



RSU JOURNAL OF THEATRE AND FILM STUDIES

July 2025, Vol. 5

THODITE

**Theatre of Dreams,
Innovation, Talents &
Experience.**

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July 2025, Vol. 5

ISSN: 3043-5706

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Published By:

Theatre and Film Studies Department,
Faculty of Humanities, Rivers State University,
Nkpolu-Oroworokwu, Port Harcourt.

Printed By:

Emu Integrated Services Ltd.
No. 18 Nnewi, Behind Urualla Street,
Opp. Mount Zion Light House, Mile 1, Diobu,
Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
Tel: 08038858029, 08079985674
E-mail: emafelixudo@gmail.com

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RSU Journal of Theatre and Film Studies - 2025, VOL. VIII, NO. III

2025, ISSN - (3043-5706)

A PEER-REVIEWED REFEREED JOURNAL

The RSU Journal of Theatre and Film Studies

(ISSN: 3043-5706) is a prestigious online academic peer-reviewed journal from Nigeria, dedicated to advancing the fields of Theatre and Film Studies. Published thrice annually, the journal has established itself as a significant platform for scholarly discourse, having successfully released two issues of RSUJTFs to date.

For the upcoming issue, Vol. VIII, scheduled for publication in September 2025, we invite contributions from university and college teachers, scholars, professionals, postgraduate students, young researchers, and practicing theatricians. This is an opportunity to share your insights, research, and expertise with an international audience of peers and enthusiasts.

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The *RSU Journal of Theatre and Film Studies* seeks scholarly submissions that explore a wide array of topics within Theatre and Film Studies. We are interested in works that:

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- Introduce innovative research methodologies

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Authors are encouraged to explore beyond these suggested themes.

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- Manuscripts should be prepared in MS-Word format.
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Dr. Eziwho Emenike Azunwo

Editor-in-Chief

RSU Journal of Theatre and Film Studies

Email: journal.thodite@ust.edu.ng, emenike.eziwho@ust.edu.ng

We look forward to receiving your scholarly contributions and to fostering an engaging and insightful dialogue within the vibrant fields of Theatre and Film Studies. This is an opportunity to share your research and ideas with a global audience, contributing to the advancement of knowledge and practice in these dynamic disciplines.

Editorial Note

It is with great pleasure that we present Volume 5 of the *RSU Journal of Theatre and Film Studies*, a peer-reviewed publication dedicated to advancing knowledge and understanding in the multifaceted domains of theatre, film, linguistics, communication, English and literary studies, philosophy, and education. As we introduce this latest edition, we express our profound gratitude to the distinguished contributors who have enriched our journal with their scholarly articles, research papers, reviews, and creative works.

This volume showcases a diverse array of interdisciplinary research that reflects the complex and dynamic nature of performance, media, language, literature, and culture. The contributions featured herein underscore the journal's commitment to fostering a nuanced understanding of the intricate relationships between these fields. We are delighted to feature works from scholars in linguistics and communication, English and literary studies, philosophy, and educational disciplines, whose research intersects with theatre and film studies in innovative and thought-provoking ways.

Through this journal, we aim to provide a platform for critical discussions, promote innovative research, and celebrate the richness of human expression in all its forms. The insights and perspectives presented in this volume are poised to inspire further exploration, spark meaningful conversations, and contribute to the ongoing development of scholarship in theatre, film, and related fields. The articles, research papers, and reviews included in this edition demonstrate a commitment to rigorous scholarship, intellectual curiosity, and a passion for advancing knowledge.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the authors, reviewers, and editorial team for their tireless efforts, expertise, and dedication to excellence. The peer-review process, which is fundamental to ensuring the quality and integrity of our publication, has been meticulously managed by our team of esteemed reviewers. Their rigorous evaluations and constructive feedback have been instrumental in shaping the articles presented in this volume.

We are also grateful to the broader academic community for their continued support and engagement with our journal. Your enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity are the driving forces behind our publication, and we are honored to be part of this vibrant community of scholars. The *RSU Journal of Theatre and Film Studies* is committed to creating a forum for dialogue, debate, and collaboration among scholars, researchers, and practitioners across disciplines.

As we share this volume with our readers, we hope that it will inspire new ideas, foster collaboration, and enrich our understanding of the complex relationships between

performance, media, language, literature, and culture. We look forward to your feedback, continued engagement, and future submissions to the RSU Journal of Theatre and Film Studies . Your contributions are essential to our mission, and we eagerly anticipate the opportunity to showcase your work in future volumes.

In conclusion, we express our sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed to the success of this journal, and we reaffirm our commitment to excellence, innovation, and intellectual rigor. We are confident that Volume 5 of the RSU Journal of Theatre and Film Studies will make a meaningful impact on the academic community and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in our fields of study.

Eziwho Emenike Azunwo, PhD
Editor-in-Chief,
RSU Journal of Theatre and Film Studies

Note On Contributors

1. **Daniel Oyinmiebi KPODOH**, Institute of Arts and Culture, University of Port Harcourt.
2. **Analysis - Adesina Adegbite**, Department of the Performing and Film Arts, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
3. **Solomon Ikibe**, Department of the Performing and Film Arts, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
4. **Adagogo Brown, PhD**, Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Rivers State University
5. **Vitalis Chinemerem Iloanwusi**, Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts, *Godfrey Okoye University, Thinkers Corner, Emene, Enugu State*.
6. **Dike Chioma Vivian**, Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts, *Godfrey Okoye University, Thinkers Corner, Emene, Enugu State*
7. **Dr. Ben-fred Ohia**, Department Of English And Literary Studies, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-oroworukwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
8. **Goka M. Mpigi, PhD**, Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Rivers State University, Ahoada Campus, Rivers State.
9. **Lolo F. Bob-Manuel PhD**, Rivers State University, Department of Religious and Cultural Studies
10. **Rufai-Ahmad, Kazeem**, Department of Performing and Film Arts University of Ilorin
11. **Solomon IDYO**, Department of Film and Photography, School of Arts, Communication & Design, University of Malawi, Zomba.
12. **Olumide Joshua OKI**, Department of Performing Arts, Music, and Film Studies, Lead City University, Ibadan. Nigeria.
13. **Ekweariri Chidiebere Sabinus (Ph.D)**, Department of Theatre Arts, Alvan

Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo State

14. **Akowe, Achor Friday**, Department of Theatre Arts, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri. Imo State
15. **BASSEY, Andrew Ubong, Ph.D.**, Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria
16. **Stella C. Enyindah**, Department of Cinematography and Broadcast Studies, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt
17. **Ogechi P. Vitalis**, Department of Mass Communication, College of Arts, Social and Management Sciences, Caleb University, Lagos State.
18. **Tayo Joan ADENUGA (Ph.D)**, Department of Performing Arts and Film Studies, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria.
19. **Daniel Henacho Eluke, PhD**, Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
20. **Anyira Kingsley Chukwuemeke Ph.D**, Department of Performing Arts, University of Delta, Agbor, Delta State
21. **Essi David Ph.D**, Department of Theatre Arts, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State
22. **Ikenna-Obi Nneka Chigozie**, Department of Theatre & Film Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Rivers State University, Nkpolu- Oroworukwo, P.M.B. 5080, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.
23. **Iloma Nyenwemaduka Richard (PhD)**, Department of Theatre & Film Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, P.M.B. 5080, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.
24. **Tekena Gasper Mark (PhD)**, Department of Theatre & Film Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Rivers State University, Nkpolu- Oroworukwo, P.M.B. 5080, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.
25. **Eziwho Emenike Azunwo**, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt,

Department of Theatre and Film studies

26. **Joe Vivian**, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. Department of Theatre and Film Studies.

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**“ACHALUGO, I AM GOING TO MARRY YOU” NOLLYWOOD’S VIRAL DIALOGUE
AND THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE IN NIGERIAN
POPULAR CULTURE.”**

VITALIS CHINEMEREM ILOANWUSI

Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts, *Godfrey Okoye University,*

Thinkers Corner, Emene, Enugu State.

chinemeremiloanwusi@gmail.com

&

DIKE CHIOMA VIVIAN

Department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts, *Godfrey Okoye University,*

Thinkers Corner, Emene, Enugu State

dikechioma.v@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the viral Nollywood dialogue “*Achalugo, I am going to marry you*” from *Love in Every Word* and its transformation into a cultural and commercial phenomenon in Nigerian popular culture. Anchored in Henry Jenkins’ Spreadability Model and the framework of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), the research explores how indigenous language, specifically the Igbo term “Achalugo” (symbolizing beauty and grace), transcends its cinematic origin to become embedded in everyday speech, social media, and commercial advertising. Through qualitative analysis, the study highlights the performances of Uzor Arukwe and Bamike Olawunmi (Bammy Bestowed), whose portrayals contributed significantly to the emotional resonance and popularity of the phrase. It further investigates how businesses across sectors, from logistics and real estate to education and hospitality, strategically deploy the phrase to attract culturally engaged consumers. The study argues that Nollywood, through audience participation and digital circulation, facilitates both the preservation and commodification of indigenous language, raising critical questions about cultural authenticity, linguistic identity, and the role of film in shaping sociolinguistic trends. The findings contribute to scholarly discourse on media virality, language economy, and the evolving functions of Nigerian cinema in a participatory media landscape.

Keywords: Nollywood, Cultural narratives, Viral quotes, Nigerian cinema, Indigenous language promotion

Introduction

Nollywood, Nigeria's dynamic film industry, has grown exponentially since the early 1990s to become one of the largest film producers worldwide, rivaling Hollywood and Bollywood in output and cultural impact. Beyond sheer production volume, Nollywood plays a crucial role in shaping social narratives and influencing language use across Nigeria's ethnolinguistically diverse society. Operating in a context where English coexists with over 500 indigenous languages, Nollywood's films frequently incorporate native languages and cultural references to reflect authentic Nigerian experiences (Adejunmobi 43; Haynes 109). By embedding indigenous linguistic elements in popular cinema, Nollywood has become a potent medium for preserving and popularizing local languages and expressions, which might otherwise be marginalized in public discourse.

The cultural and creative industries (CCIs) framework offers an insightful perspective on Nollywood's role at the intersection of culture, commerce, and communication. CCIs are sectors where creativity and cultural heritage are harnessed to generate social and economic value (UNESCO 25). Nollywood exemplifies this dynamic, producing content that resonates culturally while driving significant commercial success. One remarkable feature of Nollywood's influence is the emergence of viral linguistic phenomena, film dialogues and catchphrases that transcend the screen to become part of everyday communication, marketing, and identity construction within Nigerian society. These expressions not only enhance viewer engagement but also become symbolic markers of cultural pride and commercial leverage (Jenkins 7).

A compelling illustration is the phrase "*Achalugo, I am going to marry you*" from Omoni Oboli's *Love in Every Word*. As a romantic drama rooted in contemporary Nigerian society, *Love in Every Word* weaves themes of love, identity, language, and cultural continuity into its

narrative. The film centers around *Odogwu*, played with magnetic tenderness by Uzor Arukwe, whose emotionally disarming yet respectful pursuit of the titular *Achalugo* captures the hearts of viewers. Arukwe's portrayal balances strength with vulnerability, allowing the character's affection to feel both dignified and deeply personal.

Complementing him is Bamiike Olawunmi, popularly known as Bammy Bestowed, who brings grace and introspective charm to the role of Achalugo. A former reality TV star turned accomplished actress, Olawunmi embodies the modern Nigerian woman, rooted in tradition yet confident in contemporary identity. Her calm poise and expressive subtlety lend credibility to the romantic tension, allowing "*Achalugo*" to emerge not just as a character but as a cultural emblem of feminine elegance and emotional intelligence.

The term "*Achalugo*," meaning "the abode of an eagle" in Igbo, traditionally symbolizes beauty and grace, especially that of a woman. This metaphorical richness, combined with the onscreen chemistry between Uzor and Bamiike, gives the phrase a lasting emotional resonance that has propelled its widespread adoption.

Over time, "*Achalugo*" has moved beyond its original romantic and cinematic context to become a versatile cultural reference, adopted in numerous commercial and social settings across Nigeria. Businesses across various sectors have creatively appropriated "*Achalugo*" to engage customers through culturally resonant marketing. For instance, delivery and dispatch services might say, "*Achalugo, why haven't you patronized Beta Logistics service yet?*" to encourage customer loyalty. Mobile banking promotions utilize the phrase in messages like, "*Achalugo, so you don't use Catalog, are you sure you want payment in dollars?*" to highlight service features. Educational institutions invite potential clients with, "*Achalugo, come and enroll your child in Cenad Schools,*" while restaurants entice patrons with, "*Achalugo, you will have to spoil me with Citadel fisherman soup.*" Event planners leverage

the phrase for personalized outreach: “*Achalugo, have you contacted the event planner for the wedding?*” Travel agencies adopt it in calls to action such as, “*Achalugo, come and book that flight now.*” Even organizations like SippAfrica engage audiences by reminding them, “*Achalugo, you haven’t attended any of SippAfrica’s events.*” Real estate marketers similarly incorporate the phrase: “*Achalugo, are you aware that the Manor by PeakNova Kuje is almost sold out?*”

These varied examples demonstrate Nollywood’s expansive cultural reach and how viral film language becomes embedded in commercial and social dialogues. The phrase “*Achalugo*” functions as a cultural signifier, symbolizing beauty, desirability, and modernity, which businesses capitalize on to build rapport with Nigerian consumers. This commercialization of indigenous language highlights a broader trend within CCIs where cultural expressions are commodified, raising important questions about cultural preservation, authenticity, and identity (Bourdieu 102).

This paper investigates Nollywood’s role in popularizing indigenous linguistic expressions and the implications of their viral spread for Nigerian cultural identity and language preservation. Focusing on *Love in Every Word* and the viral use of “*Achalugo*,” the study explores how Nollywood films serve as vehicles for both cultural continuity and commercial innovation. It examines how these expressions circulate through social media, advertising, and popular culture, reinforcing local identities while navigating the complexities of commodification in a rapidly evolving media landscape. By doing so, the study contributes to ongoing interdisciplinary discussions on media virality, cultural commodification, and the transformative role of CCIs in shaping contemporary African societies.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Henry Jenkins' Spreadability Model of media virality, a theory that fundamentally reorients how scholars understand the flow and influence of media in participatory cultures. Jenkins argues that media content is no longer confined to linear, top-down distribution by media producers; instead, spreadability emphasizes the capacity of users, audiences, fans, and everyday participants, to circulate, reinterpret, and recontextualize media texts in ways that are socially and culturally meaningful (Jenkins 7). In contrast to the older notion of "stickiness," where content is designed to hold users' attention in fixed environments, spreadability recognizes that value now lies in the fluidity and adaptability of content as it moves across platforms, communities, and contexts.

This conceptual framework is particularly potent in analyzing the virality of Nollywood expressions such as "*Achalugo*," which emerged from *Love in Every Word* but has since permeated diverse spheres of Nigerian life. The phrase has evolved into a linguistic and cultural artefact, its journey from a film dialogue to a marketing catchphrase and identity marker exemplifies the principles of Jenkins' theory. The spread of "*Achalugo*" illustrates how Nigerian audiences are not passive consumers of Nollywood content; they are active cultural producers who imbue film language with new meanings, embed it in commercial contexts, and weave it into their daily interactions. This participatory dimension, where audiences shape and extend the life of media content, lies at the heart of spreadability.

The widespread use of "*Achalugo*" across sectors such as education, finance, hospitality, logistics, and event planning showcases the multifaceted nature of media diffusion in the Nigerian context. Businesses appropriate the phrase not only for its emotional appeal but also for its cultural cachet, thereby tapping into a shared linguistic resource that carries both local flavor and aspirational value. This is not mere replication but transformation: as the phrase

circulates, it is continually reshaped by the sociolinguistic, commercial, and cultural settings in which it is deployed. Jenkins' model accounts for this dynamic by emphasizing that spreadable media adapts to new environments and audiences, generating what he terms "meaningful multiplicity."

Furthermore, Jenkins' theory aligns seamlessly with the broader framework of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), which this study also draws upon. CCIs refer to sectors where culture, creativity, and commerce intersect to produce economic and symbolic value (UNESCO 25). Nollywood, as a cultural institution, epitomizes the economic and social logic of CCIs. The viral spread of linguistic expressions like "*Achalugo*" exemplifies how cultural content is not only preserved but also monetized, rebranded, and circulated within market-driven logics. Jenkins' model helps to critically analyze this process: how cultural expressions embedded in creative works are lifted out of their original contexts and reinserted into new domains, social media, advertising, corporate branding, where they accrue new forms of value.

The interaction between spreadability and CCIs highlights a paradox central to this study: the simultaneous commodification and preservation of indigenous language and culture. On one hand, phrases like "*Achalugo*" become powerful tools for preserving Igbo identity and language in a media-saturated, English-dominated society. On the other hand, their rapid commercialization raises questions about authenticity, reductionism, and cultural flattening. Jenkins' model is uniquely suited to navigate this paradox, because it does not view media as fixed in meaning or purpose. Instead, it insists on the agency of audiences, the variability of context, and the openness of cultural texts to reinterpretation.

By applying Jenkins' Spreadability Model, this study advances beyond a surface-level description of Nollywood's linguistic influence. It interrogates the mechanisms through

which media language becomes embedded in everyday life and economic systems. It shows how Nollywood serves as a vector for both linguistic preservation and cultural entrepreneurship, leveraging digital platforms and audience participation to extend its cultural footprint. In this light, the phrase “*Achalugo*” is not merely a romantic utterance, it is a node in a complex network of cultural production, audience agency, commercial strategy, and linguistic identity.

Ultimately, this theoretical approach enables a richly layered understanding of how Nollywood operates within Nigeria’s CCIs and participatory media culture. It foregrounds the interactivity of modern media landscapes, where cultural expressions are not just transmitted but transformed. It positions Nollywood viewers not merely as receivers of content but as co-creators and cultural intermediaries who shape the meanings, trajectories, and impact of the language and symbols popularized through film.

Case Study Analysis: “*Achalugo*” in *Love in Every Word*

In *Love in Every Word*, Odogwu’s repeated line, “*Achalugo*, I am going to marry you,” transcends mere romantic dialogue to become a cultural and linguistic touchstone. Though the film avoids elaborate traditional rituals or extended family gatherings, its strength lies in its simplicity, realism, and emotional sincerity. The scenes between *Odogwu* and *Achalugo* are set in modern, everyday environments, offices, public spaces, and private conversations, making the emotional resonance of the phrase feel both authentic and immediate. Delivered in a calm yet intentional tone, *Odogwu*’s declaration becomes a cinematic refrain that captures longing, admiration, and purpose.

The phrase’s significance is heightened by the name “*Achalugo*” itself, which in Igbo means “the abode of an eagle”, a metaphor for dignity, strength, and beauty, often used to describe

an extraordinary woman. In the film, Achalugo is portrayed as intelligent, self-sufficient, and professionally accomplished. Odogwu's pursuit of her, therefore, does not emerge from pity or saviorism but admiration. This layered representation elevates the dialogue and contributes to the film's immersive storytelling, which kept audiences yearning for a sequel even though the narrative had concluded.

Yet beyond the film's ending, "*Achalugo, I am going to marry you*" sparked significant social conversations and controversies. On social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, the phrase gained traction, inspiring memes, parodies, and heartfelt reflections. Many viewers, especially women, praised Odogwu's character as embodying the kind of intentional love often perceived as lacking in real-life relationships. The sentiment, "Igbo men love deeply and intentionally," trended across platforms, transforming a fictional character into a cultural ambassador of sorts.

Interestingly, even within the Igbo-speaking population, debates erupted regarding Odogwu's cultural origin. Some insisted he must be from Anambra State due to his confident demeanor and romantic fluency. Others argued he bore traits typical of an Imo man, charismatic and eloquent. A different camp completely rejected these claims, asserting he was unmistakably Enugu. These playful yet passionate arguments reflect how audiences projected their own cultural identities onto the character, turning the film into a symbolic site for regional representation and pride.

More revealing, however, was the ideological divide the film exposed. While many women celebrated *Odogwu's* generosity and gentleness, some men clung to a different interpretation, insisting that *Achalugo*, already a successful career woman, was not "won over" by love alone, but was attractive because of her established status. This interpretation led to broader

conversations about gender roles, power dynamics in modern relationships, and the commodification of love and success in urban Nigerian settings.

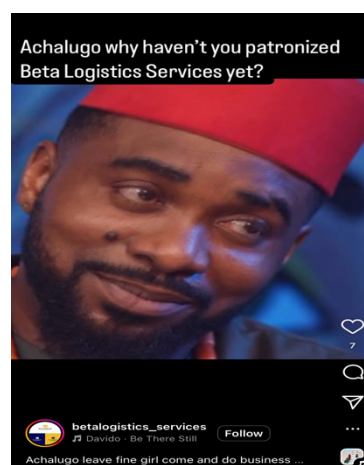
While a number of viewers engaged the film's narrative on a surface level, repeating the phrase for humor or romantic expression, others misinterpreted or selectively framed the story to suit personal ideologies. These varying reactions reveal the power of Nollywood not only to entertain but to provoke critical discourse, reflect societal tensions, and serve as a barometer for cultural negotiation.

Ultimately, *Love in Every Word* did more than captivate its audience; it dominated cultural conversation. The film grossed over a billion views across platforms in its first month, much of which was driven by the viral popularity of the phrase "*Achalugo*." Through this single expression, Nollywood reasserted its power to shape linguistic trends, ignite regional pride, and open space for complex reflections on identity, gender, and modern love in Nigeria.

The extensive commercial appropriation of "*Achalugo*" across various sectors exemplifies how a film dialogue can transcend its original context to become a versatile cultural and marketing tool. The following case studies illustrate how diverse Nigerian brands have critically and creatively repurposed the phrase, leveraging its emotive and cultural resonance to engage consumers in unique ways.

1. **Beta Logistics (Delivery and Dispatch Service)**

By invoking "*Achalugo*" in their slogan "*Achalugo, why haven't you patronized Beta Logistics yet?*" Beta Logistics transforms the phrase's romantic intimacy into a metaphor



for dependable service. This reframing personalizes logistics as a relationship built on trust, enhancing brand relatability through cultural familiarity.

Source: @betalogistics_services(Instagram)

2. Catalog (Mobile Banking App)

Catalog's playful slogan "*Achalugo, so you don't use Catlog, are you sure you want payment in dollars?*" merges indigenous identity with modern financial technology. This usage critiques financial ignorance humorously, positioning the brand as a bridge between

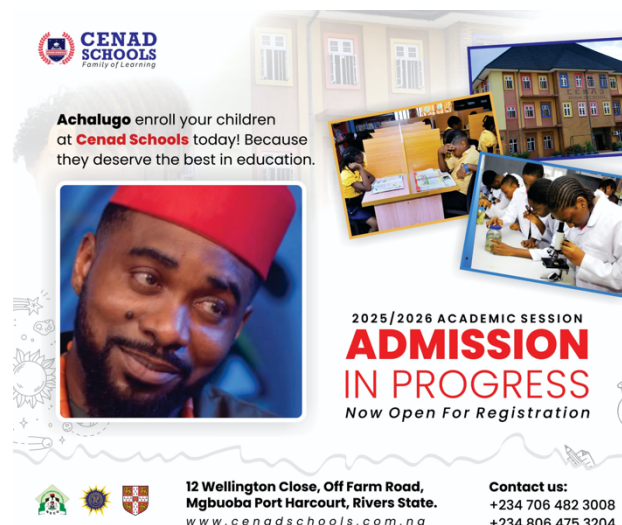


tradition and the global economy.

Source: @catalogshop (Instagram)

3. Cenad Schools

With "*Achalugo, come and enroll your child in Cenad Schools*" the phrase shifts from romantic to maternal symbolism. Cenad Schools harnesses this association to embody ideals



of care, wisdom, and parental responsibility, thereby aligning itself with societal aspirations for education.

Source: @cenad_earlydays (Instagram)

4. Citadel Restaurant

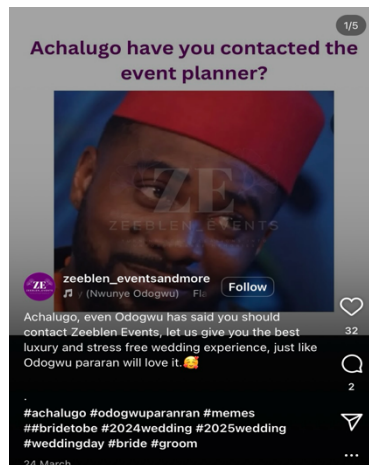
Citadel’s slogan “*Achalugo, you will have to spoil me with Citadel’s fisherman soup*” ties culinary indulgence to cultural pride. The phrase evokes affection and tradition, elevating food to a language of love and belonging while playfully subverting gender expectations.



Source: @citadel_luxury_place (Instagram)

5. Event Planning Brands

Maintaining the original romantic context, event planners use “*Achalugo, have you contacted the event planner for the wedding?*” to romanticize the logistics behind celebrations, transforming practical preparations into moments of affection and anticipation.



Source; @zeeblen_eventsandmore (Instagram)

6. Travels and Tours Brands

Travel agencies employ the phrase to invoke aspirational mobility “*Achalugo, come and book that flight now.*” Here, the phrase becomes a symbol of elegance and cultural pride,



blending the desire for exploration with indigenous identity.

Source: @jolotamotravelsandtours, swif_study_abroad_consultancy (Instagram)

7. SippAfrica

SippAfrica's use "*Achalugo, you haven't attended any of SippAfrica's events*" positions the phrase as a metaphorical muse whose presence is essential for cultural participation, appealing to socially conscious, trend-aware audiences.



Source: @sippafricauk(Instagram)

8. PeakNova (Real Estate)

Finally, PeakNova's slogan "*Achalugo, are you aware that The Manor by PeakNova Kuje is almost sold out?*" casts homeownership as a romantic and status-driven milestone, imbuing



property transactions with urgency and cultural significance.

Source: peaknovalimited (Instagram)

Together, these examples highlight the dynamic and multifaceted ways “*Achalugo*” has been woven into Nigeria’s commercial fabric. They reveal how Nollywood’s linguistic creativity not only shapes popular culture but also offers powerful tools for brands to connect emotionally with consumers, reflecting evolving notions of identity, gender, and cultural pride. This case study analysis underscores the importance of critically examining such commercial adaptations, as they illuminate the intersections of media, culture, and commerce in contemporary Nigerian society. The memefication and commodification of this phrase reveal how Nollywood not only reflects but reshapes social values through language.

Commercial Appropriation of Film Dialogue

The viral phrase “*Achalugo*” from the Nollywood film *Love in Every Word* rapidly moved beyond its cinematic origins to become a highly adaptable and marketable linguistic token within Nigeria’s commercial landscape. This transition from film dialogue to widespread commercial slogan exemplifies how Nollywood’s cultural products extend their influence far beyond entertainment, permeating everyday language, advertising, and brand identity.

Across multiple industries, logistics, mobile banking, education, hospitality, event planning, travel, and real estate, brands have leveraged the phrase “*Achalugo*” to evoke emotional connection, cultural authenticity, and consumer engagement. For instance, *Beta Logistics* uses the phrase to build trust and loyalty among delivery and dispatch riders, positioning its services as dependable and culturally connected. Similarly, Catalog Mobile Banking incorporates “*Achalugo*” into campaigns aimed at fostering financial confidence and modernity, suggesting that using their platform aligns with savvy and aspirational lifestyles.

Educational institutions like Cenad Schools harness the affectionate and protective undertones of “*Achalugo*” to communicate their commitment to nurturing students,

effectively associating the phrase with quality care and academic excellence. In the hospitality sector, Citadel Restaurant uses the phrase to invoke warmth, indulgence, and traditional culinary pride, thereby connecting cultural identity with consumer pleasure. Event organizers such as SippAfrica deploy “*Achalugo*” to create a sense of communal celebration and belonging, reinforcing the phrase’s role in fostering social cohesion. Meanwhile, PeakNova Real Estate appropriates the phrase to symbolize desirability and security, enticing potential buyers with a culturally resonant promise of homeownership.

While these brand adaptations reveal Nollywood’s extraordinary capacity to generate vernacular expressions with broad appeal, the commercial repurposing of “*Achalugo*” also foregrounds significant cultural and linguistic tensions. Chief among these is the commodification of indigenous language, a process wherein culturally rich and context-specific expressions are transformed into generalized marketing slogans. This often leads to a dilution of the phrase’s original narrative and emotional depth, as “*Achalugo*” shifts from a deeply personal romantic declaration in the film to a flexible advertising catchphrase.

The implications of this commodification extend beyond language to questions of identity and cultural authenticity. The phrase “*Achalugo*” is entrenched in Igbo linguistic and cultural heritage, and its widespread commercial use invites debate about cultural ownership and the boundaries of cultural dissemination. While its popularity promotes Igbo language and culture nationally, it simultaneously raises concerns about linguistic accessibility. Non-Igbo speakers may appreciate the phrase’s aesthetic or emotional tone without understanding its full cultural significance, which could lead to a superficial engagement with the language and, potentially, cultural appropriation.

Moreover, the commercial usage of “*Achalugo*” intersects with persistent gender norms embedded in Nigerian society and cinema. The phrase, in its original film context, represents

a male character's romantic pursuit and declaration of intent towards a woman named Achalugo, symbolizing ideals of love, commitment, and male agency. When brands co-opt this phrase for marketing purposes, they often emphasize its romantic or aspirational connotations while overlooking the patriarchal subtexts. This selective appropriation risks reinforcing traditional gender roles by perpetuating the trope of women as objects of male desire, rather than as autonomous individuals.

The commodification of "*Achalugo*" also illustrates Nollywood's role as a powerful agent of soft cultural power in Nigeria and across the African continent. The entertainment industry's ability to produce language and narratives that rapidly permeate social media, advertising, and everyday discourse underscores Nollywood's influence in shaping cultural identity and public conversations. However, this influence is ambivalent, while it amplifies indigenous languages and cultural narratives, it also subjects them to market logics that may flatten complex cultural meanings for broader commercial consumption.

To further deepen understanding of this phenomenon, future research should incorporate empirical analyses of social media trends, meme circulation, and audience reception to track how different demographics engage with the phrase "*Achalugo*." Such studies would clarify whether the phrase's commercial and popular appeal enhances or compromises cultural meaning. Comparative research examining linguistic virality in other African cinemas could also contextualize Nollywood's unique position within continental media and cultural industries.

In conclusion, the commercial appropriation of "*Achalugo*" encapsulates the dynamic interplay between culture, language, and commerce in contemporary Nigerian society. It highlights Nollywood's central role in producing vernacular expressions that resonate deeply with audiences while also prompting critical reflection on the risks of commodification,

gendered language, and linguistic inclusion. Recognizing these tensions enriches our understanding of how film dialogue functions not only as entertainment but as a site where cultural identity, commercial interests, and social values converge and contest.

Language Preservation and Identity

The viral success of “*Achalugo*” reveals a complex interplay between cultural preservation and commodification within Nigeria’s rapidly evolving media landscape. Nollywood, operating as a core component of the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), emerges not only as a site for storytelling but as a powerful force in shaping public discourse, cultural memory, and linguistic relevance. Within the framework of CCIs, the Nigerian film industry translates traditional expressions into popular media content, turning them into economic assets while simultaneously influencing identity formation and social values.

“*Achalugo*,” a traditional Igbo name meaning “the resting place of an eagle,” gained widespread recognition after its use in *Love in Every Word*, where it was uttered by the lead male character, *Odogwu*, as a romantic proclamation. In the film, the phrase conveys deep admiration, intimacy, and idealized femininity. Outside the cinematic context, however, the phrase quickly migrated into broader public discourse, becoming a versatile cultural marker. Brands and individuals alike adopted it in advertisements, memes, and social media expressions, transforming it into a linguistic token associated with beauty, modern aspiration, and cultural pride.

This journey from narrative specificity to public adaptability exemplifies a key characteristic of the CCI model: the transformation of cultural artifacts into marketable symbols. The wide circulation of “*Achalugo*” showcases Nollywood’s capacity to reintroduce indigenous language into contemporary discourse while positioning it within the logic of commodification. The phrase’s emotional resonance and linguistic texture allowed it to

transcend its original context and take on new meanings shaped by commercial and social utility.

At the same time, this media-driven virality has implications for language preservation. Nollywood's strategic use of Igbo terms, often without translation—serves to normalize and celebrate indigenous linguistic forms within mainstream entertainment. Viewers unfamiliar with the language are invited to infer meaning or seek understanding, thus fostering curiosity and engagement. The non-translation of words like “*Onyenwem*,” meaning “my owner,” resists linguistic dilution and reinforces the cultural dignity of Nigerian languages, especially when such terms are presented unapologetically to national and international audiences.

Yet, this approach also risks reducing complex linguistic expressions to aesthetic symbols or stylistic choices. As the phrase “*Achalugo*” moves across platforms and becomes embedded in advertisements, product packaging, and digital content, its original cultural and spiritual dimensions may be diminished. The symbolic weight of the name, its connections to ancestry, myth, and communal identity, can be overshadowed by its appeal as a fashionable phrase or branding tool. In this sense, while media circulation increases visibility and cultural reach, it may simultaneously flatten meaning in favor of accessibility and marketability.

Moreover, the selective elevation of certain indigenous expressions raises broader questions about inclusivity and representation. While Igbo phrases like “*Achalugo*” gain national traction, other linguistic communities may remain underrepresented, reinforcing imbalances in Nigeria's ethnolinguistic landscape. The commodification of language through film and advertising, though often empowering, is rarely neutral; it reflects broader cultural politics and economic priorities.

Nonetheless, the example of “*Achalugo*” illustrates how Nollywood, as a key player in Nigeria's CCI ecosystem, has the potential to shape language trends and public consciousness.

Through strategic storytelling, cinematic emotion, and media virality, indigenous language is repositioned from a threatened resource to a symbol of cultural sophistication. The challenge lies in ensuring that this renewed visibility does not result in symbolic erasure or the trivialization of cultural depth.

In sum, the circulation of “*Achalugo*” demonstrates the ambivalent power of Nollywood as both a cultural preserver and a cultural producer. While the film industry revives and celebrates indigenous language, it also participates in the broader economic systems that commodify culture. A balanced approach—one that honors linguistic integrity while embracing modern forms of dissemination—remains essential for sustaining the relevance and richness of Nigeria’s diverse linguistic heritage.

Conclusion

Nollywood’s *Love in Every Word*, through the phrase “*Achalugo*,” exemplifies the dynamic interplay between language, media, identity, and commerce in Nigeria’s cultural landscape. Far beyond a fleeting romantic utterance, “*Achalugo*” has become a viral linguistic and cultural marker, transcending its cinematic origin to circulate across commercial, social, and digital spaces. Its evolution from film dialogue into a nationally recognized catchphrase underscores Nollywood’s growing role within Nigeria’s Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), where storytelling, indigenous expression, and marketability converge.

By applying Henry Jenkins’ Spreadability Model, this study has demonstrated how audiences actively participate in extending and transforming media content. “*Achalugo*” spread not simply because it was scripted into a popular film, but because it resonated linguistically, emotionally, and culturally with diverse Nigerian publics. Businesses, schools, tech platforms, real estate brands, and entertainment organizers have all appropriated the phrase to tap into its

rich semantic associations with love, beauty, elegance, and cultural pride. This recontextualization aligns with Jenkins' emphasis on participatory media culture, where users become co-creators of meaning and media content circulates in fluid, adaptive forms across platforms and sectors.

At the same time, the commercial virality of "*Achalugo*" calls attention to the tensions embedded in the commodification of indigenous language. While the phrase's popularity revitalizes Igbo lexicon in public discourse, it also risks reducing deep cultural symbols to marketing tropes. This duality is a central feature of the CCIs framework, which recognizes both the preservation and transformation, sometimes dilution, of cultural expressions under market logic. Yet, even within these commercial spaces, the widespread embrace of "*Achalugo*" signals a growing appetite for cultural authenticity, a reclamation of indigenous identity, and a subtle resistance to linguistic erasure in a globalized, English-dominated media environment.

Ultimately, this paper affirms Nollywood's critical function as both cultural archive and creative engine. The case of "*Achalugo*" reflects how film can serve as a living repository of indigenous language while also generating economic and symbolic capital through viral expressions. Nollywood is not merely a site of entertainment; it is a participatory platform where language is not only preserved but actively reshaped, circulated, and commercialized by its audience. As the boundaries between art, identity, and commerce continue to blur, the Nigerian film industry's role in shaping national discourse, linguistic heritage, and cultural pride remains indispensable.

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