrọ ka ha na ya biri n'ụlọ. Otu ụbọchị, oke nuchara mmanya ma laghachi n'ụlọ, kpọọ nwoke ahụ Okoite n'ihu ụlọ ya. N'ih iwe na ihere, nwoke ahụ kwagara n'akụkụ osimiri.

Mgbe nwologbo nuru ihe mere, ọ gara kpọọ ya ka ọ loghachi n'ụlọ site n'egwu si:

Enyi m, enyi m oo,                zamiriza  
Enyi m, enyi m oo,                zamiriza  
Na chi nwologbo,                zamiriza  
Egbuola ya,                        zamiriza  
Ihe nwanne mere,                zamiriza  
Ihe nwanne mere ibe ya,        zamiriza

Nwoke ahụ laghachiri n'ụlọ. Oge ọzọ, oke meghariri omume ahụ, nwoke ahụ akwagakwa ọzọ. Nwologbo gara ọzọ kpọọ ya ka ọ loghachi. Mgbe oke mere omume ahụ nke ugboro atọ, nwoke ahụ gara biri n'ime ime ikpere mmiri ebe ọ chere na ọ gaghizi anụ olu nwologbo. Nwologbo kpesara oke ikpe n'ihu ụmụna ha. Mgbe oke putara, nwologbo jiri iwe dogbuo ya. Site n'ụbọchị ahụ, nwologbo na-achụ oke ka o gbuo ya ebe ọbụla ọ hụrụ ya.

### English Summary

A man named Okoite disliked his name and instructed those around him not to address him by it. The cat and the rat, who were his close companions, lived with him. One day, after becoming intoxicated, the rat publicly called him by the unwanted name. Feeling insulted and embarrassed, the man moved away from his home. The cat persuaded him to return through a song of appeal. However, the rat repeated the same behaviour a second time, and later a third time. After the third incident, the man relocated permanently to a distant part of the riverside. Angered by the rat's persistent misconduct and the loss of their friend, the cat summoned the rat before their kinsmen and killed him. Since then, cats have remained enemies of rats.

### Analysis

This folktale explains the enduring hostility between the cat (nwologbo) and the rat (oke) through a narrative centred on friendship, respect, social responsibility, and the consequences of repeated misconduct. Unlike many trickster tales that foreground cunning and deception, this narrative is structured around the violation of interpersonal trust and communal expectations.

One notable feature of the folktale is its extensive use of direct speech and song performance. The song rendered by the cat serves a communicative function beyond entertainment. It expresses sorrow, appeals for reconciliation, and dramatizes the emotional consequences of the rat's actions. In traditional oral performance, songs often operate as narrative devices that heighten audience involvement, reinforce thematic concerns, and

provide rhythmic variation within the storytelling process. The recurring expression “zamiřiza” contributes to the musicality of the performance and enhances memorability.

The folktale also demonstrates the importance of repetition as a structural and cultural device. The rat's offence does not occur once but three times. While repetition generally aids audience retention in oral narratives, the third occurrence carries deeper cultural significance within Igbo thought. The expression “The ruo na nke atọ, ọ tọ” reflects the belief that an action repeated three times acquires finality and certainty. Consequently, the man's decision not to return after the third insult signifies the exhaustion of patience and the collapse of reconciliation. The third offence therefore functions as a culturally meaningful turning point rather than a mere narrative repetition.

Another significant aspect of the narrative is the role of communal adjudication. Before taking action against the rat, the cat presents the matter before their kinsmen. This reflects traditional Igbo notions of collective responsibility and conflict resolution, where disputes are often addressed through communal structures rather than individual retaliation. The eventual punishment of the rat serves as a moral lesson on the consequences of persistent disrespect and disregard for social norms.

From the perspective of secondary orality, the digital adaptation preserves essential features of traditional oral performance. The narrator's vocal expression, rhythmic rendition of the song, dramatic pacing, and strategic repetition recreate aspects of the communal storytelling experience within a technologically mediated environment. Although the physical audience is absent, digital narration reproduces the auditory and performative qualities associated with oral tradition.

Furthermore, the adaptation demonstrates that digital media can transmit not only stories but also the cultural philosophies embedded within them. The symbolism of the number three, the emphasis on communal justice, and the performative role of song remain intact despite the shift from face-to-face storytelling to digital dissemination. In this sense, the folktale exemplifies Ong's notion of secondary orality, whereby oral forms and cultural meanings are reconstituted and sustained through modern communication technologies.

Folktale Three: Why Tortoise Has a Cracked Shell

#### **Igbo Narrative Excerpt**

Ụnwụ dara n'obodo ụmụ amụmamụ. Mbe choputara na sọ ụmụ nnụnụ na-eriju afọ. O jiri aghughọ juo ugoloma maka nke a. Ugoloma gwara ya na o nweghị nku ọ ga-eji fega ebe ahụ. Mbe guputara alo ka ụmụ nnụnụ dum nye ya otu ugbene otu ugbene. Ha ji ya kwaara mbe nku o wee soro ha fega eluigwe.

Tupu ha eruo, mbe gwara ha ka ha na-akpo ya aha ọhụrụ ya bụ Ụnụ Dum. Mgbe ha rutere, ha gbachara Chukwu egwu ma too ya. Chukwu wee nye ha nnukwu oriri. Mbe kwuru na ebe e dere na nri ahụ bụ nke Ụnụ Dum, na ọ bụ naanị ya nwe ya. O wee rie nri ahụ naanị ya.

Nke a wutere ụmụ nnụnụ. Ha narachara ya nku ha nile wee fega. Mbe si n'elu daa wee kụrisie okpokoro ya. Mgbe e mechara ya, ọ dịzie mpekele mpekele.

Ụmụ nnụnụ siri: Onye aghughọ nwuo, Onye aghughọ e lie ya.

Ifo chakpii wọ!

#### **English Summary**

During a period of scarcity among the animals, the tortoise noticed that the birds always appeared well-fed. Curious about the source of their food, he learned that they regularly visited heaven. Because he had no wings, the tortoise persuaded each bird to donate a feather, which was used to make wings for him. Before their journey, he instructed the birds to address him by a new name, “All of You.” Upon arriving in heaven, the birds praised God and were rewarded with a feast. Exploiting his new name, the tortoise claimed that all the food belonged to him because it was designated for “All of You.” He consumed the feast alone. Angered by his greed, the birds reclaimed their feathers and flew away. The tortoise fell from the sky and shattered his shell. Although his shell was repaired, it remained permanently cracked. The birds concluded the story by condemning deceit and trickery.

#### **Analysis**

This folktale is built around the trickster figure of Mbe (the tortoise), one of the most prominent characters in Igbo oral tradition. Tortoise narratives often explore themes of intelligence, greed, manipulation, and the consequences of selfish behaviour. In this story, the tortoise employs linguistic deception by changing his name to Ụnụ Dum (“All of You”) and subsequently exploiting the ambiguity of the expression for personal gain. The

narrative therefore demonstrates the importance of language as a tool of power and manipulation within oral discourse.

A notable feature of the folktale is its emphasis on naming and semantic manipulation. The tortoise's strategy depends entirely on the reinterpretation of a common collective expression as a personal name. This illustrates how meaning can be manipulated through language, a phenomenon that reflects the sophisticated linguistic awareness embedded in many Igbo folktales. The story therefore functions not only as a moral narrative but also as a commentary on the social consequences of deceptive language use.

The folktale also exhibits several performative features associated with traditional oral storytelling. The use of direct speech enhances dramatic effect and creates immediacy within the narrative. Furthermore, the concluding expression, "Ifo chakpii wọ!" serves as a conventional closing formula that signals the end of the storytelling session. Such formulaic endings are characteristic of oral narratives and help establish interaction between the storyteller and the audience. The statement "Onye aghughọ nwụọ, onye aghughọ e lie ya" functions as a moral refrain that reinforces the didactic message of the story and invites audience reflection on the dangers of greed and dishonesty.

Another important element is the etiological nature of the narrative. Like many traditional folktales, the story explains the origin of a natural phenomenon—in this case, the cracked shell of the tortoise. Etiological narratives occupy an important place in oral traditions because they provide culturally meaningful explanations for observable realities while simultaneously transmitting moral values.

Viewed through the lens of secondary orality, the digital adaptation successfully preserves many of the oral features that characterize the traditional version. The narrator's use of voice, pacing, dramatic emphasis, and direct speech recreates the experience of oral storytelling within a digital environment. The closing formula and moral pronouncement remain intact, thereby preserving the communal and didactic functions of the folktale despite its migration to a technological platform.

The digital version also demonstrates how podcast-style storytelling extends the reach of indigenous narratives beyond their original performance contexts. While the traditional storytelling arena is replaced by digital media, the narrative structure, cultural symbolism, linguistic creativity, and moral lessons remain accessible to contemporary audiences. Consequently, the folktale exemplifies Ong's concept of secondary orality by illustrating how oral traditions continue to thrive through technologically mediated forms of communication.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings reveal that digitally adapted Igbo folktales retain significant features of traditional oral performance despite their transmission through contemporary digital platforms. Elements such as formulaic expressions, repetition, songs, direct speech, and animal symbolism remain evident in the selected narratives, indicating the continuity of indigenous storytelling conventions within digital environments. The study further demonstrates that digital storytelling platforms reconstruct traditional narrative techniques and preserve culturally embedded systems of meaning, thereby enabling folktales to maintain their educational, moral, and cultural functions.

These findings support Ong's (1982) concept of secondary orality, which posits that electronic and digital technologies facilitate the re-emergence of oral forms of communication. The selected folktales illustrate how digital media recreate important aspects of oral performance while extending the accessibility of oral traditions beyond their original communal settings. Consequently, the study confirms that digital storytelling serves as a contemporary medium through which Igbo oral traditions are preserved, revitalized, and transmitted to wider audiences.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the manifestation of secondary orality in the digital adaptation of selected Igbo folktales through the framework of Walter J. Ong's Theory of Secondary Orality. The findings revealed that, despite their transition from traditional storytelling settings to digital platforms, the selected folktales retain significant oral-performance features such as formulaic expressions, repetition, songs, direct speech, animal symbolism, and culturally embedded systems of meaning. These features demonstrate the continuity and adaptability of Igbo oral traditions within contemporary digital environments. The study further established that digital storytelling platforms function as alternative spaces for the preservation, transmission, and revitalization of Igbo oral heritage. By recreating essential elements of oral performance through technological mediation, digitally

adapted folktales exemplify the phenomenon of secondary orality as described by Ong (1982). The study therefore concludes that digital a

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