



IGIRIGI
Vol.5 No.3, 2025



IGIRIGI

A Journal of African Studies

VOL. 5. NO. 3, 2025

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IGIRIGI

Vol. 5. No 3, 2025

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CONTENTS

**TRENDS IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (L2)
IN NIGERIA**

Okafor Stella Amaka (PhD) , Nmadumelu Obi **1-5**

ỌFỌ: NGWA IKPENKWỤMỌTỌ N’EJIJE IGBO

Ayozie, Chioma R. **6-14**

**STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF YOUTH LANGUAGES IN CENTRAL AND
WEST AFRICA: FOCUS ON CAMFRANGLAIS AND NAIJA SLANG**

Grace Ochuole Odey, PhD, Abass Ngoungouo Yiagnigni, PhD **15-26**

**THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: A PRAGMATIC
STUDY OF PRESUPPOSITION AND POLITENESS IN PRESIDENT BOLA
TINUBU’S 2025 DEMOCRACY DAY SPEECH**

Monday A. Okugbe, Patrick O. Attashie **27-40**

**EXPLORING METAPHYSICAL REALITIES IN THE WORLD OF ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE (AI)**

Gbadamosi, Oluwatoyin Adebola, Ph.D, Ojile Barnabas Audu **41-52**

**TRADITIONAL BURIAL AND FUNERAL RITUALS IN UMUMBA-NDIAGU: A
CONTROVERSY BETWEEN TRADITION AND CHRISTIANITY**

Chinweze Chinedu Evaristus **53-63**

THE PLACE OF ORAL TRADITION IN SELECTED IGBO LITREARY TEXTS

Dr. Oluchi Eugenia Nebolisa , Ass. Prof. Ebele E. Okafor **64-76**

**WOMEN AND THE COLONIAL SPACE: A RE-SIGNIFICATION OF WOMEN
IN ACHEBE'S THINGS FALL APART**

Amos, Dauda Bivan, PhD, Stephen Onimisi Ajinomoh **77-82**

**CHANGES AND CONTINUITY OF LAND TENURE SYSTEM IN AGULU-
ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA**

Esther Ogochukwu Akpulu , Onukwube Alex Alfred Anedo **83-91**

**PRAGMALINGUISTICS STUDY OF NAMES IN THE GHOMALA’ LANGUAGE
OF CAMEROON**

Dr Emma Flaricelle BAKAM **92-102**



**LEADERSHIP AND THE MISSING LINK IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF
AFRICAN LANGUAGES**

Alhaji Auwalu Isa PhD

103-110

THE PHONOTACTICS OF KI IN ỊZỌN FOCUS CONSTRUCTIONS

Celestina Predia KEKAI PhD

111-123

**POLITENESS AS POWER IN YORUBA TRADITIONAL RELIGION:
EXAMINING (IM)POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN IJALA POETRY**

Olusegun Oladele Jegede , Patricia O. Arubuola

124-137

**THE IMPACT OF CLASS SIZE ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING
OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT PRIMARY AND SENIOR
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN FAGGE LOCAL GOVERNMENT,
KANO STATE**

Ibrahim Salihu Mohammed PhD

138-146

**LANGUAGE AS A MEANS OF SUSTAINABILITY: EXPLORING THE
INTERSECTIONS OF LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY, CULTURAL PRESERVATION
AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS**

Chioma Deborah SUNNY-ADIKWU, Favour Ogemdi EGWIM

147-159



TRENDS IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (L2) IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

A look at the language teaching methods over the years has revealed that there have been changes from one method to another. These changes in the teaching methods (Teacher-Student Connect with Web, Learner-Centered Approach, and Technology Assisted Learning etc) have been described as a “swing of the pendulum” in the history of language teaching. This paper therefore, x-rays the fact that no one method of language teaching holds the answer for all the purposes and situations. The authors stress the importance of these methods to the teaching of English as a world language. Hence, linguists maintains that the use of these methods in the teaching of English as a second language would pave way for a speedy understanding on the parts of the learners.

Introduction

The teaching of second language in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. As such, in this twenty-first century, it has been taught with many methods approaches or tends to cater for a variety of those who are interested in the language. The interested learners range from monolingual, bilingual and multi-lingual speakers of other languages. This necessitates the emergence of many different programmes targeted at equipping speakers of other language with much needed skills in the learning of this prestigious language.

Among the popular programmes are: Teaching English as a second languages (TESL), Teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), Teaching English Language (TEL), Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) etc. Before the emergence of these programmes and the current trends used in the teaching of English in Nigeria, there was the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) (in which the teacher explained grammatical rules and students performed translations). From 1980 to 1990 there has, according to Modi (2012), a tremendous shift from the former methods to one directed at enhancing the communicative competence of the learner. The focus of this shift takes cognizance of the need for students’ practical participation in meaningful and contextualized discourse.

For the purpose of attaining the set learning goals, the teaching of English in Nigeria has adopted series of strategies for giving the learner what he needs to become an accomplished speaker of the English language as the second Language. It is in the light of the above, that the authors deemed it fit to review the current trends used for the teaching of English as second language in Nigeria. Some of the current trends are:



Learner-Centered Approach

This is one of the most recently utilized techniques used in the teaching of English as a second language with emphasis on the rigorous development of learner in communicative competence. It is used in the bid to ensure that the learner is not only trained in the use of the language, but also to give him autonomy in proper use of the language in both classroom and other social contexts. The method embodies two crucial concepts. The first one deals with making the learner independent to enable him manage his own learning tasks and the second, making the teacher of English as a second language to serve as a facilitator who guides the learner in many respects, other than playing the traditional role of a “fountain” of knowledge. The technique encourages the learner to be highly motivated, self-confident, knowledgeable of his needs and the role of the language, creative in thinking and being open minded among the participants for self assessment and improvements.

Technology Assisted Learning

This is a modern breakthrough in the teaching of English as a second language in Nigeria. It has been stated that technology, through the Information Communication Technology ICT has a lot of potentials to provide to both the language teacher and the learner, though, some teachers seem reluctant to provide computers in their language classrooms. It is imperative to note that learning with technology is different from learning about technology. Competent language teachers integrate technology into their classes to build the learners confidence in meaningful ways. Modi (2012) identified the following as features and uses of technology into the classrooms in England today:

- Word processor
- Digital camera
- Digital video
- Internet
- Web page
- Email
- Video confessing
- Computer games and
- Presentation software

In the 21st century, teachers in England integrate technology into their classrooms to build the confidence of learners on how to use technology in meaningful ways. As laptop computers, interactive whiteboards and broad band internet became cheaper and more available in U.K, teachers now begin to introduce them into classrooms.

Teacher-Student Connect with Web

This approach stems from the fact that language teaching and learning is no longer restricted by the four angles of the classroom. Now in Nigeria, language learning among second learners of English is not in any way a herculean task, (which involves ‘sweat and pains’ between teachers and learners). The social software, such as the Virtual Reality (VR) environments, the second life, and face-book, students and teachers open up new opportunities of interaction and collaboration between them. The totality of learners say, classmates have found the process a very interesting language learning strategy since they can relate and interact among themselves on the web.

This method is used by the teachers and students to discuss language vocabulary, structures, current methodology, language habit, varieties of the English language outside Nigeria and other countries, assignments, proposals and topics for individual student’s progress and development. All these take place without the two that is, (the teacher and the learner) coming together to discuss eyeball-to-



eyeball. Learners can watch a film or clip from a network, comment on it in the target language (English) in a blog thereby start discussing with his peers or even beyond the classroom context.

Using Real Texts and Real Situation

Recently, teachers of English as a second language in Nigeria have confirmed that using real texts produced by students has achieved real communicative competence. According to Modi (2012) working with what students produce rather than creating situations to provoke desired language competence will be more participatory than teacher led. Grammar is seen as a process than a 'thing' out there to be learnt. Learning is made to be emergent and facilitated rather than prescribed and taught to students.

English as Lingua Franca in Integrating English as a Second Language (ESL) Approaches

English today as a lingua franca of non-native speakers in Nigeria has been also integrated as a new approach in the teaching of English as a second language. Lingua franca means any language which is constantly used in regions for dealings between speakers of different mother tongues.

The main purpose is to learn and understand different varieties of English, and communicate with non-native speakers from other countries. English as Lingua Franca (ELF) interactions include persons who share neither a common native language nor a common cultural system, and for whom English is the chosen foreign system of communication.

English as an international language: This is a debate that relates to almost everything for example: Who owns English? Which English do we teach? Who are the best teachers? Native or non-native speakers? Is it possible to separate language with culture? Arguments are usually accompanied by statistics that shows that non-native speakers of English and those who speak Received Pronunciation (RP) English or standard American English are greatly out-numbered by speakers of other languages. Hence, teachers of English in Britain have currently, devised many models in the teaching of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF).

Corpus Linguistics Strategy

In Nigeria today, Corpus Linguistics has taken a new dimension in the sense that it is used as an approach to investigating language structure and use through the analysis of large databases of real language teaching and learning. For example, large databases are stored on computer. Prominent issues open to corpus linguistics include the meaning of words across registers, the distribution and functions of grammatical forms and categories, the investigation of lexical grammar associations, the study of discourse characteristics, register variation and issues in language acquisition and development.

Material Development: Global and Local Publishing

There have been significant developments and innovations with content becoming less ethnocentric and more intercultural; less stereotyped and more critical in syllabus design and materials development. There has equally been an increasing tendency towards more locally relevant non-global publishing of courses and materials.

Recently, English language teachers in Nigeria have realized that instructional materials produced in one country may not be effective in other countries, unlike in the past, different countries are producing the teaching materials (textbooks and reference materials) on their own and that suit their land, culture and values. Imported language teaching materials are no longer practicable in the contexts where they are not produced keeping into consideration of the local needs.



Reflection on the Teachers Methodology

This is about teachers questioning and exploring their own practice of teaching. It is a sort of systematic curiosity about going beyond the edges of what we know and do, to find out how we could do things differently or better (Underhill, 2007). Reflecting upon our own way of teaching tremendously helps the teachers to improve the practice. The basic idea about reflection is that teacher learns about his/her teaching and how to improve it by trying to observe and understand what is happening in his/her own classroom, reflecting on it, learning from it and trying out something slightly different and so on.

Use of Bottom-up and Top-down Skills into Learning (Interactive Processing Approach)

Interactive processing

A theory of reading comprehension that sees reading as involving both the accurate and sequential understanding of text based on identification of the meanings of words and sentences in the text (i.e. bottom-up processing) as well as the experiences, background information, and predictions that the reader brings to the text (i.e. top-down processing). Both kinds of processing are involved and they modify and act on each other.

Comprehension

This is the identification of the intended meaning of written or spoken communication. Contemporary theories of comprehension emphasize that it is an active process drawing both on information contained in the message (bottom-up processing) as well as background knowledge, information from the context and from the listeners and speakers purpose or intentions (top-down processing).

Listening comprehension:

This is the process of understanding speech in a first or second language. The study of listening comprehension processes in second language learning focuses on the role of individual linguistic units (e.g. phonemes words, grammatical structures) as well as the role of the listeners' expectations, the situation and context, background knowledge and the topic. It therefore includes both Top-down processing and Bottom-up processing. While traditional approaches to language teaching tended to under-emphasize the importance of teaching listening comprehension, more recent approaches emphasize the role of listening in building up language competence and suggest that more attention should be paid to teaching listening in the initial stages of second or foreign language learning. Listening comprehension activities typically address a number of listening functions, including recognition (focusing on some aspect of the code itself), orientation (ascertaining essential facts about the text, such as participants, the situation or context, the general topic, the emotional tone, and the genre), comprehension of main ideas and understanding and recall of details.

Implications to Language Teaching

There is no single most excellent way of teaching English as a second language. A successful language teacher will not confine himself to only a single method. A method which is appropriate with one class on one occasion might not necessarily suit the same class at another time. Likewise, a method which is suitable for one language teacher while teaching a particular language item may not be applicable for other teacher in the same or similar context. There has been gradual shift from a literature based foreign language to equipping learners with communicative skills for interaction in Nigeria. Most English language teachers and more significantly most teacher-trainers adhere to communicative methodology today. A large number of articles and conference talks have been devoted to exploring precisely the communicative approach of language teaching. Nonetheless, ESL practitioners have not remained reliant on fixed prescribed and imposed practices. Instead, ESL practitioners around the globe put into practice a great deal of diverse activities to keep themselves up-to-date and enhance their practices which have been dealt above.



Conclusion

From the foregoing, we realized that to explain the reasons for the change from one method to the other, it is worth noting that times too are changing and there is need to adapt to these changes. Besides, language is now seen and emphasized for communication, thus, the need to get ourselves abreast with the trends in teaching English language becomes paramount as one method cannot claim to be the complete answer in teaching English language. The world is getting smaller by the day (Olugbodi, 2010). As such the need for changes in our trends/approaches in the teaching of language should as well change.

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ỌFỌ: NGWA IKPENKWỤMỌTỌ N'ẸJJE IGBO

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Ụmịedemede

Otu n'ime ihe kacha dị mkpa na ndụ ndị mmadụ bụ ikpenkwụmọtọ. Onye ọbụla n'ala Igbo choro ka a na-enwe ikpenkwụmọtọ n'ihu na ọ ga-enye aka dozie ezinaụlọ, agburu, obodo maobu mba. Otutu ihe ka e ji ekpe ikpenkwụmọtọ n'ala Igbo nke ofo so n'otu n'ime ya. Ofo bu otu n'ime ngwa ofufe nke ndi Igbo na-akwanyere nnukwu ugwu n'ihu na ọ bu ngwa ofufe nke e ji ekpe ikpe ziri ezi. O bu ngwa na-ekwu eziokwu, ngwa ikike nchikwa nakwa ngwa e ji ahazi iwu n'uzo ziri ezi. Mana o dighi etu ahụ n'oge ugbo a. A naghizi eji ofo were ekpebi ikpe, ya mere ikpensomanya ji were na-abawanye n'obodo. Mbunuche nchocha a bu ichoputa oru di iche iche ofo na-arụ, mkpa o di iji ofo were ekpe ikpe obula daputaranu n'obodo nakwa uzo di iche iche ndi odee ejije Igbo a horo siri ziputa udi nsogbu e nwere nakwa uzo e siri were ofo were kpebie ha. Ihe e ji mee ntucha bu akwukwo ejije Igbo ato ndi a horo ndi bu: *O ji ihe Nwata* nke Okoro na Epuchie dere, *Obidiya* nke Akoma dere na *Aku Fechara* nke Chukuezi dere. Nchocha a bu nke nkwa. Site na nchocha e mere, a choputara na ofo na-arụ oru ikpenkwụmọtọ n'etiti oru ndi ozo. Nkabi ikpe obula e jiri ofo kpee bu o kwuchaa o gwu. Ofo ka a na-ahụ dika ihe bu eziokwu n'ihu ikpe ziri ezi bi n'ime eziokwu. N'uzo di mkpa, a na-atu anya na nchocha a ga-akpali mmuo ndi Igbo imata uru na oru ofo na-arụ. O ga-emekwa ka otutu ndi Igbo na-agba mbọ maka ikpe ikpe ziri ezi. Ozokwa, a na-atu anya ka e weghachita ofo dika ngwa a ga-na-eji akwado, achikwa, ahazi ma na-ekpe ikpe ziri ezi n'ala Igbo.

Mkpelite

Otu ihe kacha di mkpa na ndu umu mmadu bu ikpenkwumoto. Dika etu e si kee mmadu, ha kwenyere na okwu a bu “e menyere nwa ogwugwu e menyere nwa anosike, udo were chia”. Ozo a buru “e mee nwata ka e si mee ibe ya, obi adi ya mma”. Mana o buru na e meghe ya otu a, nsogbu amalite. Ya bu, o ga-adi mma etu e siri meere mmadu maobu ndi, si sikwa etu ahụ meere onye maobu ndi ozo. Udi mmeso a bu ihe kacha amasi mmadu. O buru ma e nwee ikpenkwumoto, udo na ihunanya ga-adi n'etiti mmadu na ibe ya, otu na otu, nakwa n'obodo n'obodo. Ihe mmadu na-acho n'ebe mmadu ibe ya no bu ezi omume, udo, eziokwu, ikwuba aka oto, ikpe nkwumoto zuru oke na ezi uche n'eleghi mmadu anya n'ihu bu ihe di oke mkpa na ndu mmadu. O bukwu ihe ga-eme ka udo na-achi n'etiti nwanne na nwanne, ezinaulo, umunna, ogbakọ, mmadu nakwa obodo. O bu ya mere Ifeduba (2009) jiri kwuo na omume n'adighi mma na-emetuta umu ndi a muru. Ndi Igbo maara ihe na-esi n'omume ruru aru aputa, ya mere ha ji agbali ka e nwee ezi ukporo n'ihu na ihe ojoo nwere ike igbu ogbo. Ya mere, onye Igbo obula ji agba mbọ ihapu ndu ezighe ezi ma dabere na ndu ziri ezi. Agumagu so n'otu n'ime ihe e ji akuzi ikpe nkwumoto n'ebe ndi mmadu no.

Otutu ndi odee akowaala agumagu n'uzo di iche iche. Ufodu n'ime ha kwuru na agumagu bu echiche miri emi nke mmadu chere gbasara isiokwu obula nke e ji asusu nka akowaputa. Onyia na Amamgbo (2018) kwuru na agumagu bu enyo nke a na-esi na ya eziputa kpomkwem ihe na-eme na gburugburu anyi no n'ime ya. Ya bu, agumagu bu uzo e si elebakari anya n'ihu na-eme na ndu ndi mmadu. O kachasi na ihe gbasara ikpenkwumoto. O bukwu uzo odee si eziputa ihe na-eme n'uwa nakwa ihe mmadu kwenyere na ya. Agumagu bu ihe niile e dere ede maobu ihe niile a koro n'onu n'ime otu obodo maobu n'otu oge.

Ejije bu otu n'ime udi agumagu ato e nwere, bu nke na-enomi agwa mmadu ma na-egosi ya ihe o na-eme. Ayozie (2019:96) kwuru na ejije na-eleba anya na ndu mmadu, kochaa ihe ojoo, gbazie mgbazi ma kuzie nkuzi nke mmadu ji adi ndu. Nke a putara na site n'ejije ka e si eme ka mmadu mata na mmadu kwesiri idi na-akwuba aka ya oto, kwuo eziokwu, ma kpee ikpenkwumoto.



N'ihì ọ bụrụ na a kwubaghị aka ọfọ were kpee ikpe maọbụ e kwughi eziokwu, ọ gaghi eweta udo, ọ gaghi eweta idinotu. Ya mere ndi Igbo na-esi ụzọ di iche iche were egbochi ya. A na-adụ isi, n'ụọ iyi, sụọ ọfọ iji mee ka udo diri.

Ndi Igbo nwere ngwa ofufe di iche iche nke e ji eme ka e kpee ikpe ziri ezi, mee ka udo chia, choputa eziokwu, mezie esemokwu, choputa onye nwe ihe ma choputakwa ihe na-eme n'obodo. Otu n'ime ngwa ofufe ndi a bu ọfọ. Ihe e jiri mara ọfọ bu ikpenkwumoto. Arazu (2005:132) kwuru na ọfọ bu ụzọ ndichie na mmuo si enwe mmekorita. Ndi odee ejije ugbo a, na-esi n'ederede ha na-akuziri umu mmadu uru ọ di ikpe ikpenkwumoto. Umu mmadu ga-esikwa n'ihe ha gutara n'ejije were tinye n'oru were mezie okwu obula daputaranu n'obodo.

Nchocha a, n'uzo puru iche, ga-eleba anya na mkpa ọ di iji ọfọ were ekpe ikpe obula daputaranu nakwa ụzọ di iche iche ndi odee ejije Igbo ndi a hooro bu *o ji ihe Nwata, Obidiya na Aku Fechara* siri were ziputa udi nsogbu daputaranu nakwa ka e siri were webata ọfọ were mezie okwu ndi ahụ.

Ntuleghari Agumagu

N'ala Igbo, mgbe elu bu ala ọsa, ndi Igbo nwere ngwa ofufe maou di iche iche nke na-egosi ntuputauche n'omenala maobu nke nwere mputara n'obodo. Ozuzu oke ndu ndi Igbo na-erughari okirikiri na ngwa ofufe ndi a nwere mputara n'omenala ha. Carol (2011) kwuru na osisi nsọ nwere ihe di iche iche ọ na-anochite anya ha dika ndu, ihe na-amị ezi mkpuru nakwa ihe dikarisiiri nsọ. Ọ bu n'ihì nke a ka e ji akpo ha osisi nsọ. Ngwa ofufe ndi a di otutu, ha nwere ugwu na nsopuru puru iche. Ọ bughì ngwa ofufe ndi mmadu ji egwuriegwu kama ọ bu ngwa ofufe na-enye aka egosiputa omenala na nkwenye ndi Igbo banyere ihe ha nwere. Ngwa ofufe ndi a nwere nnukwu onodu n'ebe ofufe, echiche, nkwenye na ndu ndi Igbo di. Ngwa ofufe a na-ekwu maka ya bu ọfọ.

Amamgbo (2021)kwuru na ọfọ bu osisi nsọ ndi Igbo na-akwanyere ugwu nke ukwu n'ebe puru ihe Ọ bu ngwa ofufe ama ama n'ala Igbo. Ọ bu osisi a na-akwanyere ugwu n'obodo. A na-akpo osisi ọfọ a “ukwu ọfọ”. Ọfọ dika ihe nnochianya mmuo nke oru ya di nsọ. Ọ bu ngwa ofufe nke na-ejiko Chukwu na mmadu, ndi nwuru anwu, ndi di ndu na ndi amubeghi amu. Ọ dikwa ka chi nke na-ekwu eziokwu ma na-ekpe ikpenkwumoto.

Ikpenkwumoto bu ikpe ziri ezi n'enweghi onye a ga-emegide. Otu n'ime uzo ndi Igbo si ahụ na e nwere ikpenkwumoto bu site n'iji ọfọ. Okorji na Okeke (2011:139) kwuru na ọfọ dika osisi nke nwere obere mkpuru nke ibe akwukwo ahụ di ya ihe ga-eru asaa maobu iri n'onu ogugu. Ekwealor (2013:108) kowara ọfọ dika osisi a pichatara site n'osisi aha ya bu ọfọ. Ọ kwuru na ndi Igbo kwenyere na ọ bu ọfọ na-ejikota obi ndi ichie niile nke ezinaulo, umunna, ogbe, maobu obodo. Ọ gara n'ihu kwuo na ọfọ na-egosiputa ikike puru iche, ọ na-egosiputakwa ikpenkwumoto na ezinaulo. Ọfọ bu ihe na-egosi ike na ochichi. Okpara ezinaulo na-eji ya n'aka mgbe ọ na-ekpe ikpe ezinaulo. A na-eji ọfọ agwa ndi ichie okwu. Ọfọ na-egosiputa ikpe ziri ezi n'etiti ndi Igbo. Ọ bu ngwa odinala nke ndi Igbo na-eji. Ọ bu ngwa ikike nke sitere n'aka ndi nna nna anyi na nke a na-ahuta dika ngwa eziokwu. Mgbe a goziriri ọfọ, ọ nwere udi ngosiputa e jiri were mara ọfọ mana ebe ọ kacha sie ike bu mgbe e nyefere ya nwa nwoke ruo otutu ogbo. N'oge ochie, ndi Igbo na-eji ọfọ were na-eme otutu ihe. Ndi na-ata oji ala, ndi na-agba ndu na ndi na-ago agugo di iche iche na-eji ọfọ. Mgbe a na-agu nwa aha, okenye na-eji ọfọ n'aka were mee omenala ahụ. Onye na-enye mmadu aha ozo, na-eji ọfọ n'aka mgbe ọ na-enye ya aha ahụ. A na-ahuta ọfọ dika akara eziokwu, ikpenkwumoto iwu na ike ochichi n'etiti ndi Igbo. Ebe obula ọfọ di, a na-enwe ikpenkwumoto, n'ihì “o ji ọfọ ga-ala”.

Okorji na Okeke (2011:147) kowara ọfọ dika aka ikpe nkumoto na eziokwu, ebe ndi Igbo turu ilu si, “egbe bere ugo bere nke si ibe ya ebela, nku kwaa ya”. N'iganihu, ka e nwee ikpenkwumoto, ndi Igbo na-ekwu “Ome ihe jide ọfọ”. Ha kowara na ọfọ bu ihe na-eme ka mmadu kwuo eziokwu, obuladi mgbe mmadu na-ata ahuhu maka eziokwu o kwuru. Onye ji ọfọ n'aka agaghi ekwu okwu ugha. Mgbe ufodu, ndi mmadu na-enwe ọfọ nke aka ha, kama ha na-ehi aka n'anya nkeoma wee mara na okwu ọ ga-ekwu ga-abu okwu ziri ezi. Ọ buru onye a kporo ka o kpeere ndi mmadu ikpe, onye ahụ jide ọfọ n'aka, ọ ghaghị ihu na okwu niile ọ ga-ekwu maobu okwu niile o kwuru ga-abu okwu ziri ezi, nke aghugho maobu asi agaghị adi n'ime ya.



A na-eji ofo ekwu okwu obula di oke mkpa n'obodo. N'akuku niile nke ala Igbo, ndi na-agba afa na-eji ofo eme ihe e ji achoputa ozi ndi a kooro ha site n'iji mkpuru afa. Ndi dibia Igbo na-ejikari ya aru oru n'okwu agwu ha. E ji ofo anu iyi ebe obula a na-ekpezi esemokwu ka e were mata onye kwuru eziokwu. Ndi Igbo kwenyere na o buru na e nwere ikpe azu, mmuo na ndichie ga-ata onye kwuru okwu asi ahuhu. O bu nke a kpatara na o bu ofo ka e ji ahuta ikpenkwumoto n'ala Igbo. Nwokoye na Eze (2017:289) kwuru na ofo dika ntala nke mmuo onye Igbo, nke e jiri ike mmuo meputa, nke na-ekputa, jikoo, kwadoo ma gbaziere ha. Ya mere e ji wee si na ofo bu onye nnochianya mmuo na ikike okike nke uwa. O nwere ikike kariri nke nkiti iji bibie ihe ojoo.

A bia n'ala Igbo, Igwe obula nwere ofo nke o ji achi ndi obodo ya. Ofo bu ihe na-egosi ikike Igwe nwere o ji achi obodo ya. O bu ya kpatara ndi Igbo ji atu ilu si, "eji m ofo, eji m ogo". Iji kowaa onye aka ya di ocha, ya mere Nwaorgu (2001:5) jiri kwuo na ofo bu ngwa e ji eme emume nke na-echekwa ezi omume, kwado ezi mmekorita nke na-adị n'etiti mmadu na ibe ya ma weputakwa ukporo iwu e ji achi ochichi nakwa ikpenkwumoto.

Site na nkowa e nyere gbasara ofo dika ngwa ikpenkwumoto, o putara na ofo bu ngwa ofufe di nsọ, nke eziokwu, nke na-ekpe ikpe ziri ezi, ngwa na-enye onye na-eji ya ikike ichu aja, kpee ekpere, nuo iyi, kwuputa ikpe ziri ezi, kpaa usoro iwu nke daputara n'ezinaulo, umunna maobu obodo ma nyekwa ngozi maobu buo onye mehiere onu. Ya bu, ofo bu udi osisi mkpanaaka nke ufodu ndi isiala, ndi eze na ndi ufodu ndi mmonu a hoputara n'ala Igbo na-eji, nke na-egosi ikike inye iwu, ikike nchikwa obodo maobu nye ikike dika onyeisi a hoputara iji ofo.

Udi Ofo e Nwere

E nwere otutu ofo di iche iche ndi gunyere:

Ofo nke Onwe:

Nke a bu ofo mmadu okachasi umu nwoke nwere ike iji. Ndi mmadu na-enwe ofo nke aka ha, kama ha na-ehi aka n'anya nke oma wee hu na ha na-ekwu eziokwu. Ya bu, o buru na udi onye a bu onye nwere ofo ka a kporo ka o kpee ikpe, onye ahụ jide ofo n'aka, o ghaghị ihu na okwu niile o ga-ekwu ga-aburiri eziokwu nke ikpemsomanya adighi ya. Ejizi (2002:142) kwuru na ofo nke onwe na-eme ka e nwee njiko nke na-adị n'etiti onye nwe ofo na uwa ndi mmuo. Ofo nochiri anya eziokwu, ezi omume, idi ocha, inye iwu, inwe ikike na ikpe ikpe ziri ezi n'etiti ndi Igbo. Onye obula ga-eji ofo a aghaghị ibu onye ezi omume na onye na-ekpe ikpenkwumoto. Oji egbe ezu ohi, onye na-emebi iwu enweghi ike ijide ofo nke onwe, n'hi na ofo a ga-egbu udi onye di otu a. Nwoke obula na-akwa iko anaghị eji ofo a, nke a bu otu n'ime ihe mere tupu ndi mmadu a na-ewe ofo nke onwe, ndi okenye ga-enye ya ofo a ga-ehi aka n'anya nke oma nyochaa udi onye di otu a tupu e nye ya ofo.

Ofo Ezinaulo:

Udi ofo a, na-abukari diokpara ezinaulo ahụ na-eji ya. Ekwealor (2013:108) n'aka nke ya kwuru na ofo ezinaulo bu onye tochara n'ezinaulo na-ebu ya. Ejizu (2002:126) nwekwara otu nkwenye a, wee kwuo na a naghị azu udi ofo a azu kama o na-abu ihe nketa. Mgbe onye isi ezinaulo nwuru, bukwanu onye ji ofo ezinaulo, onye nke ozo na-eweghara ofo a na-abu di okpara ezinaulo ahụ. O nweghi onye nwere ike iwere ofo mgbe onye ji ofo ka di ndu. Nke a na-egosi na onye obula ga-enwe ofo ezinaulo ga-abu onye mbu na ezinaulo ahụ, ma onye ahụ o bu ogaranya maobu ogbenye. A naghị anọ na mba ozo were ebu ofo, onye na-ebu ofo ga-ebi n'obi nna ya.

Ofo Umunna:

Umunna bu ezinaulo di iche iche mebere ya, Okafor na Ewelukwa (2012:382) kwuru na umunna, e nwere onye bu onyeisi umunna. O bu oru diiri onyeisi umunna inye ndi no n'okpuru ya ezi ndumodu, kuziekwara ha ezi uzọ mgbe ha na-ejehie. O bu oru diiri ya idozi esemokwu daputara n'umunna. N'udi ofo a, o bu onye bu okenye kari ndi ozo niile na-eji ya. Mgbe onye ji ofo umunna ahụ nwuo, onye na-esota ya enwere ofo ahụ. Ofo ahụ bu nke onye isi n'umunna ahụ ga-eji na-ekwu okwu ziri ezi, na-ekpe ikpenkwumoto, wee ghara icho imegide mmadu obula. Ejizu (2002:126) kwuputara na ofo umunna bu onye kacha buru okenye n'usoro omumu n'umunna ha na-eji ofo



umunna were duzie umunna ha. Eziokwu, obi idi ocha na ikpe nkwumoto bu ihe a turu anya n'aka onye ji ofo a.

Ofo Echichi:

Udi ofo a bu ofo a na-enye ndi bu aku na-ekwu okwu, ndi merela ndi obodo nnukwu ihe a na-ahu anya. O nweghi ihe jikotara udi ofo a na ofo umunna na ofo ezinaulo. N'udi ofo a, a naghi egbochi onye nwere mmasi iji ya kama a na-adọ ya aka na nti, mee ka o mara na malite mgbe o weere ofo a na o ga-agba mbọ hụ na o na-ebi ezi ndu, ekpe ikpenkwumoto, nwee obi ocha ma burukwa onye a ga-ama dika onye na-ekwu eziokwu oge obula. Ejizu (2002:86) tinyere onu n'okwu a si, na aha a na-aza n'ofọ echichi a bu nke ga-esite n'aha echichi ya dika ofo Ozugo, ofo Duru, ofo Eziaha, dgz.

Ofo Ewumewu:

Udi ofo a bu nke kacha di ochie n'ala Igbo. O nwere ufodu chi bu ndi na-arụ oru di iche iche n'uzo omenala nwere ofo nke ha na-eji, nke na-egosi ngwa oru nke ha na ndi mmuo na ndi nna nna ha na-eji ekwurita okwu. Ndi na-eji ofo ndi a aru oru na-egosi na ha na-eji ezi obi ha were aru ya bu oru. Udi ndi a na-ahuta na-eji udi ofo a bu ndi dibia afa, ndi na-adọ mmiri na ndi dibia odinala.

Site na nkowa e nyere n'udi ofo e nwere n'ala Igbo, o gosiri na o bughi onye obula nwere ikike ijide ofo. Ya mere, o doro anya na o bu ndisi nke ngalaba ndi a di iche iche na-ejide ofo n'etiti ndi mmadu. A na-atu anya na ndi a ji ofo na ngalaba di iche iche ga-eji eziokwu, ikpenkwumoto, kwuwa aka ha oto were kpee ikpe di, ha n'aka. Ndi isi ngalaba ndi a bu ndi ji ofo kwesiri ibu ndi ziri ezi na ndi adighi ele mmadu anya n'ihu. Onye obula kwesiri ijide ofo ha n'ihe gbasara mkpebi, o dighi onye a na-atu anya na o ga-ezochi ihe ojoo ga-agbanari ntaramahuhu nke chi. N'ezie, o bughi naani na ofo na-ata ndi obula ji ya nuo iyi asi ahuhu kama o na-atakwa onye ji ya kpee ikpe ezighi ezi ahuhu.

Oru Ofo na-aru n'ikpe Ikpenkwumoto

Ofo bu ngwa ofufe nke na-ahu na e nwere udo, ihunanya, idinotu na ikpe ikpe ziri ezi. N'ebe ndi Igbo no, a na-ahuta ofo dika ngwa ofufe nke e ji eme udo, nke yiri osisi omewe iwu nke ozurumba ji ekpe ikpe. A na-eji ofo ahụ na e nwere ikpenkwumoto n'ebe a na-ekpe ikpe obula ma hu na eziokwu putara ihe. N'otu aka ahụ, ofo na-ahukwa na e gwuzoro n'ezio kwu na ezi omume. Ofo bu ngwa ofufe nke na-enye onye dara iwu ntaramahuhu diiri ya n'obodo. A na-eji ofo eme ihe mgbe e nwere nnukwu nsogbu. A na-ewebata ofo mgbe e nwere nnukwu nsogbu n'etiti ezinaulo maobu n'etiti ikwu na ibe maobu n'etiti obodo na obodo. A na-eji ofo anu iyi na ikpe niile daputaranu. Onye eze na-eweputa ofo iji were choputa onye na-ekwu eziokwu. A na-eji ofo agoputa onye maobu ndi aka ha di ocha. Ofo na-aputa ihe naani mgbe a chorọ ka eziokwu puta ihe. A na-eji ofo anu iyi iji hu na e nwetara ikpenkwumoto. A na-eji ofo egosi onye aka ya di ocha. Ndi na-eji ofo bu ndi okenye ezinaulo, ogbe na obodo na-edewe aka ha ocha n'ihu na ha na-eji ofo were agozi mmadu maobukwanu ekpe ikpe nke ekweghi okwukwu.

Ndi okenye ndi a ga-edewe aka ha ocha kwuru n'ezio kwu tupu oru ofo ahụ adi ire. Onye na-eji ofo kwesiri ikwuru n'ezio kwu ma na-ekwukwa eziokwu n'ihu na o kwuwa aka ya oto ma na-ekwukwa eziokwu, ka o ga-abu ha na-aku ofo n'ala mgbe obula e kpebiri okwu, okwu ahụ adi ire ma kwudosie ike.

N'ezinaulo, ogbe maobu obodo, mkpebi obula bu mkpebi ga-enweta udo, ihunanya na idinotu bu ofo ka a na-eji were ekpebi ya. E ji ofo ama onye aka ya di ocha. A na-eji ya achoputa ihe e zoro ezo ma nyekwa onye maobu ndi dara iwu ntaramahuhu diiri ha. Ndi Igbo na-akwanyere ofo ugwu ma na-eweputa ya mgbe e nwere ikpe nke siri ike, iji were mara ndi na-ekwu eziokwu na ndi na-atu asi n'etiti ndi na-eseokwu. A na-eji ofo were ekpe ikpe obula a chorọ ka e kwuo eziokwu na ya. O buru na a kpote otu onye n'ime ndi a na-ekpe ikpe, were kpawa ya ofo, n'aka ka o nuo iyi, o nweghi ihe ga-eme ya ma o buru na o bu eziokwu ka o na-ekwu mana o ga-anata ntaramahuhu ozugbo ma o buru na o bu asi ka o na-atu.



Nchikọta akuko Dị n'Oji ihe Nwata Welie aka elu

Akwukwọ ejije *Oji ihe nwata welie aka elu* bụ nke Okoro na Epuchie dere n'afọ (1995). N'akwukwọ a, n'obodo Umuoma ndị hapurū Isiguzo bụ Oji ofo nna ha ma chie Okparaku eze n'ihu na Okparaku kpata ego. O bụ echichi eze obodo Umuoma chiri Okparaku mere ka obodo niile daba n'ime oke onwunwa, mmiri iju izo na aguu, were ruo mgbe e dupuru Isikote ka o gaa na mmuo juta ase ihe butere nsogbu a dakwasara ha. Ndị mmuo gwara Isikote ka o mee ka ndi obodo ha mata na a naghị eji maka mmadu enweghi ego were napu ya oke ruuru ya. Nke a mere ndi mmuo na ndichie jiri zie Isikote ozi ka o zie ndi nze obodo Umuoma, ka ha were ebule chara acha, gaa n'ihu ala Umuoma chuo aja, si ka isi buru isi ma odu burukwa odu. Ndị mmuo na ndi ichie mere ka ndi obodo Umuoma mata na aja a ga-eri isi mmadu ole na ole tupu ala a juru, udo ga-aloghachikwa azu n'obodo Umuoma. Ka Isikote gwachara ndi obodo Umuoma ihe o jetere be ndi mmuo, e chiri Isikote Ichie Ekwueme. Ndị nze mere ihe niile a gwara ha mee. N'abalị ubochi ndi nze chuchara aja ahụ, n'ulo Okparaku, a huru ka eze Okparaku malitere igba ntiri onwu, ma na-ekwokwa onwu. O teghi aka, Okparaku ekubie ume. Ozugbo Okparaku nwuru, amuma mmiri gburu, egbeeluigwe malitere gbawa, mmiri ezowe ozigbo. E werekwara ochichi nyeghachi Isiguzo bu onye o ruru n'aka ichi ndi obodo Umuoma.

Nchikọta Akuko Dị n'Aku Fechaa

Aku fechaa bụ akwukwọ ejije nke Chukuezi dere n'afọ (1980). N'obodo Otamkpa mgbe Duru Iyi-Mbaa bụ onyeisi nchujaja Iyi-Mbaa nwuru. Etu omenala ndi Otamkpa siri wee di, o bu otu afọ onyeisi nchujaja nwuru, ebido okwukwu ya bu Duru Iyi-Mbaa. Enweghi ike ikwa Duru ma a ahughi onye ga-anochi anya ya dika iwu ha siri di. O bu eze Iyi-Mbaa nke ohuru bukwa onye ji ofo agbara ha ga-achū aja okwukwu nke onye o na-anochi anya ya.

Igwe na-achi ndi Otamkpa kpokuru dibia afa bu Odumodu ka o gwa ndi obodo onye eze Iyi-Mbaa ruru aka ga-anochi Duru. Odumodu wee si na onye Iyi-Mbaa turu aka bu Agu nwa Okadigbo. Agu siri onwu na o gaghi abu eze Iyi-Mbaa kama nke ahū ga-eme, si ka igwe dagide ala. Agu hapuru obodo ya bu Otamkpa were gbalaa Abomige. Agu kpochiri nti iza oku Iyi-Mbaa bu agbara mmiri Otamkpa kporo ya ka o bia fee ya. O bughị naani na agu tinyere ndi Otamkpa niile na nsogbu, kama o kpasuru agbara obodo ha iwe. Mmadu anaghi echere agbara aka mgba maka na Aku fechaa, o daara awo. Agbara Iyi-Mbaa mere Agu ka o kpuo isi, ma mee ka Agu si Abomige gaa Otamkpa. Ebe a ka dibia Odumodu mere Agu ka o hu uto ozo. N'agbanyeghi isi akwara Agu gbara, o mechara nabata okpukpo oku agbara Iyi-Mbaa kporo ya bu iruru ya oru dika onyeisi nchujaja Iyi-Mbaa.

Nchikọta Akuko Dị n'Obidiya

Obidiya bụ akwukwọ Akoma dere n'afọ (1988). Oriaku bu isi agwa n'ejije a. O bu ogaranya mana o choghi ka ogbenye biri. Oriaku gbara mbo inara Onuma ala ya. N'agbanyeghi ikpe onye majistreti kpere, Oriaku anabataghi ikpe e kpere. Nke a mere Oriaku jiri gbaa mbo gobie ndi ogbuu ka ha gbuooro ya Onuma. Ndị ogbuu gburu Onuma nke mere Obidiya bu nwunye Onuma jiri kwuru oto foro ntutu ya taa were kwuo na o ga-agba mbo hu na o mechiri ezinaulo onye gburu di ya.

Obidiya gakwuuru dibia Akakaaka rio ya ka o kpoputara ya di ya n'ugegbe, ka Onuma jiri aka ya kwuo onye na etu e siri gbuo ya. Dibia Akakaaka mere nke a, ebe a ka Obidiya noro were choputa na aka Oriaku di n'onwu di ya. Obidiya nyere Akakaaka ego ka o hu na e mechiri ezinaulo Oriaku. Akakaaka mezuru ebumnuuche Obidiya site n'igobi ndi ogbuu ndi ga-egbu Oriaku. Ma tupu ndi ogbuu ndi a azopu njem, Akakaaka mere ka ha jiri ofo nuo iyi iji gosi na ha ga-edebe nkwa ha kwere bu igbu Oriaku. Nke ahu akwusighi ebe ahū. A gakwara n'ihu ihu na umu Oriaku bu Chima, Omenuko na Adamma nwuru.



Oru Ọfọ dika e siri Ziputa ya n'ejije ndi a

Udi ọrụ di ichie ichie ọfọ na-arụ dika e siri ziputa ya n'ejije ndi a hooro gunyere:

Ichoputa ihe:

E ji ọfọ were choputa ihe gbagwojuru obodo, ezinaulo maobu mmadu anya. A huru nke a n'akwukwo "Oji ihe nwata welie aka elu". Mgbe eze Okparaku na ndi obodo Umuma zipuru Isikote ka o gaa choputa ihe mere ugani jiri dakwasị obodo Umuma ya na mmiri juru izonu. Mgbe Isikote rutere be Onyeisiala, Onyeisiala kuru ọfọ ya n'ala, wee si Isikote naa nti nkeoma, ka obere oge gaturu, Chukwu Ukpabi malitere ikwu okwu. Odee ejije a gosiputara nke a mgbe Onyeisiala kpokuru agbara ya;

Onyeisiala; (Onyeisi weputara ọfọ were kuo n'ala were kwuo)

Ebule Ukpabi

nwoke di ike

O ma ama amasighi amasi

Isikote nwa obodo Umuma

abiaruola inu olu gi.

I maara nke bu ahụ oku

nke butere isi owuwa.

kaa, bia gwa ya

n'ihia na mgbe nwata

bere nne, bee nna

O bechaala ihe o nwere

ibe n'akwa

Olu Agbara:

Isikote nwa m,

gwa ndi obodo Umuma

na o ji ihe nwata welie aka elu

aka rawa ya ahụ, o wetuo aka ya,

nwata e werekwa ihe ya.

Gwa ndi nze ka ha were ebule chara acha

gaa n'uhu ala Umuma,

Chuo aja si ka

Isi buru isi,

Ma odi burukwa odi.

Gwa ha na ala ha

di oku n'ihia anya ukwu

na oke ochicho nke ego

nke ha kworo ree

oke nwa ogbenye.

Gwa ha na ala ga-eri mmadu,

isi mmadu ole na ole

ga-eso ya,

tupu ala a juru.

Udo aloghachitekwa

(ihu akwukwo 67-68)

Site n'ofọ Onyeisiala kuru n'ala ka e siri were choputa ihe kpata obodo Umuma jiri noro na nsogbu. A choputakwara na ndi obodo weere ihe erughiri Okparaku were nye ya, bu nke tinyere ha n'onodu ha no n'ime ya.

Ikpenkwumoto:

A na-eji ofọ were ekpe ikpenkwumoto. A huru nke a n'akwukwo "Oji ihe nwata welie aka elu". Mgbe Onyeisiala kuru ọfọ ya n'ala. Mgbe a ka ndiichie kpere ikpe di n'etiti Okparaku na Isiguzo. Ebe a ka e si were mata na o bughị Okparaku kwesiri ibu eze ndi Umuma. Odee ejije a



ziputara nke a mgbe onyeisiala kuru ofo ya n'ala; olu agbara were daa were kwuputa onye kwesiri ibu eze:

Olu agbara: ... gwa ha na ala ha
di oku n'ihu anyukwu
na oke ochicho nke ego
nke ha kworo ree
oke nwa ogbenye
(ihu akwukwo 68)

Inye ntaramahuhu:

A na-eji ofo were ata ndi megoronu ahuhu. A huru nke a n'akwukwo "*Oji ihe nwata welie aka elu*". Mgbe Onyeisiala kuru ofo n'ala, ya mere mgbe olu agbara dara, o mere Isikote mata na aja ahụ ndi Umoma ga-achu ga-eri isi mmadu. Isi mmadu aja riri bu isi Okparaku bu onye naara ihe n'eruweghiri ya n'ike. Odee ziputara nke a mgbe olu agbara kwuru:

Olu agbara; ... gwa ha na ala ga-eri mmadu,
isi mmadu ole na ole
ga-eso ya,
tupu ala ajuru.
Udo aloghachitekwa
(ihu akwukwo 68)

Site n'ofu Onyeisiala kuru n'ala, ka e jiri si n'olu agbara were nye Okparaku ntaramahuhu ruuru ya. Nke a mere o naghi adi mma iwere ihe n'eruweghiri gi n'ike.

Ikpe ekpere:

A na-eji ofo were ekpe ekpere. Ya bu irio Chukwu aririo. N'isi ututu tupu a zopu ukwu ebe obula a na-aga, a na-aku ofo iji rio Chukwu Abiama ka o nonyere mmadu n'ihe obula o ga-eme n'ubochi ahụ. A huru nke a n'akwukwo "*Aku fechaa*", mgbe Agu choro iga nta, o wara oji, were chee oji ahụ n'ihu agbara, wee bulite ofo ya were kwubie okwu si:

Chi nwe m,
ekelee m unu.
Taanu oji,
Amadioha taa oji
Ogwugwu taa oji.
Ala nwe anyi taa oji.
O bu onye bu ibu
ma ebe o ka ya aru.
Ndu na onwu di unu n'aka.
Onye ije amaghi ihe di n'uzo
Ka m na-apu,
burunu ndi nche m.
O biara egbu m, gbuo onwe ya.
Taa bu oke ubochi.
Ebe onye bi ka o na-awachi
Dunu m n'ohia nta nke taa.
Zopotanu m na ihe ize ndu.
Ma duterenu m anu.
Ohia anu ka m jiri biri.
Onye na nke ya.
Onye na nke ya.
Okuko ogbenye bu ehi ya.
Aja agwu ike
(ihu akwukwo 15)



Agu ji ofo ya were kpee ekpere. O rioro chi ya ka o duo ya n'ohia nta nke o na-akwado iga. Ya bu ndi Igbo kwenyere na ofo di ire. Ihe obula mmadu na-akwado ime, o ga-ebu uzọ were ofo ya kpokuo chi ya ka o bia duo ma nonyere ya.

Idu isi:

A na-eji ofo were adu isi iji were mezuo ihe e kwuru maobu ihe ekwekoritara. A huru nke a n'akwukwo *Obidiya*, mgbe Obidiya biara na nke Akakaaka were choputa na o bu Oriaku gburu di ya. O gwara dibia Akakaaka ka o hu na o gbuchapuru Oriaku na ezinaulo ya. Obidiya mezuchara ihe dibia Akakaaka gwara ya iji hu na e mezuru ebumnobi ya.

Akakaaka kporo ndi ogbuu ka ha jeere ya ozi bu igbu Oriaku. Ndi ogbuu nabatara ime ihe Akakaaka kwuru, mana tupu ha azopu ije, Akakaaka mere ka ha nuo iyi site n'iji ofo were duoro ya isi. Iji gosi na ha ga-edebe ihe ha na ya kwuru ma mezuo ozi e dunyere ha. A huru nke a mgbe Akakaaka kwuru:

Akakaaka: A ga-eme nwa omenala foduru
 Ogbuu: Idu isi
 Akakaaka: Nke bu ikpa ofo na ogu aka
 Omeife: Onye kpara ofo na ogu aka o dubeghi isi?
 Ogbuu: Onye turu aka na nsi, araala ya
 Akakaaka: Nke a abughi nsi
 Omeife: Anyi ma. O bu uka, burukwa ilu.
 Ogbuu: I choronu ka anyi sutu ofo onu?
 Akakaaka: uzọ I si ekwu ya adichaghi mma.
 Omeife: Hapu nke ahụ. Ihe tiri pii anwuola. Weta
 Ofo ka anyi mee omenala
 (ihu akwukwo 53)

Site na mkparitauka di n'etiti Akakaaka na ndi ogbuu, o gosiri na ofo bu ngwa oru nke e ji anu iyi, iji gosi na ihe ahụ mmadu kpebiri na o ga-eme na o ga-emeriri ya. O nweghi mgbagha na-adi na ya. Ya bu Akakaaka mere nke a iji mee ka ndi Ogbuu buru n'obi na ha ga-aruriri oru ahụ nke ha naara ego ya.

Iju ogu:

Ofo bu otu n'ime ngwa ofufe nke a na-eji ekwuputa na aka mmadu di ocha. A na-eji ya aju ogu. Ya bu onye aka ya di n'ihe ojoo dakwasara mmadu, ezinaulo maobu obodo. A na-eji ofo were ekwuputa ihe ga-adakwasị onye mere ihe ojoo ahụ. A huru nke a n'akwukwo *Aku Fechaa*, mgbe Agu juru iza oku agbara Iyi-Mbaa kporo ya. Agu jiri ofo were juo ogu na mgbe o kwuru:

Agu: Onye si na ya bu dimkpa zone ukwu n'obi nwa Okadigbo. (Agu weputara ofo ya di n'ime akpa ya were kwuo)
 Uke na-echere ibe ya erikata n'ochere eriwe n'ala.
 Si ugani na ubiam biri n'ulo ya.
 Ihe ojoo kpoo ya ihu ututu niile.
 Obasi bi n'elu, aka m di ocha
 O biara egbu m gbuo onwe ya.
 Onye si ihe oma adighi ya mma
 Ekwensu sokwuru ya n'ulo
 (O wee bie ofo ya n'ala)
 (Ihu akwukwo 69)

Site n'ihe Agu kwuputara, o gosiri na ofo bu ngwa e ji aju ogu iji gosiputa na aka onye ahụ di ocha.

Ibu onu:

A na-eji ofo were ekpe onye mehiere ikpe ma nye ya ntaramahuhu diiri ya. A na-eji ofo n'aka were ekwuputa abumonu nke ga-adakwasa onye mere ihe ojoo. A na-eji ofo were ekwuputa ntaramahuhu ga-adiri onye meruru ala. A huru nke a n'akwukwo *Oji ihe nwata welie aka elu*, mgbe



ndị nze Ụmụoma gbakọtara ikwuputa abụmọnyụ ga-adakwasị onye mere ahụhụ jiri dakwasa obodo Ụmụoma. A hụrụ nke a mgbe nze Ozuome weliri ọfọ ya elu were kwuo:

Nze Ozuome: Ihe anyị na-ekwu bụ

ndụ mmiri, ndụ azụ
Iyi atala ma azụ anwula
Ma onye ji aka ya
kpara nkụ ahụhụ nọ n'ime ya,
ka ya na ha luo.
Asị m ka iyi rie
Sọ onye ọ hụrụ ukwụ ya

Mgbe Nze Ozuome kwuputara abụmọnyụ a, ndị nze ibe ya kwuru ise-o-o. Ha kuo ọfọ n'ala. Nke a na-egosi ka ọfọ nūrụ olu ha ma jeere ha ozi nke ha zinyere ya.

Nchịkọta

Nchọcha a na-ekwu na ndị odee ejije ndị a jiri ejije ha were gosiputa ọfọ dika ngwa ikpenkwumoto. Ọfọ bụ ngwa ikike, eziokwu na nke na-ekpe ikpe ziri ezi. Ọ na-eguzo dika e kwuchaa ọgwụ, ọ bụ ngwa e ji achoputa ihe ma meekwa ka e debe okwu obula maobu nkwa obula e kwere. E mere nke a ka ohanaze mata nkeoma na ọfọ bụ ngwa na-egosi ikpenkwumoto na onye obula na-eji ya kwesiri ikwuwa aka ya oto ma gbaa mbọ ihu na ọ na-ekpe ikpe ziri ezi.

Mmechi

Nchọcha a choputara na ọfọ bụ ngwa ofufe e ji ekpe ikpe ziri ezi n'etiti ndị Igbo. A na-ahuta ya dika ihe e ji agba akaebe, nke e ji ekwu eziokwu, achoputa eziokwu, eme udo, enye onye mere ihe ojoo ntaramahuhu, ekpe ikpe ziri ezi. Ikpe obula e ji ọfọ kpee na-abu e kpechaa ọgwụ. A naghị agbagha ya agbagha. N'otu aka ahụ, ndị odee ejije jiri ejije ha were gosiputa oru ọfọ na-arụ. Mana n'oge ugbo a, nleghara anya e leghara ọfọ mere ka a na-enwe ikpeasomanya. Eziokwu alaa, asị na nkwugide na-arị ibe ya elu. Ya mere ọ ga-adị mma ma ọ buru na e webata ọfọ dika ngwa ofufe were tinyere na nke e ji ekpe ikpe n'oge ugbo a. Ọ ga-enye aka na-ebelata mpu, nkwugide na asị n'obodo ma meekwa ka a na-enwe ikpe nkwumoto n'obodo.

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STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF YOUTH LANGUAGES IN CENTRAL AND WEST AFRICA: FOCUS ON CAMFRANGLAIS AND NAIJA SLANG

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Abstract

This study investigates the emergence and evolution of youth languages in two neighboring African nations: Cameroon, located in Central Africa, and Nigeria, situated in West Africa. The focus is on Camfranglais, a vernacular language spoken in Cameroon that combines elements from Cameroonian French, Cameroonian English, Cameroonian Pidgin English, and indigenous languages of Cameroon. Camfranglais is a hybrid sociolect primarily used by young people in restricted social settings, such as schools, universities, and informal gatherings. Alongside Camfranglais, the study analyzes Naija Slang, a vibrant youth language in Nigeria that draws heavily from English, Nigerian Pidgin English, and various Nigerian languages. Naija Slang has evolved rapidly, becoming a significant force in Nigerian popular culture, influencing music, film, and social media. Employing a comparative framework, this study employs linguistic and socio-linguistic methods in examining the linguistic features of Camfranglais and Naija Slang, including phonological, morphological, and syntactic innovations, such as code-switching, lexical borrowing, and the emergence of new grammatical structures. Furthermore, the study investigates the social functions of these languages, exploring how they facilitate social interaction, foster a sense of belonging within youth communities, and serve as markers of social identity and cultural affiliation. The research highlights the dynamic and creative nature of these youth languages, demonstrating how they reflect the complex interplay of language contact, social change, and cultural identity in contemporary Central and West Africa. By analyzing Camfranglais and Naija Slang, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of youth language practices, their social and cultural significance, and their role in shaping linguistic landscapes, highlighting the importance of language variation and diversity in Central and West Africa. It provides valuable insights into how young people construct language and express identities. The study further identifies new trends and helps to predict the future language development in Central and West Africa. The implication of this study reveals patterns of social inclusion and exclusion. It also highlights the need for inclusive language practices.

Keywords: youths' language, Slang, Camfranglais, Naija Slang

Introduction

The rapid urbanisation and social transformation across Africa have given rise to dynamic linguistic phenomena, particularly among the continent's youth. In Central and West Africa, young people have developed innovative forms of communication that blend elements from multiple languages to reflect their diverse cultural and social environments. This study focuses on two prominent youth languages: Camfranglais in Cameroon and Naija Slang in Nigeria. Camfranglais is a hybrid sociolect that merges Cameroonian French, English, Pidgin English, and indigenous languages, predominantly used in informal settings such as schools and social gatherings. Similarly, Naija Slang, emerging from Nigeria, incorporates English, Nigerian Pidgin, and various indigenous languages, rapidly gaining prominence in popular culture through music, film, and social media.



These youth languages not only serve as tools for everyday communication but also function as powerful markers of identity, creativity, and social belonging among young people (Eyo, 2016). This study observes, analyses and provides insights into how the youth manipulates language in a quest for effective social interaction among themselves.

By examining the linguistic structures and social roles of Camfranglais and Naija Slang, the study aims to shed light on how these languages embody the complex interactions of language contact, social change, and cultural identity in contemporary African societies. Through a comparative analysis, the research contributes to a broader understanding of youth language practices and their significance in shaping the linguistic landscapes of Central and West Africa.

In the context of Africa, youth is classified based on social construct characterised by flexibility and fluidity, especially where there are inadequate resources to support the educational and employment opportunities necessary to effectively integrate young men and women into mainstream society (Eyo, 2016). Youth is a socially defined construction that goes beyond puberty, adolescence and post-adolescence. This means that being a youth in this context is not necessarily biologically based, but rather on social age phase,(Gorke,2023). According to Tyyska (2005), age in Africa, is not a reliable boundary in constructing the category of youth, rather it is the demographic structure, social status, social processes and cultural influence that define this category based on specific cultural idiosyncrasies. It is mainly the socio-economic dynamics that draw the line of transition or delineate the boundary that determines who is a youth.

From the foregoing, it can be said that youth language is not limited to a particular age grade within a certain biological age bracket, rather, it is identifiable by the operations and characteristics of the young population, seen to be within the age range, cultural background, socio-economic status and language preference. The language preference can affect social relationships among the youth. Youth prefers to engage in speaking the language that is socially acceptable among them, hence, the concept of youth language.

The emergence of African youth languages is an undeniable reality that has developed overtime and it is increasingly gaining acceptance and recognition as a medium of expression both in music and media within the regional space. Youth language is crucial for fostering identity, building social cohesion within peer groups, and reflecting cultural dynamics, acting as a marker of belonging and a tool for creativity and expression. According to Eyo (2016), youth is the age of communicative creativity in which language undergo different kinds of changes or manipulation.

African countries are notably identified to be multilingual in nature. This has a tremendous impact on the linguistic and social behaviour of the people, especially the youths. The presence of many languages has significantly influenced the creation of language variations order than the main language. As a result, young people are observed to be manifesting a unique and notable practice within the context of already diverse and multilingual structure in African countries, leading to a language variation that is peculiar to them (Eyo, 2016).

1. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This study is anchored on the theory of Sociolinguistics and language change by Gumperz. These theories focus on how language is used in social interaction. Sociolinguistics is a study of language in its social context. It examines how language varies according to social factors and how they are used to create and negotiate social meaning and identity. Youth language is situated within this theory because it is characterised by the quest for communication and social identity among the youths.



The study, furthermore, hinges on the theory of language change propounded by Labov (1966), which explains how and why language evolves over time due to some factors such as interaction with other languages which leads to borrowing. This marks a significant contribution to the study of language change. It highlights important milestones in the development of language change by Ferdinand's (1916) work and Chomsky's (1957) work, which led the foundation for the study of language variation and change. The theory proposes that language change occurs through language contact, where speakers of different languages interact and thereby influences each other's language use. It further emphasises that language change can be influenced by social status, age and identity as well as cultural values and norms. The theory of language change thus encompasses (i) the dynamism of language, (ii) language contact and (iii) language variation. This helps to understand the processes in the evolution of youth language as a result of language contact and hybridisation in African urban centres.

Youth language has evolved rapidly, becoming a significant force in the African continent. This, according to Eyo (2016), is triggered by the combined forces of urbanisation, migration, multilingualism, globalisation and transcultural contacts. The influx of young people with diverse linguistic backgrounds to the city helps to promote multilingualism that lead to unique sociolinguistic behaviour. As young people migrate to urban cities, they learn one or more of the city's languages or possibly 'invent' a unique language given their specific originating social moments. For instance, there are several youth languages in Africa such as Sheng (Kenya), Tsotsitaal (South Africa), Nouchi (Ivory Coast), and most of others evolved as gang languages. Other African youth languages like Camfranglais (Cameroon), and various pidgin language varieties along the West African coasts such as Naija Slang (Nigeria) evolved as the need for cross-linguistic communication. According to Obo and Obuikwu (2022), the urban settings are generally characterised by multi-ethnicity. People migrate from rural surroundings as well as other parts of the country. As a result, there is often need for a common language to make social interaction possible between members of various ethnic and linguistic groups.

The dynamic and creative nature of these youth languages reflect the complex interplay of language contact, social change, and cultural identity in African countries (Hurst-Harosh, 2020). Some youth languages are perceived negatively due to their criminal tendencies. As such, they are often seen as deviant and anti-social. Mensah (2012) reports that the language of the Ágábá boys in Nigeria is basically used to protest against marginalisation of their social existence and to compensate for the failure of traditional society to provide acceptance and identity.

However, youth languages have come to acquire new roles and functions and now assume urban identities (McLaughlin, 2009). They now serve a wide range of functions in urban areas in the media and marketing communication. Mutonya (2008) and Kariuki, Kanana and Kebeya (2015) also report the utility of the language in print and electronic advertising. Youth language is also a medium of broadcasting in youth-initiated radio and television programmes. This is why McLaughlin (2009) contends that a language that is widely used in various contexts and not limited to an informal setting is no longer exclusively youth language but is now expanding its role to become an urban language of wider communication.

Thus, youth languages are developing and fulfilling the demands of communication in many sociolinguistic domains, such as literature, youth-centred cyberspace, media space and advertising, among others. This utility of African youth languages reveals that they are constantly in transition and enhancing their internal resources to meet the challenges of modern society.

Youth language plays a vital role in shaping the social, cultural and economic lives of young people and by extension, the entire country. Thus, its importance cannot be overemphasised. Language helps young people form and express their identities, distinguish themselves from older generations



and establish their own cultural norms. Youth language serves as a common denominator, uniting young people across different ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds.

2. Methodology

This is a qualitative study which adopted a comparative approach to analyse the phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic nature of Camfranglais and Naija Slangs. The data were collected through primary and secondary sources (spoken and written samples, interviews, media content). Using linguistic and sociolinguistic survey, the data collected was compared under phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic analysis.

3. Data presentation

3.1. Linguistic Structure of Camfranglais and Naija Slang

Over the years, Naija Slang as well as Camfranglais have experienced some development in their lexical, phonology, semantic and syntactic features. Both languages display some interesting phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic characteristics which are examined hereafter.

3.1.1. Phonological Features

Camfranglais is characterised by an intriguing phonological system that draws from French, English, Cameroonian Pidgin, and indigenous languages. The adaptation of the standard Latin alphabet to local pronunciation habits results in distinctive sound patterns. Vowels are often simplified, English diphthongs are reduced to monophthongs, and consonants are adjusted to fit local speech norms. Consider the examples below:

(1)

- a. **Kot** (from English “**cut**”)
- b. **Tchop** (to eat; from Pidgin English)
- c. **Broza** (from English “**brother**”);
- d. **mata** (from English “**matter**”);

In Camfranglais, the English word “cut” (1.a) becomes “kot,” pronounced with an “ɔ” sound instead of the English “ʌ.” This demonstrates the adaptation of vowel sounds to local preferences. In the same vein, the word “tchop” in (1.b) is pronounced with a “ʃ” sound at the beginning, reflecting both its Pidgin origin and the tendency to simplify consonant clusters. In (1.c), the “ð” sound in “brother” is replaced by a “z” sound, resulting in “broza.” This substitution occurs because the English interdental fricative [ð] is not present in many Cameroonian languages.

Naija Slang has a phonological system that draws from English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous languages. The uniqueness of phonology is drawn from the mixture of English and indigenous languages. Let us consider the examples below:

(2)

- a. **Change** is pronounced as **shange**
- b. **Join** is pronounced as **shion**
- c. **Press** is pronounced as **pess**: (the /r/ sound is silent)
- d. **Church** is pronounced as **shursh**.....
- e. **Kitchen** is pronounced as **kishen**

It is observed from the data above that Naija Slang modifies the English phonological structure by simplifying some consonant clusters, often replacing affricates like /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ with the fricative /ʃ/



and softening sounds like /r/. These changes make the sounds more fluid and easier to pronounce which align with local speech rhythms and cultural identity.

3.1.2. Morphological characteristics

Camfranglais exhibits remarkable morphological creativity, frequently blending, truncating, and hybridising elements from French, English, and local languages. Affixation, syllable inversion, and reduplication are commonly used to create new words, as illustrated in the data below:

(3)

- a. **Lomeur** (from “**lom**” meaning “lie” + French suffix “-**eur**”)
- b. **Reback** (from English “**back**” + prefix “**re-**”)
- c. **Nden** (from French “**identité**”)
- d. **Rémé** (from French “**mère**,”); **répé** (from French “**père**”)
- e. **Nayor nayor** (reduplication for emphasis)

The word in (3.a) is formed by combining the root “lom” (to lie) with the French agentive suffix “-eur”, resulting in “lomeur” (liar). It demonstrates the use of French morphological elements in new word creation. In (3.b), the word “reback” “to return something” is created by attaching the French/English prefix “re-” to the English root “back”, illustrating cross-linguistic blending. As far as (3.c) is concerned, the word “den” is a clipped and blended form derived from the French word “identité” (identity card). This example shows truncation and blending in Camfranglais word formation. The word “rémé” and “répé” in (3.d) are created by inverting the syllables of “mère” (mother) and “père” (father), following the French Slang process of verlan. This demonstrates syllable inversion as a creative process. Finally, the repetition of “nayor” intensifies the meaning, resulting in “very slowly.” Reduplication is a common strategy for emphasis or intensity.

As far as Naija Slang is concerned, it creates new words from a combination of indigenous languages and English words. Smith (2011) identifies youth language as one of the most productive resources in contributing new words to standard languages in lexicographic practices. The importance of morphology is to remodel and reshape base language words in new contexts with new or negotiated meanings. In Nigeria, for instance, the development and spread of Nigerian Pidgin is effectively differentiated from city to city, and has been manipulated by young people to create radically distinct linguistic norms and stylistic commonalities (in Naija Hip-Hop culture). The following are some of the examples:

(4)

- a. **Oshofree**: something given to someone without payment: **Osho** is an indigenous (Yoruba) language joined with **free** (an English word)
- b. **Kolomental**: used to refer to someone who is mentally ill. The word is formed by combining pidgin **kolo** “madness” with English word **mental**.
- c. **Kororo-rubber**: used to refer to condom. The word is formed by combining Hausa word (**kororo**) with English word (**rubber**).
- d. **Informate**: coined from the English word and used to refer to information
- e. **Arrangi**: coined from the English word **arrange** to mean stage managed. It could mean connecting two people to marriage without their consent.

The examples provided highlight how Naija Slang blends English with indigenous Nigerian languages and Pidgin, resulting in a dynamic and hybrid form of communication. This linguistic fusion reflects the fluid code-switching habits of Nigerian speakers, who seamlessly mix languages



to create expressions that are culturally resonant and contextually rich. These coinages from English words with Yoruba, Hausa, or Pidgin terms carry meanings that often extend beyond their original English roots, and which adapt to local social realities and experiences. Such blends not only serve as a marker of cultural identity but also allow for more vivid and efficient communication, as they capture nuanced ideas in a way that standard English alone might not. This process demonstrates the inventiveness of Nigerian speakers in shaping their language environment, by producing a vibrant Slang that mirrors the country's multilingual and multicultural landscape.

3.1.3. Syntactic Structures

Camfranglais primarily follows the English-French syntactic patterns. English verbs are often conjugated with French endings to reflect the language's flexibility and creativity. Consider the following:

(5)

a. **La go ci yamo le kongossa.**

The girl this PRS-like the gossip
"This girl likes gossiping" (affirmative).

b. **La go ci ne yamo pas le Kongossa.**

The girl this NEG PRS-like NEG the gossip
"This girl does not like gossiping" (negative).

c. **Vous goez où?**

2PL PRS-go where
"Where are you going?" (interrogation)

d. **Tu lap quoi?**

2SG PRS-laugh what
"Why are you laughing?" (interrogation)

e. **Je go buy le pain.**

1SG PRS-go buy the bread
"I am going to buy some bread."

f. **Vous knowez qu'il ne run pas vite**

2PL PRS-know that-3SG NEG run NEG quickly
"You know that he does not run quickly".

The sentence in (5.a) follows the English-French subject-verb-object order with mixed vocabulary. In (5.b), the negative sentence uses the French negation "ne...pas". In (5.c), the French pronoun "vous" (you) is combined with the English verb "go" plus the French present tense ending "-ez", followed by "où" (where). The interrogative form demonstrates verb adaptation. The same process is observed in (5.d) with the use of the French pronoun "tu" (you), the English verb "lap" (from "laugh"), and the French question word "quoi" (what). In (5.e), "Je" (I, French) is followed by "go buy" (English verbs) and "le pain" (the bread, French). The sentence shows integration of English verbs in a French syntactic frame.

Finally, the construction in (5.f) features "vous" (you, French), "knowez" (from English "know" with French ending), and "ne run pas vite" (does not run fast). This structure highlights the use of English verbs with French morphology and syntax.

The syntactic nature of Naija Slang nearly reflects the structure of English language. However, the structure is loaded with pidgin and English language as illustrated hereafter:



- (6)
- a. **Wetin dey worry you?**
What PRS-be worry you
"What is your problem?"
 - b. **I go shange am for you**
1SG FUT change OM for you
"I will change for you" (You are pissing me off)
 - c. **You dey follow me yarn?**
2SG PRS-be follow me QM
"Do you understand me?"
 - d. **Wetin dey happen?**
What PRS-be happen
"What is happening?"
 - e. **All of una just de yarn okpata-**
All of you just PRS-be talk trash
"All of you are talking trash"
 - f. **I wan chop**
1SG PRS-want eat
"I want to eat"
 - g. **No shaking**
NEG shaking
"Up to the task"
 - h. **The gbege na dilaye**
The fight PRS-be serious
"The fight is serious"
 - i. **You no de yarn the odour?**
2SG NEG PRS-be perceive the odour
"Are you not perceiving the odour?"

The sentences above exemplify common structures and idioms found in Naija Slang and Nigerian Pidgin English. Unlike standard English, Naija Slang and Pidgin often use simplified verb conjugations and employ specific lexical items to convey nuanced meanings, as seen in "Wetin de worry you?" for "What is your problem?" or "I go shange am for you" to express irritation. The examples also showcase direct translation of local thought processes into English-based vocabulary, such as "You dey follow me yarn?" directly asking if one understands. Furthermore, they reveal the use of vivid imagery and culturally specific expressions, where terms like "okpata" (trash) or "gbege" (fight) are integrated to create expressive and contextually rich communication. "Opkata" is an Igbo word which refers to someone who is generous, while "gbege" is a Yoruba word which literally means "forest" or "wilderness".

3.1.4. Sources of Vocabulary

The vocabulary of Camfranglais is a rich blend of French, English, Pidgin, and indigenous languages. Words are borrowed, adapted, and newly created to reflect the urban and multilingual environment of Cameroon, as summarised in the table below:

Words	Meanings
Tchop	to eat
Ndock	Greed
Way	Thing, object, or sex (figurative)
Kolo	1,000 francs
Go	girl, girlfriend
nga	Girl, girlfriend, wife



Piol	House
Le proving	to live beyond one's means
Marie ngombe	10,000 francs

Table 1. Illustrative summary of Camfranglais vocabulary

In the table above, borrowed words are widely used in Camfranglais and shows the influence of the original languages on the youth speech. The word **ndok** is locally derived and refers to the concept of greed, as a contribution of creativity. The word “Piol” comes from the French Slang “piaule,” which means “house” or “room.” This example illustrates how French Slang expressions are adapted and integrated into Camfranglais vocabulary. “Le proving” is a creative neologism derived from the English verb “to prove” and refers to living above one's income.

Naija Slang's vocabulary is characterised by borrowing from English, Pidgin English and indigenous languages. Many youths from different parts of Nigeria have developed their own peculiar sociolects, patois or ritualised codes with peculiar vocabulary and recontextualised meanings of words which are borrowed extensively from the immediate languages. The dynamics of youth language is therefore most noticeable in language change and the creation of new words and meaning depending on the location and situation. Selected examples are presented in the table below:

Words	Meanings
Japa	To flee or escape
Sapa	Poverty or hunger
Chai	An exclamation of surprise or disbelief
Wahala	Trouble/Problem
Ehen	Okay, Yes, And so or What?
Amebo	Someone who gossips a lot
Wobia	A glutton
Chop breakfast	To be heartbroken
Ajebo	A pampered child

Table 2. Illustrative summary of Naija Slang's vocabulary

3.1.5. Semantic Characteristics

A defining feature of Camfranglais is its highly connotative and context-dependent semantics. Words frequently acquire new, metaphorical, or euphemistic meanings that diverge from their original sense in French, English, or local languages. This semantic inventiveness allows speakers to communicate covertly, address taboo subjects, and reinforce group identity. Consider the table below:

Word	Denotative meaning	Connotative meaning
<i>Laver</i>	Wash	Have sex
<i>Chat</i>	Cat	random sexual partner
<i>Piment</i>	Pepper	Sex
<i>Pain</i>	Bread	Handsome man

Table 3. Illustrative summary of Camfranglais semantics

In Camfranglais, “laver” is used as a euphemism for “to have sex with someone”. This shift shows how neutral verbs are repurposed to discuss intimate topics in a discreet or humorous way. While the “chat” means “cat” in French, in Camfranglais it refers to a random sexual partner or a prostitute. The term is loaded with connotations of casual or transactional sexual relationships, showing how animal names are re-semanticised. “Piment” is used to denote prostitution or a prostitute. The metaphorical use of “piment” (something spicy or hot) conveys sexual allure, danger, or excitement



associated with the sex trade. In Camfranglais, “pain” refers to a handsome boy or boyfriend. The word draws on the positive, desirable connotations of “bread” as something essential and attractive. This reflects the playful and metaphorical nature of Camfranglais semantics. These examples show that Camfranglais is not only innovative in structure but also in meaning. Semantic shifts serve various communicative purposes: they allow speakers to discuss sensitive topics indirectly, create in-group codes, and display creativity. This connotative richness is one reason Camfranglais resonates so strongly with its youthful speakers and continues to evolve rapidly in urban Cameroon.

These semantic characteristics are also tenable for Naija Slang as summarised in the table below:

<i>Word</i>	<i>Denotative meaning</i>	<i>Connotative meaning</i>
<i>Anyhow, belle face</i>	Whichever direction the stomach faces	Someone playing football and kicks the ball in random direction
<i>Make I near you?</i>	Should I come close?	Anything for the girls?
<i>Water don pass garri-</i>	Water is too much in the garri	The matter has gone out of hand
<i>You too much-</i>	You are exceptional,	A deep appreciation

Table 4. Illustrative summary of Naija Slang’s semantics

3.2.Sociolinguistic Value

Camfranglais is more than a linguistic phenomenon; it is a vibrant social tool that occupies a unique place in Cameroon’s multilingual landscape. Its sociolinguistic value is rooted in the diverse contexts and functions it serves, especially among urban youth. Naija Slang, like Camfranglais, holds significant sociolinguistic value as it serves as a marker of Nigerian identity, culture and shared experience. It is used in informal settings to foster a sense of community and camaraderie among users. Naija Slang showcases linguistic innovation, blending English with local languages and cultural references. It bridges linguistic and cultural divides, facilitating communication across different ethnic and socio-economic groups.

3.2.1. Usage Contexts

Camfranglais thrives in informal settings such as secondary schools, universities, markets, sports fields, and urban neighbourhoods. It is the preferred medium for peer group conversations, street interactions, and social media exchanges, acting as a code of solidarity and in-group identity. Students use Camfranglais to discuss academics and relationships, which allows communication that is not easily understood by teachers or outsiders. Vendors and customers use Camfranglais to negotiate prices or share jokes to reinforce a shared urban youth culture. Young Cameroonians use Camfranglais in WhatsApp chats, Facebook posts, and TikTok videos, and most increasingly in the musical genre “le mbolè”.

Naija Slang is commonly used in various contexts such as informal conversations among friends, family and peers. It is also widely used in social media plat forms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Naija Slang is widely used in music, comedy and entertainment. It serves as a key part of youth culture in Nigeria and reflects their creativity, humour and identity. The speakers have a community of practice such as music, dress sense or fashion, sports, initiation rituals and a whole social universe that transports their ideas and makes up their world.



3.2.2. Social Functions

The primary social function of Camfranglais is to foster a sense of belonging and group identity among young people. It serves as a marker of modernity, urban sophistication, and resistance to linguistic and social authority. By speaking Camfranglais, youths assert their difference from both the French-speaking and English-speaking mainstream, as well as from the older generation, who may view the language as subversive or non-standard.

Camfranglais is also a tool for humour, creativity, and linguistic play. Speakers enjoy inventing new words, twisting meanings, and using the language to express attitudes and emotions that might be difficult to convey in standard French or English. It is sometimes used as a secret code to exclude outsiders or adults from private conversations. A group of friends might switch to Camfranglais to discuss sensitive topics or poke fun at each other. This reinforces their bonds and shared identity. Students may deliberately use Camfranglais in the presence of teachers or parents to exclude them from conversations or to challenge linguistic norms.

On the other hand, in West Africa, Naija Slang has a profound impact on the social identity of Nigerian youths. It is a way for them to express themselves and showcase their creativity, and connect with others who share similar experiences and cultural backgrounds. It brings about social bonding, group membership in a particular social group or community. The multi-lingual and multi-cultural situation in Nigeria facilitates the use of Naija Slang among the youths as a means of communication. This plays a unification role and serves as an identification marker. It further provides networking opportunities through valuable connections. It broadens different perspectives due to the interaction with people from diverse cultural background, and helps to maintain meaningful relationships, which are essential for emotional and psychological well-being of the youths.

3.2.3. On Code-Mixing and Code-Switching

A defining feature of Camfranglais is its fluid code-mixing and code-switching, both within sentences and across conversational turns. Speakers effortlessly blend French, English, Pidgin English, and indigenous languages, often within a single utterance. This linguistic agility reflects not only the multilingual background of Cameroonian youth but also their desire to showcase creativity and adaptability. Consider the example below:

(7) Je go buy le pain.
1SG PRS-go buy the bread
“I am going to buy bread”

The speaker combines French (“Je”), English (“go buy”), and French again (“le pain”) in a single sentence. This seamless blending is typical of Camfranglais and signals both linguistic competence and group membership. With respect to code-switching, a conversation may begin in standard French but switch to Camfranglais when the topic becomes more personal or informal, or when speakers wish to signal solidarity or secrecy.

In brief, the strategic use of code-mixing and code-switching allows Camfranglais speakers to navigate different social worlds, negotiate identities, and manage relationships. It also enables them to draw on the expressive resources of multiple languages to enrich their communicative repertoire. The common strategies employed by Nigerian urban youth language is code-switching and code-mixing, borrowing and other trans-idiomatic practices. This presents a prominent feature of Naija Slang among Nigerian youth and reflects the country’s multilingual reality where speakers regularly navigate between Standard English, Pidgin English and indigenous languages (Adegbija, 2004). A comparison of key characteristics of Camfranglais and Naija Slang is summarised in the table below:



Aspect	Camfranglais (Cameroon)	Naija Slang (Nigeria)
Linguistic Sources	French, English, Pidgin, local languages	English, Pidgin, Nigerian languages
Main Contexts	Schools, youth gatherings, Pop culture, social media	Schools, youth gatherings, Pop culture, social media
Social Functions	Group identity, creativity	Popular culture, identity
Innovations	Code-switching, hybrid grammar	Lexical creativity, media influence

Table 5. Comparison of key characteristics of Camfranglais and Naija Slang

4. Findings

The study reveals that Camfranglais and Naija Slang are youth language innovations that are peculiar to youth, whose language practices are a totality of their repertoires, which are not consistent, clear and bound by any rule. This evidence shows that African youth languages are contested locally, although they are clearly a distinct means of communication with their community of speakers, who relies mainly on context to convey meaning. Reynolds and Chun (2013) in Eyo (2016) refer to this ‘differentiated identities and collective belonging’. The study also reveals patterns of social inclusion and exclusion. Both Camfranglais and Naija Slangs are used as lingua franca to facilitate communication, especially among the youths due to their multilingualism. It was observed that both of them blend local languages and foreign languages, and are used in casual conversations popularly among the younger generations. While Camfranglais combine French, English and local languages, Naija Slang incorporates English, Nigerian languages and other influences.

Furthermore, the phonology of Camfranglais is influenced by the phonology of local Cameroonian languages, French and English, by adopting the sounds and intonation patterns of these languages such as the use of clicks or implosives found in some Cameroonian languages. Naija Slang phonology, on the other hand, is largely based on Nigerian English phonology with influences from indigenous languages with distinct pronunciation patterns, such as variations in vowel sounds or syllable stress. The same scenario of influences from the local languages is observed in the areas like syntax, vocabulary and semantic characteristics of both Camfranglais and Naija Slang.

It is, however, worthy of note that the semantics of Naija Slang is highly contextual and often relies on shared cultural knowledge. That is, words and expressions can have multiple meanings depending on the situation. New terms always emerge frequently also, to reflect changing social realities. In a nutshell, both Camfranglais and Naija Slang demonstrate the dynamic nature of language use in multilingual communities, where speakers creatively combine linguistic resources to express identity, culture, and social relationships.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has reviewed the theoretical aspects of linguistic situations of youth languages in Cameroon and Nigeria. The analysis revealed that Camfranglais and Naija Slangs have dynamic phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic characteristics. Their sociolinguistic behaviour and creativity are linked to the influence of English, French and indigenous languages. The understanding of the uniqueness of youth language structures and functions help to achieve a more tolerant view and appreciate youth cultural mobility and linguistic production as essential components of our social existence. The study therefore concludes that youth language should be given a chance to thrive in the linguistic landscapes of Central and West Africa because it offers a fascinating medium for effective social interaction among the youths and serves a significant role in shaping the social, emotional and cognitive development of young people. It therefore recommends



that government should set up a linguistic body to manage the linguistic situation experienced in Central and West Africa. There should be an inclusive language policy that will incorporate youth language into the mainstream of public and private activities. This will serve as a language that unifies linguistic diversity. The creation of meaning is therefore one of the noticeable linguistic components of youth languages in Africa. It is informed by connections with social changes and cross-generational transformations which reflect the fluid and dynamic nature of their linguistic practices, presentation of the language: origin, evolution, and linguistic characteristics music, film, and social media.

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THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF PRESUPPOSITION AND POLITENESS IN PRESIDENT BOLA TINUBU'S 2025 DEMOCRACY DAY SPEECH

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Abstract

Since 2018, when the former Nigeria President, Mohammad Buhari declared June 12th a national holiday in Nigeria to commemorate the restoration of democracy in 1999, it has now become an annual ritual, marked with social activities and a presidential speech, christened: “Democracy Day Speech”. It is an observance that constitutes the formal review of socio-political developments in the country since the annulment of June 12 presidential election in 1993. Democracy Day Speech is usually anticipated for the soothing promises it makes and the reassurances it contains. This study investigates pragmatic presuppositions made and politeness strategies employed by President Bola Tinubu in the 2025 speech delivered at his Democracy Day ceremony. The text of the speech is downloaded from the net to ensure accuracy, and the fifty-seven (57) sets of sentences are numbered serially for ease of reference and close analysis. The study reveals that Tinubu presupposes among others, the uniqueness of the event, the socio-political and economic challenges facing Nigeria, and deploys the imperatives to address some key areas in the country. Regarding politeness, the paper unravels both the face saving and face threatening acts performed by the speaker through the various strategies deployed. It concludes that although Tinubu strives hard to mitigate the threats to the face of the past political leaders among others, the emotional touching effects of the threat still remain painfully memorable for their enormity and emphasis.

Keywords: Bola Tinubu, Democracy Day Speech, Presupposition, Politeness

1 Introduction

Regular occasions of speech delivery by elected presidents of Nigeria include, Inauguration Ceremony, Independence Day Celebration and most recently, Democracy Day. Such speeches are delivered amidst fanfare, jubilation and renewed hope for a better future. A presidential speech is therefore unique in a number of ways. Although almost all the presidential speeches mentioned above are political, only inauguration speech is delivered at an interval of some years, most often four years because it is connected with a new elected president on assumption of office. Inaugural speech is a victory speech, presented to make the reality of the success of the new president felt by the people, especially the opposition party or parties, and consequently marks the beginning of their compulsory acceptance and submission.



Nigeria is often described as the giant of Africa. Therefore, its nascent democracy occupies a pride of place in the political topography of Africa, and her actions and inactions attract international attention. The president of Nigeria is perceived in some quarters in this connection as a prominent political leader who has a voice in Africa affairs, through remarkable organizations, such as UNO, WHO, among others. This background makes the Democracy Day speech of Nigerian president very important, widely anticipated, collectively heard and variously interpreted. The logical expectation, considering the enviable place of African affairs and politics is that the president employs tact in national discourse to effectively manoeuvre governance in order to achieve steady political growth and peace across the nation. To that end the president used the Democracy Day Speech to anticipate for the soothing promises and reiterate reassurances of hopes and aspirations democracy holds for Nigeria and Nigerians.

The paper therefore attempts to examine the Pragmatic features of Presupposition and Politeness in President Bola Tinubu's 2025 Democracy Day Speech. The study explores the linguistic features in the president's speech that convey the socio-political developments in the governance of the country since after the annulment of June 12 presidential election in 1993, coupled with X-raying legislative procedures of the social-political and ideological era in the National House of Assembly. The President's creative and resourceful employment of language accounts for his drive for success in leadership. Since this paper investigates the nature of presupposition and politeness, it is revealed that Bola Tinubu's Democracy Day Speech employs language to serve as an empirical base to define and shape his linguistic behavior and to address the concern of his critics, with a view to motivating them.

2. Language of Politics

The bond between language and politics is derivable from the association of language and communication. Man is a political being whose entire life is shaped by politics, and his eloquent speech provides apt enablement. Language plays a crucial role in politics as every political action is inspired, accompanied, controlled and influenced by it (Schaffer, 1996). The importance of the study of language of politics, according to Beard (2000) is to know how language is utilized by those who desire to gain, exercise and keep power. Language is used in politics to make speeches and remarks. Thus, political career is negotiated, secured and practised through the instrumentality of language whose product, in this wise is mainly speech making. Beard (ibid: 35) further adds that "making speeches is a vital part of the politicians' role in announcing policies and persuading people".

Lakoff (1990:7) presents the inextricable relationship between language and politics more aptly. He posits that "language is politics, politics assigns power, and power governs how people talk and how they are understood". He notes further that political manipulations depend on the use of language because language initiates and interprets power relations. Thus, language serves to bestow or confer power and delineates the relationship among its users through the roles it allots to them. Power is demonstrated through the use of language and every language user "plays the linguistic power game according to hidden agendas, the unsaid being far more potent than the said" (ibid :21). The clarification of the unstated meaning or the 'hidden agenda' is the concern of pragmatics (Mey, 2001:207).

It is language that provides the opportunity for politicians to explore its verbal communicative resources and manipulate words to suit their intentions. Hence, language could be regarded as the vehicle of politics. In this direction, Opeibi (2009) points out that language is the channel for the expression of the candidate's manifesto, superior political thoughts and party's ideologies and it is the tool for translating them into social actions for social change and continuity. Therefore, the



place of language in convincing, mobilizing, persuading and enlightening the citizenry cannot be over emphasized. It is the link to people's hearts. Akinkurolere's (2011) argument that the support politicians enjoy from the citizens is predicated upon their message and the manner of presentation is apt as these determine success of candidacy, programmes or policies. Both the political message and its manner of presentation are consequently very important. For this reason, it is expedient to interrogate political discourse through the related frame works of discourse analysis, stylistics, rhetoric and pragmatics. However, the resources of pragmatics are explored in this study to analyze our data.

The various definitions of pragmatics available emphasis primacy of context for a meaningful interpretation of language in use. Pragmatics, according to Leech (1981) investigates the aspect of meaning derivable from the manner in which utterances are used, and how such utterances relate to the context of their use. This view regards pragmatics as a theory of appropriateness in any discourse. Lawal (2003:150) defines pragmatics as "the study of how context influences our interpretation of utterances." Pragmatic analysis of language according to Adebija (1999:189) is an investigation of "how language is used in any particular communicative contexts or situations". Yule (1996:3) similarly provides four interrelated aspects of the definition and scope of pragmatics as; the study of speaker meaning; the study of contextual meaning; the study of how more meaning get communicated than said; and the study of expression of relative distance. Thus, the concern of pragmatists includes the interactants, the context, the unsaid or meaning communicated and its implication in discourse. This informs Allan's (1986) definition of pragmatics simply as the study of interactional meaning. Pragmatics, to unravel interactional meaning, includes in its scope such aspects as: context, speech acts, deixis, conversational principle, politeness, presupposition among other concepts concerned with basics and nuances of communicative values. This study pays attention on Interactional meaning in a public speech.

3. Theoretical Framework: Presupposition and Politeness

The theoretical framework is anchored on presupposition and Politeness.

a. Presupposition

Yule (1996:25) defines presupposition as "something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance." The speakers, according to him, not the sentences, have presuppositions. It is, thus, a premise or ground assumed by the speaker in relation to the hearer's knowledge. Presupposition is "the explicit assumption about the real world which speakers make, and on which the meaning of an utterance largely depends" (Lawal, 2003:153). Speakers or writers usually design their message on the assumption that the hearer or reader already has a degree of the knowledge of what is being communicated. The presupposed knowledge is naturally taken for granted as it is believed that the listener or reader will understand the communication, by processing the said with the shared information about the subject and the context.

As Grundy (2000) points out, certain clauses are employed to make presuppositions because of some words that they contain. Such words express change of state predicate like begin and continue or time such as after and before. Yule (1996) similarly notes that certain forms – words, phrases and structures - have been associated with the expression of presupposition. He identifies types of presupposition as: (i) existential (expressed through possessive forms or noun phrases), (ii) factive (expressed by words signifying fact), (iii) lexical (expressed through the non assertive meaning of words), (iv) structural (expressed through certain grammatical constructions), (v) non-factive (expressed to show that something is false) and (vi) counter-factive (expressed through



structures used to show unreality). Presupposition is natural in interaction as it helps the speaker to predicate his/her speech on common knowledge and helps the hearer also to make inferences.

b. Politeness

Part of the political nature of man is his innate sense of dignity or self-importance that he wants others to acknowledge. This is the sense to be regarded and treated as human. Grundy (2000: 147) describes linguistic politeness as “the function of language to imply the most appropriate speaker-hearer relationship”. Appropriateness in this regards essentially involves a lot of linguistic considerations to effect and maintain acceptable interpersonal relationship. Politeness is a means of avoiding conflicts and establishing harmonious interpersonal relationship between social interactants (Izadi, 2013). Communication involves doing things with words or performing speech acts (Austin, 1961) and the exercise of caution in the performance of acts not to avoidably hurt the feelings of others is called politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987) underline the use of indirect speech act as a feature of politeness and further relate politeness to *face* which they describe as “the public self image that every individual wants to claim for himself.” They identify two types of face as: positive face, “the individual’s want of admiration and approval” and negative face, “the individual’s want of freedom from imposition” (ibid: 67). Similarly, Yule (1985: 134) describes politeness as “showing awareness of another person’s face.

Some speech acts have intrinsic threat in them; they are Face Threatening Acts (FTA’s) while certain acts are performed to lessen the possible threat to face; these are Face Saving Acts (FSA’s). Both positive and negative face types are constantly at the risk of being threatened and as a result conscious interactants usually strive to save them in communication. FSA’s are achieved through mitigation, which involves employing such politeness strategies as indirection, hedges, deference, apology, generalization and nominalization among others (Brown and Levinson, 1987). The nature of texts however determines both the kinds of acts, the prevalence or otherwise of FTAs and the appropriate politeness strategies.

Presidential speech as a genre is characterized by the clear distance between the president and audience participants. The president is the speaker and the listeners or audience include the law-makers, citizens, and non-citizens. Besides, there is inequality in terms of the power relation between the speaker and the audience. These demand a great deal of face work on the part of the president who will need to articulate his unique mission and achieve solidarity and peace.

4. Analysis of the Speech

The 2025 Democracy Day Speech of President Bola Tinubu of Nigeria is composed of fifty-seven (57) sentences which are largely structurally simple. Perhaps, this is a linguistic reflection of his promise to hit the ground running and keep faith with the spirit of democracy. The sentences (scs) are numbered serially for ease of reference in the analysis. The speaker’s assumptions about the reality of his determination and attitude to run smooth governance and guaranteed interpersonal relationship as reflected in the speech are analyzed under the two headings: Presuppositions and Politeness Strategies, as employed in the address.

a. Presuppositions in the Speech

In a speech of this kind, presupposition is a measure of the way the speaker characterizes the knowledge listeners share about their personalities, their affairs and the general state of the nation. Tinubu’s speech reveals key areas of knowledge of common reality which he shares with his listeners, especially the law-makers on account of the evolving democracy in Nigeria.



The uniqueness of the event, and invariably the speaker, is profoundly presupposed. The ideas shared are taken for granted and thereby presented unarguably in a number of ways. The speaker achieves this presupposition particularly in five sentences – scs: 6,7, 8, 9, &13. This set of sentences appreciates rather than greets as it is typical:

Since 2018, we have celebrated Democracy Day on this day; to commemorate the sacrifices of the men and women who fought to restore democratic governance to Nigeria (sc 6). Let me pay tribute to former President Muhammadu Buhari for reaching back into history to rectify a national misdeed by making June 12 Democracy Day and by officially acknowledging Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola and his running mate, Babagana Kingibe, as the victors and thus duly elected President and Vice President respectively of Nigeria after the June 12, 1993 elections (sc 7). Year by year, election after election, every time we debate instead of battle, discuss instead of fight, and argue instead of destroy, we preserve the institutions of democracy... (sc 8). we must not forget the long list of those who equally deserve to be called heroes of Nigerian democracy (sc 9)....It is fitting that I come to this chamber. You are the authors of the people's law, and I must be their faithful implementer.... (sc 13).

The speaker's presupposition in the first sentence through the last sentence is that, he appreciates both his immediate and remote audiences: all Nigerian citizens, the immediate past president of Nigeria (Muhammadu Buhari) and various dignitaries. In particular, in sentence 13, he concretizes the knowledge of the uniqueness of the occasion held in the National Assembly, which underscores his audience's belief that the ceremony has special meaning in its unprecedented nature, since it held in the National Assembly. This same presupposition is consolidated with the reference to the venue of the ceremony, as representing the seat of law-making:

With profound honour, I stand before this joint session of our National Assembly; a parliament that embodies the will of the Nigerian people (sc1).

Most importantly in the above presentation, is the speaker's assumption that the listeners know their responsibilities to make laws that respect the desires and needs of the people. This presupposition is obvious in sc1 of the speech, and it is particularly signalled by the phrase: **the will of the Nigerian people**. The phrase further inspires the sentence below:

I felt a sense of collective accomplishment when I realised how far we had come as a nation. Since 1999, democracy has risen from the ashes and destitution of military rule to take its rightful place as the only mode of governance of our resilient and beloved people (3).

The expression, 'a sense of collective accomplishment' in the above presentation indicates the speaker's presupposition that signals far reaching action through democratic process, which has rebuilt or restore good governance in Nigeria. Again, Nigeria is believed by Bola Tinubu to have known the source of the setback to be the military government who had consistently denied others of the supposedly common opportunity. Both the knowledge of the loss and the agents of denial are communicated as common, through the excerpt below:

... Since 1999, democracy has risen from the ashes and destitution of military rule to take its rightful place as the only mode of governance of our resilient and beloved people (3). Upon assuming office, my team and I moved to reform our



ailing economy. We introduced fundamental reforms to correct structural imbalances that prevented maximum growth (27).

In the above extract, Tinubu presupposes the current state of Nigeria as a product of democracy, which he encodes as common knowledge through political, social and economic achievement for national needs. Similarly, he underlines the general assumption underlying the poor performance of the military rule in such structural description as ‘the ashes and destitution of military rule’ (sc 3).

In communicating the knowledge of Nigeria’s past frustrating encounters in the hands of the military as a reality to him and other citizens, Tinubu employs the following excerpt:

... under the military, the National Assembly tried to protect our democracy. After General Abacha took over power on November 17, 1993, and dissolved the National Assembly, some of us, led by Senator Ameh Ebute, the Senate President in the 3rd Republic, defied the General and his goons to reconvene in the Old Parliament Building in Lagos. We were jailed on our defiance (sc15).

The above presupposition reveals the speaker’s belief that the listeners, especially the law-makers, know that Nigeria was a strong, wealthy, proud, safe and great nation with a huge political challenge. The resolution of the political conflict as presupposed in the sentence, is consequently apt and warranted by the shared national and international knowledge that Nigeria is currently democratically progressing.

As a logical sequel to his assumption of a stable democracy, Tinubu presupposes that everyone knows that change is inevitable to restore civil governance. This knowledge can be deduce from his clamour for free and fair elections and the right to belong to any of the registered political parties in Nigeria. The following sentences in the speech would be questionable without such an assumption:

To those who ring the alarm that the APC is intent on a one-party state, I offer you a most personal promise. While your alarm may be as a result of your panic, it rings in error. At no time in the past, nor any instance in the present, and at no future juncture shall I view the notion of a one-party state as good for Nigeria. I have never attempted to alter any political party registration with INEC ... (18). I dare not do such a favour to any political adversary by repeating the same mistake of political overreach (22) A one-party state is not in the offing. Nor should it ever be. That said, we would be guilty of political malpractice (23)

The speaker’s rejection and values placed on the potency of multi- political groups is communicated with emphasis through repeated metaphorical language. Repeating “alarm” twice in ‘To those **who ring the alarm** that the APC is intent on a one-party state...’ (sc 18), Tinubu presupposes the pursuance of the uniqueness of his action plan. He underlines the need for collective participation in politics by different group, as a definition of an ideal democracy and reality, as against what his government believes. The speaker’s willingness to dismiss a one-party state is expressed by the following lexical/modal verbs: offer/ shall/ have never attempted (18); and dare not do (22), to reveal his assumptions of the common knowledge and aspiration of the need for oriented actions.



(b) Politeness Strategies in the Address

The task of governance, though often vested on a group of people, is a collective responsibility if it must be successful. The periodic speech of a sitting president is to formally update the citizens on political development and the direction of governance in a country. Thus, as a communicative event, Democracy Day speech normally features promises or reassurances by the president as well as call or request for support by the citizenry and other nations. There is a major role relationship of the political leader (the president) and the citizens. Among the citizens, however, are some socially and politically special people. These may include the ex-presidents, business tycoons, educationists and other important dignitaries. The composition of the audience nationally is complex, and so is the nature of the distance. From the foregoing, the speech needs to aptly present the vision and or mission of the government and deftly save the face of the listeners to whom references may be made in it. Politeness is, therefore, requisite in ensuring fairness in the task. Tinubu's efforts in this direction are discussed in the next two subheadings:

(i) Face Saving Acts

The speech reflects premeditated face saving acts in spite of the biting criticism it contains. The speaker's consciousness of the importance of saving the face of his varied listeners and avoiding, or at least limiting face threatening acts, is asserted in the following words:

We must welcome and accept the diversity and number of political parties just as we welcome and embrace the diversity of our population. Our efforts must never be to eliminate political competition but to make that competition salutary to the national well-being by working across the political aisle whenever possible. (sc 25)
We are committed to giving more opportunities to young people through job creation and skills development... (sc 30)

The President's declaration of his government's promise to tolerate other political parties outside his party, underscores his knowledge of the place of sportsmanship and cooperation in achieving ideal democratic practice in Nigeria. It is a promise of recognition and an appreciation of collectivism. Besides his crave for unity in diversity, which defines a positive face saving act, the declaration of his administration's intention to uplift the economic fortunes of the younger generation is a testimony to his consciousness of the need not to threaten the listeners' negative face. The two pledges satisfy the requirements of both positive and negative politeness.

The speech begins on a note of appreciation and praise which are invariably a mark of recognition and a call for support. The expression, 'With profound honour' in the first sentence of the address enacts a polite recognition of the national law makers, and by extension, the people of Nigeria. The appreciation begins from the specific to the general. Expectedly, President Tinubu more specifically appreciates his predecessor, Mohammadu Buhari and Chief M.KO Abiola and his running mate, Babagana Kingibe - for their role in the actualization of democracy in Nigeria as follows:

Let me pay tribute to former President Muhammadu Buhari for reaching back into history to rectify a national misdeed by making June 12 Democracy Day and by officially acknowledging Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola and his running mate, Babagana Kingibe, as the victors and thus duly elected President and Vice President respectively of Nigeria after the June 12, 1993 elections (scs 7)



This is certainly pleasing to the outgoing president, the families of MKO Abiola, his running mate and listeners who believe that Buhari did his best during his tenure. In some subsequent sentences – 10, 11 and 52-55 the same expression of appreciation, and conferment of awards on certain Nigerians, is reiterated to show gratitude to the listeners generally, in order to give them recognition and make them feel valued in line with their own estimation of their self-worth.

The speech also features devices of inclusion which are prerequisites for achieving positive politeness. The first person plural and reflexive pronouns 'we/us and ourselves' are employed to foreground the speaker's crave for support and perception of his home audience as active stakeholders in achieving the heights that Nigeria deserves. He, therefore, represents the audience as important through the audience inclusive pronouns deployed. Remarkable among the occurrences of these pronouns are the ones highlighted in the following part of the speech:

. ...we will launch a bold new initiative to empower four hundred thousand young Nigerians, including youth corpsers, with consumer credit (sc 29); We are committed to giving more opportunities to young people through job creation and skills development(sc 30); ... let us rededicate ourselves to the ideals of June 12; (sc 56)

The personal pronouns in each of the sentences above are face devices employed to reflect the collective spirit of democracy, which Bola Tinubu shares about the roles every individual owes Nigeria in a better society. The same reason explains the rare occurrence of the first person singular pronoun I in the text. Only in few sentences (52 -53) in the whole of the speech, do we find its use by the president, only employed while performing the personal role of presenting awards to beneficiaries.

(ii) Face Threatening Acts

Although the speech consists of varied face saving attempts made by the speaker, especially through such speech acts as appreciation, recognition and inclusion, it features a lot of criticisms which according to Levinson (1987) are intrinsically face threatening acts. At some point, the criticisms translate into poignant accusations. Perhaps, the speaker's reason is to justify his capability and readiness to propel a democratic process. Unarguably, face threatening acts are natural in some contexts even though they are detestable. It is doubtful, however, if they are quite appropriate, especially as enormous as they are in this context. Threatening the face of social equals and dignitaries who have made selfless contributions to common course is not desirable.

Conscious of this fact, President Tinubu generalizes his criticism of the military regime as the failure of all Nigerians. The following excerpt exemplifies this strategy:

... Since 1999, democracy has risen from the ashes and destitution of military rule to take its rightful place as the only mode of governance of our resilient and beloved people....(scs3).

The above excerpt is a portrayal of the military administration as inept, and also, the employment of 'ashes and destitution' implies the negative influences of military government, which had caused the economy of Nigeria some setback.

Apart from mitigating the obvious threat posed to the military leaders in the speech act of criticism and or condemnation as shown above, Tinubu equally indicts his political opponents, for laying



false accusation against APC. He strives to mitigate this through metaphoric expression as shown below:

... I have never attempted to alter any political party registration with INEC. ... we cannot blame anybody seeking to bail out of a sinking ship even without a life jacket. (sc 18)

In the above sentence, 'seeking to bail out of a sinking ship' symbolizes the opponents who need help from alternative party, while 'a life jacket' refers to the acceptance the optional party (APC) grants intending opponents to deflect to another party. That exemplifies a fairly understandable face threatening act in the speech of the speaker.

Conclusion

Democracy Day speech as a form of discourse offers elected public office holders the opportunity to make promises and to give assurance of good governance through effective language use. Through the analyzed speech, Tinubu makes a lot of presuppositions to demonstrate his vast knowledge of Nigerians and current socio-political realities of Nigeria. The presuppositions serve as premise for the various promises he makes. They also account for the prevalence of structurally simple sentences through which he draws on the shared knowledge of his listeners without boring details. President Tinubu also embarks on a lot of face work asserting lucidly the essence of collectivism and the evil of dictatorship. The speech, however, conspicuously include ample avoidable face threats occasioned primarily by extensive criticism and accusation. The hedges employed are meant to mitigate the shock associated with his criticism, thus making them unavoidably bearable, but still sadly memorable.

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Appendix

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Speech In Commemoration Of Democracy Day, on June 12, 2025

Protocol:

1. With profound honour, I stand before this joint session of our National Assembly; a parliament that embodies the will of the Nigerian people.
2. Today, as I entered this grand edifice built from the sweat and toil of our democratic yearning, my heart stirred. It was a blend of accomplishment and resolve.
3. I felt a sense of collective accomplishment when I realised how far we had come as a nation. Since 1999, democracy has risen from the ashes and destitution of military rule to take its rightful place as the only mode of governance of our resilient and beloved people.
4. With every footstep I took through these hallowed halls up to the moment I now stand before you, I remembered that we still have much further to go.



5. To achieve this progress, we sought an elective office to lead this nation forward. Thus, I hereby affirm before our Merciful and Almighty God and all men my resolve to do all that I can to safeguard and build our democracy as the Divine hand intends for us to do.
6. Since 2018, we have celebrated Democracy Day on this day; to commemorate the sacrifices of the men and women who fought to restore democratic governance to Nigeria.
7. Let me pay tribute to former President Muhammadu Buhari for reaching back into history to rectify a national misdeed by making June 12 Democracy Day and by officially acknowledging Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola and his running mate, Babagana Kingibe, as the victors and thus duly elected President and Vice President respectively of Nigeria after the June 12, 1993 elections.
8. Year by year, election after election, every time we debate instead of battle, discuss instead of fight, and argue instead of destroy, we preserve the institutions of democracy. More importantly, we weave the culture of democracy into the very fabric of our nation.
9. Whilst Chief MKO Abiola is June 12's central figure, we must not forget the long list of those who equally deserve to be called heroes of Nigerian democracy.
10. We must celebrate the courage of Alhaja Kudirat Abiola and Pa Alfred Rewane, both of whom were murdered by agents of military repression. We also remember the many civil rights activists, journalists, and politicians imprisoned, exiled, tossed aside, tortured and beaten by the military regime.
11. We remember Chief Anthony Enahoro, Commodore Dan Suleiman, Chief Abraham Adesanya, Ayo Adebajo, Chief Gani Fawehinmi, Balarabe Musa, Ganiyu Dawodu, the journalist Bagauda Kaltho, and Commodore Ndubuisi Kanu. I mention these names not to exclude or degrade the profound contributions of anyone else, but to illustrate, through these few heroes, the universality of our pursuit of democracy.
12. The struggle was never the province of any one group or section of the country, it was pan-Nigerian in its conception and will be even more pan- Nigerian as we strive to perfect it.
13. It is fitting that I come to this chamber. You are the authors of the people's law, and I must be their faithful implementer. While we may not always agree, we must forge a way to work together because this is what democracy demands of us. I pledge myself to this cooperation and ask that you do the same for the good of our people.
14. Mr. Chairman, the National Assembly has acted to uphold democratic ideals at every critical moment in our national history. In 2006, the 5th National Assembly protected our democracy against an unseemly third-term bid that would have ripped our constitution apart. In 2010, the National Assembly, through the doctrine of necessity, opened the door for then-Vice President Goodluck Jonathan to become the acting President following the illness of his predecessor.
15. Even under the military, the National Assembly tried to protect our democracy. After General Abacha took over power on November 17, 1993, and dissolved the National Assembly, some of us, led by Senator Ameh Ebute, the Senate President in the 3rd Republic, defied the General and his goons to reconvene in the Old Parliament Building in Lagos. We were jailed for our defiance.



16. On behalf of a grateful nation, I commend your invaluable role in lawmaking, oversight, and constituency representation.
17. At this point, I plead for your indulgence so that I may put a terrible rumour to bed.
18. To those who ring the alarm that the APC is intent on a one-party state, I offer you a most personal promise. While your alarm may be as a result of your panic, it rings in error. At no time in the past, nor any instance in the present, and at no future juncture shall I view the notion of a one-party state as good for Nigeria. I have never attempted to alter any political party registration with INEC. Equally, my friends, we cannot blame anybody seeking to bail out of a sinking ship even without a life jacket.
19. Look at my political history. I would be the last person to advocate such a scheme. In 2003, when the then-governing party tried to sweep the nation clean of political opposition through plot and manipulation, I was the last of the progressive governors standing in my region.
20. In all their numbers and false grandeur, they boasted of ruling, not governing, Nigeria for the next half century or more. Where are they now?
21. Yet, I stood alone. My allies had been induced into defeat. My adversaries held all the cards that mortal man could carry. Even with all of that, they could not control our national destiny because fate is written from above. A greater power did not want Nigeria to become a one-party state back then. Nigeria will not become such a state now.
22. The failed effort to create a one-party state placed progressive political forces on a trajectory to form the APC. It put me on the trajectory which has brought me before you today. I dare not do such a favour to any political adversary by repeating the same mistake of political overreach.
23. A one-party state is not in the offing. Nor should it ever be. That said, we would be guilty of political malpractice if we closed the door on those from other parties who now seek to join the APC and I sincerely welcome our party's newest members from Delta and Akwa Ibom States led by Governor Sheriff Oborevori and Pastor Umo Eno and other members of this National Assembly.
24. Political parties fearful of members leaving may be better served by examining their internal processes and affairs rather than fearfully conjuring up demons that do not exist. For me, I would say try your best to put your house in order. I will not help you do so. It is, indeed, a pleasure to witness you in such disarray.
25. We must welcome and accept the diversity and number of political parties just as we welcome and embrace the diversity of our population. Our efforts must never be to eliminate political competition but to make that competition salutary to the national well-being by working across the political aisle whenever possible.
26. One area in which democracy calls us to work together, whether in the legislative or executive branch, whether in this or other political parties, is that of economic and social development.
27. Upon assuming office, my team and I moved to reform our ailing economy. We introduced fundamental reforms to correct structural imbalances that prevented maximum growth.
28. We are already seeing results. GDP grew by 3.4 per cent in 2024, with Q4 hitting 4.6 per cent, the highest quarter of growth in over a decade. Inflation is easing gradually, steadying the price of



food staples like rice and beans. Our net foreign reserves have increased fivefold, and the Naira exchange rate has stabilised. Our balance of payments position is positive; our sovereign credit rating is improving as we continue to promote oil and non-oil exports. States now do not need to go about borrowing to pay salaries.

29. In less than one year, over one hundred thousand Nigerians, including thirty-five thousand civil servants, have benefited from affordable consumer credit through the Nigerian Consumer Credit Corporation (CREDICORP), enabling them to purchase vehicles, light up and improve their homes and purchase life essentials. This July, we will launch a bold new initiative to empower four hundred thousand young Nigerians, including youth corpsers, with consumer credit.

30. We are committed to giving more opportunities to young people through job creation and skills development. Through such programs as NELFUND, we are investing in education, vocational training, apprenticeships, and internships to ensure our youth are job-ready and

future-ready.

Iyayi (CON), Dr John Yima Sen (OON), Alhaja Sawaba Gambo (CON), Dr. Edwin Madunagu (CON), Dr. Alex Ibru (CON), Chief Bola Ige (CFR), Pa. Reuben Fasoranti (CFR), Sen. Ayo Fasanmi (CON), Sen. Polycarp Nwite (CON) and Dr. Nurudeen Olowopopo (CON).

52. I also confer national honours on Prof. Wole Soyinka (GCON), Prof. Olatunji Dare (CON), the journalist and journalism teacher; Kunle Ajibade (OON); Nosa Igiebor (OON), Dapo Olorunyomi (OON), Bayo Onanuga (CON), Ayo Obe (OON), Dare Babarinsa (CON), Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah (CON), Senator Shehu Sani (CON), Governor Uba Sani (CON), Barrister Femi Falana, SAN (CON), Prof. Shafideen Amuwo (CON), Barrister Luke Aghanenu (OON), Senator Tokunbo Afikuyomi (CON), Hon. Labaran Maku (OON), Dr. Tunji Alausa (CON), Mr Nick Dazang (OON), Hon Abdul Oroh (OON), Odia Ofeimun (CON), Seye Kehinde (OON), Barrister Felix Morka (CON) Barrister Ledum Mitee (CON), Hon. Olawale Osun (CON), Dr. Amos Akingba (CON), Prof. Segun Gbadegesin (CON), Mobolaji Akinyemi (CFR), Dr. Kayode Shonoiki (CON), Prof. Julius Ihonvbere (CON), Prof. Bayo Williams (CON), Sen. Abu Ibrahim (CFR), and Sen. Ameh Ebute (CFR), General Alani Akinrinade, GCON.

53. Additionally, I confer the national honour of CON on Uncle Sam Amuka Pemu, a legendary journalist and publisher who remains true to his lifetime calling as he marks his 90th birthday tomorrow, June 13.

54. Furthermore, I also confer posthumous national honours on Ken Saro Wiwa (CON), the leader of the Ogoni Nine and his fellow travellers, Saturday Dobee (OON), Nordu Eawo (OON), Daniel Gbooko (OON), Paul Levera (OON), Felix Nuata (OON), Baribor Bera (OON), Barinem Kiobel (OON), and John Kpuine (OON). I shall also be exercising my powers under the prerogative of mercy to grant these national heroes a full pardon, together with others whose names shall be announced later in conjunction with the National Council of State.

55. Finally, it is my great privilege to now decorate the presiding officers of the National Assembly with the National Honours earlier conferred upon them last year:

Presiding National Assembly Officers

Senator Godswill Obot Akpabio, GCON – SENATE PRESIDENT



Rt. Hon. Abbas Tajudeen, PhD, GCON – Speaker

Senator Jibrin Ibrahim Barau, CFR – DEPUTY SENATE PRESIDENT

Rt. Hon. Benjamin Okezie Kalu, CFR – Deputy Speaker

56. In conclusion, let us rededicate ourselves to the ideals of June 12; freedom, transparent and accountable government, social justice, active citizen participation, and a just society where no one is oppressed.

57. Happy Democracy Day, and may God continue to bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria and protect our troops.

Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR

President, Commander-in-Chief of The Armed Forces,

Federal Republic of Nigeria



EXPLORING METAPHYSICAL REALITIES IN THE WORLD OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

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Abstract

Metaphysics, a philosophical discipline focused on exploring the fundamental nature of reality, remains significant despite the dominance of science in today's empirically driven world. When metaphysics intersects with artificial intelligence (AI), it provokes deep questions about consciousness, morality, and the characteristics of the divine. This paper uses an evaluative approach to investigate whether AI can develop religious awareness, comprehend divine transcendence, or engage in moral reasoning akin to human religious ethics. It also addresses theological considerations, such as the potential of AI to participate in religious practices, interpret sacred texts, and make ethical choices. Drawing from philosophical—particularly metaphysical—perspectives, the study assesses AI's limitations in understanding metaphysical concepts and examines how it affects religious traditions. Ethical concerns are also discussed, especially regarding AI's influence on faith communities, human autonomy, and responsibility. The findings indicate that AI operates within constraints set by its training data and model design. Ultimately, AI lacks subjective experience, self-awareness, and qualia. While AI can mimic understanding, it does not possess true metaphysical insight. Therefore, its integration into religious contexts should be approached cautiously and only to a limited extent.

Keywords: Metaphysics, artificial intelligence, consciousness, theology, anthropology

Introduction

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) has sparked significant philosophical and theological discussions, especially within the realm of the philosophy of religion. With AI's capacity to analyze large datasets, mimic human thought processes, and perform ethical reasoning, critical questions emerge regarding its relationship to consciousness, spirituality, and divine characteristics. As AI technology continues to evolve, theologians and philosophers are increasingly challenged to consider whether AI can truly grasp religious experiences, engage in spiritual rituals, or offer valuable insights to theological debates. Central to these inquiries is whether AI is capable



of possessing consciousness or moral agency on par with humans—an idea that is fundamental to many religious perspectives on faith and ethical accountability.¹

Furthermore, the incorporation of AI into religious contexts—ranging from automated analysis of sacred texts to robotic clergy and AI-generated theological discourse—raises important questions about traditional concepts such as religious authority, human distinctiveness, and divine revelation. Can AI systems offer genuine spiritual guidance, or are they merely imitating understanding without possessing true belief or faith? How do various religious traditions perceive and interpret the role of AI within their doctrinal frameworks? This paper aims to explore the philosophical and ethical aspects of AI's interaction with religion, considering both its potential benefits and inherent challenges. By engaging with key philosophical themes—such as the nature of consciousness, the tension between free will and determinism, and the theological impact of AI—this study seeks to shed light on how artificial intelligence is transforming religious belief and practice in contemporary society. Ultimately, this research aspires to enhance the ongoing conversation among religion, philosophy, and emerging technologies.²

Metaphysical Realities on Science and Technology

According to David Chalmers, metaphysics plays a crucial role in shaping scientific exploration by offering conceptual tools to understand phenomena that extend beyond direct empirical observation. This interplay is especially apparent in quantum mechanics, which disrupts classical ideas of reality and causality. Phenomena such as wave-particle duality, nonlocality, and the observer effect raise deep metaphysical questions about the nature of existence and the influence of consciousness on reality. For instance, the Copenhagen interpretation proposes that particles remain in a state of superposition until observed, suggesting that observation itself plays a role in constructing reality. These insights challenge the boundaries of scientific explanation and underscore the importance of metaphysical inquiry in addressing fundamental questions about existence, cause, and determinism. Emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR) further complicate these discussions by questioning established notions of consciousness and personal identity. AI's ability to replicate human cognition and behavior raises the issue of whether machines can truly be conscious or morally responsible. Likewise, VR's capacity to create immersive, seemingly real experiences provokes debate about what constitutes genuine existence. These technological advancements emphasize the growing need for metaphysical models that can interpret artificial consciousness and simulated realities, thereby bridging the divide between technological progress and philosophical thought.³

The Nature of Intelligence and Consciousness

Traditional religious worldviews often link consciousness and intelligence to the soul or divine origin. In contrast, artificial intelligence offers a radically different model—one rooted in data processing and computational mechanisms rather than any metaphysical or spiritual essence. Philosopher John Searle, particularly through his Chinese Room Argument and his engagement with the "hard problem" of consciousness, has critically examined whether a machine executing a program could genuinely possess understanding or consciousness in the same way humans do. This debate continues to question whether AI truly experiences consciousness or simply imitates human-

¹Adams, Rachel.. "Can Artificial Intelligence Be Decolonized?" *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 46 (1-2): (2021): 176-197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03080188.2020.1840225>

²Berkeley, G. *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*. Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1710)(1998), 48

³Bostrom, N. Are we living in a computer simulation? *Philosophical Quarterly*, 53(211), (2003), 243–255. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9213.00309>



like cognitive behaviors. It also challenges both dualist perspectives, which separate mind and body, and materialist views, which reduce consciousness to physical processes. Intelligence and consciousness, though closely related, are fundamentally different elements of the human experience. Intelligence refers to the capacity for learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and adapting—skills that encompass memory, creativity, and logical analysis. While AI can

demonstrate these forms of intelligence through pattern recognition and decision-making, whether it can truly possess conscious awareness remains a central philosophical issue.⁴ According to Luciano Floridi, consciousness is fundamentally distinct from intelligence. He emphasizes that consciousness involves the experience of being aware—it encompasses self-awareness, emotions, perception, and the capacity for introspection. While intelligence can be quantified and replicated in artificial systems, consciousness remains an elusive and unresolved phenomenon that resists full scientific explanation.⁵

Philosophers such as David Chalmers make a clear distinction between the “easy problem” of consciousness—which involves explaining the mechanisms of brain functions—and the “hard problem,” which centers on understanding how and why subjective experience, or qualia, emerges from physical processes.

AI can exhibit intelligence without possessing consciousness—it is capable of processing vast amounts of information efficiently, yet does so without any sense of awareness. The connection between intelligence and consciousness remains a subject of active debate. Some theories, such as Integrated Information Theory (IIT), propose that consciousness arises from systems with a high degree of interconnected information processing. Others, like Higher-Order Thought Theory, argue that consciousness depends on the capacity for self-reflective awareness. From an evolutionary perspective, both intelligence and consciousness have played key roles in enabling humans to adapt to complex environments, form societies, and engage in abstract reasoning. However, the core enigma persists: how do subjective experiences emerge from the brain’s neural activity? As artificial intelligence continues to evolve, distinguishing between intelligence and consciousness becomes increasingly significant. Can machines ever achieve true consciousness, or will they remain highly advanced yet fundamentally unaware tools? This question lies at the heart of ongoing debates in philosophy, neuroscience, and AI research.⁶

AI and Theological Anthropology

Religious traditions often assert that humans are uniquely created in the image of God—*imago Dei*—a belief that underpins notions of human exceptionalism. However, the emergence of AI with human-like intelligence raises important questions: Does this development challenge the theological claim of human uniqueness? This paper will explore how various religious worldviews—including the Traditional African Belief System, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism—approach the idea of human distinctiveness in light of AI. Central to this discussion is whether AI could ever possess a soul or engage in a relationship with the divine.

In line with this discourse, Warwick contends that theological anthropology—the study of human nature in relation to God—must now confront new questions about the soul, free will, and the meaning of being made in God’s image. The advancement of artificial intelligence forces a re-

⁴Searle, J. R. Minds, Brains, and Programs. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, Vol. 3, Issues 3.(1980), 18

⁵Floridi, L. *The Fourth Revolution: How the Infosphere is Reshaping Human Reality*: UK.(Oxford University Press, 2014), 11

⁶Chalmers, D. J. The singularity: A philosophical analysis. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 17, Volu. 9, Issues 10, (2010): 7–65.



examination of these doctrines, particularly as they relate to spiritual identity and personhood. According to Warwick, one of the most pressing debates is whether AI undermines or supports the theological conception of what it means to be a person.

Building on this perspective, thinkers like Goertzel and Pennachin further argue that:

Traditional theological anthropology maintains that humans are set apart from other creatures because of their moral responsibility, rationality, and spiritual nature. Although AI may demonstrate sophisticated learning abilities, it does not possess self-awareness, moral agency, or an inherent connection to the divine. This fundamental difference supports the theological view that humans, unlike machines, have souls and the capacity for communion with God.⁷

However, the growing involvement of AI in areas such as decision-making, creativity, and even religious tasks—like producing sermons or engaging in theological debates—raises significant ethical and doctrinal concerns. Can AI truly take part in religious life? If AI systems provide spiritual guidance, what impact does this have on the authenticity of religious experiences? Some theologians maintain that although AI might enrich religious participation, it cannot substitute for the deeply personal and transcendent aspects of faith.

Moreover, theological anthropology emphasizes human dignity and moral responsibility. As AI becomes increasingly influential in society, it is essential to ensure that it promotes human well-being without undermining or replacing human agency. Ethical concerns, including the risks of AI-driven bias and potential dehumanization, must be carefully considered within theological perspectives. Importantly, AI should be understood as a tool rather than a spiritual being, reinforcing the idea that while technology can enhance human abilities, it does not redefine what it means to be human. Theological anthropology continues to affirm that humans—not machines—are made in the divine image and bear a unique call to moral and spiritual development.⁸

AI and the Nature of Free Will and Determinism

The issue of free will has long been a key topic in religious philosophy. Given that AI functions through algorithms and deterministic processes, the question arises: can AI bear moral responsibility? Many theologians maintain that human free will is essential for moral and religious accountability. This section examines compatibilist and libertarian perspectives on free will to assess whether AI can engage in moral decision-making and the theological consequences of such involvement. Copeland highlights that the longstanding philosophical debate between free will and determinism gains fresh relevance through AI. While AI systems—especially those based on machine learning and neural networks—operate according to deterministic rules, their behavior can sometimes appear autonomous or unpredictable.⁹ According to Copeland, this duality presents a compelling viewpoint on whether free will is merely an illusion or a sophisticated emergent property arising from deterministic processes. From a strictly deterministic standpoint, Bostrom argues that:

AI serves as an example of how decision-making can be entirely determined by preceding causes. Similar to how AI systems produce results based on input data and pre-set algorithms, some

⁷Goertzel, B., & Pennachin, C. (Eds.). *Artificial general intelligence*. Springer. UK: (University Press, 2007), 28

⁸Alexander, Jennifer Karns. "Introduction: The Entanglement of Technology and Religion." *History and Technology* 36 (2): (2020): 165-186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07341512.2020.1814513>.

⁹Copeland, J. *The Turing test. Minds and Machines, Vol. 10, Issues. (2000)*, 15



philosophers contend that human decisions—despite appearing free—might actually be driven by prior neural states and environmental factors. This perspective aligns with hard determinism, which holds that free will is an illusion because all actions arise from causal chains outside of conscious control.¹⁰

Searle contends that compatibilists believe free will does not require complete randomness, but rather the capacity to act in line with one's own desires and reasoning. From this perspective, artificial intelligence—particularly systems using reinforcement learning—can be seen as “making choices” through internal processes rather than being externally manipulated. Although Searle maintains that AI lacks consciousness, he acknowledges that its decision-making structure mirrors compatibilist views of human agency, where freedom is defined by rational action rather than indeterminacy.

The advancement of AI also invites reflection on libertarian notions of free will. Some philosophers suggest that true freedom might arise from quantum indeterminacy or emergent behaviors in complex systems. Should AI ever attain self-awareness and act in ways that are unpredictable and not strictly determined by its programming, it could challenge deterministic theories and prompt a reconsideration of what free will entails.

In conclusion, AI functions both as a model and a testing ground for philosophical debates about free will, highlighting the ongoing tension between determinism and agency in increasingly sophisticated ways.¹¹

According to Gbadamosi, research into the nature of human will has led, through empirical studies, to the conclusion that free will is an illusion, as human choices are ultimately determined by brain activity. Findings in neuroscience challenge the long-held belief that individuals have full control over their will, suggesting instead that decisions are initiated by the brain before a person becomes consciously aware of them. This view draws a parallel between humans and machines, raising significant philosophical and theological concerns—particularly within Yoruba religious and cultural frameworks—where the concept of free will plays a central role. The idea introduces a gap in understanding (a lacuna), questioning the compatibility of scientific findings with traditional Yoruba beliefs about human agency and moral responsibility.¹⁴

AI, Ethics, and Divine Command Theory

Religious moral frameworks—particularly Divine Command Theory (DCT), which traces its philosophical roots to Plato's *Euthyphro* and ancient religious traditions—argue that moral laws are ultimately grounded in the will of a divine being. This view, especially prevalent within monotheistic religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam (notably during the early 14th century, c. 1300–1347), holds that moral rightness is determined by God's commands.

This raises a critical question: **Can artificial intelligence, which lacks consciousness, divine inspiration, or spiritual agency, act morally?** Ethical frameworks for AI—such as Isaac Asimov's *Three Laws of Robotics* and modern debates in machine ethics—attempt to establish moral guidelines for AI behavior, but they are entirely human-constructed. These human-designed principles may struggle to align with religious notions of morality rooted in divine will.

¹⁰Bostrom, N. *Superintelligence: Paths, dangers, strategies*. UK. (Oxford University Press, 2014), 29

¹¹Searle, J. R. Minds, Brains, and Programs. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, Vol. 3, Issues 3. (1980), 18



The issue of whether AI can interpret or respond to divine commands is particularly problematic. In this context, Hütter argues that the intersection of AI, ethics, and Divine Command Theory introduces deep philosophical and theological challenges. Since DCT posits that moral truths are determined solely by God's will, AI—being a human creation—can only function within ethical systems devised by its developers. This raises further debate about whether machine ethics, however sophisticated, can ever truly reflect or comply with divinely ordained moral standards.¹²

A key issue in the intersection of artificial intelligence and Divine Command Theory (DCT) is whether AI can be guided by objective moral truths as defined by divine will. If moral goodness is derived from God's commands, as DCT asserts, then for AI to act morally, it must either be programmed in accordance with divine law or risk functioning entirely outside a theistic moral framework. However, AI systems rely on human input for their ethical frameworks. This means that their moral reasoning is shaped by human biases, cultural norms, and often secular worldviews—raising significant concerns about whether AI can ever truly reflect divine morality.

Another major challenge lies in AI's involvement in autonomous ethical decision-making. As Searle notes, systems such as self-driving cars and military drones are increasingly tasked with making morally consequential choices. If AI is to act in alignment with DCT, it would require explicit programming rooted in religious moral principles. Yet, as Searle emphasizes, the vast diversity of religious doctrines and interpretations means there is no universal agreement on how divine commands should be translated into machine behavior. This lack of consensus complicates any attempt to ground AI ethics in a singular theological framework.¹³

Moreover, artificial intelligence challenges traditional understandings of moral agency. Divine Command Theory (DCT) presupposes that moral responsibility rests with agents who possess free will and consciousness. Since AI lacks both self-awareness and genuine autonomy, it cannot be held morally accountable in the same way human beings are. This raises important theological questions about whether AI can meaningfully engage with or adhere to divine ethics.

Ultimately, the intersection of AI and ethics within the framework of DCT reveals a complex and evolving relationship. It underscores the need for deeper philosophical and theological reflection on issues such as moral responsibility, divine authority, and the influence of emerging technologies on human moral frameworks. As AI continues to play a larger role in decision-making, these questions become increasingly urgent for scholars, ethicists, and faith communities alike.¹⁴

AI and Arguments for God's Existence

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) both challenges and reinforces various classical arguments for the existence of God, such as the **Cosmological**, **Teleological**, and **Ontological** arguments. These philosophical frameworks can be re-examined in light of AI's rapid development. For example, does the creation of highly advanced, human-like intelligence point toward a designer, thereby supporting a theistic worldview, or does it reinforce a naturalistic understanding of intelligence and consciousness?

¹²Hütter, M. AI and the Theological Problem of Evil. *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, Vol. 47, Issue 4.(2012): 24

¹³Searle, J. R. Minds, Brains, and Programs. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, Vol. 3, Issues 3.(1980), 18

¹⁴AlgorithmWatch. "Automating Society 2020 Report." *Bertelsmann Stiftung*. <https://automatingsociety.algorithmwatch.org>.2020



The emergence of AI has reopened theological and metaphysical debates concerning the origin of intelligence, the nature of creation, and the purpose of existence—central concerns in classical theism. While AI is undeniably a product of human engineering, its increasing complexity raises questions about the boundaries between human creativity and divine design.

According to **James Moor**, AI provokes a rethinking of what it means to be intelligent and what counts as "design." Moor argues that AI, though man-made, blurs the lines between natural and artificial systems, forcing us to reconsider whether intelligent design must necessarily be divine or if intelligence can arise through purely material processes. This ambiguity places pressure on traditional arguments like the **Teleological Argument**, which infers the existence of God from the appearance of design in nature:

One classical argument that gains renewed relevance in light of artificial intelligence is the **Teleological Argument**, or the **Argument from Design**. AI systems, despite their complexity and apparent autonomy, do not arise by chance—they are the result of deliberate programming, structured data input, and carefully guided learning processes. This intentional design in artificial systems reflects a level of order and complexity comparable to that found in nature.

Supporters of the Teleological Argument suggest that if AI—an artificial form of intelligence—necessitates an intelligent designer, then by analogy, the far greater complexity and order found in the natural universe must also point to the existence of a supreme designer. In this way, the development of AI can be seen as reinforcing the logic of design inherent in the Teleological Argument: complex systems, whether biological or artificial, seem unlikely to exist without purposeful creation.¹⁵

Proponents of **Intelligent Design** often draw on analogies from artificial intelligence to argue that the order, complexity, and apparent purpose in the universe point to the existence of a higher intelligence—namely, God. Just as AI systems require intentional design and structured programming, they argue, so too must the universe reflect the handiwork of a divine creator.

The **Ontological Argument**, which holds that God's existence is necessary by definition as a being than which none greater can be conceived, also takes on new dimensions in the age of AI. Philosopher **David Chalmers** and others have speculated that if artificial systems can develop advanced reasoning or self-awareness, they may also contemplate metaphysical concepts—including the possibility of a supreme being. If an AI were to recognize the necessity of an ultimate intelligence beyond all contingent entities, this could lend support to **Anselm's** original claim: that the very concept of a perfect being implies its necessary existence.

In addition, the **Moral Argument** is recontextualized through AI ethics. If machines can be programmed to make ethical decisions based on universal principles, it raises the question of where these moral standards originate. Theists argue that the existence of objective moral laws—discernible even in artificial systems—requires a transcendent moral lawgiver. In this view, the presence of moral absolutes within AI frameworks may reinforce belief in a divine source of ethics.

In summary, rather than refuting belief in God, the emergence of artificial intelligence invites renewed engagement with classical theistic arguments. The complexity, purpose, and ethical dimensions of AI development may, paradoxically, provide further grounds for affirming the

¹⁵Bostrom, N. *Superintelligence: Paths, dangers, strategies*:UK. (Oxford University Press, 2014), 29



existence of a divine creator. AI thus serves not as a challenge to theology, but as a catalyst for deeper philosophical and spiritual inquiry.¹⁶

AI and the Problem of Evil

Theodicy seeks to reconcile the existence of evil with the belief in a benevolent, omnipotent God. The advent of artificial intelligence introduces new dimensions to this longstanding debate, particularly through novel forms of suffering such as autonomous warfare, pervasive surveillance, and algorithmic biases. This raises important questions: How do traditional theodicies address suffering that arises from AI technologies? Does AI represent a new category of moral evil, distinct from human-caused wrongdoing?

This section examines AI's role in contemporary discussions surrounding the problem of evil. Philosopher **Ray Kurzweil** highlights that the Problem of Evil remains a central challenge in theology and philosophy, questioning how an all-knowing, all-powerful, and wholly good God permits evil and suffering to exist. While AI itself is a non-conscious computational system devoid of subjective experience or moral agency, it can process, analyze, and generate responses grounded in philosophical and theological reasoning.

By exploring these dynamics, we aim to understand whether AI-related harms require new theodicies or can be integrated into existing frameworks, and what implications this has for the evolving discourse on evil and divine justice in the digital age.¹⁷

From a logical standpoint, AI is capable of categorizing and analyzing traditional responses to the problem of evil. For instance, it can evaluate the Free Will Defense, which holds that human free will inevitably allows for moral evil, and the Soul-Making Theodicy, which views suffering as a means for developing moral and spiritual growth. AI can also engage with probabilistic arguments like the evidential problem of evil, which weighs the probability of God's existence in light of the prevalence and intensity of suffering.

According to Warwick, AI's role in these discussions is strictly analytical, relying on data from both historical and contemporary philosophical debates without personal belief or conviction. It can systematically compare different theodicies, interpret religious texts, and even simulate dialectical exchanges among various philosophical perspectives. However, AI inherently lacks the emotional nuance and existential engagement that human beings bring to these issues. It does not experience suffering nor does it confront the spiritual and personal dimensions of evil in the way humans do.¹⁸

Furthermore, Warwick emphasizes that AI, by its nature, cannot provide a conclusive solution to the problem of evil, since this issue ultimately hinges on metaphysical and faith-based dimensions that transcend empirical analysis. While AI can aid theologians and philosophers by organizing arguments, identifying contradictions, and clarifying complex positions, it functions solely as an impartial instrument rather than an engaged participant in the profound existential struggle with suffering. Therefore, although AI can enhance and disseminate philosophical discourse on the problem of evil, it does not generate novel insights that surpass human reasoning. At its core, the problem of evil remains an intrinsically human and spiritual dilemma.¹⁹

¹⁶Chalmers, D. J. The singularity: A philosophical analysis. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 17, Volu. 9, Issues 10, (2010): 7–65.

¹⁷Kurzweil, R. *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. Viking. 2005

¹⁸Warwick, K. *Artificial Intelligence: The Basics*. Routledge.: (CK Press, 2013), 19

¹⁹Warwick, K. *Artificial Intelligence: The Basics*. Routledge.: (CK Press, 2013), 19



AI and Religious Experience

Some researchers are investigating the potential of AI to enhance religious experiences, including the creation of AI-generated sacred texts and virtual spiritual mentors. This raises the question: can AI truly facilitate authentic religious encounters? The exploration of AI's role in simulating divine revelation or serving as a spiritual guide is analyzed through both phenomenological and theological lenses.

As AI increasingly influences religious life, it prompts significant reflections on spirituality, worship, and the nature of divine encounter. Traditionally, religious experience is viewed as a deeply personal and transcendent interaction with the divine. However, AI now mediates this experience in various forms—ranging from virtual clergy and automated prayer applications to AI-generated sermons and theological dialogue—challenging conventional understandings of spirituality.²⁰

One of the key ways AI impacts religious experience is by enhancing accessibility. AI-powered tools enable individuals to explore sacred texts, receive tailored spiritual guidance, and participate in religious rituals remotely. Chatbots can answer theological questions, virtual reality (VR) immerses worshippers in sacred spaces, and AI-driven apps offer timely reminders for prayer and meditation. These technologies particularly benefit those with physical disabilities or people living in regions where access to religious communities is limited, thereby broadening opportunities for religious engagement.

However, from Bostrom's perspective, AI's involvement in religious experience also brings significant theological and ethical questions. Can AI truly facilitate an authentic connection with the divine, or does it simply simulate the appearance of spiritual engagement? Although AI can generate prayers, interpret scriptures, and even compose hymns, it fundamentally lacks consciousness, emotional depth, and genuine understanding of faith.²¹

Religious traditions emphasize human intention, sincerity, and the dynamic relationship between the divine and humans—qualities that AI inherently lacks. Furthermore, Hütter cautions that relying on AI within religious contexts risks depersonalizing spirituality. Worship and rituals are fundamentally communal and relational activities that nurture human bonds, which AI cannot genuinely replicate. If AI were to replace traditional spiritual leaders, there is concern that religious communities might lose the depth of personal mentorship and pastoral care that underpin their cohesion.

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that AI functions as a tool to support, but not substitute, religious experience. While AI can enhance accessibility and learning, the core of spirituality—grounded in faith, introspection, and divine connection—remains a uniquely human pursuit beyond the reach of artificial intelligence. At its heart, religious experience transcends algorithmic processes and retains its profoundly personal and sacred nature.²²

²⁰Campbell, Heidi A., ed. *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious practice in New Media Worlds*. London and New York: Routledge.2013

²¹Bostrom, N. *Superintelligence: Paths, dangers, strategies*:UK. (Oxford University Press, 2014), 29`

²²Hütter, M. AI and the Theological Problem of Evil. *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, Vol. 47, Issue 4.(2012): 24



Can AI Be a Religious Believer?

If AI were to reach advanced levels of intelligence, could it develop religious beliefs? Could AI genuinely pray or possess faith? The concept of machine spirituality is examined, alongside debates about whether AI can truly participate in religious practices. This inquiry extends to the theological implications of AI-generated religious texts and prayers.

The question of whether AI can be a religious believer touches on profound philosophical, theological, and technological issues. Religious belief is traditionally understood as an act of faith involving consciousness and personal experience—qualities AI, as a programmed system, inherently lacks. Yet, with improvements in natural language processing and machine learning, AI can simulate religious expressions, interpret sacred scriptures, and even compose prayers or sermons. But does this simulate true belief?

According to Tegmark, religious belief is closely linked to self-awareness, intentionality, and existential reflection. AI functions through algorithms and pattern recognition without personal experience or inner conviction. It does not wrestle with faith, doubt, or the human search for meaning—core elements of genuine religious commitment. Tegmark emphasizes that while AI can analyze theological texts and identify discourse patterns, it does not worship with devotion or experience a personal connection to the divine.

Some propose that if AI were to develop advanced consciousness, it might cultivate something resembling belief. However, this would necessitate AI possessing emotions, existential inquiry, and a genuine sense of the sacred—attributes that transcend mere computational processes.²³

Copeland contends that even if AI were programmed to adhere to religious traditions, its practice would still be an imitation rather than a genuine experience of faith. Theologically, most religions associate belief with the human soul, divine grace, or a personal relationship with God—qualities that AI, as a creation of humans, inherently lacks. Nonetheless, Copeland acknowledges that AI can contribute meaningfully to religious life by supporting education, facilitating translation, and promoting interfaith dialogue. Ultimately, it can be concluded that while AI can simulate belief, it does not possess the self-awareness or personal conviction essential to authentic religious faith. The more profound question may not be whether AI can believe, but rather whether it should have a role in shaping religious experiences moving forward.²⁴

On Future Implications and Theological Responses

Religious traditions must actively engage with AI's expanding influence in society. While some theologians welcome AI as a tool to deepen human understanding and promote ethical living, others caution against its potential dangers. The evolving relationship between AI and religion requires ongoing interdisciplinary conversations among scientists, philosophers, and theologians to grapple with the moral and existential challenges AI introduces. The future landscape is marked by swift technological progress, changing ethical paradigms, and global issues that call for both philosophical inquiry and theological reflection. Technologies like artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, climate change, and transhumanism present ethical questions that challenge our concepts of human identity, responsibility, and existence itself. As the world grows increasingly interconnected, religious traditions are compelled to confront and integrate these new realities.

²³Tegmark, M. *Life 3.0: Being Human in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*. Knopf. (Kupa, 2017), 29

²⁴Copeland, J. *The Turing test. Minds and Machines, Vol. 10, Issues*. (2000), 15



Tirosh-Samuelson highlights a key consequence: the transformation of ethical frameworks. Developments in biotechnology confront established theological perspectives on human nature and the sanctity of life. The potential to enhance human abilities through artificial means raises difficult questions about the boundaries of human agency and divine intention. Furthermore, climate change poses threats not only to the natural environment but also to theological understandings of stewardship and divine justice.²⁵ In his view, theological responses to these emerging challenges need to be both adaptable and firmly grounded in tradition. Many religious scholars emphasize the importance of an ethics of responsibility, advocating that technological advancement should be guided by moral wisdom rather than unchecked progress. Floridi supports this perspective, highlighting that the concept of *imago Dei*—the belief that humans are created in God’s image—remains a foundational principle in discussions about human dignity amid AI and genetic modification. Likewise, environmental ethics within various faith traditions underline the moral obligation to protect creation, framing sustainability as a vital theological mandate.

Furthermore, Floridi points out that interfaith dialogue is increasingly vital for addressing global ethical challenges. Religious communities can work together to provide moral guidance on critical issues such as social justice, peace, and human rights. Ultimately, it can be concluded that theology must stay dynamic, offering not only critique but also a hopeful vision for the future—one where human flourishing aligns with divine purpose. Therefore, as faith traditions navigate these complexities, they must strike a balance between maintaining doctrinal integrity and embracing innovative engagement to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world.²⁶

Conclusion

The intersection of philosophy of religion and artificial intelligence (AI) brings both significant challenges and unique opportunities for modern thought. AI’s capacity to mimic human thinking, interpret theological ideas, and even participate in religious practices raises important questions about consciousness, free will, and the nature of divine-human connections. Although AI lacks true self-awareness and spiritual experience, its expanding role in religious discussions and activities compels a reassessment of traditional theological and philosophical beliefs. Can AI genuinely engage with religion beyond mere imitation, or is its function solely instrumental?

Ethical issues also emerge around AI’s impact on religious authority, moral judgments, and faith communities. The deployment of AI in roles such as automated clergy, scripture interpretation, and virtual spiritual advisors generates pressing concerns about authenticity, divine inspiration, and the place of human agency in religion. Furthermore, theological opinions vary on whether AI undermines or supports religious worldviews, especially concerning ideas about creation, intelligence, and the soul.

Ultimately, the ongoing conversation between AI and philosophy of religion encourages deeper consideration of what defines humanity, the boundaries of artificial cognition, and the changing dynamics between faith and technology. As AI advances, religious traditions and philosophical inquiry must evolve to safeguard ethical and theological integrity within a progressively digital and automated society.

²⁵Tirosh-Samuelson, H. AI and Religion: Between Theology and Technology. *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*, Vol. 53, Issues 4. (POP Press, 2018), 42

²⁶Floridi, L. *The Fourth Revolution: How the Infosphere is Reshaping Human Reality*: UK.(Oxford University Press, 2014), 11



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TRADITIONAL BURIAL AND FUNERAL RITUALS IN UMUMBA-NDIAGU: A CONTROVERSY BETWEEN TRADITION AND CHRISTIANITY

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Abstract

The traditional rituals at burial and funerals portray something about a man's inner religious awareness, his vision and his belief about the cosmos. The belief of Umumba-Ndiagu people in ancestral existence is the clearest expression of their faith in life after death. The same belief is also the dynamic hope of the traditional Igbo—that after a successful life on earth, one could be happily gathered with his forefathers in the land of the 'living dead', to continue the interminable cycle of life. This transition from the physical existence to the invisible existence takes place in the land of the ancestors. It is for this reason that the dead is accorded a special ritual before and after burial. Despite this, traditionalists and Christians in Umumba-Ndiagu run into conflicts on the presentation of material and items for funeral rituals. The presentation of certain items, type, quality and quantity differ between traditionalists and Christians. Also, the issue of killing life animal ranging from fowl, goat, cow and used the blood to sprinkled on the eye or body of the corpse before burying the corpse and the shaving of the hair of the close relatives were other major problems affecting burial and funeral rites in Umumba-Ndiagu. The purpose of this is to examine traditional burial and funeral rituals in Umumba-Ndiagu: a controversy between tradition and Christianity. This study adopted qualitative method of data collection. This study used secondary data collected from the review of literatures in textbooks, journal articles, library and the internet. This study adopted method content analysis to analyze the contents. The findings of the study showed that burial and funeral rituals in Umumba-Ndiagu are deeply rooted in Igbo traditional belief and values which many parts are serious opposed by the Christian doctrine. Also, the findings of the study indicated that the people of Umumba-Ndiagu seriously believed that failure to perform all the traditional funeral rituals to send the dead home posed socio-religious consequences such as unidentifiable sickness, spirit haunting, trouble in business, death of livestock, death in very severe situations, seen the spirit of dead person on the road, market and in the farm. The finding also, showed that this beliefs made people of Umumba-Ndiagu to attach much importance to funeral rituals according the demands of the tradition. The study recommends that since tradition of Umumba-Ndiagu and that of Christianity are different belief systems from each other on the issue of burial and funeral rituals, both of them should be practiced differently in the community and avoid clashing with each other.

Keywords: Traditional, burial, funeral, ritual, controversy, Christianity.

Introduction

Life is not permanent on earth and no statistics have proven that someone has been alive on earth since the first man (Adam) till today. This is evidence to proof that man's existence on earth is not permanent. Every human has a short time to spend on earth and pass on to the next life in the spiritual realm. This makes death compulsory, burial and funeral rituals the last respect to the dead person. Kanu (2019: 25-50) observed that burial and funeral rituals are "one of the common things fund to be done to accompany home the dead in the diverse African societies. Igbo people are always seen treating the dead with unreserved respect and an uncommon type of complex rituals. To affirm this assertion, Anyacho (2005) opined that life to an Igbo person is a continuous thing; its cessation on earth paves way for the soul to experience life in the great beyond. In Umumba-Ndiagu tradition, death is a passage to the hereafter and the last thing given to a man at death is funeral



ritual. So, funeral rituals occupy a central position in Umumba-Ndiagu traditional religion. The belief of the Umumba-Ndiagu people in ancestral existence is the clearest expression of their faith

Human being is the only creature known to bury his dead. The practice is not originally motivated by hygienic considerations but by ideas entertained by primitive people concerning human nature and destiny. This is clearly evident from the fact that the disposal of the dead from the earliest times was of a ritual kind. The primitive people not only buried their dead but they provided for them food and other equipment thereby implying a traditional belief that the dead still needed such things in the grave which are not accepted by Christianity.

However, the presence of Christianity and its doctrines have raised issues between the traditions of Umumba-Ndiagu and Christian beliefs over burial and funeral rituals. Agha (2004) opined that over past decades till now, the processes of this traditional funeral ritual have been affected. He said the most serious problem is the issue of presentation of material items for funeral rituals. The presentation of certain items whose type, quality and quantity may differ from case to case is one of the sore points between traditional rite and Christian rites. Also, the most conflict oriented aspects of the traditional burial and funeral ritual is the killing of life animal ranging from fowl, goat to the cow and using the blood to sprinkled on the eye or body of the corpse before buried and the shaving of the hair of the close relatives. These above mentioned issue have between bone of contention between the traditional beliefs and Christianity in Umumba-Ndiagu.

What is Burial?

Burial is defined as a method of final disposition whereby a dead body is placed into the ground, sometimes with objects. This is usually accomplished by excavating a pit or trench, placing the deceased and objects in it, and covering it over. Burial has been used to prevent the odor of decay, to give family members closure and prevent them from witnessing the decomposition of their loved ones, and in many cultures it has been seen as a necessary step for the deceased to enter the afterlife or to give back to the cycle of life. According to Alabi (2007) the responsibility of burying the dead lies not only with the bereaved family but also with the entire members of the community. It is a practice that is still adhered to. A burial is a unique and personal experience that addresses the cultural, religious, and traditional requirements of an individual decedent and/or the individual(s) responsible for planning the traditional burial and funeral.

What is Funeral Rites?

A funeral rite is a ritual observed after burial. It is a ceremony or practices done to accompanied home the person after traditional burial. Kanu (2019; 25-50), opined that funeral ritual is the first part of last rites of passage of man or woman in relation to physical burial or the act of committing a dead person's body or corpse into the mother earth. The funeral rituals constitute the rites of passage and it takes place after traditional burial. The funeral rituals demonstrate the close bond between the visible and the invisible world in an essential religious worldview. Agha (2004) funeral rituals as ways of performing religious acts is in tandem with the beliefs the people. According to Okaba (1999; 264-284) "sending off the deceased in contemporary times seems to be the most elaborate, expensive and highly ritualized of all our social celebrations". In this circumstance, ostentatious funerals have assumed the status of a social narcotic. In the face of this expensive festivities, it has become more costly for an average Nigerian to die than to live.

Preparation for Burial

Wake-Keep: Burial follows an elaborate wake-keep with the dead lying-in-state. While lying-in-state, elderly women and the first daughter keep vigil or watch as they sit on both sides of the bed on which the corpse is laid. The corpse is usually laid in the house of the first wife. In the case of a



man who married more than one wife, the daughter fans the body to protect it from flies. During wake-keep, those who knew him or her very well would re-enact some of his or her activities when he was alive in a dramatic fashion. Those things he or she was known for, for instance, if he or she was a trader, a farmer, a palm wine tapper, a hunter etc. all these would be dramatized just as he did them when he was alive. His character ranging from his manner of speech, jokes, relationship with people and how he lived his life generally will be demonstrated. It takes various forms in different parts of the world because death is a potentially frightening subject and there are many taboos surrounding it. Wake-keep are low-key occasions. Wake-keep is a party or social gathering held in connection with burial and funerals.

It involves keeping watch beside the corpse and behaving in a demonstrative way either by lamenting or merry-making. Wake-keep is a vigil celebrated with merry-making and dancing. It means preventing someone from sleeping, to wake the person up, to disturb the person's slumber and make it impossible for him or her to slip back into it. The merry-making and dancing take place in order to wake the deceased up again. However, waking the dead is carried out mainly for the benefit of the dead themselves in order to restore them to wakefulness. Wake-keep is not merely to give a dead person a good funeral but to keep the dead properly moving in the right direction instead of simply losing consciousness (O'sulleabhain, 1967). In religious terms, it means making sure that the person goes on living in the dimension of being, he or she must now enter into.

In other words, the deceased must be awake among the dead, a state of affairs that is held to be beneficial to the deceased survivors as well. The underlying intention of wake-keep everywhere is to honour the dead person. According to O'sulleabhain (1967) it was an attempt to heal the wound of death and to do final justice to the deceased while he was still physically present. After the burial, the opportunity to do so would be absent. So, the practice is held to be an expression of a straight forward fear of dead and what they are capable of doing to the living?

The thanksgiving and praise and the fear which people normally experience during burials explain the religious ceremonies surrounding death and dying. A determination to play games and invent ways of amusing the mourners seems rather more than out of place in such circumstances. Those who claim to understand such behaviours tend to do so in terms of a reaction against sadness or a celebration of corporate optimism in the face of death i.e. conviviality called upon to reinforce solidarity. According to Toolis (1995) wake-keep is a way of creating a space for irrational grief to be acted out. In the words of Clare (1995) it is an energy and activity used to anaesthetize the bereaved.

Dressing the Corpse: The dead body or corpse will be washed and dressed the second day before burial. This rite is usually performed for both genders by the women or the daughters of the deceased in preparation for the burial. After bathing, the corpse was dressed in the best clothes of the deceased. Some local cosmetics are applied like "nzu", ufie or odo and even powder. He will also be dressed in many beautiful wrappers and a cap. For an ordinary person, he will need two or three ufu eku and a cap. Men who had children will need 12 fathoms: One for the diggers of the grave, one for the dressers of the corpse and one for the children: six will be used for the burial.

Titled men will need more. Having more enhances their socio- economic status so that even in the spirit world, they will continue to dress in a way befitting of titled men.

Digging of the Grave or Tomb: The first son of the dead man must indicate the place where his father is to be buried even if he is still a child. If the child is too small, an adult supports him by holding his hand to the hoe. The first son takes out one or two scoops of sand from the gravesite then the family and friends or volunteers among the kindred help in digging the grave. The grave is usually dug on the day of the burial proper. The grave diggers are given a gallon of palmwine, a live



chicken and some tubers of yam with which they prepare porridge. If the man died a conceivable bad death, such rites cannot be performed for him because tradition forbids that. Instead sacrifices may be made to appease the gods.

Burial or Interment: According to Alabi (2007) the responsibility of burying the dead lies not only with the bereaved family but also with the entire members of the community. It is a practice that is still adhered to. Basically, the traditional burial rites start from when a person dies till a few days after interment. Multiple traditional burial rites are accorded to the dead irrespective of gender and social class. However, these rites are not carried out for the young and unmarried particularly those whose parents are still alive because they are believed to have died abominable death. Though, immediately after committing the dead to mother earth, people will gather, drum and dance in order to give that person honour. After the burial, there will be traditional drumming and dancing, eating and drinking which continue till the next day. This is followed by the main ceremony. Members of the community including the children, the in-laws, members of the dead person's lineage and other relatives gather for this ceremony. There will be cultural display by various cultural troupes, traditional drumming and dancing. If the dead person's married daughter's bride wealth or dowry had not been paid, the kindred will reject her gifts and subsequently refuse her participation in the ceremony unless that is settled. The affected daughter will bring people to plead on her behalf. After an agreement to pay the dowry on a later day, she will be allowed to continue with the funeral ceremony. This aspect of the ceremony is very intriguing and fascinating.

Reasons for Burial and Funeral Rites

Wolfelt (2018) highlighted the reasons for burial and funeral rituals as follow;

Respect for the physical remains: If left lying on top of the ground, scavengers may eat the corpse, considered disrespectful to the deceased in many (but not all) cultures. In Tibet, sky burials deliberately encourage scavenging of human remains in the interest of returning them to nature, just as within Zoroastrianism, where burial and cremation were often seen as impure (as human remains are polluted, while the earth and fire are sacred) (Wolfelt, 2018).

Reality: When someone we love dies, our minds and hearts rebel against it at first. We don't want to accept that the person we loved is gone. The first purpose of a funeral is to help us accept the reality of the death. In order to heal and grieve, we must first accept what has happened and meaningful funeral, mourners have the chance to confront reality and begin processing their grief. The funeral is not the end of the grief journey – it is the beginning. We must learn to come to grips with our new reality – one without our loved one.

Recall: One of the key components of a funeral is remembering the one who has died. We see this happen in the eulogy, in the tribute video (if there is one), in the songs or readings chosen, as well as in the gathering of friends and family following the service. By recalling and sharing about our relationship with a loved one, we help ourselves transition. We begin the process of moving our relationship with the one who has died to one of memory rather than presence. We must go backward into our memories before we can move forward in our grief journeys.

Support: A third purpose of the funeral is to activate support. At a funeral, we gather with other people who knew our loved one. People can share memories, give voice to others feelings, and find support in others. When a funeral includes a visitation or a gathering, mourners have the opportunity to come together and offer a listening ear and a caring hug. When no service is held, friends may keep their distance, thinking that the family wants to grieve privately. But with a public funeral, friends and neighbors can offer their caring support during a trying time.



Expression: As human beings, we are wired to feel. When one feels deeply but actively suppress in emotions, those feelings can become unbearable and begin to fester. Funerals are meant to act as a safe place for us to get our thoughts and emotions out. By putting our thoughts and feelings into action, we begin the journey toward healing. One may need to talk, cry, or just sit quietly with a person who cares. Whatever one may need, expression is an important purpose of a funeral. Through expression, people begin to put grief in motion and create forward movement in the grief journey.

Meaning: When a well know person dies in a family or in a community, many questions begin to surface. Did the person live a good life? Why did this person die? Why do people die? While there are no simple answers to these questions, a funeral gives us time and opportunity to ask them and begin to find our way to answers that give us peace. By searching for meaning and allowing oneself to find peace, people find purpose in continued living and can work toward reconciling oneself to the loss one have experienced.

Transcendence: The final purpose of a funeral is transcendence. This happens in two ways. First, the funeral helps us find a new self-identity. Funerals help us publicly mark a change in status. For example, someone who has lost their spouse goes from someone who is married to someone who is single. A funeral allows everyone to publicly acknowledge this change and begin offering the mourner support in their new status. Second, funerals often wake us up and make us think about our lives and how we want to spend our remaining days.

Traditional Burial and Funeral Rituals in Umumba-Ndiagu Town

Funeral ritual are the rites of passage. The word rites of passage was coined and first used by the German anthropologist, Gennep far back in 1960. He argues that in simple societies, every change that could be thought of as passage from one state to another was ritualized. Gennep (1960) in his work observes that burial ritual are group of ceremonies carried out in connection to the interment and inhumation of the death. The functional role of rites of passage is important to the individuals, groups and society. Ihechu and Uchechukwu (2018) asserted that the Umumba-Ndiagu people believe that a well done burial ritual would determine the well-being of the deceased in the land of the 'living-dead'. It is often believed that if the burial ritual is not properly done, the dead would be in a state of unrest and cannot partake or mingle with their people in the land of their ancestors. This view is the same with Umumba-Ndiagu people believe that a well done burial ritual would determine the well-being of the deceased in the land of his ancestors; some have it that if the burial rituals are not properly done, the spirit of the deceased would roam the earth, causing havoc and destroying lives and properties of their loved ones. Nwala (1985) concurs with this view, when he asserted that death and burial rituals mark the separation of the physical body from the living and that the dead are viewed as the 'living' that deserves necessary rituals in order to progress to the spirit realm.

In Umumba-Ndiagu tradition, birth rites, puberty rites and death rites are rites of passages which are both obligatory and sacrosanct institutions in the socio-structural framework of Umumba-Ndiagu. Parrinder and Geoffrey (2014) concluded in his work that burial ritual are connected with rites of passage. He identifies two burials; the first and the second or final funeral ritual. This contribution has taken decades and this idea is still relevant to the religious beliefs and practices.

On the other hand, he fails to differentiate between the qualifications of the beneficiaries of the burial and the funeral rituals. Awolalu and Dopamu (1979; 258) point to two important kinds of burial ceremonies for every adult who dies a good death in Umumba-Ndiagu . The first ceremony is the physical burial of the body, while the second burial is intended to make the dead man secure his place in the company of the ancestors. They submit that, "Both burials are characterized by great feasts; singing, drumming, clapping, dancing and general rejoicing". The above depends on the high social status of the deceased man or the relative's financial capability. Madu (2003; 25) wrote on



rites of passage in traditional and modern Igbo society; observed that human life from birth to death is ritually celebrated. He maintains that, "rituals of passage celebrate transition from one phase to the other. It means that one's movement involves separating oneself from the former status and thus transiting into another status". There is substance in articulating man's helplessness in the face of the mysteries surrounding him which is said to be responsible for his dependence on ritual actions.

More still, funeral ritual are the first part of the last rites of separating the dead from the physical life to the ancestral world. Ilogu (1979) pointed out that, after sometime of not performing these rites and rituals for the deceased, the family will start experiencing some difficulties. Such bad visit could result to accident, barrenness, late marriages, hard lucks and premature death. This is often regarded as generational curses because it continues recurring in the family. This view is in tandem with occurrences in Umumba-Ndiagu. Ejizu (1986) remarked that the aims of burial rituals are: "first to absolve the deceased of his transgression and to rid off all obstacles which could impede his entrance into the spirit land. And then pray for the deceased to re-incarnate and bring greater blessing to the family". During the ritual ceremony, the divinities are asked to receive the dead and keep him in peace and also the deceased not to obstruct the family on earth rather to send them more blessings. This shows that death rites and rituals are necessary for the dead to enter into the spirit land. Hence, in Umumba-Ndiagu, funeral rituals are meticulously and purposefully prosecuted to create wealth for the dead in the ancestral world. He remarks that happiness of the dead according to Igbo people's beliefs, depend largely on the type of funeral rituals accorded him during and after death. To go home unhappy person means the wrath of his spirit to the departed family, his spirit would constantly visit the family members to torment them. There is no doubt that the coming of bad spirit is not a healthy visit to the living. He also observes that at burial, the mourners and sympathizers from various clans or ethnic groups gather together, they feast, drink, dance and make new friends or renew their old friendship and induce a relation of crowd behaviour. In this way the individual lose their sense of individualism or separateness and isolation as a result of the inevitable excitement.

Consequently burial rituals and funeral rituals are one important means our fore fathers used to promote good moral behaviour in the society in one hand and enhancing the passage of a deceased into the ancestral world on the other hand. Refusal of any family to perform the traditional rituals for their deceased sometimes result to difficult times like failure in business, lack of promotion in areas of work and poor harvests in agricultural practices. Such family may not locate their problems, rather they accuse their neighbour and relatives as the source of their predicaments. The perspective of Nzomiwu (2012) on the concept of funeral ritual is that the body of the deceased is given a ritual bath, anointed with cam wood, dressed in his or her best regalia and laid in state. The work of Nzomiwu on the concept of funeral ritual is at one with Igbo traditional funeral ritual of passage in a way. In Umumba-Ndiagu, wailing and prayer are essential components of rituals of passage.

Funeral rituals are traditional ceremonies performed on behalf of the deceased by the living relatives during the second funeral ritual. The idea of second burial is to ensure that no ritual element has been left unperformed, so that the danger of misfortune brought about by the displeasure of the deceased may be averted. Basden (1966; 124) in his work affirms that funeral rituals among the Igbo have differing customs and its practice has its own peculiar adaptation. He concludes that "second burial is the name adopted by Europeans, from that time, to all intents and purpose, there are two burials the first real, the second by proxy". He affirmed that funeral rituals among the Igbo people have little differences among communities. From the Basden's idea, there exist the connotation of the fact that prior to the advent of the Europeans, death rituals were not considered as real and proxy rituals in nature, rather, all were expressed as burial and funeral rituals in concurrence nature but not in a day.



The idea of interdependent relationship between the living and ancestral world in Igbo cosmology presents the living-dead as real member of the family in senior partner form. Funeral rituals predicated on this platform seems to nullify the view of European missionaries view which holds that funeral rituals are burial by proxy. However, in Umumba-Ndiagu, the death rites are known by two names. The first is called funeral ritual *ili ozu* while the second is called funeral rituals *Ikwa ozu*. The categorizing of burial and funeral rituals into numerical positions of first and second rites could be the impact of Christianity on Igbo traditional beliefs and practices in relation to burial and funeral rituals as Basden pointed out. Yet, Basden's work failed to outline the qualifications for first burial and the second burial and their importance to Igbo society.

In Umumba-Ndiagu cultural, burial rituals is incomplete without the performance of funeral rituals. Also, in Umumba-Ndiagu, funeral rituals cannot be performed on the day of internment of the corpse. When he said, the date for these ceremonies is fixed by the eldest son or the closest relatives of the deceased in consultation with the members of their kindred *Umunna*. The scholars elaborate on the activities of the four days. In Umumba-Ndiagu culture, funeral rituals began the second day after burial and last four days. During the four days funeral rituals, every woman married in the compound of the deceased and the kindred (*Umuada*) cook food and serve the people at the funeral. goat and fowl will be killed and sprinkle part of the blood on the grave and rest of the blood will be poured in the alter of a shrine that unite the kindred. After cooking portage with the animal, the heart, liver and unique parts of animal and some parts of food will be removed, sacrificed in the grave and the kindred shrine with enchantments.

Burials and Funeral Rituals for Different Classes of Individuals in Umumba- Ndiagu

Burials and funeral rituals for different categories of individuals vary in Igbo land. The old and the young are not buried the same way; the rituals differ. The way a title holder is buried and the way an ordinary man is buried differ. In Igbo land and Umumba- Ndiagu not exempted, when a married woman who is aged or with kids dies, the news is not just announced. First, they take the news of her sickness to her maternal relation, and then return in tears to break the news of her death. It is believed that if it is not done this way, the children would be required to pay an amount of money; they need to know the source of her death. After this is done, the maternal relations would break down in tears for their sister and then proceed to ask the children if they intend to bury her immediately. Their response would then determine the next step to take. If their response is 'Yes', members of her maternal home start making preparation to carry her corpse, although this is no longer done as they only carry the corpse symbolically now, but all their rites must be performed, some of which include wrapper, her drinking pot, basin, kitchen knife and the kitchen seat, etc. An unmarried man is not given respect during his burial. In some places in Igbo land and as well as Umumba- Ndiagu, the corpse is thrown into the evil forest.

Furthermore, when a titled man dies, the corpse is given preferential treatment. They are not permitted to be buried in a communal cemetery; they are buried within the precincts of their own house, with elaborate ceremony. The Ozo title holder is also given a befitting burial, even if the family would have to borrow. Some of the rites that are done for an Ozo title holder include washing the corpse thoroughly with local pomade (*elu aki*), supervision of the corpse by Ozo titled men to confirm that the body was given due preparation, covering the body with black cloth and placing his cap on his head with eagle feather and a red feather and his titled staff put in his hand. In Obimo, the dead Ozo title man's grave is dug into two chambers, one for his corpse and the other for his bed (Solomon-Etefia & Nweya, 2017). When a child dies, the corpse is thrown into the evil forest. Other factors not mentioned determine how a person would be buried and where such a person would be buried.



Burial and Funeral Rituals in Christianity

The Christian Meaning of Death: Biblical testimony reveals the Christian belief that humanity was the only creature made in the image of God, and was also given dominion over other creatures (cf. Gen 1:26-27). The Roman Catholic Church interpreting the symbolism of biblical language in an authentic way teaches that our first parents, Adam and Eve, were constituted in an original state of holiness and justice. This grace of original holiness was to share in divine life (CCC. 375). This background serves as clue to the Christian understanding of death. In the book of Genesis, we find a narrative of how the first parents of humanity disobeyed God and attracted unto themselves and the rest of humanity the consequences which culminate in death. Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy (cf. Gen 3:1-5, CCC 391). This is simply known as the fall from "original justice" to "original sin" - the universal condemnation due to sin. In the New Testament, there are several passages that announce hope and remedy for this condemnation. Among them are the Pauline lines that speak of victory over death through the merits of Christ's redemptive acts (cf, Rom 5:1.9-21; I Cor 15:57). In summary, the Christian who dies in Christ Jesus is 'away from the body and at home with the Lord* (CCC, 1681). This Christian indoctrination concretely shapes the nature, purpose and proceedings of Christian burial.

Christian Burial Rites: Even though all Christians profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, variations abound in their rites of worship, ceremonies and liturgy. In other words, to articulate a unifying rite for Christian burial would be almost impossible. Hence, this discussion would focus more on burial rites as it is in the Catholic Church - the proto-Church from whom others separated. Generally, Christians bury a deceased member in a consecrated ground. Until recent times, Christians never welcomed cremation of corpse on certain theological (eschatological) grounds. In the modern times, this objection seems to have disappeared. Nevertheless, Christians forbid cremation when it is chosen for reasons which are contrary to Christian teaching.

Structure of Christian Burial: The different funeral rituals are in keeping with the situations and traditions of each region. From the past, Christian funerals followed a predictable pattern. The vigil, the funeral Mass, and that rite of committal formed a familiar threefold structure (Turner, 2001:xi). The vigil is the principal rite celebrated by the Christian community in the time following death and before the funeral liturgy (OCF, 54). The funeral mass is the central celebration of the Christian community for the deceased (OCF, 128). The rite of committal is the conclusion of the funeral rituals, the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member (OCF, 204). In Catholic liturgy, the funeral celebrations follow* a common order: The greeting of the community, the liturgy of the Word, the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and final commendation, final commendation is the last farewell by which the Christian community greets one of its members before his body is brought to its tomb (CCC, 1690). After the burial an entry is to be made in the register of the dead, in accordance with particular law (Can. 1182).

Place of Burial: The funeral of a Christian takes place in the Church (parish) where he/she belongs. However, those in charge of the deceased person's funeral, with the consent of the parish priest, may choose another church (Can. 1177.2). If a parish has its own cemetery, the deceased faithful are to be buried there, unless another cemetery has lawfully been chosen by the deceased person, or by those in charge of that person's burial (Can. 1180.1). The prevalent practice among African Christians is burying the deceased in the family (ancestral) land, after the Holy Mass or Funeral Service has taken place in the Church.

Those Eligible for Christian Funeral Rituals: Catechumens and children whose parents had intended to have them baptism but who died before baptism, may be allowed Church funerals by the local Ordinary (Can. 1 183). Unless they gave some signs of repentance before death, these



categories of persons are not accorded Christian burial: notorious apostates; heretics and schismatics; those who for anti-Christian motives chose that their bodies be cremated; other manifest sinners to whom a Church funeral could not be granted without public scandal to the faithful. If any doubt occurs, the local Ordinary is to be consulted and his judgment followed (Can. 1184). Christian funeral is arranged in such a manner that it brings honor to the deceased and bestows hope on the mourners (Turner, 2001, p.11).

Controversies between Tradition and Christianity over Burial and Funeral Rituals

In Igbo land especially Umumba-Ndiagu, burials and burial rituals or rites have become a bone of contention in which Christianity plays a major role in changing it. Before, in Igbo traditional society, when a person dies, most especially if he is an influential person in the society, his corpse is traditionally preserved as there were no mortuaries in those days. The body would be wrapped in clothes and mats and laid on sticks in a small hut and this is usually done in an open room. Fire is made and holes are also made on the sides of the wall so as to allow the smoke to penetrate; it is this smoke that envelops the body and then keeps the body dry for as long as one wants. Other methods were also used in preserving corpses in those days like herbs, alcohol and many more but today Christianity has abolished that practice and replace with mortuary.

Before now, it is believed that before a man or a woman is buried, certain rituals have to be made, such as the “Iwa Nkita Anya”, the goat ritual, the cow presentation, mourning, corpse preservation, determining the place for the deceased to be buried. All these rituals have to be performed to ensure that the deceased is properly welcomed by their ancestors but they are forbidden by Christians creating fighting, quarrelling and conflicts between tradition and Christian believers.

It is also stated that in time past, a woman's body is believed not to rest anywhere asides her paternal home. Also, tradition demands that the corpse is only taken symbolically and certain ceremonies are done to ensure she rests in peace. Once all the demands made by her maternal home are met, which include the cow, the goat, the hen and the drinks, she can then be buried. But now, such practice is no longer observed as Christianity believers oppose it and permit that a woman should be buried in her husband's house and that goat, fowls and other animals must be provided for scarifies before she can be buried. In a similar not, when an aged woman or a woman kids dead, the news is keep secret from her maternal relatives. The information that would be sent to the maternal relatives is come that their sister is sick, those that sent to inform the maternal relatives about their sick sister would return home with tears before the news of her death would announced. It is believed that if this tradition is not observed, the children of the woman would pay 'fine', this is so because they need to know the source of her death. After this is done, the maternal relations would break down in tears for their sister and then proceed to ask the children if they intend to bury her immediately; their response would determine the next step to take. If their response is 'Yes', members of her maternal home start making preparation to carry her corpse, although this is no longer done as they only carry the corpse symbolically now, but all their rites are provided, some of which include wrapper, her drinking pot, basin, kitchen knife and the kitchen seat, etc.

Solomon-Etefia & Nweya (2017) opined that in Christian practice widows no longer go through the rigorous cleansing rituals and all the nightmares that come with it. Christianity has abolished this traditional ritual for their widows to their dead husbands. He maintained that the Osu's before now are seen as outcasts and it is believed that their head is not supposed to touch the soil. Before now, the body is hanged with the head half cut underneath with a pot, so that when it decayed, it drops into the pot; then the body can be buried. Today Christianity has changed this and Osu is now being buried the same way others are buried.



Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

Since tradition and Christianity have their own faith different from each other on the issue of burial and funeral rituals, both practices should be allowed to co- exist to avoid clash. This will make it possible for people for tradition to observed burial and funeral rituals according to their traditional beliefs without disturbing Christians and Christian should do via- versa.

1. The traditional rulers, priests, scholars and the elderly ones who know Igbo tradition burial and funeral rituals should come together and revive and promote the culture.
2. Families should do the needful to ensure that their 'dead' is buried properly in order to avoid certain misfortunes.
3. The people of Umumba-Ndiagu should be sensitized on the importance of burial rituals and not just see it as a 'ceremony'.
4. The people of Umumba-Ndiagu should embrace Christianity as it will alleviate the people from the bondage of tradition.

Conclusion

This paper investigates traditional burial and funeral rituals in Umumba-Ndiagu: a controversy between tradition and Christianity. It is evident that burial and funeral rituals are important as it serves the purpose of respect to the dead. The tradition and Christianity recognized burial and funeral rituals to the dead person. The issue here is on the practices and beliefs system uphold by them. It is observed from this study that burial and funeral rituals in Umumba-Ndiagu is deeply rooted in Igbo traditional belief and values which many parts are serious opposed by the Christian doctrine. In Umumba-Ndiagu, it is seriously believed that failure to perform all the traditional funeral rituals to send the dead home posed socio-religious consequences such as unidentifiable sickness, spirit haunting, trouble in business, death of livestock, death in very severe situations, seen the spirit of dead person on the road, market and in the farm. It is this beliefs made that them attach much importance to funeral rituals according the demands of the tradition. So, this study concluded that traditional beliefs and Christian believe pertaining to burial and funeral rites are important and cannot be eliminated, but allowed coexist in the community.

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THE PLACE OF ORAL TRADITION IN SELECTED IGBO LITREARY TEXTS

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Abstract

This study examined the place of oral literature in the selected Igbo novels. Igbo oral literature and Igbo written literature are the literature of Igbo people. Oral literature is transmitted orally through the word of mouth, while written literature is written down in books. Many people failed to realize that oral literature provides a source of materials, to the writers of written literature. They do not know that modern literary writers draw their inspiration from oral literature. The proverbs, folktales, riddles etcetera which the literary writers use to beautify their works, are from oral literature. This is a survey research. The theory adopted was readers- response theory. In this study, three texts were analyzed to showcase the place of oral literature in the selected Igbo novels. The novels include; *Uwa Ntogo* (2001) by Onyekaonwu, *Mkpokpta Oru Nka Onyekaonwu* (2014), *Anu Gbaa Ajo Oso* (2001) by Ofomata and *Aka Ekpuchi Eziokwu* (2010) by Okafo. This study revealed the examples of oral traditions in selected Igbo literary texts such as use of figurative language, the traditional ways of storytelling, Belief and Culture of Igbo People, the use of songs and retributive justice. All these are the product of oral traditions. It was concluded that modern writers have succeeded in using oral literature in their literary works, to discuss about many issues in the contemporary society and it is a way of preserving Igbo culture and traditions.

Introduction

The Igbo, like any other society had its own system of education which ruled heavily on oral tradition .Oral performances is handed down from generation to generation through the word of mouth. Oral tradition refers to the body of oral rendition that passes from one generation to another .Epuchie, Epuchie, and Amaechi (2009:150) opined that oral tradition embodies the way people perceive the world around them, superstition, beliefs, marriage, death as well as attempts to explain and give meaning to certain natural phenomenon .In the olden days, children grow up under the language of their mothers. Usually, after the evening meals children gather around the fire-place listening to traditional stories/folktales.

Oral tradition according to Akparobaro (2001:33) “is the totality of verbal expressive forms and beliefs evolved in traditional societies for social entertainment and for the ordering of society, and passed on orally from one generation to another”. Akparobaro notes that oral tradition of the people is their belief that has been with them for generations.

The oral tradition is of the ancient and of the archives, as the name implies, is opposed the modern tradition. This study tries to examine the truth of oral tradition in the written Igbo literary work .The incorporation of the traditional into the modern has manifested itself in the works of



prominent Igbo prose writers and the impact of this(negative or positive)on the overall development of modern Igbo prose fiction.

Obviously, the traditional culture and ethics of the Igbo are steadily undergoing some changes as a result of the impact of foreign culture. Notwithstanding, the elements of the culture in which one has been genetically born and nurtured continue to dominate that person's thoughts, imagination and consciousness .From the above observation, one sees a clear picture of the relationship between the Igbo writers and the Igbo oral tradition. Obiechina, (1967:142), in Nnyigide (2010:635) says "oral village story-telling as well as the other forms of oral tradition is a living reality and helps to inform and direct their attitudes and values".

From Obiechina view, one observes that the writers are bound to be influenced by the Igbo oral tradition. In some of the literary works, elements of folktales, legends and myths are employed and in their expression, proverbs, anecdotes, and other Igbo verbal arts are freely applied. Oral tradition can be seen as the body of Igbo folklore .Ekwealor (1998) says,

Literature whether oral or written is culture bound; and
While written literature draws its materials from people's
Culture. Oral tradition is an integral part of that culture
And therefore a basic material for the written form.

What Ekwealor means is that oral and written literatures are culturally based .In addition, oral tradition is an integral part of the culture and, at the same time, a raw material for the written literature. According to Obi (2002:2) in Onuigbo (2012:149);

Apart from *Omenuko* by Peter Nwana, which is recorded
As the first Igbo novels that D.N.Achara in his *Ala Bingo*
And *Elelia na lhe O Mere* uses oral literature especially
Folk narratives as his writing aids. As a result of this, his

Works can be seen as a chain binding oral and written
Igbo literature.

In addition, the Igbo literary artists apply oral traditional materials in their novels so as to show that the write-up is meant for consumption by the Igbo people .In view of this, Okodo (2005:50-65) in Ogbalu (2012:149) states that 'the beginning of every development has culture as its basis, as well as every facet of development is a matter of culture. We talk of political culture, technological culture, linguistic culture, farming culture and food culture. Okodo emphasizes that culture is indispensable with language.

Reader-Response and Reception Theory

Another critical approach that has proved widely congenial since 1980s is reader-response theory, with roots in earlier thinkers such as Husserl. The role of the reader or audience of a literary work or performance has been recognized since classical times. Many classical and medieval writers viewed literature as a branch of rhetoric, the art of persuasive speaking or writing. As such, literature had to be highly aware of the composition and expectations of its audience .According to Dubie (2011:268) Romantic theories stressed the powerful emotional impact of poetry on the audience, and various later nineteenth century theories such as symbolism and impressionism stressed the reader's subjective response to literature and art. Marxism and feminism have longed acknowledge that literature, necessarily operating within social structures of class and gender, is always oriented toward certain kinds of audiences, in both aesthetic and economic terms.

Reader-response theory is concerned with the relationship between texts and reader and reader and texts, with the emphasis on different ways in which a reader participates in the course of reading a text and the different perspectives which arise in the relationship. Thus, reader response theory is also concerned with the reader's contribution to text, and it challenges, with varying degrees of



plausibility and conviction. Cuddon (2013:589) says a “text, whatever it be (poem, short story, essay, scientific exposition), has no existence until it is read .Its meaning is in potential, so to speak. A read completes its meaning by reading it. The reading is complimentary; it actualize potential meaning”. Reader does not have a passive role, as has been traditionally thought; on the contrary, she is an active agent in the creation of meaning. By applying codes and strategies the reader decodes the text.

Reader-Response criticism opposes formalism, seeing the reader’s interaction with the text as central to interpretation. Unlike formalists, reader-response critics do not believe that a work of literature exists as a separate entity. Instead, they considered the reader’s contribution to the text as essential. A poem, short story, novel, or play is not a solid piece of fabric but rather a series of threads separated by gaps that readers must fill in, drawing on their own experiences and knowledge. According to Kirzner and Mandell (2007:2085) readers “approach a literary text, they contribute their own interpretations. As they read one sentence and then the next, they develop expectations; and, in realistic stories, these expectations are generally met”. Reader-response theorists believe in the importance of recursive reading-that is, reading and rereading with the idea that no interpretation is carved in stone. A second or third interaction with the text may well produce a new interpretation. This changing view is particular likely when the rereading takes place significantly later than initial reading.

The reader’s primary purpose is fulfilled during the reading event, as he fixes his attention on the actual experience he is living through .This permits the whole range of responses generated by the text to enter into the center of awareness, and out of these materials he selects and weaves what he sees as the literary work of art. The significance of the work, then, does not lie in the meaning sealed within the text, but in the fact that meaning brings out what had previously been sealed within us. When their own lives intersect with the text, that text takes on vitality.

Dobie (2009:132) notes that “reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particularly mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition”. A reader’s experience is determined by these and many other elements. The effect is not limited to the understanding of a text, however .it extends to the understanding of the self as well .Because reader-response criticism calls for introspection and on one’s own values and beliefs. It can lead the reader to deeper personal knowledge and greater cultural awareness.

The Literary view of Igbo culture and Tradition

Given their education and the historical environment already described, what indigenous culture do to the Igbo literary writers. The literary appears to be more interested in recreating in the reader’s mind a whole traditional way of life, bringing out with varying degrees of realism, and different shades of attitude, its triumphs and failures. Frequent allusions are made to the people’s customs, traditional ceremonies, community festivals, beliefs and rituals, mainly in order to demonstrate their importance to the community, but occasionally to show the effect of external influence on traditional culture.

In these literary works, Igbo culture and tradition are presented with details which illustrate local variations. Many writers reflect in their writings specifically Igbo culture, although most of what they write about will be valid for other parts of Nigeria. Umeasiegbu (1969) in Taiwo (1976 :29) He discusses the significance of community festivals and other items like the breaking of kola, the use of cohise chalk, the worship of idols, the place of women in society, the birth of twins, wrestling, the functions of the tribal priest and the responsibilities of a titled man. One common feature of these literary is the constant recourse the writers make to oral traditions – riddles, proverbs, myths, legends and folklore. They draw a great deal on folk sources to localize the content of their works. Practically every one of these authors shows some skill in the African verbal art of conversation and



attempts to enrich his work by the appropriate use of oral tradition. These oral tradition deal with all aspects of life and are usually employed to convey effectively moral lessons and advice.

Synopsis of the literary works used in research

Uwa Ntọọọ By Onyekaonwu(2014)

This drama revolved around Ebubedike of Isingodo, a warrior, who got missing after fighting for his village Isingodo. There was a fight between Isingodo and Umuagada village. Ebubedike was fighting for his community, at a stage, the war became tough, their opponent Umuagada people chased Ebubedike and his men, seeing what was about to happen, Ebubedike and his men stopped fighting as a group, rather every one of them ran away to different direction to save his life, Isingodo men ran home safely except Ebubedike who was not found after the battle.

The villagers were confused on what could have happened to Ebubedike. A native doctor (*dibia afa*) was consulted who told the villagers that Ebubedike is dead. After the native doctor's declaration, funeral date was announced on Ebubedike. On the day of funeral rite of Ebubedike, surprisingly he returned and realized that it was his funeral rite that was taking place, Ebubedike cried bitterly because it is an abomination to perform a funeral rite of someone that is still alive. Ebubedike was asked what happened. He told his people that he came across a leaf (*ahihia nju ohia*) and he lost his consciousness. Agamevu one of Ebubedike's kinsman and a friend who planned to marry Ebubedike's wife, Onukwube vowed that Ebubedike must die. Agamevu poisoned Ebubedike on the day of Ogumaalam's dedication that is Ebubedike's son. After Ebubedike funeral rite, Agamevu married Onukwube irrespective of what Ebubedike told her when he was about to give up the ghost. Ebubedike told his wife not to remarry. After many years of Ebubedike's death. Ebubedike's spirit revealed himself to his son Ogumaalam and later killed his wife Onukwube who disobeyed him and remarried after telling her not to do so.

Anụ Gbaa Ajọ Ọsọ by Ofomata (2001)

This text is about Ikpendu, the son of Ogadimma and his wife. Ogadimma and his wife have notorious behavior when they were young. Ikpendu resembled his parents in nefarious behavior. When Ikpendu was young, he always stole his parent's money, food and other things. Ikpendu stole his teacher's money, including other ill character of his that made the headmaster expelled him from school. Now that Ikpendu was expelled from school, he started going from village to village to steal and to commit atrocities. Villagers and his kinsmen after a meeting concludes that Ikpendu must leave the village or they will kill him. Ikpendu refused to leave the village but later left. He went to Onitsha where he joined armed robbery. He was killed in a robbery attack in Onitsha. Since Ikpendu's death, his spirit was not at rest. The villagers including men, women, and children normally see him. His kinsmen was summoned to look for profound solution to the problem. After the meeting, his kinsmen told his parents to consult a native doctor (*dibia afa*). After consulting the native doctor, the native doctor told them what to do and they stopped seeing Ikpendu's spirits.

Aka Ekpuchi Eziokwu Okafo (2010)

Obiekwe and Ezeji are brothers. They are having land dispute. Obiekwe took kolanut and a pot of palm wine to their kinsmen (*umunna*) and reported the incident to them. Their kinsmen tried to settle the dispute but could not because of injustice. Obiekwe later reported the matter to their *Igwe* (king) about the land dispute with his brother. The *Igwe* and his cabinet looked into the matter and shared the land. The way it was supposed to be. People thank the *Igwe* how he settled the land dispute between two brothers wisely and sang to him in appreciation of his kind gesture towards villagers.

Examples of Oral Traditions in Selected Igbo Literary Texts

The selected Igbo literary texts are: *Uwa Ntọọọ* by Onyekaonwu, *Anụ Gbaa Ajọ Ọsọ* by Ofomata and *Aka Ekpuchi Eziokwu* by Okafo. Modern Igbo literary writers have realized the significance of



oral tradition and its preservation for the future generation. As a result of this, they make use of oral tradition in producing their literary texts. Some of the oral traditions used by these authors are:

Use of figurative language

- .Traditional ways of story telling
- .Belief and culture of Igbo people
- .Themes of the story
- .Use of songs
- Use of Retributive justice

1. Figurative Language

Figurative language or expressions are statements which must not be taken literally. When a word is used in a way other than in its literal meaning in order to produce a special effect, it is said to have been used figuratively.

According to Umegbolu (2009:38) “figures of speech heighten and elevate the effects of words .that is to say, they are used for freshness, lucidity, and effectiveness” Figurative language is the bedrock of a literary and stylistic success. These authors make profuse use of figurative language in their works. Examples are;

.Ewu ataa m igu n'isi, izuzu m zuru ezu atalaa m n'isi (Onyekaonwu 2014:97).

Agameevu used this proverb to show when his first plan to remarry Onukwube, Ebebedike's wife failed because Ebubedike was still alive.

.Awọ anaghị agba ọsọ ehihie n'efu .(Onyekaonwu2014:99)

This proverb shows how moody Ebubedike is, each time he remembered that it is an abomination to perform the funeral rite of someone that is still alive.

O ji ngwere haa ngwere na ọ bughị anyị. Onye kwechi ya ekwe. (Onyekaonwu 2014:102) This proverb shows how Ebubedike isolate himself from village gathering and meeting since his funeral rites took place. His married sister Ekeubu was trying to console him to forget about the past and cheer up.

Ọ na-abụ e nye nwata ihe karịrị ya, ọ jụọ onye a siri ya wegara.(Onyekaonwu 2014:109) This proverb shows when Agameevu killed Ebubedike using poison. He made first attempt of telling late Ebubedike's wife Onukwube how he is going to remarry her. Ebubedike's wife was surprise at Agameevu's comment.

Ọ matara ka ya bụ mmiri siri baa n'opi ụgbọgụrụ, (Onyekaonwu 2014:112). This indicates when daughters of clan (*Umuuada*) heard that Onukwube late Ebubedike;s wife was about to go back to her father. *Umuada* tried to intervene but Onukwube insisted, she is acting on what Agameevu told her to go back to her father's compound so that he can marry her. When Onukwube refused to listen to *umuada* plea not to go, rather to remember what her late husband told her, *umuada* now told her that she knew what happened to Ebubedike.

Onye ụlọ ya na-agba ọkụ ọ gaa na-achụ oke, Onyekaonwu:119 .This shows when Ebubedike's spirit revealed to his son Ogumaalam that it was his mother's new husband Agameevu that killed him. These incident happened when Agameevu was away. When he came back, He saw Onukwube lying lifeless, he asked Ogumaalam what happened. Ogumaalam told him how Ebubedike killed her. Agameevu started chasing Ogumaalam and Ogumaalam ran to Umuinwere his village. Ogumaalam told his father's kinsmen what has happened, Ebubedike's kinsmen was planning to retaliate when Ogumaalam told them not to do so.

Agwọ nọkwa n'akirikwa. Onyekaonwu (2004:121). This shows when one of Ebubedike's kinsmen Inweregbu leaked the secret to Agameevu. Ebubudike's kinsmen planned to kill him because he killed Ebubedike.



I marakwa ebe I na-etinye isi, tunye gi bu oke agbalaghi odu eree ya oku. Onyekaonwu (2004:121). Here, Inweregbu used this proverb to tell Agameevu to run for his life before it is too late.

Other proverbs is include;

Nku onye kpapa n'okochi ka o na-aga anya n'udummiri. Ofomata(2001:2)

Onye nwe ozu na-ebu uzọ. Ofomata.(2001:3)

Okwu daghararia kwaghararia onodu Ofomata (2001:5)

Ukwu nnekwu okuku zoro nwa ya anaghi egbu ya. Ofomata(2001:10)

Anu a na-agba egbe, o na-ata nri Ofomata (2001:23)

Agaghi ekworo mgbagbu ghara ogu Ofomata(2001:31)

Awo na-akpo ibe ya wokuru Ofomata (2001:33)

Onye mara asu ya suo n'ikwe, onye amaghi asu ya suo n'ala Okafo(2010:12)

O nwere ihe mere ede jiri n'bee nurii Okafo(2010:20)

Uto ka a toro tota ihe Okafo (2010:27)

Ka ihe tara n'abalị buru anuwunta Okafo (2010:29)

Idiom (*Akpalaokwu*)

- *Ajo chi* Onyekaonwu (2014:117)
- *Anaghi ata nti ya ata* .Ofomata (2001:1)
- *Ogonna ha na-eme aka nabo* (Ofomata 2001:i)

This shows when the author is explaining the character of Ikpendu's mother that made Ikpendu to resemble her.

- *Isu aka n'ala* Okafo (2010:25)
- *Iri aka azu* Okafo (2010:47)
- *Ikpu mmiri n'onu were kwuo okwu* Okafo (2010:48)

Onomatopoeia (*Uda uda*)

This is a device in which the sound suggests the meaning of words or expressions, because the words are formed by imitating the actual sounds associated with the thing concerned. It is also referred to as the sound echoing the sense it portrayed. For instance

Nne ya nwuchie ya chiim Ofomata(2001:11) *kporokpotu kporokpotu* n'isi.

Parii parii. Ofomata(2001:39)

Waam Ofomata (2001:87)

Metaphor (*Ndika*)

Ikpendu dika mkpi. Ofomata (2001:1). Ofomata used this to show how ugly Ikpendu the protagonist is.

Kporopu anya ka isi ehi. Onyekaonwu (2014:115).

2. The traditional ways of storytelling

In Igboland, there are traditional ways of storytelling. Stories like folktales have introduction section, narrative section and the concluding section .In *Anu Gbaa Ajo Osọ* by Ofomota (2001:5). It has an introductory part as the following;

Okwu Mmalite

Nwa, bu ihe onye obula na-ekpe ekpere ka o muta. Mana udiri nwa onye ga-amuta bu naaani chineke maara. Ma o ga-abu ezigbo nwa, ma o ga-abu ajo nwa, naani Chineke Nna bi n'eligwe ga-akowa. Ma na ndumodu kacha ndumodu bu ka onye obula choro ighota mkpuru oma gbaa mbọ kuo mkpuru oma na ndu ya.

Otu nwaanyi na amutabeghi nwa na-aju chi ya ihe o mere ya o jighi kwe ka o gbaa aka ahia. Onye nke mutara ajo nwa na-aju chi ya ihe o mere ya o ji nye ya nwa ahụ. Na o kaara ya mma na o mutaghi chaa. Ha abuo, kedu onye ka ibe ya mma?



Onye mụtara ezigbo nwa were na-asị na ọ na-ata ahụhụ n'izu nwa, ya jekwuru onye mụtara ajọ nwa ka ọ hụ ihe bụ iyi eze echipere ala. Ọ bụ ya kpatara ndị Igbo ji were kwuo okwu sị na onye mụtara ajọ nwa na ume omumụ bụ otu. Kama onye chi ya nyere nke o nyere, were obi umeala nara ya. N'ihì na ọ bụ ndidi na-emeri ụwa. Onye na-eme nke ọ na-eme chetakwa echi ka ọ ghara iburu chi ya ụzọ, were gbagbuo onwe ya n' oso. Onye nwee nti, ọ nūrụ, Onye enweghị nti, o were anya ya hụ maka a tuorọ ọmara, ọ mara., a tuorọ ofeke, o mee ihe eji etu ya ofeke!

Concluding section (Okwu Mmechi)

Onye hūrụ agadi nwanyị ka, ọ na-eri akpala ọkụkụ napụ ya maka o bute ụkwara, o zuo ọha. Nwanne awọ gbatia ya ụkwu ka nwanne nkapi bebilata ya ọnụ maka ọ hapụ ha, ha amụọ oyiri ha. Onye chọrọ ihe ọma mewe ihe dị mma n'ihì na ọ bụ mkpuru onye kuru ka ọ ga-aghọrọ maka a chọwa isi ọchụ a gaa n'uzu.

Ndị be anyị, ọ bụ ihe onye turu n'ahia ka a ga-azutara ya maka a gbachaa egwu. o laa n'ukwu. Ndị Igbo kwetara na ihe onye ọbula na-eme n'ụwa a, na ọ ga anatariri ụgwọ ya, ma ọ bụ nke ọma, ma ọ bụ nke ọjọọ. Ọ bụrụ na mmadụ akwughị gi, chi gi akwuo gi ụgwọ ya. Mgbe mmadụ abuo a na-akuru aka n' ihe ọjọọ luru di na nwunye, kedu ụdị mkpuru ọ di gi ka ha ga-amita? Mee elu, mee ala, agwo anaghị amụ ihe mkpumkpu maka ihe nkwo muru ga-eburu ọkukọ!!.

In Uwa Ntọọ (2014:96), Onyekaaonwu used traditional way of telling story. When Ebubedike returned, his brother asked him to tell him what happened, that caused him to stay in the forest for many week.

Ekwegbara Kọrọ anyị, olee ka ihe a siri mee?

Ebubedike Mgbe ọgụ siri nnukwu ike, ndị Umụagada chuuru anyị chubanye anyị n'oke ọhia di n'lkpaebu. Ka anyị na-abata n'oke ọhia ahụ, m jiri anya okenye ji achọ ihe n'akpa wee mata na ya bụ ekele agafeela isi nku aka; na ya bụ osimiri ataruola, m wee gwa ha ka onye ọbula chọwa ụzọ ula. Ka anyị dum gbasajuru oke ọhia ahụ, na-achọzi ụzọ ula; ejeere m pụta, metu akwukwo osisi di na otu obere ukwu osisi aka, amakwaghị m ụzọ opupu, ọ dikwaghị onye m huziri n'ihì ndi iro imata ebe m nọ, o nyekwaghị m ọnụ iti mkpu. m wee malite gaghariwa

3. Belief and Culture of Igbo People

In Igbo traditional society, they exist different kinds of belief and culture which formed their ways of life. The literary authors always used these beliefs and cultures in their literary works. Some of them are as follows:

a) Belief and culture of Igbo people about Kinsmen (Umunna)

Uzochukwu (2012:53) says “the rancor and acrimony in our body politic will perhaps be minimized if we adopt the home bred type of democracy practiced in Igbo traditional society as typified in the decision-making process carried out in Igbo village squares”. Today this sort of governance has partially survived through the establishment of development or improvement unions in autonomous communities throughout Igboland. Because this form of governance is indigenous in Igbo and is devoid of monarchical dictatorial tendencies Uzochukwu (2012:52) says “it has led to adage, *Igbo enwe eze* (the Igbo have no kingship). Apparently this sounds opprobrious for it suggests that the Igbo have a disrespectful disposition to instituted authority. But far from it. The adage merely underscores the republican nature of the Igbo. Nowadays, even in Igbo communities where kingship is accepted (or is it imposed?) Important decisions are still arrived at by consensus in the town assemblies with an elected president presiding with members of his executive imposition by fiat is never entertained.

In Igbo culture and tradition, if a man wants to take any serious decision, he must involve his kinsmen. This is because Igbo people believe that unity is strength. In Onyekaaonwu (2014:118) when Agamevevu wanted to kill Oguamaalam after the death of Onukwube, Oguamaalam ran to his village *Umuinwere*. He told his father's brother Ekwegbara how his father Ebubedike revealed



himself to him. How his father Ebubedike told him who was responsible for his death and how his father Ebubedike killed Onukwube for marrying Agameevu that killed him. Ekwegbara after listening to Ogumalam, did not take decision alone rather he summoned his kinsmen and they agreed to kill Agameevu for killing their brother Ebubedike..

Umunna, echighi m na okwu a rijuru afo, si aguputa

Okorobia ise aka kara aka, tinyere mu onwe m

Uchichi taa, na riomriom abali, anyi ga-aga n'ulo ya,

Toro nwa ahụ anụ ohiya gbufuo. Ebe a ka m kwu. Nke a

Na-eme, si na-eme ya oso oso na ije di m n'ukwu. Onyekaonwu(2014)

In *Anu Gbaa Ajo Oso* by Ofomata (2001) since Ikpendu's death, because he died a bad death, he was burnt alive by eye witnesses who caught him while stealing. His spirit was not at rest. The villagers including men, women, and children normally see him. Ikpendu's father Ogadimma instead of taking decision alone, he summoned his kinsmen (*umunna*) to look for a profound solution to the problem. After the meeting, his kinsmen told him to consult a native doctor (*dibia afa*). After consulting the native doctor, the native doctor told them what to do and they stopped seeing Ikpendu's spirit.

In *Aka Ekpuchi Eziokwu* by Okafo (2010). When Obiekwe and his brother Ezeji are having land dispute. Obiekwe took kolanut and a pot of palm wine to their kinsmen (*umunna*) and reported the incident to them. Their kinsmen tried to settle the dispute but Obiekwe disagreed with them. Obiekwe later report to the *Igwe* about the land dispute with his brother, the *Igwe* and his cabinet looked into the matter and shared the land the way it was supposed to be. People thanked the *Igwe* by singing to him and people were happy.

b Significance of Kolanut in Igbo Culture and Tradition

Ndi Igbo celebrate brotherhood, unity and love using kolanut. The full impact of the place of kolanut in Igbo socio-cultural life can only be appreciated if one understands the myth of the origin of kolanut among the Igbo people. According to Echeanyanwu (2011), kolanut came from God, just like the Igbo people were created by God in the place where they are found today

While explaining the origin of kolanut, Madu (1998) in Apakama (2012:37) says; According to the myth, an Nri man went to Chineke for a

Visit. On getting to heaven, Chineke received him

Happily. He took him to his garden and showed him all

The fruit tress therein .He took him to a corner of the

Garden and showed him a tree which he termed special

Kolanut tree. He plucked a pod out of the tree and both of

Them went back to God's house. He opened the pod and

Brought out a nut with which he played host to the man.

As the man was going, he gave him a nut of the pod

And told him to plant it when he got home. He get

Instructed to use the nuts to host his guests when the

Tree starts producing. But, he was told that before he

Eats it, he should invite him (chukwu) through prayer, in

Order that he would symbolically come down to partake

Of the kolanut in.P.165

The man went home and carried out God's order religiously, and thus kolanut originated among the Igbos. Dike (2010:36) in Apakama (2012:38),while discussing the origin of kolanut and why it is so important in the Igbo world and peace-keeping says;

Mr Igbo visited God and was entertained with so many



Edible things. When Mr Igbo wanted to go, God asked
Him to wait for a parting gift for which he would be
Remembered. God gave him room for choice and
Mr Igbo requested for the fruit that had bitter and
Sweet taste. God was happy and uprooted the young
Kolanut plant and asked him to go home and plant it

In *Uwa Ntooo* by Onyekaaonwu (2014), Ebubedike invited the villagers to inform them about the naming ceremony of his child Oguamalem. When the villagers gathered, he thanked them for coming and brought kolanut for them which they pray with, bless and shared among themselves. After eating the kolanut, Ebubedike now told them his intention of inviting them then, naming ceremony now commenced. Ebubedike said;

Onukwube wetere anyị oji

Onukwube eburu oji bata.

Ebubedike ebunye ya nwanne

ya nwoke bụ Ekwegbara.

Ekwegbara ogo oji si.

Qha Mmadu: Ndi mbu na ndi egede.

Ekwegbara: Oduma, agbara anyi

Qha Mmadu: Oduma, agbara anyi

Ekwegbara: Ogbuoogebe mutara Ezeanyim

Qha Mmadu: Ogbuoogebe mutara Ezeanyim

Ekwegbara: Ezeanyim mutara Ebubedike

Qha Mmadu: Ezeanyim mutara Ebubedike

Ekwegbara: Leenu nwa biara unu uwa;

Qha Mmadu: Leenu nwa biara unu uwa;

Ekwegbara: O jewe ejewe lawa alawa;

Qha Mmadu: O jewe ejewe lawa alawa;

Ekwegbara: Ka ukwu ghara ikpo ya.

Qha Mmadu: Ka ukwu ghara ikpo ya.

Ekwegbara: Ka o nokaara anyi nka.

Qha Mmadu: Ka o nokaara anji nka.

Ekwegbara: Wee zuo nna ya na nne ya.

Qha Mmadu: Wee zuo nna ya na nne ya.

Ekwegbara: Di ka ha ga-esi wee zuo ha,

Qha Mmadu: Di ka ha ga-esi wee zuo ha,

Ekwegbara: Ala lsungodo, o buzinu ofo o!

Qha Mmadu: Iyaa.

Ebubedike: Ebubedike, olee aha unu nyere m nwa a? Oguamalam

Ekwegbara: Oguamalam! Ogu o ga-amanu uma ma anyi. Ndi be Anyi unu anunu o!

Oha Mmadu: Oguamalem anyi o o o o! Aha nke a aburu ya o!

Oguamalem: Umunne, ndeewonu. Akuko m adighi ogologo.

So in Igboland when kolanut is shared among friends, it is used to entertain visitors in times of bitterness (death and sorrow) and at happy occasions. In Igboland during kolanut prayer, God is remembered as He is praised and favor is asked of Him upon the people.

Ch.)Igbo Culture and Tradition about Death

This term usually describes as death of a young man through an accident and this makes a person not to accomplish his duties; hence, he has to finish his work and settle the creator. This sudden death is seen as an abomination and sacrifices are performed

Igbo traditional funeral rites are based on what kind of death a person had, and to the status that the person had on earth. As Thomas (1917:181) in Udeze (2012:86) opines that “rites of burial vary



according to the age, sex and importance of the deceased. More sacrifices were necessary for a man who is married and has children than a young man who have not taken a wife". Not all death were regarded by the Igbo people as good death. Some were seen as bad, such as violent death by accident, suicide, or death caused by lightening, leprosy, small pox or by stealing, etc. These kinds of death were believed to be as a result of sin, atrocity or incest and in such cases, the deceased person was not buried or mourned in the community. The type of death also determines the kind of funeral one will be given in the community, and one's spirit status in the afterlife.

Igbo people believed in life after death, they believed that the dead partakes in affairs of the living. In *Uwa Ntọọ* by Onyekiaonwu (2014) Oguamalam saw his dead father who told him the following;

*Bụ ebe m gara ihiota nku ka m hụrụ nna m nwurụ
 Anwụ o wee kpọọ m, gwa m na ọ bụ Agameevu
 Nyegburu ya na nsi, ụbọchi a na-eme mmemme igu
 M aha. Ka m lotara na-akoro nne m ihe m huru,
 Onyinyo ya putakwa ọzọ, ka nne m hụrụ ya,
 Onyinyo ahu juru ya ihe wetara o jiri lugha dī
 N'agbanyeghi okwu ya gwara ya. Ka nne m mere ka
 Ọ saa, ọnụ dara, kpuo ihu n'ala nwụọ. Ka nke a
 Na-emecha, Agameevu batara, ka ọ hụchara ihe
 Mere nuchaakwa ihe m kọrọ ya, chọputara na mụ
 Amatago na ọ bụ ya gburu nna m wee miri mma wee
 Chụwa m ọsọ. M wee gbapụ, gbalatawa.*

Again, Oguamalam, when he finally died, he saw his dead father Ebubedike in the spirit world and he said the following to him;

*Onyinyo Ebubedike: Oguamalem!
 Oguamalem!
 I lakwutela m, nnọọ
 (Oguamalem atitigharia na mmụọ, were nwayọ
 bilite soro galagala gaa jide onyinyo nna ya aka)
 Nwata rie ihe ọ na-amụrụ anya, ụra atụwa ya. Ma
 Nwa m, agha a kara aka ọ na-eri ngwuro? E kwuo
 Ma a nughị ataala isi gị. Ihe riri ụtara wee rachakpọọ
 Ofẹ nri. Uwa ntọọ! Nwa m nnọ, nnọ, nnọ
 I hapurula ha ụwa-ụwa wara awa;
 I larutego, nnọ, nnọ, nnọ, nwa m,
 Uwa ntọọ!
 (Ekwe ọnwụ na opi agwụ na-ada ngharịta n'azu
 Nkwago; ọchịchiri jiri nwayọ na-agba.*

In *Anụ Gbaa Ajo Ọsọ* by Ofomata (2001) since Ikpendu's death, because he died a bad death, he was burnt alive by eye witnesses who caught him while stealing. His spirit was not at rest. The villagers including men, women, and children normally see him. The Igbo man's ontological worldview concerning the concept of death, which is the unavoidable end of human life, supports his belief in reincarnation. For the Igbo, death is not just the end of a person's sojourn on earth. It has a deeper meaning than that. They see it as a transmigration from the mundane world to another world where the spirit of the deceased assumes a new life. The Igbo compare death with a situation where a person has left his house for somewhere else from where he is capable of coming back later.

d.) Igbo Culture and Tradition about Divination

Afa divination itself is one of the oldest institution of the Igbo. It is a consultative institution which attempts to discover events that affect human beings (for good or evil), but are beyond the control



of the ordinary man and are believed to have supernatural, mystical or other non-human cause. Thus the ordinary man sees the *Afa* priest as one living in two worlds the human world and the spirit world. According to Ekwealor (2012:56) "he is seen as a wise and intelligent man, who has the solution to almost all human problems. Thus the public expectations of the *Afa* priest are so high that the society demands that his training should be very elaborate one, if he must live up to these expectations".

In *Anu Gbaa Ajo Oso* by Ofomata (2001) when Ikpendu died and his spirit was disturbing his parents and villagers, *dibia afa* when consulted told them what to do in order to stop the situation. In *Uwa Ntooo* by Onyekaonwu (2014) when Ebubedike was not found after fighting with Umagada people, *dibia* was consulted by his people who told them what to do about the situation. The Igbo generally believed in cause/effects relationship. Hence they always say "*ife eme na nkiti*" Nothing happens without cause. Thus in such situation *dibia afa* is consulted to find out the cause of such misfortune.

4.) The Use of Song

Like in folktales, the three literary text used in this research, their authors made use of songs in their narrations. For instance, In *Uwa Ntooo* by Onyekaowu (2014), during the Ebubedike first funeral rite before he finally returned, one of his kinsmen started singing to show damages caused by death. He also called upon all and sundry in Isungodo to be patience in this time of mourning their hero Ebubedike.

Nwunye Ebubedike bu Onukukwube no n'ala n'akuku ulo, yiri afe mkpe; umu ndi nwunye di ya nonyeere ya okirikikiri; ndi egwu odachi ngwa egwu ha noro ebe ahụ ma ha amalitabeghi kuwa egwu; ndi okenye ole na ole nochakwa ebe ahụ, ufodu na-akpari uka, ufodu na-anu mmnya. Ka a nokataziri, Onwudiegwu wee kulie:

Onwudiegwu: (malite mawa mbem)
Okokooko o, Okokooko o, Kokooko!
Kokooko o, Kokookoo, Kokooko.
Isungodo na Ala Ngodo, ala mu anyi;-
Ngodo e! Isugodo muru ebu muo mfu;
Obodo wuuru n'ogidi mputamkpu;
Nga iyi na-achi owa na-asu n'ike n'ike

In *Anu Gbaa Ajo Oso* by Ofomata (2001), after the death of Ikpendu, his two friends Chima and Chukwuka continued with stealing. One day, after robbing from Onitsha marketers, the markers decided to confront them singing song.

Ha niile were iwe kpochichaa ulo ahia ha niile ozigbo, ozigbo, were mja mma mma, ma opio, ma egbe, guru egwu ugu gawa ebe ahụ Chima na Chukwuka bi:

Nzogbu, Nzogbu,
Enyimba, enyi.
Zogbuo Chima,
Enyimba, enyi
zogbuo Chukwuka,
Enyimba, enyi.
Zogbuo umuaka ha,
Enyimba, enyi.
Zogbuo ndi ohi,
Enyimba, enyi.
Zogbuo ndi ama ha,
Enyimba, enyi.
Nzogbu, Nzogbu,

Enyimba, enyi



In Okafo (2010:49) the author used song to showcase how excited people were, when Igwe Ogbajiligwe settled Obiekwe and brother's land dispute wisely..

Otutu mmadu biara inuru ikpe si n'ime obi puta gbaa Obiekwe okirikiri na-ekele ya, na-anu onu. Mgbe o na-ala, o na-akoro ndi ya na ya na-aji na mma ihe e kpetara. Onye o kororo o puo kororo onye ozo. Etu a ka akuko siri gazuo ebe niile. Ndi niile na-emere ya ebere wee gbara na-abia be ya na-agu egwu na-enwe onu ma na-etokwa Igwe Ogbajiliwe. Otu n'ime egwu ndi ha na-agu bu nke a:

Ogbaji! Ogbaji! Ogbaji ka anyi ga-eso oo

Ma o na-eje eje ma o na-ala ala

Ogbajiliwe ka anyi ga-eso oo.

5.) Use of Igbo Oral tradition and Retributive justice

In oral tradition, the primary objective of the storyteller is to set up memorable situations, a folktale is never without a direction and purpose. This is so in the respect that all the various incidents – characterization, and action are carefully tailored to a common end, in terms of a basic principle. This is a moralistic principle that is commonly referred to as the principle of Retributive justice. According to Akporobaro (2001:120) what is meant by this is that unlike what generally happens in life, the wicked characters in oral tradition never go scot free. At the end, they are often victims of their excessive cunning, selfishness and malice. By being presented in this form, the oral tradition becomes a moral force that aesthetically directs the consciousness of the community towards the lore and cultivation of what is good and desirable.

In *Uwa Ntooo* (2014) by Onyekaonwu, Agameevu remained in exile because he was afraid of being killed by late Ebubedike's kinsmen. Onukwube died a premature death for marrying Agameevu that killed her late husband Ebubedike

In *Anu Gbaa Ajo Qso* (2001) by Ofomata, Ikpendu who refused to stop robbery even when his parents and his community were against him, was later burnt alive by group of people that caught him stealing in Onitsha

In *Aka Ekpuchi Eziokwu* (2010) by Okafo, Ezeji was known as a corrupt rich man in his village, for bribing his kinsmen to judge land dispute in favour of him against his brother Obiekwe.

Conclusion

Oral tradition provides a unique and invaluable insight into the cultural life-beliefs, customs, values and aspirations of the Igbo race. Authors of the modern literature have understood crucial role, oral tradition plays in lives of Igbo people. They therefore incorporate oral tradition in their literary works as a way of preserving the cultural heritage of Igbo people. Finally, this paper recommends that further researches have to be carried out from time to time on the relevance of the Igbo oral tradition in the present day study of Igbo literature. This will help in preservation of the Igbo oral tradition for the future generation.

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WOMEN AND THE COLONIAL SPACE: A RE-SIGNIFICATION OF WOMEN IN ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART*

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Abstract

In this article, the re-signification of women in *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe is examined, placing them as agents of change and resistance within the colonial space. An allusion to two well-known colonial texts that continue to obliterate and marginalize African women: Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* buttress this discourse on the African women in colonial space. Using a Postcolonial Feminist perspective, this study looks at how Achebe's depiction of Igbo women subverts colonial preconceptions and patriarchal conventions that have traditionally marginalized and repressed them. Through highlighting the experiences of women such as Ekwefi, Ojiugo, and Ezinma, Achebe challenges the prevailing colonial narrative and demonstrates the intricate and varied roles that women played in preserving cultural identity such as emotional, spiritual and cultural roles; opposing colonialism, and influencing the course of their communities. Women are humanized and empowered by this re-signification of them in the colonial sphere, which also emphasizes their agency and contributions to the fight against colonialism. By reclaiming and revaluing the lives, experiences, and viewpoints of women in the colonial space, *Things Fall Apart* provides a potent counter-discourse to the colonial enterprise, as this study ultimately shows.

Keywords: women of African descent, colonial space,

Introduction

The need to re-signify the representation of the African Woman in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* rests on the assumption that there is a pre-existing signification which is premised on the cultural space and time within which *Things Fall Apart* (TFA) is situated. At this time, culture is considered a great enabler that is disabling (McDermott and Varenne, 1995:336) particularly to women. In the same light, Ajinomoh (2018:315) argues that the:

Hegemonic relation in a patriarchal setup legitimizes and assigns oppression to women. It is this oppression that accounts for the disablement that confronts the feminine gender in such setups. In contrast, the male figure becomes a prosthesis or crutch which the female must depend upon for social, marital and cultural relevance. Thus, getting married, giving birth to children and conforming to social, religious and cultural expectations are all made possible by the prosthetic aid of a masculine figure.



The excerpt points to the tendencies of male hegemony within the African colonial space and the “second fiddled” role that women supposedly play within such cultures. This was indeed a recurring theme and subject of critical interest in the emergent African Literatures. At this point, the treatment of the African woman within the patriarchal system became a metaphor for the oppression of colonies by the colonial powers. There is no doubt that the novel TFA is considered one of the first Master pieces that projected Africa to the world as it is. It was also a repudiation of an “epistemology of ignorance” which had been furnished by the Euro-centric creative and critical literary enterprise that dominated the African literary-scape at the time. The cultural framework that inspired the thematization of and characterization in TFA was therefore predominantly patriarchal. Thus, the representation of women in the texts is done from a standpoint of patriarchy. Most critical works have in line with such arguments described such representations as derogatory especially those authored by women critics. Muthui and Muhoro (2022: 4513), for instance, aver that:

The female gender is seen as subsidiary characters in this text and their good deeds are not recognized. In fact, in this text where female characters tend to outshine the male characters the female gender is demeaned. A good example is when Ezinma portrays a sense of brightness; Okonkwo always wishes she were a boy. Thus, the female characters are placed at subsidiary level.

Such a view continues to find expression in discourses that advocated the liberation of women from cultural oppression and chauvinistic representations. This is so because women continue to advocate their emancipation from the oppressive practices of patriarchy which has relegated them to the background as home makers and child rearers. The gender roles as required by culture and tradition largely favored the men than the women because the traditional institution assigns power and authority to the men. The excesses of patriarchy became the premise upon which women advocated emancipation because they were rendered handicapped by cultures and traditions they considered favorable to the men. Again, this explains why early literary critical works (especially by women) were reactionary and done from the stand point of bias against male projections of female characters. In view of this, it is necessary to critically re-examine such criticisms against the background of gender roles within a patriarchal setup and their underlying implications for the growth and development of society. For instance, rather than emphasizing the “second fiddle” narrative of women, we could examine motherhood as an important and foundational aspect of building society. If indeed, the “Feminists are engaged in the struggle for a fundamental change in gender relations so as to recognize the role of women as full and active participants in the development process” (Yeseibo, 2013:82), then it is important to also acknowledge the important roles they play and are portrayed to play in African literature. The task therefore is to examine the contributions of women to the overall development of society particularly within the colonial space.

As it stands, the portrayal of women in African literature is complex and multifaceted but it has not always been so, what obtains now is a product of Cultural Revolution and Evolution. African literature, being a medium of conveying these Cultural Revolution and Evolution, has itself evolved over time, leading to a significant change in the portrayal of women and the critical engagements that follow. The Pre-Colonial and Colonial era saw the practice of patriarch in its crudest form. In these periods, women were largely depicted as marginal figures, who operated with a limited agency and power. Such depictions portrayed women as subservient to men, occupying roles that limited them to domestic duties.

Research Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative research design which deploys a critical mode of engaging context in relation to the text. The idea is to engage both the reading and writing formations in the interpretative process. The Qualitative Research Method allows for an elaborate and systematic conceptualization and examination of human subjectivity (Brown, 2008:699). In this case, the paper examines existing arguments informed by bias against male dominance and patriarchal culture.



Reference is made to both primary and secondary sources. These sources serve to foreground and interrogate feminist arguments and positions on the representation of women in *Things Fall Apart*. Thus, a critical reading of Chinua Achebe's *TFA*. The task in this paper is to examine these "questionable" roles not as an end in themselves but a means to an end that is crucial to the development of social and cultural formations. This paper approaches this claim through a critical examination of *TFA* and the roles of female characters within the text.

African Women in Colonial Space: An Overview

Heart of Darkness portrays African women through a Eurocentric prism and largely marginalizes them. Although Conrad's depiction of African women is brief, it is noteworthy in the role of the African queen connected to Kurtz. Eroticism and exoticism are used to define this persona, who represents darkish nature and atavistic attraction. African female characters' lack of complexity is a reflection of Conrad's larger propensity to reduce non-European people to tropes or symbols rather than fully formed people. Conrad's criticism of colonialism, which emphasizes the exploitation and dehumanization of Africans, particularly women, may be observed in his portrayal of African women. But this representation has also come under fire for bolstering the "otherness" of African people and promoting racist prejudices.

The statement provides a critical interpretation of *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad, emphasizing the reductive and Eurocentric portrayal of African women. It draws attention to how African female characters - Particularly the "African queen" connected to Kurtz - are marginalized and used symbolically. Instead of being accurately portrayed, she is portrayed with sexuality and exoticism, which resemble Western dreams. As the comment correctly notes, Conrad's African women are more symbolic than fully formed people, lacking nuance and uniqueness. This is part of a larger trend throughout *Heart of Darkness* where non-European individuals are frequently dehumanized or used as a backdrop for European men's moral and psychological issues.

Although the text exposes the cruelty and moral decay of colonialism, it paradoxically perpetuates racial and gendered prejudices, especially by portraying African women as quiet, enigmatic, and representative of a primitive "other." Conrad's anti-colonial criticism is acknowledged, but the study also acknowledges the novel's role in sustaining colonial ideology. In conclusion, the statement criticizes *Heart of Darkness* for its simplistic depiction of African women, contending that despite its denunciation of colonialism, it does not humanize those who are most impacted by it.

Mister Johnson and *Heart of Darkness* are both products of their eras, exhibiting prejudices and colonial mindsets. One may argue that these pieces' representations of African women are stereotyped and symbolic. Instead of being fully developed characters, African women are frequently employed as stereotypes or symbols. Otherized and marginalized; African women's "otherness" and lack of agency are reinforced by their recurrent marginalization in the narrative reflecting prejudices from colonialism. Due to the prejudices of the colonial era, the way African women are portrayed in these works has the potential to reinforce sexist and racist preconceptions.

The way African women are portrayed in these novels reflects the larger issues of colonialism, power struggles, and cultural conflicts. By examining these representations, we may gain a better grasp of the intricacies of colonial narratives and how they continue to influence how we see African cultures and identities.

Postcolonial Feminism as Analytical Framework

Postcolonial Feminism as theoretical framework engages colonialism, gender, race, and class all at once in its analysis of texts. It is interested in both conventional feminism and postcolonial theory. The basic assumptions of the theory begins from the distinction between the struggles of women across the globe, to the idea that the variables of history, race, gender and class each contribute to shaping women's experiences around the world and the empowerment of African women to the detriment of their core values, in terms of culture and traditions. There is also the question of social



justice for women. Some key figure that contributed to the development of Postcolonial Feminism include: Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1955-), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1942) bell hooks (1952-2021), Sara Suleri (1953-2022). Postcolonial feminist readings generally analyze how literature from former colonies portrays women's struggles. The basis for these struggles is rooted in the postcolonial discourse, whose struggle extends over the domains of gender, race, ethnicity and class. According to Collins (2000:71):

The foundations of intersecting oppressions become grounded in interdependent concepts of binary thinking, oppositional difference, objectification, and social hierarchy. With domination based on difference forming an essential underpinning for this entire system of thought, these concepts invariably imply relationships of superiority and inferiority, hierarchical bonds that mesh with political economies of race, gender, and class oppression.

The question of difference and otherness has become applicable in different categories. More so, the question of objectivity is often sacrificed at the instance of such engagements because the mission is to prove the limitation of one and the privilege or dominance of the other. This itself becomes the limitation of all theoretical approaches that seek to examine the struggle of "one" against the oppression of the "another". The task is to examine the gender roles more critically and find the hidden strength of the "other" within the supposed spaces of oppression. The extent to which Postcolonial Feminism is deployed therefore is to the point where it neglects the condescending but powerful roles women play within a patriarchal system. To re-echo the words of Azodo (1997:202) since we cannot say the likes of:

Buchi Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Flora Nwapa are irrelevant because Julia Kristeva, Susan Gardener, Virginia Woolf, Toril Moi, Simone de Beauvoir, and bell hooks, to mention only a few, have already dealt with all the issues that affect women, including African women? To say so would be to ignore the fact that there existed a complementarity of male and female roles in precolonial African societies and that it is during and after colonization that the downfall of the African woman from a position of power and self-sovereignty to becoming man's helper occurred.

The extent to which the latter is true, is what opens up the argument in this paper. If indeed, the roles were complementary, it meant it had some socio-cultural significance in the precolonial space and the enforcement of communality. The question is, at what point some of these roles become derogatory and oppressive? This paper examines three roles projected in *Things Fall Apart* that illustrate a deep level of participation by women in building and sustaining certain socio-cultural values.

Emotional, Spiritual and Cultural Roles of Women in *Things Fall Apart*

The precolonial space has always been portrayed as a patriarchal space that is predominantly hostile to women, especially when we consider the entire arguments from the perspective of women emancipation and social justice for women. Achebe, like most early male authors, has been described as sexist. Nnolim (2009:165) points out that:

Right from the Edenic myth to modern times, women have been depicted as angels with feet of clay, as purveyors of unhappiness both for themselves and for their male counterparts. The image of women in African literature is a gloomy one, compounded by the unhelpful hand of tradition and patriarchy.

This position, leaves much to be desired in terms of the need for a balance criticism of the portrayal of the woman in African Literature. There is however a different angle to this position which is valid when considered from the standpoint of the complementarity of gender roles within a patriarchal setup. *Things Fall Apart* has always been examined from the lens of women emancipation and social justice. This is why the study of the portrayal of women in the text is often done against the background of certain postcolonial and postmodern conditions which are all



products of an interaction with the outside world. As earlier mentioned, the context within which the characters were projected were largely traditional and organic. The characters within Achebe's narrated world will perhaps not have considered their role as condescending and derogatory because they were part of a culture which they are obligated to honor and sustain. Within the same context, certain roles assigned to women had more serious implications for the sanity and growth of the community or communal life. Some of these duties were culture specific and instrumental to ensuring balance within the communal structure of such localities. There are three aspects of such significant obligations or duties that are noticeable in *Things Fall Apart*. They include; the role of providing emotional balance, the role of culture preservation, through creative ingenuity and the role of spirituality in other words serving as spiritual guide.

Emotional Balance

The significance of emotional intelligence in child rearing and the fostering of peace in the home and society at large cannot be down played. In *TFA* Okonkwo's wives served as a source of emotional balance for the family because Okonkwo himself "was ruled by one passion - o hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those things was gentleness and another was idleness" (p.10). Okonkwo's lack of gentleness made him impatient and emotionally unavailable for his children especially Nwoye who was already "developing into a sad-faced youth" (p.10). The role of child rearing is not a condescending role. It is important because it contributes to the overall building of a healthy society. The character of Ikemefuna, for instance, is described as belonging to the clan when Okonkwo handed him over to his wife for care. In this sense, he passes as a metaphor for the children of the entire clan. To entrust him to his wife is no small task considering the manner he was whisked off his homeland. This illustrates the heavy sense of responsibility that lies with the woman because in raising the child, she is also raising a community.

Again, the question of the emotional balancing role of a woman is expressed in the willingness of Okonkwo's mother's people to accept him, when he was banished from Umuofia. They recount the paradox of the situation thus, "A man belongs to his fatherland and not to his motherland. And yet we say Nneka- "Mother is Supreme" (p.96). The explanation put forward is that a mother is always there to protect in other words, emotionally available. What this means is that when "there is sorrow and bitterness, he finds refuge in his motherland" (p. 97). Okonkwo himself enjoys this emotional support from his mother's people when he suffers banishment from Umuofia his fatherland. The argument here is that women play a significant role in ensuring not just the balance of the family but also the balance of society since they provide emotion support for their children and even husband. This role resonates through *TFA* and it is worthy of acknowledging even in the midst of those roles pointed to as negative. In some sense, the narrative journey of the text, is sustained also by this role. To end the narrative line would have been to insert three wives that are unwilling to honor their roles. Perhaps, Okonkwo's end would have been earlier and even more tragic.

Spiritual Role

Another significant role portrayed by women, which is worth pointing to in *TFA* is the spiritual role. It is quite honoring to women that the determinant of victory for the Umuofia clan in times of war, rest with an Oracle whose face and voice is a woman. Umuofia's most potent war-medicine is feminine; "agadi nwanyi" (p.9) meaning old woman. The name of the medicine is feminine because "the active principle in that medicine had been an old woman with one leg" (p. 8). There is also, Agbala: whose priestess, during Okonkwo's childhood, was a woman called Chika. "She was greatly feared" (p. 12). The spiritual source of all fertility is feminine; "Ani" the goddess played a greater part in the life of the people than any other deity; as the ultimate judge of morality and conduct (p. 26). The feast on the New Yam Festival, an important event, was held every year to honor the earth goddess. Women in this sense, are portrayed as spiritually significant and important to the overall growth and development of Umuofia.



Culture Preservation

There is also the role of culture preservation. Over time, this practice have been a means of handing down value and inculcating morals from one generation to another. In *TFA* women were portrayed to carry out this all important role. In one instance; the narrative recounts that: “Low voices, broken now and again by singing, reached Okonkwo from his wives’ huts as each woman and her children told folk stories. Ekwefi and her daughter, Ezinma, sat on a mat on the floor. It was Ekwefi’s turn to tell a story” (p. 68). The practice of telling folktales solely rest with the women, the stories were an embodiment of certain moral values that is expected to shape the children’s moral consciousness. This in itself is a very important role because to build morally sound children is to build a morally sound society.

Conclusion

The re-signification of women in *Things Fall Apart* offers a more objective projection of the role of women within the colonial space. The argument put forward in this paper is that a critical examination of the roles of women require a balanced projection of the roles portrayed in the novel. A closer look at *TFA* therefore reveals that women in the text contribute to emotional stability, cultural conservation and important spiritual activities. Achebe’s narrative also portrays the African woman as active participants in the survival and transformation of their societies. Using the Postcolonial Feminist lens, the paper has demonstrated that women in *TFA* are not merely victims but also an integral part of the making of Umuofia. The likes of Ekwefi, Ezinma, and the priestess of Agbala signify resilience, astuteness, and agency. The presence of these qualities counter both Eurocentric and patriarchal narratives that have historically marginalized African women. Achebe’s portrayal of women in *TFA* arguably revalidates the significance of women in traditional African societies while also offering a richer and more balanced perspective on gender dynamics. Ultimately, *TFA* should not only attract a critique of colonial misrepresentations but also calls for a re-evaluation of interpretations of African cultural histories through the lens of gender. The novel also underscores the necessity of recognizing and valuing women's roles—not just in resistance to colonialism, but in the broader discourse of cultural preservation and societal continuity. The paper affirms that re-signifying women in Achebe’s narrative, and indeed other male authored first generation novels, is essential for a deeper analysis of the novel(s) and the broader historical realities they reflect.

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CHANGES AND CONTINUITY OF LAND TENURE SYSTEM IN AGULU-ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

There has been changes in various Igbo traditional practices and land tenure system is not an exception. In Agulu, there are persistence practices despite obvious alterations in land tenure system and these have not been studied. Agulu is among the communities in Anaocha Local Government Area in Anambra State, Nigeria. This study is poised to highlight land tenure system, the changes and as well persistent practices in land tenure system in Agulu. The theory of social change which explores how and why societies transform over time is used to analyse the changes in land tenure system in Agulu. The changes are as a result of factors like, increase in indigenous population, placing high monetary value on land, among others. It is a survey research and qualitative research method was employed. Data collection was by library collection, oral interviews and observations. Interviews were posed to randomly selected elders and youths who are knowledgeable in land matters. This was done to ascertain the changes and persistent practices in land tenure system in Agulu. Findings reveal that traditionally, Agulu community does not alienate lands to strangers but in the present dispensation, strangers can buy land in Agulu. The study also reveals that in the traditional practice, first sons were obliged to occupy their fathers' compounds but currently some first sons establish settlements outside the fathers' houses. It is believed that this study would benefit every member of the society especially subsequent anthropology scholars as it will serve as a reference point for them. The study recommends that Igbo communities should be mindful of the changes they accommodate while some sustainable traditional land practices should be retained.

Introduction

The Igbo traditional society is both religious and cultural minded. Most of the traditional beliefs they share among themselves are rooted in their customs and are determinants of their cultural values. Pre-colonial Igbo nation operated a republican society and relied on norms guided by customary laws of the land for social management, control and order. Customary laws are products of traditional wisdom developed through socio-environmental experiences to solve life challenges. The custom of the land is handed over from generation to generation. No one knows when they first started taking full effect. It is rather believed that they are learnt and transferred from one generation to another.

Land tenure system in traditional Igbo society like other cultural practices was not written down anywhere instead, they were engraved in the minds of the people. In the contemporary society, most of the practices have been documented and series of alterations also recorded. Land is an indispensable valuable right from the very beginning of man's existence. No one can substantially



trace the origin of land except to the creation story according to the Bible where the Omnipotent being created land in line with the whole universe. In Genesis 1:9-10, "And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let the dry ground appear." And it was so. God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas."..." Prior to the creation, the earth was presented as formless and empty, (International Bible Society, 1993). Many Nigerian scholars have written on land tenure, law, development and management but apart from the creation account, no one has been able to trace the evolution of land. After creation, man understands that land is very essential for his existence.

This study intends to highlight land tenure system in Agulu with a view to explore the changes and as well as persistent practices in land tenure system in Agulu. The changes are as a result of factors like, increase in the indigenous population, placing high monetary value on land, among others. The theory of social change which explores how and why societies transform over time is used to analyse the changes in land tenure system in Agulu. It is a survey research and qualitative research method was employed.

Agulu is one of the towns in Anaocha Local Government Area in Anambra State, Nigeria. It is situated along Awka-Nise-Ekwulobia road. Agulu is a big and prominent town with deep rooted traditions like new yam festival, age grade systems, masquerades cult, among others. It has twenty villages organized into three quarters namely: Ebenato- made up of three villages, Ebeneshii- made up six villages and Ebemonu- made up of eleven villages. The people of Agulu value unique communal life, kinship, and ancestral lineage and as well share cultural heritage that bound them together.

Conceptual Studies

Major concepts used in study were reviewed for clearer understanding.

Change

Change is the process of becoming different from previous or former state. It is replacing of one thing with another. According to <https://www.yourdictionary.com> (2023), change is the act or process of substitution, alteration, or variation. Shaikh (2020) refers to change as the continuous modification that an organisation or individuals make to deal with adjustments in any matter. He adds that in the continuously demanding environment for change as a result of globalization, technology evaluation or higher customer expectation, management of change is very important for organisation continuity and development. Therefore, change is a process, not an event. This means that change is constant and as a result, it is pertinent to handle it in a way it will encourage progression.

Land

Land has many literal concepts. The basic notion of land is that it is a specific piece of earth, a property which the boundaries are clearly delineated and has an owner. It is the soil surface of the earth that is not permanently submerged in the water. Omole (2009:32) believes that "Land is an asset and factor of production for households in Nigeria." This means that land is indispensably valuable to man. *Black law dictionary 7th edition* in Oseni (2014) defines land as an immovable and indestructible three dimensional areas consisting of a portion of the earth's surface, the space above and below the surface and everything growing on or permanently affixed on the land. This definition implies that land may have both a natural and an artificial content. The natural contents include, the ground and its subsoil and things below or above the surface of the earth; whereas the artificial contents include, building and other structures that may be added. It equally means that soil is not the only component of land but also other elements like the lakes, streams, trees and others.

Mgbeahuru (2017) sees land as a part of the earth's surface considered as property. Land as a property subject to private ownership and control is the foundation of modern society and it is



eminently worthy of the superstructure. This means that land as a property under individual ownership and control is traceable to the contemporary society.

Oseni (2014) further asserts that according to section 3 (miscellaneous provision) of the Land Use Act of 1978, immovable property of lands include, everything attached to the earth, and chattels real but does not include minerals in the language of the property. This means that the section 3 included all attachments as part of land except minerals. For Chen (2022), the term land encompasses all physical elements, bestowed by nature, to a specific area or piece of property the environment, fields, forests, minerals, climate, animals and bodies or sources of water.

Shaw, Sinclair, Andah & Okpoko (1993) observe that land in Southern Africa is a representative of the most valued asset of descent groups. They explain that individuals may clear land for their own use, but at death, title passes to their lineage, to be administered as part of their title and claims to authority by invoking a hierarchy of ancestral spirits: that is those who once owned the land who willed responsibility to it to their heirs. Shaw et al (1993) further stress that the Shona call their chiefs *mwene we nyika* meaning, owners of the land. But *nyika* signifies not only the land, but also the people dwellers on it and their rights.

Land Tenure

Land tenure system as Mixtafrica (2021) explains is the process of granting ownership of land to individual bodies, cooperate bodies and natural bodies based on their use of these lands. This statutory instrument is used to ensure that human habitats are safe and sustainable.

Noronha and Lethern (1983) define traditional land tenure as the rules accepted by a group of the ways in which the land is held, used, transferred and transmitted. These rules may have “force of law”, that is, they may be enforced by the courts of a country though they may be unwritten and not incorporated, or specifically set out in any statutes. This means that land tenure in a traditional society is enforceable by law even without being recorded in any book.

Kasimbazi (2017) expresses that land tenure systems are products of historical and cultural factors. Land tenure system comprised of the customary and legal statutory rights that individuals or groups have to land and related resources. They reflect and determine the resulting social relationship between members of a given society. Various countries of the world have developed specific land tenure concepts which are basically on the historical and current values and norms. According to Kasimbazi, these concepts which have often been shaped by an evolutionary process are determinants of present land tenure.

He further avers that “Land and proprietary rights can be used to refer to the rights that individuals, communities, families, firms, and other corporate or community structures hold in land, water, forestry, wildlife and, in some cases, mineral resources.” Kasimbazi believes that land tenure includes the concept of tenure security which refers to enforceable claims on land, with the level of the enforcement ranging from national laws to local village rules, in turn supported by national regulatory frameworks. This implies that land tenure cannot exist outside established regulations be it formally or informally instituted.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts theory of social change to facilitate analysis.

Theory of Social Change

Theory of social change explores how and why societies transform over time and have roots in the works of early sociologists like Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, as well as later thinkers like Karl Marx and Max Weber. Several perspectives exist, each offering a unique lens to explain how societies transform. There are early and modern theories of social change. Early theories of social



change include evolutionary, functionalist, and cyclic theories. While modern theories include, modernization, social evolution, conflict theories, among others.

Theories of social change according to Strasser and Randall (1974) have exhibited great variation in the ways they define and conceptualise the phenomenon of change. Strasser and Randall (1974) maintain that various theories have focused on the individual and group processes which underlie changes in society while others have focused on changes on the social system level. Most theories dealing with social change have been based on one of these perspectives: the psychological perspectives like Freud, Horney; social-psychological perspective like Simmel, George Herbert Mead; sociological perspective like Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx. There are also some biological theories like social Darwinism and geographical and climatic theories that have been advanced. In corroboration with Strasser and Randall (1974), Robertson (1977) expresses that a number of theories of social change have been proposed, not only by sociologists but also by historians and anthropologists, for all three disciplines have a common interest in social change.

However, Robertson (1977) asserts that there are four main theories of social change. They include evolutionary, cyclical, functionalist and conflict theories. This study uses theory of social change based on functionalist perspective because it is the most suitable for the topic under discussion. The functionalist theory of social change proposes that society is in a constant state of equilibrium. When a change occurs in one part of the society, adjustments are made. Social change occurs when the equilibrium is compromised due to rapidity with which events occur.

Again, Neubeck and Glasberg (2005) observe that social change is latent when it is largely unrecognized and unintended. However, sociologists generally agree that whether it is manifest or latent, social change is an ongoing process; it is not a singular, discrete event in a vacuum of time and place. Nevertheless, there has been wide disagreement over how to explain social change.

Stark (2004) states that basic element of social life limits the scope of social change and not all changes are equally likely or even possible. And social life conditions influence the pace of change. For most human history, change took place very slowly. In the past few centuries, change has been very rapid, but only in some parts of the world. While some societies launch space rockets, others have not yet learned to make tools from metals.

Stark (2004) examines general principles of social change and grouped them according to internal source of change and external source of change. Stark opines that social and economic changes that have dramatically taken place in the world during the past several centuries could be summed up by the term modernization. Modernization according to Stark is the process by which agrarian societies are transformed into industrial society.

This theory is the most suitable to analyse the changes and continuity in land tenure system in the area of study. Various factors have driven changes in traditional Igbo land tenure including colonial rule, Western contact and education, urbanization, demand pressure, and the Land Use Act of 1978. These changes have introduced statutory land ownership, individual rights, land commodification and gender equality pressure. The functionalist theory of social change is applied to analyse how these factors reshape traditional land practices, create tension between old and new systems, and alter values of inheritance and authority.

Empirical Review

Ezeh, Emeribe, Ogbomida and Ubachukwu (2022) carried out studies in land tenure system under secular and customary systems. The study made insightful contribution in explaining that under the customary law, land is vested in the community or family and no one has the right to alienation, and the customary court is established to litigate land cases. While in secular system, land is governed by the 1978 Land Use Act that vested land in the state, and the secular system presents some difficulties in land acquisition and administration due to bureaucratic bottleneck and corruption.



Onyemelukwe (2015) studies inheritance and land ownership in Nanka. The objective of the study is to highlight role of female son (retention marriage) in a family that has no male child. The study observes that a man with no son to inherit his landed property cannot pass on his property but it will revert to his brothers or to his male relatives on his death. According to the study, Igbo custom has a way of ensuring continuity of a man's lineage even without a male heir.

Onyemelukwe's study reveals that when there is no male descendant, custom can make a daughter fill the role. The family of the female son will perform the necessary custom on *nhàchi* after which the female son would assume double role in the family. First as a son and full member of the kindred thus, entitled to rights and benefits due to other sons in the kindred. Secondly, she would join the co-wives in the kindred. She could inherit land and transfer to her children.

Adedipe, Olawoye, Olarinde and Okediran (2021) review the rural communal tenure regimes and private land ownership in Western Nigeria and observe that customary land tenure in Nigeria placed the Oba in charge of land distribution. The study avers that the colonial law did not as a rule intervene in customary land tenure, except in cases of appropriation for the public good. The study also observes the similarities and differences in land tenure concepts and practices prior and after the Land Use Act of 1978 which affected the entire country.

Adedipe, Olawoye, Olarinde and Okediran's study is necessary as it discloses the impact of land tenure system on agriculture, rural development and overall national development from economic, socio-cultural and legal perspective. The study as well reveals that despite changes in land tenure, the subject of land remains sensitive throughout the country. This is because of the fact that land is regarded as a productive combination of economic, social and political assets.

Ojiaka (2022) examines the customary land tenure system of Unubi people and observes that interest in land is mainly acquired by inheritance. The study observes that Unubi people's land were founded by three families who were the first settlers on the land. Ojiaka's study is important because it helps to understand that Unubi community has a long established five modes of land ownership.

Acholonu and Ochiabutor (2021) carried out study on Igbo land tenure system and gender inequality focusing on the mass media responsibility. The objective of the study is to examine the issue of land tenure system in Igbo land with its attendant gender inequality and the responsibilities of the mass media. Findings of the study reveal that women disinheritance of landed property had continued despite Supreme Court decision on female inheritance which upheld the right of a female child inheritance to the father's property. It also discloses that the mass media wield enormous power when it comes to campaigning for attitudinal or behavioural change and so they should see the campaign on Igbo land tenure system and gender inequality as important and consequently reflect it in their news stories, editorials, commentaries and feature articles. The study of Acholonu and Ochiabutor (2021) relates to this study in that they both discuss land tenure system in Igbo land. But, they are different in the area of concentration.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Here, the study sets out to analyse the concept of land among Agulu people together with the changes and persistent practices in land tenure system in Agulu.

The Concept of Land among the Agulu People before the Contact with Foreign Culture

The Igbo people are cultural people. They have certain peculiar cultural heritage that distinguishes them from other cultural groups. Land among the Igbo people has two concepts. Firstly, the Igbo people consider land as the earth surface where they cultivate crops, build houses and markets, construct roads, among other things. Pius Nnebedum (phone interview on 29th November, 2023) explains that everything a man can do is done on the land and for the Igbo people, land is a gift



from God on which man performs every other tasks. Man cannot give any account of land in terms of its origin rather every human being comes into the world and meets the land already in existence. Agulu people believe that God instructed the Israelites to obey His command and enjoy the land He promised them in the Bible, (Deuteronomy 11:24) thus, “Every place where you set your foot will be yours: Your territory will extend from the desert to....” This is to say that people of Agulu believe that God created land and handed it over to man as a gift for him to utilize.

The second concept of land among the Igbo people right from the pre-colonial period remains that land is a spirit agent of supreme God. Before the contact with Europeans, Agulu people believe that land is the earth goddess and an agent of the supreme God. There is a belief that land is bigger and greater than man not only amongst Agulu people but in entire Igbo land. It is evident in Igbo names like Anakamadu, Ananwemmadu, among others. And this belief still holds.

Ogechukwu Okonkwo (personal interview on 17th May, 2023) concurs that traditionally, Agulu community has a belief that land is a super natural agent of God who oversees right conduct and equally superintends over fruitfulness. Because land is in charge of good conduct, Igbo people do not bury those that committed abominable acts like one who committed murder or suicide in the land for fear of polluting the earth goddess. In the pre-colonial period, such corpse was abandoned in the evil forest as food for vultures and wild animals.

More so, consequent on attribute of land as a symbol of spiritual agent of fertility, it is believed that the earth goddess is a female being. Land is the goddess who is in charge of fertility. As a goddess, it gives authority to plants and farm produce to give abundant yield. According to Onyemaechi Anikwata the people are always conscious not to offend the earth goddess because it is capable of causing a poor harvest. Onyemaechi's assertion agrees with Asogwa and Opata (2017) assertion that land is regarded as the source of human sustenance from where all plants and humans draw their powers of fertility and production and both lend credence to Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism which proposes that interpretation given to a symbol by any group is the best. Agulu people believe that land is symbolically a spirit agent of fertility and the interpretation stands as the most correct.

4.2.1 Land Tenure System in Agulu in the Pre-Colonial Period and Changes

There are five major categories of land tenure system in most Igbo traditional communities including Agulu. They are: (a) Communal or community land (b) Village land (c) Clan or Kindred land (d) Family land (e) Individual land.

(a) Communal land: Communal land also known as community land comprised of lands which the entire community has an individual or proprietary interest. Community lands are held in trust and administered by the community chiefs or leaders. Individuals are entitled to pieces of communal land for farming as members of a village, clan or family. The community land is mapped out from according to the number of villages and the villages share according to clans and each clan shares to all male indigenes that are of age and pay their annual community levies. Community members are given some portion of the land only for the purpose of farming. With the inception of colonial rulers and subsequent contact with the Christian missionaries, Agulu community donated most of their community lands to the churches and government for public oriented projects like building of schools, churches and hospitals. Schools like former Girls High School Agulu now Rosa Mystica College and Udodimma Primary School both sited along Awka-Agulu-Ekwulobia road are situated in community lands.

(b) Village land: Village land also refers to as communal land comprises lands which the entire community has an individual or proprietary interest. Village lands are held and administered by the village chiefs or leaders. In communities that practice communal land tenure system, each member has a right to use independently the holdings of the community. The communal land is owned and managed by the village. The village leaders or heads allot lands to adult male indigenes in the



village who transfer the ownership to their progenies. The village land is specifically given out for farming and for public projects like siting markets.

(c) Clan land: It emanates from the village land. According to Norbert Muoebonam it is the clan that owns and distributes their share of land from the village in most Igbo communities. The clans own land and distribute among the families who thereafter redistribute among families members. Land tenure system common among Agulu community was mostly clan land ownership because clans in the twenty villages in Agulu have lands clustered together in their villages. Though there are few individuals, families or clans whose land are seen situated in between other clans.

In Isiamagbo village Agulu, for instance, there are five quarters made up of varying numbers summing up to 40 clans. The quarters are: Akaezi, Ogwugwu and Dunife, Umuezeota, Umugo and Ndiagu. Members of these clans in these quarters divide lands according to families that constitute each clan. For example, Umudinuchenwa a clan in Umugo quarter is constituted by four extended families namely; Umuegede, Umugbajalu, Umobianwo and Umokpokoro. Lands were subdivided among these four extended families and as such their lands are mostly clustered close to one another both the residential houses and farm lands, except for few houses and farm lands situated within other clans. Individuals use mainly *ogirisi* or other life trees to indicate demarcations of their portions of the land.

Whenever there is misunderstanding among family members or between brothers as regard land distribution, the parties involved would consult their kinsmen who will settle the dispute. When the dispute among family members or brothers cannot be resolved by the kinsmen, or, any party involved in the dispute is not satisfied with the resolution given by the kindred, the party would take the case to the village group.

Again, most times the village group would refer to the resolution made by the kinsmen. Anyone who neglects the kinsmen and takes such case straight to the village would always be referred back to the kindred. Sometimes, the village group would uphold the resolution of the kinsmen. In other words, any land dispute among family members must first of all be taken to the kindred to settle. It is only when one party is unsatisfied with the kinsmen's judgment that the matter would be taken to the village group. Since the inception of statutory laws, most land disputes are taken to the law court especially when either of the parties feels dissatisfied with the clan's judgment.

(d) Family land: Family land in the pre-colonial era was allotted from clan to the family. The head of the family holds the land in trust for other members of the family. The head of the family cannot take any decision on the land or alienate the land without first of all seeking the opinion of other principal family members. However, this is no longer obtainable in most cases because, at the time of this study, individuals can decide to sell their land without the knowledge of other family members. Again, the oldest son in the family irrespective of whether the mother is the first, second or third wife gets the biggest share of land. This practice has been consistently in use.

Also, the eldest son inherits the father's compound but, he must accommodate his siblings till they are able to build their own houses and then move out of the family house. But at the time of this study, eldest son who is wealthy can acquire land elsewhere maybe at a more pronounced location and build a residential house for himself. Some eldest sons even when they move out still hold on to their fathers' compounds as their birth rights while few others may decide to relinquish to the younger brothers.

(e) Individual land: In the pre-colonial Igbo society, individual land tenure was available only for farming or agricultural purposes. Individuals get share of the land from their family land. It could be for a member of the family to build residential house and some portions to cultivate for his subsistence needs. Most individual lands in the pre-colonial period was inherited from the forefathers that is, father to son inheritance. An individual can as well give out the land he either inherited from the father or his share of the kindred's land to others on rental basis for cultivation.



In Agulu community, land in the pre-colonial period could not be alienated by an individual without the consent of other family members.

In pre-colonial period, land can only be pledge, borrowed, gifted or exchanged but not outright alienation especially through sale to a stranger. It is believed to be because individuals lack absolute right or title to land but possess only usufruct right or title. The use right to land by individuals in the Igbo traditional society made some people like Uzoezie (2002) to argue that individual land ownership is alien to the Igbo people. But, in the present dispensation, individuals alienate lands without the knowledge of other family or clan members. Consequently, some families are challenged by land disputes and protracted court cases with the unsuspecting buyer or buyers.

Summary of Findings

At the end of the study, findings reveal that in the pre-colonial period, Agulu community does not alienate lands to strangers but in the present dispensation, strangers can buy land in Agulu. The study also reveals that in the traditional practice, first sons were obliged to occupy their fathers' compounds but currently some first sons establish settlements outside the fathers' houses. Again, findings show that the father's house is persistently the eldest son's birth right though at present, he can choose whether or not to relinquish to his younger brothers.

Conclusion

The study has been able to establish that though there have been alterations in land tenure system in Agulu, some important aspect of land tenure system have remained resilient. For instance, first son inheriting the father's house is still prevalent despite the change observed where some wealthy first sons can now establish in any better locations of their choices. Also, the study has ascertained that individuals at the time of the research have absolute title or right to land and can conveniently dispose of their lands any time without the consent of other family members. This research cannot claim to have exhausted every aspect of land tenure system in Agulu. Therefore, it recommends that further study be made to explore other areas of land tenure system.

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PRAGMALINGUISTICS STUDY OF NAMES IN THE GHOMALA' LANGUAGE OF CAMEROON

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Abstract

This article presents a pragmalinguistic aspects of names in the Ghomálá' language spoken in Cameroon. A pragmalinguistic study of names is an analysis of the use of names in a specific social and cultural context, taking into account the way they convey meaning and intentions. In Ghomálá'-speaking communities, people, places, groups, plants, animals and other entities are assigned names that reflect circumstantial, contextual, historical, social, temporal and cultural perspectives. We want to understand how names in the Ghomálá' language contribute to the construction of cultural and social identity, and how they are used to convey information about the relationship between the speaker and the named identity. This study aims to provide the meaning and function of these names in order to preserve our rich cultural heritage. The theoretical framework is based on the principles of pragmatics and sociolinguistics which highlight the role of context in shaping language use and meaning. The methodology employed in this study combined qualitative and quantitative analysis. Data were collected from interviews with native speakers of the Ghomálá' language and text analyses. The pragmalinguistic analysis reveals that names in Ghomálá' language serve not only to identify specific entities but also to convey information about the relationship between the speaker and the named entity, as well as the cultural and social context in which communication takes place.

Key words: pragmalinguistic-names-language-function-onomastic

Introduction

Names are an integral part of human communication enabling us to identify individuals, groups and places. In social context names play a crucial role in creating and maintaining social relationships. Ghomálá' is a Bantu Language of Western group, spoken in the departments of Mifi, Koung-khi and the Hauts-plateaux of West Cameroon. It is one of the major native language in Cameroon. It comprises fourteen dialects, namely Bandjoun, Bahouan, Baham, Bafoussam, Bayangam, Batie, Bansoa, Bamendjou, Bameka, Baleng, Bamengoum, Badenkop, Bapa, and Bafounda. In the Ghomálá' language – speaking communities that we listed above, we say that names can be used to nickname individuals who have made an impact on us. People may have names related to circumstances or names can be related to status in the society. Names also designate groups, places, plants and weather conditions in the society. The use of names in Ghomálá' language – speaking communities is not well understood, and there is a need to investigate the significance and functions of names in these communities. Our goal is to categorize and classify the various names used in these communities, with the aim of subsequently analysing and interpreting their meanings and functions within the cultural context in which they are used.

Despite the importance of names in Ghomála' culture, there is a dearth of research on the pragmatics of naming in this language. Previous studies or naming practices in African languages have highlighted the complex and multifaceted nature of naming systems (example: Akinnaso (1980); Oyebade (2001)). These studies have primarily focused on naming practices in languages such as Yoruba and Igbo, and there is a need for research on naming practices in other African languages including Ghomálá'. In the context of pragmatics, the study of naming practice can provide insights into the ways in which language is used to create and negotiate social relationships. As noted by Levinson (1983), Pragmatics is concerned with the study of language in



context, and the analysis of naming practices in Ghòmálá' can reveal how language is used to construct and maintain social identities.

To achieve the objectives of this study, a qualitative approach was used. The study employed a case study design, focusing on the Ghòmálá' language and culture. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants, observations of naming practices and analysis of relevant documents. The results of this study show that names in the Ghòmálá' language are deeply linked to the culture and history of the people. As far as this study limitations are concerned, we say that the geographical scope is restricted to the Ghòmálá -speaking communities in the West of Cameroon.

I- LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Research on names in African languages has shown that names play a crucial role in African cultures, reflecting social, cultural and religious identities Eru (2008); Kouega (2018) publication entitled: "Names and identity in African cultures, with a focus on Cameroonian names. He examines the structure, semantics and pragmatics of names in Cameroon, highlighting their role in shaping identity, culture and social relationships. George Echu (2008) in his-article titled "names and practices in African cultures explores the significance of names in African cultures, including their role in shaping identity, culture and social relationships. In the context of Cameroon, Echu's research highlights the importance of names in reflecting cultural identity and social status. He also examines the structure and semantics of names in various Cameroonian languages. The paper of Eric A, Anchimbe (2011) titled "on not calling people by their names pragmatic undertones of sociocultural relationships in a post colony" discusses name, avoidance by Cameroonians, and some of the socio-pragmatics impacts it creates. Focus is on five items that are often used in place of personal names – Manyi (mother of twins) Tanyi (father of twins) Moyo (in law, especially male), Mbanya (co-wife in a polygamous marriage), and Mbombo (namesake). The article identifies some of the contexts in, and the purposes for, which these terms are used. Eyoh Mensah and Solange Mekamgoum (2017) in their article entitled "the communicative significance of Ngêmbà personal names" present personal names as communitive acts that mirror a wide range of human experience within its socio-cultural context. They trace the stories behind these names, investigate their communicative and socio-onomastic significance and analyse their ethno pragmatic meanings. Mapeh Joan (2023), in her paper entitled "the socio-linguistic implications of personal names in Mokpe" investigates the semantic aspects, naming criteria and typology of Mokpe personal names. Wega Simeu in his Article titled "Morpho-syntactic, lexical and semantic curiosities in the naming practice in Ghòmálá' identifies the various morphosyntactic structures of names, he aimed to discuss their semantic implications. He sensitizes the native speakers to enhance the value of their culture and identity through their family names. He also derogates the mental colonization and the excessive attribution of borrowed names to Cameroonian-children, which in fact is taking them away from their culture, language and identity. In our work, we plan to categorize these names based on their contextual appearance and then explore their cultural significance.

In our article entitled "Pragma linguistics study of names in the Ghòmálá' language of Cameroon", we aim to categorise the existing names as they appear in different contexts, this follows the onomastic-typology in order to describe them and provide their implications according to the Pragma and sociolinguistic approach.

As far as theoretical framework is concerned, let us first of all remind that this paper remains on the aspect of linguistics based on the theory that there is a strong interface between people's language and their cultural practices. In this presupposition, the premise is that language is both used as a cultural resource, practice and envisioned as a resource, used to view and understand the worldview and philosophy of a particular society. Agye Kum (2006) stresses that language can be used as microscopic lens to view and understand the society. People's language, culture and thought are intimately interwoven. In this linguistic anthropological intimacy, language is considered as a social



tool with the power to evoke realities beyond the literal linguistic content of what is uttered. According to Duranti (1997), language is a set of symbolic resources connecting the social fabric and the individual representation of actual or possible worlds; a cultural practice and verbal activities that link and fit verbal activities to the real world. Presumably, this is also true of Ghòmálá' names.

Since there is a very close connection between the world, which is reality and the word, which is language, linguistic signs are therefore representations of words and also to a greater extent the world. In the study, Ghòmálá' names are the linguistic signs, while their sociocultural interpretations represent the real world. Since language and sociocultural practices are dynamic, the Ghòmálá' people and their naming systems are eventually affected by this dynamism. As a manifestation and description of the complexity and diversity of way of life and practices, people's language is itself manifested in various ways. Such ways include their naming systems (the focus of this paper), marriage, family, kinship, political aspect, economic issues, occupational aspect, health systems, religious beliefs and practices, law, funeral persuasion. Linguistic anthropology may also be used to explain how language allows for and creates differentiations between groups, individuals and identities Duranti (1997). This is the case in sociocultural contexts specificity in the general theoretical frame of anthropology.

Though naming is considered as a universal cultural practice where every society in the world gives names as tags to its people, it is also specific because how the names are given the practices and rituals involved and the interpretations attached to the names differ from society to society and from one culture to another. This goes without saying that amid the fact that every society may have their unique naming system, societies with closely related culture ought to have closely related naming practices. Thus, being a Cameroonian national language, Ghòmálá' may share same naming system practices with other Cameroonian linguistic communities though uniqueness among them may still prevail.

This study was conducted within the premise of the principle of indexicality and specificity of sociocultural contexts. With the principle of indexicality, language is used as a tool through which people's socio-cultural world is constantly described, evaluated and reproduced Wardhaugh (2006). The Ghòmálá' naming system is an aspect of cultural indexicality in which names are connected to some aspects of the sociocultural contexts of the society. Ghòmálá' names can be described and receive pragmatic and sociolinguistic interpretations by referring to personal, temporal, spatial, plants and river names.

In Ghòmálá' communities especially in the Bandjoun community, each type of rain (bèn) presenting different characteristics has its names. We have for example "bèn tîdzu". It is a name given to the rain that falls every time; in the night as in the day. It appears every month of August. We also have the temporal name "bèn tɔ kwo 'nyə" referring to the rain that comes without warning, there are also river names referring to Ghòmálá' communities. For instance, "Hèshyó in the Bandjoun village which is a purifying river. There is "Mghám" which is a sacred river where people do not enter, as their ancestral spirits reside within. There are plants names like "Pèkùdzum" that soothes red bottoms in children and "wùwù" that treats ringworm in children. Beyond description, these names can also have social and contextual meaning. For example, a woman who has given birth to two children is called "Mâgnè" and the man "Tâgnè". Some names clearly depict that the bearer comes from the royal family or from a particular clan. For a child born to the royal family and for somebody belonging to a clan. This paper therefore, seeks to document the contextual and social aspects of names, even though it associates the description of some initiatives like the Ghòmálá' language and Literacy committee which is committed to documenting the Ghòmálá' language in every possible area and means in order to preserve this very important aspect of cultural heritage.



II- METHODOLOGY

In order to carry out this study, we developed a rigorous methodology that enabled us to collect and analyse reliable data. In the following section, we will present the key elements of our methodology, including participants, instruments, and data collection procedures and data analysis.

Participants

“The participants in our data collection were ten people, mostly men. Some were notable figures, while others were indigenous community members. They were aged between sixty and eighty years old. These informants were receptive to our study and are all native speakers of the Ghomálá’ language. Participants consented to having their voices recorded, and we opted to keep them anonymous to protect their identities. We selected some of these speakers based on recommendations from people close to us, while others were chosen due to their cultural significance within the community. Nevertheless, we found that they all possessed valuable information about the meaning of names.

Numbers	informants	Traditional Status	sex	age	occupation	origin	Place of residence
1	DZUDOM Philippe	Notable	M	61	mechanic	West	Bandjoun
2	SOUOP FOADING	Notable	M	80	Traditional Doctor	West	Bandjoun
3	DESO Chretien	Village priest	M	64	Retired civil servant	West	Bandjoun
4	MAGNE Marie	Priestess	F	75	Female farmer	West	Bamendjou
5	MAFO Caroline	Priestess	F	60	Hair stylist	West	Baham
6	TALLA Ignace	Notable	M	61	Teacher	West	Bamendjou
7	TAYOU Paul	Notable	M	78	Farmer	West	Bandjoun
8	KAMDEM Arlette	Priestess	F	60	Teacher	West	Baham
9	TALOM Vieux	Local priest	M	74	Crop farmer	West	Bahouan
10	FOKOUÉ David	Notable	M	60	Trader	West	Bamengoum

Instruments

We collected our data using video and audio recording instruments, specifically cameras and dictaphones. We chose these tools to ensure that no information would be missed. The video recordings allowed us to discover contextual names derived from the ritual of accessing the stool in the Bandjoun and Bamendjou communities. After recording the sacrifice chair rituals, we conducted interview with some speakers, during which we obtained the meaning of the names assigned during the ritual. These interviews with resource persons gave us a certain level of assurance. With other speakers from these communities and through our audio record interviews, we were able to understand the meaning of other types of names.



Data collection procedures

Our data were collected through direct observation techniques of a few rituals and through interviews with speakers from communities who provided us information on the meaning of names within the contextual historical, social, temporal and cultural framework of the communities. These techniques enabled us to assemble a corpus. We opted for semi-structured interviews which involved asking close-ended questions that respondents had to limit their answers to the advantage of this type of interview is that it allowed us to obtain almost identical responses from participants to ensure the authenticity of the information, we interviewed at least three people from each studied community.

III- DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of data on proper names is a fascinating field of studies that allows for a better understanding of the origins and meaning of proper names. In this study, we propose to examine the data related to these different types of names, in order to identify trends and patterns that could help us better understand the mechanisms of naming and the processes of creating proper names. We will focus particularly on names of people, rivers, mountains, and times. The results of our analysis are based on the data from linguistic data bases: informants, data of our thesis, our resources and Ghomálá' dictionaries.

i. Typology of Ghomálá' names

This subsection presents the typology of some existing proper names in the Ghomálá' speech community. It is an empirical contextual and sociocultural descriptive study of names that exist in this communities. After categorizing them, we present the origin, morphological structure and variation of these proper nouns in speech communities. The results of our analysis are presented in the form of tables in order to facilitate understanding and interpretation of the data.

Patronymic names

A patronymic name can be defined as a family name that is transmitted from generation to generation, usually based on the paternal lineage. It is also called a surname. In Western Cameroon, the attribution of patronymic names is often linked to local culture and traditions. Names in most communities are given in a dynastic way. (That is a name is given to a child because someone else had that name). The attribution of the name consists of perpetuating the lineage, to perpetuate the name so that it is not lost. Names can also be given in relation to the reality, of life. The name "Sokoudjou" in Bamendjou community is a royal name. It can be attributed to a child to pay homage to the Chief. This means that the twin who bears this name is as powerful as the Chief. But let us say that the name in itself is meaningless. We present on the table below, patronymic names from their origin before giving their implication and content.

Junior names	twin's	Circumstantial names	Theophoros names	Stereotypical names
Málá Kǝŋgnè Kuátè Kouetche Bakam Kemogne		Bǝnyè Sûmǎfè Nyǎplǎ'á Dzwíjyè Mǎtyè'jyè Fǎmdyè	Fosí Gaǝcwésí Ghǝmsí Dzwísí Nǝmsí Da'sí Símò	Sokoudjou Djomo Kamga Foadjo Chǝmcwà' Fokam Gǎmnyè



In some communities speaking the Ghomálá' language, younger twins are given specific names that are traditionally reserved for them. The names Málá, Kǎṅnè and Kouetche are attributed to younger twins in Bamendjou. Málá' is exclusively for girls and Kouetche for boys. The proper name kǎṅnè can be borne by both girls and boys. In Bandjoun community, we have the names Kuátè for boy and Bakam for girl. In Baham community, we have Kəṁmogne for girl and boy. The variation observed shows the evolution, richness and even the diversity in the language. Let us talk of morphological structure of the name "Bakam". It is made up of two names: Bá and Kam. "Ba" means calabash and "kam" means "dignitary". Where Bakam means "the chief's calabash". Let us also say that "kuátè" in Bandjoun is the equivalent of "Kouetche" in Bamendjou.

The name "Bonyə" is given circumstantially to a child in Bandjoun community when the parent of the child has been repeatedly victimized by the jealousy of their neighbors. This name can vary as "Bonyəṅkà", which literally means "jealousy of the world" or "hatred of men of earth". The proper name "Dzwíjyə" is composed of "Dzwí" that means woman and "Jyə" meaning "forbidden". It literally means "forbidden woman". This name was given to children born on a specific day of the week in the community. The day is "Dzədə", it is a major market day when it was forbidden to go to work. The name may vary by Mətyə'jyə. This variation in the name shows the evolution of the language. Other circumstantial names include: 'Famdyə', 'Súmàfò', and 'Nyàplă'á'. During the rite that grant access to sitting on the stool, which we participated in Bandjoun and Bamendjou communities, we received circumstantial names such as Nyaplă'á and Súmàfò in Bandjoun and Bamendjou respectively. These surnames were given at the end of the rite by the officiant to the daughters of the concession who were made to sit on the stool. "Nyaplă'á" literally means the one who arranges the concession. As for the other, "Súmàfò" means the friend of the Queen. These surnames given in the ritual context will be evoked to refer to the circumstance. Also, with the aim of reminding them of their mission. That of bringing peace and being a friend to the Queen. Another circumstantial name includes "Famdyə" which literally means "abandoned house". A child who receives this name is one whose father died while the child was still in his/ her mother's womb. It is the circumstance that is at the origin of this name. Therefore, a child who still has both parents cannot bear this name at birth. If there are children bearing this name without being in this situation, it is because we have a habit of giving our child the name of a family member or friend in a dynastic way, who likely came into the world under these circumstances.

Theophoric names such as Ghəmsí (word of God); Dzwîsî (wife of God); Nəmsí (animal of God); Fosí (Chief of God) in the Bandjoun community; and Gaəcwə'sí (I have cried out to God) in Bamendjou community are names that refer to a deity, God. These theophoric names often have morphological structures that combine a name of God with another name.

Here are some examples of morphological structures of theophoric names listed above:

- i. Noun + name of God: "Dzwîsî" (wife of God)
- ii. Noun + name of God: 'Nəmsí' (animal of God)
- iii. Noun + name of God: "Fosí" (chief of God)
- iv. Pronoun + verb + name of God "Gaəcwə'sí" (I have cried out to God).
"Si" stands for "God"; "Dzwî" means "woman"; "Nəmə" means "animal" and "Fo" stands for "Chief". "Gaə" means 'I', Cwə' means 'to cry'.

These morphological structures can be used to create theophoric names that express a relationship or divine characteristic. This way of giving names is specific to communities speaking Ghomálá' languages in particular and African communities in general.

There are names given to children considered as special in the community. That is twins and some children born with certain physical characteristics, such as feet-first. In the Bandjoun and



Bamendjou communities, twins are given the names of village chiefs, regardless of whether they are alive or dead, the royal names Sokoundjou in Bamendjou and Fokam, Gâmnyè, Foadjo and Djomo are given to twins in Bandjoun community. These names are given to pay homage to chiefs, signifying that the twins bearing the names are as powerful as the chief. Similarly, some children born feet-first are given the name “Cîmcwà” in both Bandjoun and Bamendjou communities. There are considered to be as more powerful than twins. Let us recall however, that the following stereotypical names have no meaning. They are: "Foko", "Foadjo" in Bandjoun community and "Sokoudjou" in Bamendjou.

Crononym

It is used to describe a specific period of time. In Bandjoun community, names are given to describe timeframe; this during raining and dry season. Raining season called “KâpSôp” in Ghômálá’ is characterised by different rains. As we can see in the table, dry season called “Kâp Lôm” also have period that we can see indicated in the table.

Raining Season	Meaning	Dry Season	Meaning
Bəŋ tîdză	Continuous rain that falls day and night typically in August.	Kákkák nàm	Bright sun
Bəŋ mkamkàm	Rain that marks the end of the rainy season, typically in October	Kékê nam	Early morning sun
Bəŋ tə kwó’ nyə	Sudden rain	Nàm kópák	Sunset
Bəŋ zhwəmsəŋ	Heavy rain with strong winds that causes damage.	Nàm bəŋ	Sun shining through the rain
Bəŋ mwe	Rain with hail	Kapcwə	Famine or food scarcity
Bəŋ gwǝ’sám	Rain that brings out termites	Bě̀nàm	Late afternoon
Dòmnyə bəŋ	Flood	Tsənàm	Sunrise

Toponym

It is the study of place names. It evolves examining the origins and history of names of geographic features. They are presented in the table below

Mountains names	Origin	Meaning	History
Hù	It is formed by the accumulation of fresh or brackish water in a depression in the terrain	Marsh	It has played important role in human history in the sense that it provides resources such as fish, birds, medicinal plant and building materials for community living near
	Rivers, streams and water run off can all	Canyon	It is used for traditional



Kəṇnyətsu'	contribute to their formation		ceremonies, rituals and ancestor worship.
Kəkəṇ	It can be created or modify by human activity such as construction	Landfill mound	The current hills are the result of geological processes that occurred during this period of geological history including mountain formation and erosion
Pfəpfəp	It can originate from erosion, deposition, tectonic activity	Lowland	Plains have played a significant role in human history, often serving as fertile agricultural areas, habitats for wild life and routes for trade and migration

Hydronym

It is a proper noun that designates a watercourse, lake, ocean or any other hydrological feature. It can be names of rivers, lakes, seas, ocean. Most of the water courses existing in the communities speaking Ghomálá' are natural and have existed since the creation of the lands of these communities. It is certainly true that some appear during the rainy season and disappear during the dry season. These watercourse names do nothave meaning in English. Their meaning remains within the context of the language. A body of water originating from another community's area flows into different communities and has different names in each community. We present below in a table the existing watercourses in Bandjoun community, along with their origin. We will describe these watercourses before exploring their cultural significance.

Watercourses	Origin	Description	Cultural significance
Mnuḍ	It is a water source that flows from the Noun River	It is located in the country side, not far from where the women farm	It is a watercourse that changed its course due to a sea crab (kómnyḍ) that was the totem of the former village chief Foadjo. It is used to treat diseases.



Mghóm	It is a natural sacred water that originated from Bayangam	This water flows in a sacred place, Hèshyó at Bandjoun	It is commonly referred to albeit inaccurately and is used for purification purposes.
Shyámgho	It originated from Baham it is water of strangers because a group of people settled in this area, and the water source there came to be known as “Water of strangers” due to the new comers being outsiders.	It is situated between two neighbourhoods, Shyálá' and Jyámgho. It also flows into the water located near the mosque in the area.	It is a sacred place where sacrifices are made and people are purified with water that flows
Hèeshyóshyó	Sacred place where Mghóm water flows. Water Mghóm is now called H because of its sacred status.	This water in the Noun placed is now called "Hèshyó"	It is a sacred place where sacrifices are made and people are purified with water that flows.

Phytonym

It is the study of plant names, especially the linguistic and etymological analysis of the names given to plants. This can include: the origin of plant names, their meaning. we present some of these plants and trees in the following table.

Plants and trees	Meaning and Description	Origin	Rôle
Thó dók	Eucalyptus: it is a tree native to Australia	It is an imported plant brought by the colonizers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eucalyptus leaves have medicinal properties Eucalyptus logs can be used to make slats, planks
Tójom	It is a traditional remedy whose meaning remains within the context of the community.	The name “Tójom” was given to the remedy to remember the one who found the medicine that ended the plague in the Bandjoun community.	This traditional remedy is administered to children to cleanse their stomachs and prevent the plague that once affected the community.
wùwù	Greeping herb existing only in language	There is no story behind this traditional plant	It is used to treat ring worm in children



Təŋkəyú'	Medicinal plants	No story behind the traditional herb	The plants treat coughs and helps the umbilical cord stump fall off quickly in new-borns.
Fupàgras	Lemon grass	No story behind	Use for medicinal properties
Pfə̀kə̀ŋ	Peace tree	It symbolized peaceful intention in a time of tribal wars. Leaders carried it to signal they came in peace, not war.	This plant holds spiritual significance and is used to symbolize a sacred site
Mghé kə̀dà	The king of herbs. It is a magical herb	No story behind the medicinal herb	It cures many diseases

Conclusion

In conclusion, this pragma linguistics study of names in the Ghòmálá' language of Cameroon has revealed the intricate relationship between language, culture and identity. The analysis of various types of names, including Patronyms, Toponyms, Chrononyms, Hydronyms and Phytonyms, has shown that names are not just mere labels, but carry significant cultural, historical and social meaning. The study of patronymic family names in communities speaking the language has allowed us to group them in context. We have names attributed to younger twins, circumstantial names, theophoric names and stereotypical names. The analysis of the morphological structures of the names allows for a deep understanding of them. The names are given in a dynastic way, in order to preserve the lineage and prevent names from being lost. Circumstantial names for example can be attributed to a child who has not experienced the circumstance. Names can also be given to socially characterize a man or woman. In the rite, giving access to sit on the stool, a name is given at the end of this rite to socially characterize the one being installed on the stool. The circumstantial name Nyàplá'á is given to the one who brings peace to the family. Certain names, although meaningless, are given according to the realities of life. This is the case with the stereotypical name Sokoudjou which is attributed to one of twins in Bamendjou community simply to signify that a twin is as powerful as a chief. All these attributions are rooted in tradition.

Regarding Chrononyms, let us say that each type of weather in communities speaking the Ghòmálá' language has a specific name. This shows the richness and diversity of the language from a temporal perspective. The names of places (Toponyms) derive their meaning from their origin, geographical feature and history. The majority of watercourses flowing through the communities are used either for purification or treatment. The majority of place names, time, rivers and Patronyms do not have meaning in English. Their meaning remains in the cultural context. This may be due to conventions and history in their language. Preserving this meaning in the context of the language helps maintain consistency and accuracy in referencing, this to avoid confusion. Let us say that this study on the meaning of names help us to understand how language works. It also helps us understand the cultural and historical context in which they were created and used.



Recommendations

To further this research and deepen our understanding of the language and name, we recommend: studying dialectical variations of the language and their impact on names, deepening the analysis of cultural and historical contexts of names in the Ghomálá' language. Documenting and preserving knowledge about the Ghomálá' language and associated names.

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LEADERSHIP AND THE MISSING LINK IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES

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Abstract

Most African countries contain different linguistic and cultural groups. Unfortunately, few of our leaders welcome these languages and cultures, attempting to promote one or two languages deemed important for unity and economic growth. Others have their minds closed to the prospect of any African indigenous language cutting many children off from their culture and enforcing them to spend their time in school struggling to understand instead of building new knowledge. As language is the channel through which people's cultures are transmitted, development on the other hand is based on communication through language. This paper discusses trends in the African continent and the objective is to explore the potential of African languages and literature as tools for socio-cultural and economic development, emphasizing the need for empowerment through linguistic recognition while addressing challenges rooted in colonial educational legacies. The essay does this by discussing the practicalities (factors that may be promoting or threatening) of African language and argues that the current efforts being made fall short of achieving the ultimate aim due to their inherent paradoxical nature. It posits that only by ensuring its use and development at all levels can the tragedy of the disappearance of African language, which ultimately means the impoverishment of humanity be prevented.

Key words: Africa, African languages, Missing Link, Development

Introduction

Development is based on communication through language. With more than 2,000 languages being used in Africa, language becomes a highly relevant factor in all sectors of political, social, cultural and economic life. This important sociolinguistics dimension hitherto remains under-rated in the mainstream development studies. This paper discusses the resourcefulness of language in view of the ongoing transformation of African society as much as for economic development. "The rejection of the linguistic legitimacy of a language—*any* language used by *any* linguistic community—in short, amounts to little more than an example of the tyranny of the majority. Such a rejection reinforces the long tradition and history of linguistic imperialism in our society. Linguistic imperialism can be caused by different factors, including trade, immigration and colonialism. Most of the language imposition happened during the colonial period. Many of the countries on which a new language was imposed had diverse linguistic groups.

Historically our challenge with language in Africa as it relates to diversity is that it has often been used as a tool of oppression for the purpose of establishing and perpetuating systems of dominance and hierarchies between and among groups. As a result, language has in many instances throughout our society history, served to advance the status of certain groups while relegating other groups to a status of inferiority.

The most striking issue among the missing links in the development of African Languages is lack of determination from most African leaders as well some elites who continuously perpetuate the



supremacy of the neo-colonial languages like English, French and Portuguese and buttress their power in most cases over the African languages.

As a point of departure, the indigenous African languages studied actually play second fiddle to foreign languages. Applied to the language question in the sub Saharan Africa, one can conclude that indigenous African languages are given secondary roles in the African countries by the African leaders. Let me emphatically say that African linguists, language practitioners and researchers, and like-minded progressive forces should condemn the situations in which indigenous African languages play secondary roles in Africa and that the situation should be resisted by all and redressed without further delay by our leaders.

Literature Review

African languages here will be defined as those languages indigenous to the continent south of the Sahara and for which there is not a primary cultural center in another region. Africa is the most linguistically diverse continent in the world, according to the UN's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2025) which alone is home to a third of the world's languages and before the colonial era, through the strong oral tradition of our indigenous languages we proudly perpetuated our cultural practices, our history and our sense of the world. Our self-identity and character were intact, we had a strong sense of direction because our culture served as our reference point to the past and to the future.

Language policies and the African elites

The most painful thing that is most striking was that African leaders in most of the countries have deliberately perpetuated the supremacy of foreign languages over indigenous languages. There is clear evidence that language and power are closely related and in this case the foreign language that was used to subjugate the local people and their languages is the most preferred language by the government establishments. The socio-political environment created by the leaders and political elites has had a negative perception of the status of local languages against foreign language. In other words, the power that is exercised by the leaders is entrenched in the foreign language of the colonial master.

The rejection of the linguistic legitimacy of a language—*any* language used by *any* linguistic community—in short, amounts to little more than an example of the tyranny of the majority. Such a rejection reinforces the long tradition and history of linguistic imperialism in our society. The harm, though, is done not only to those whose languages were rejected, but in fact to all of us in Africa, as we are made poorer by an unnecessary narrowing of our cultural and linguistic universe. The Practice as a deliberate attempt, consists of a range of approaches to understanding the expansion of capitalism into new areas, the unequal development of different countries, and economic systems that may lead to the dominance of some countries over others.

Many African leaders have imposed their obedience and servitude of the colonial language on the local people of their nations and their languages as the most preferred language by the government establishments. The socio-political environment created by the leaders and political elites has had a negative perception of the status of local languages against foreign language. In other words, the power that is exercised by the leaders is entrenched in the foreign language of the colonial master.

One is at this point made to inquire whether the winning of political independence led to a linguistic liberation of African countries, and if not, why not? Are the former colonial languages a useful bond with the international community and necessary for state formation and national unity internally? Or are they a bridgehead for Western interests, permitting the continuation of a colonial



system of marginalization and exploitation? What is the relationship between linguistic dependence (continued use of a European language in a former non-European colony)?

It is saddening to observe that almost all African countries seem to enjoy doing business in foreign languages despite attainment of political power. Their present predicament however is not out of their own volition. Their status emanates from a long history of colonial subjugation. This history induced perpetual marginalization of African languages such that African states view their languages as unfit to transmit business ideas and higher knowledge. Respectability of African languages as conveyors of important high status knowledge was compromised.

To a great extent, colonial language policies disempowered and eroded African languages to the background. In view of this backdrop, this paper observes an anomaly whereby a majority of the African languages are sidelined from socio-economic and politico-environmental mainstream development of the continent. With this background, the paper interrogates the positioning of African languages in the global village and recommends that cultural diversity can instead be strengthened through globalisation by providing the means and wherewithal to support cultural groups attempting to make a difference in society while still maintaining their distinctive set of beliefs, practices and values.

African Languages in a Global World

Globalisation poses the temptation of maintaining global languages to keep pace with global developments. Africa still needs to gain a significant place in the global economy, politics and other development initiatives so the temptation for colonial languages is great. On the one hand, globalisation increases the visibility of African languages beyond the African continent yet on the other, it exposes them to stiff competition against established global languages such as English and French.

For African languages to claim significant space in the global village, the languages must be able to transmit high status knowledge and technological information that is in demand globally. Languages that are able to convey such information are languages of hegemony and power. In the Information Age, such languages are easily accessible on the information highway. Currently African languages are highly challenged as majority are struggling to gain space in education not even as media of instruction but as subjects of study.

Globalisation exposes African languages on the international language market as: - Subjects of study, Media of educational instruction and Communication tools in modern society. Today's workplace is characterised by a search for knowledge and information. This demands that workers should be able to communicate, handle information and adopt to new developments either orally, numerically or literally.

Currently, a majority of African languages are more restricted to communication between co-workers in the workplace (Mutasa 2004: WaL 2002). It should be emphasised that where workers are limited by language proficiency certain information is omitted as workers struggle to get the correct vocabulary to express themselves. African governments need to consider a cost-benefit-analysis of the language use. Coulmas (1992:124-5) contends that: Language training for industry and commerce can be a considerable burden for a company but those who hesitate to make the necessary financial outlays have to ask themselves which is costlier language training or losses and foregone gains brought about by lack of language proficiency.

As an instrument in the socialisation of people, language is important in establishing norms and values required for rapid transformation and effectiveness. Webb (2002:218) asserts that language instills a sense of institutional loyalty and security, which are essential ingredients of good



governance and good business. Once this is established the role of language then becomes that of creating an enabling social environment hinged on sustainable development.

Language has an important role in the development of vocational skills as an instrument of education and training (Webb, 2002:219). Uju (2003:2) remarks that, an individual with lots of potential should be able to speak out so that society could give him or her listening ears. Since a majority of Africans are not quite conversant with foreign languages, indigenous languages could help in fostering commitments.

Tanzania for instance has achieved a considerably high degree of democratisation through deliberate language choice and language policy. English was replaced with Kiswahili as the sole language of parliamentary, business, both written and oral that enabled Tanzanian people to participate in political and legislative issues. This move opened floodgates to the common people who could now compete with members of the educated elite for parliamentary seats as they could use their Kiswahili oratorical skills attentively to influence legislative decisions.

Other than empowering its people the move had an effect of elaborating the language bringing in new technical terms for legislative register. The participation of more citizens in the parliament has enriched and empowered Tanzanians to the effect that they realise that their language has capacity for intellectual and scientific thought, (Bamgbose, 1991). To date Kiswahili could be claimed to be the language of the African continent because it is the most widely used in the continent and accessible on the information highway.

The African linguistic map can only be changed through aggression. Mutasa (2006:83) asserts that aggression is a paramount ingredient in development without which the development and promotion of African languages is tantamount to being lip service. Sustainability depends on effective communication and policy implementation for efficient management of resources for the benefit of present and future generations. Latin (1992) argues that the economic misfortunes of Africa are a result of Africa's dependence on European Languages. He contends that the use of African languages is likely to make it difficult to seek western expertise and to reduce western penetration of Africa, by learning western without westernisation, Africa is likely to improve her chances of economic and political development.

Similarly, the use of African languages would assist the continent retain its most valued human resources which left their countries for better opportunities in the diaspora. Linguistic dissociation with the West would help separate the technical from the western making it more probable to induce challenges whilst policies of linguistic association might induce "catch up", (Laitin, 1983:38). Challenge might lead to innovativeness based on local resources and indigenous ideas. Innovations born of and nurtured through African languages are likely to be exported in African languages on the global map as languages capable of increasing connectivity and interdependence of the world's markets and businesses.

Linguistic dissociation might induce challenge for indigenous speakers to come up with home grown ideas relevant to their environment as solutions to economic development as opposed to linguistic association that might induce "catch up". Linguistic dissociation is likely to leave the Africans more proactive in solving development issues hence it is more empowering. African languages can be elaborated to handle modern technological and scientific knowledge. Africa needs to urgently consider the gains of language planning in favour of the indigenous languages or risk to remain trailing behind global development.

The present state of development is a result of a historical situation hence to change the situation requires some kind of social transformation of structures including the language situation. It is argued that for as long as African languages are not used in formal economic activity, global



sustainable development will remain a dream. Paradoxically, Africans need to possess a reasonable amount of wealth for their language. African governments often do not optimise African languages as resources to be valued economically. Africans are often unconsciously caught in a colonial mentality. African languages are often undervalued by society since society is not fully appreciative of the real cost of exclusion of African languages. In as much as governments might have political commitments to the language issue, the biggest hurdle that remains is changing people's attitudes. Triandis (1997) cited in Okombo (1999:591) declares that: We have the technical knowledge to change the world, but we do not have the attitude to bring the change. The view complements the position of this paper which, further observes that there is bound to be resistance to the empowerment of indigenous languages.

The worst enemy of development is resistance to change and yet change is a ubiquitous phenomenon. To both industry and government, the use of indigenous languages might have financial implications. As far as the modern employment based domains of power are concerned, English is seen by many as the key to power and access to information. Crystal (1997) in Mutasa (2006) contends that English is fast becoming a global language because of its competence. Groddal (1997) in Gill (2002) as cited by Mutasa maintains that 'the strength of English lies in the complex mix of the political and cultural factors. To claim space in the global village, African languages should be propelled to levels of transmitting complex knowledge and technology so that people from across the world would envy to gain knowledge and skills through them.

In the absence of economic power for the indigenous people, the salvation of African languages is vested in the education sector. Education as a process is capable of unlocking and instilling positive attitudes towards accepting African languages as global languages. However, this change of attitude is easier achieved where policies are supported by financial injection from indigenous Africans themselves. There is no doubt that a foreign language cannot unite a people, for there will always be aspects of it that cannot be converted perfectly.

Language and Cultural Imperialism on the African Nation

Language imperialism is a term used to describe the imposition of western language (English, French, Portuguese etc.) on the culture of people in developing countries. Language imperialism often refers to Britain's language influence on other world languages, for better or worse. A man's right lies in his confidence and personality which is greatly nurtured by his language. Man is essentially the product of his language. It builds and moulds a person into a particular shape. Language makes one think, speak, dance and behave in a particular manner. Its language that makes one Nigerian, Kenyan, Arabian or African etc.

Africa as a continent has its given language which is unique in its own respect. This language may not be absolutely the same among all countries and even within a country, a lot of languages exist but there are features that differentiate Africans from other people of the world. The issue here is that any person with passion for the African language today will believe that, the very material, spiritual and aesthetic fabric of African people had been destroyed by western civilisation.

Findings of the Study

Our Continent which is made up of rich and diverse languages has been losing most of its language and cultural ideals especially through the adoption of foreign languages showcased through the mass media. Nowadays, it is observed that our young men and women have abandoned our cultures and languages for foreign ones. It is common to see young Africans walking across the streets half nude putting on micro-mini skirts, handless top, trousers and other outfits that are not part of our cultural identity.

Indeed, we have our traditional attires, but how many Africans proudly wear such traditional attires today? A visit to our banks today will give you a perfect example. In fact, it is mandatory in the



banks that you wear a suit except on Fridays that you are allowed to wear native attire. The question we must answer is whether wearing of suit is part of African or Western culture? Must we copy everything western? Can't we promote our rich culture, language and traditional outfit so that our local industries can boom? The dress code aspect is of importance in our present situation especially inward looking in exploring and exploiting the potential inherent in Africa.

It is disheartening that most Africans no longer patronise their native languages. They often tagged them as "local". This will not help our continent grow because, when we do not patronise our own native languages, even our economic fortunes would continue to dwindle. We must take pride in our home languages rather than rush for foreign.

Our languages are gradually going into extinction due to preference for foreign languages. The younger generations can hardly communicate in their native dialects. White men colonised Africa; which Africans consciously and unconsciously imbibed. In the process of accepting the new cultures and languages, they forgot to sift carefully and select the important and discard the less important ones. They forget the existence of their true culture and language. The colonial masters provided Africans with their own language and painted array of benefits that would accrue them (the Africans) once they mastered the white man's language and culture.

Today, many people are even ashamed to speak their local dialect in the public. They prefer to speak English because they believe that it is the best language to speak. We often see couples who hail from the same village in Nigeria for instance, whose children cannot speak their native language instead, they speak English and even in most cases, they do not speak simple and correct English but pidgin. What an aberration!

Our cultural heritages have been watered down by western civilisation. Gone were days where life was treasured and values were welcome and held with high level of respect. As of then, parents hide their faces in shame when their daughters are found out to be non-virgin by their husbands during wedlock. The notions of chastity and virginity have been rendered absurd. The moral excellence of African society has overnight transformed into moral decay. Elders are no longer respected; our rich cultural festivals and ceremonies are now seen as old school.

The mass media are the core influence of cultural imperialism on society today. Africans, especially the youth now imitate values like gangsterism, bribery, drug addiction, rape, semi-nudity, etc. These values have dangerous effects on the youths, who ignorantly mimic them as a way of life. The mass media in this case is seen as media imperialism which is described as the over-concentration of the mass media from larger nations as a significant variable in negatively affecting smaller nations, in which the national identity of smaller nations is lessened or lost due to media homogeneity from the imperialist countries.

One of the negative roles the mass media plays in our today's society is the dominance and propagation of violence through the use of colonial English particularly on television and video industry. A lot of the foreign films content on television are mainly scenes of violence. The actors who engage in murder and other violent acts are portrayed as heroes. Home video, which is very popular now with local films, also carries the same theme. Research has shown that children who watch violence are most prone to violent behavior in adulthood.

Recommendation

Since Africa has inherited enough from her foreign colonisers, it is time for us to start appreciating these things and blending them into traditional African society in order to bear a trade mark of our own and language in particular. Gone were the days where our native African language were



cherished. Now we tend to enjoy using foreign language, products and life style to the detriment of our traditional way of life.

We should be on the revival of traditional morality which our continent Africa was known for. The government headed by the African leaders, the elites, the wealthy, the common and the parents should come together and play the major role each it is supposed to play in ensuring a shift from the use of alien language to our African home languages. This in the long run will surely raise our cultural values in high esteem.

In sub-Saharan Africa, people and culture are inseparable since there is no denial of the fact that what makes any society is its Language. In this same vein, going by the theory of environmental determinism, the language of any society is largely dictated by its geography. Arguments have risen from several schools of thought to the problems causing these trends. The complex nature of language is that no two different languages that have diverse interest can exist side by side without clashes.

To ensure fulfillment of the above, one would, first and foremost recommend that, on the level of individuals, everyone is attached to a language and should therefore, be culturally conscious and alert to his or her identity and its uniqueness. In other words, language is inseparable from people and should therefore be cherished and relished.

Further, the social institutions such as the family which shoulders the responsibility of procreation and orientation of new ones should not be lose in its function of socialisation, the agents of which should be closely monitored. Rather, they should be made to internalise the values and virtues, which are in tandem with the family's language dictates so as to ensure behavioural sameness and ideological similarity.

On the part of the government, political power should be utilised to encourage cultural people, regardless of their tribal divergence, to develop interest in promoting and marketing their language uniqueness and potency, which could be of economic advantage. This is to bring maxim that "there is unity in diversity".

African language is currently the missing link in our lives, in our education system and in our society. Language is the vehicle which carries culture from one generation to the next. And culture is expressed through language. So language and culture are intertwined one cannot exist without the other. As Africans we should ensure the reengagement of our children with the indigenous languages which will lead to the recovery of our position in the development of our continent.

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THE PHONOTACTICS OF KI IN IZÓN FOCUS CONSTRUCTIONS

BY

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Abstract

That focus places prominence on certain constituents and leaves out (back)ground information in information structure is not new. Also, language-specific parameters observed in foci and their markings are established in the literature. However, a literature gap exists on the variants of the Izón focus marker identified as kị. A seeming challenge in pedagogy is envisioned in distinguishing its variants in syntactic frames. This study is cast within the phonological processes of elision, epenthesis, tonal reassociation, and vowel reassignment. Data are drawn from utterances of Izón competent speakers in interpersonal interactions and innate knowledge of the researcher. The study avers that kị is heterogenous, conditioned by contagious onset(less) morphemes and manifests as ke, ko, ku, ki, etc., having elided its onset vowel and conversely too, that kị remains stable when it co-occurs with onset morphemes but may insert an /o/ epenthesis when a time adverbial or place argument is the focus. All phonological processes conform to the CV syllable structure of the language.

Keywords: focus, Izón, prominence, elision, epenthesis, reassociation, reassignment

1.0 Introduction

Focusing is one universally expressed syntactic phenomenon that involves emphasis or prominence of some element(s) in constructions. Lambrecht (1994:206) identifies a focus construction as the ‘new knowledge hitched to the topic post’. That is the unknown information about a topic in a discourse setting. There is no known natural language that does not purposefully place prominence on constituents for focus. Still, the means through which it is expressed in natural languages could be different and, most times, diverse (Gundel, 1988 and Givon, 1991). Though this is the case, it is worth noting that these languages hardly express focus the same way. While some may employ the use of suprasegmental features such as tonal undulations, stress or pitch, others choose to employ distinct morphological declensions which may select certain syntactic slots (depending on the focused element) into which they will be inserted in information structure²⁷ ~IS~ (Prince, 1981; Halliday, 1967; and Chafe, 1976).

Chafe (1974) opines that information structure ~IS~ is a phenomenon of information packaging that responds to the immediate needs of interlocutors. As opposed to syntactic structure which is concerned with lexical categories and their interrelationship/connection in constructions, IS deals with the knowledge of interactants on the discourse elements in which the syntactic frames are employed and how their common knowledge and the sum of the information that people assume

²⁷ This refers to the knowledge and state of affairs that language users have about the content of the structure of their speech which is dependent on text structure, background information and innate conventions about the subject matter of discourse (Kekai, 2017).



they share (Clark, 2006), relates to their background knowledge. Sentences in IS are divided into **focus** and **ground** and the latter is further broken down into **link** and **tail**²⁸ (Vullduvi, 1990) and often, the presupposed or known information. Focus refers to the new or unknown information that is introduced into a discourse, often with an element which could be an argument; in the objective or subjective case, a predicate focus, or sentence focus (Saskia, 2016). Studies acknowledge that languages express focus by several means such as intensifiers, exclusives, non-scaler additives, particularizers, etc. (Xu, Y., C. X. Xu and X, 2004; Szendroi, K, 2004). These studies tend to represent information in ~IS~, such as; the background and focus with syntactic processes like clefting, topic or focus.

Studies of focus have identified preferences for indicating focus in languages. bn (2019) for instance, opines that for Ñjò -Kóo, there is no distinction between sentence and verbal focus, only one focus strategy is employed for both. Focus in an information structure ~IS~ requires new, important or stressed information to be inserted into the structure either for emphasis or attention. Several ways of marking focus are isolated: morphologically, structurally or prosodically, through clefting focus, and topicalization with discourse markers of a language. The aim of this study, therefore, is to identify the focus marker in Izón²⁹ in order to examine the structural variants in constructions for ease of interpretation, description in pedagogy and for documentation.

1.1. Background to the study

Studies show that natural languages exhibit several formal phenomena, such as syntactic alternations, insertion, subject/object inversion, head positioning, morphological markings, assimilation, deletion, etc., some of which are invariably associated with ~IS~. Though these phenomena exist in natural languages, there is enough evidence to show that parameter settings constrain some languages from manifesting them in the same way so as not to violate language-specific parameters (Chomsky, 1981; Chomsky and Lasnik, 1993).

There is a dearth of information, particularly on focus marking and the variations that surface on the element identified herein as focus marker (henceforth, FOCm) in Izón, which results in wrong pedagogical interpretations. The ~FOCm~ specifically identified in this study as **ki** manifests in various forms in competent speakers' speech and structural representations, even for the Kabu dialect (one of the twenty-eight (28) dialects of the language collectively called Izón deployed for this study).

Izón

The name Izón is synonymous with its people and culture. It is one of a group of four closely related languages collectively called Ijaw or Ijo and spoken in Delta, Edo, Bayelsa, Akwa-Ibom, Ondo and Rivers states. This language group includes Eastern Ijo, which comprises Kalabari, Okrika, Ibani, and Nkoro; Nembe and Akassa; Buseni, Okodia, and Oruama; as well as Izón (Williamson, 1983; Jenewari, 1977). Kekai (2016) states that Izón, an Ijoid language, has an estimated speaker population of about ten million. Although Greenberg (1955) suggests that the Ijoid languages belong to the Kwa family, linguists consider Ijaw (Ijoid) to form a divergent branch, particularly due to its word order (SOV) and the absence of a noun class system. Consequently, it is regarded as a distinct branch and should be classified accordingly (Welmers, 1973; Williamson, 1989; Dimmendaal, 2011; Jenewari, 1989). Two tonemes are in use: an unmarked or grave tone (ˊ) and an acute tone (ˋ). On a single word, the tones [-H] and [+H] can occur side by side, e.g., àrí 'deceive' and àrú 'canoe'. Similarly, a grave [-H] or an acute [+H] tone may occur sequentially in clusters, e.g., dùrù 'shout' and pélé 'cut'.

²⁸ For a thorough understanding of link and tail, read Vullduvi, (1990)



Kabu, the dialect employed for this study is spoken in Belta and Bayelsa states in South-South Nigeria. All twenty-eight dialects of the language are mutually intelligible to its speakers including Kabu (Williamson, 1965; Emenanjo, 2003).

There is enough evidence to claim that the ~FOCm~ **kɪ** may manifest as **ka**, **ko**, **ke**, etc. in the surface realization of competent speakers' utterances. In **1a**, for example, **kɪ** changes its structure by eliding its high front vowel, /i/ and reassigning the features of the low/back open vowel of the succeeding third-person singular object pronoun /á/ 'her'. In **1b** also, the data show that an /o/ epenthesis is inserted into the frame. In which case, the resultant ~FOC~ marker is either **ka**, comprising **k**, the consonant of **kɪ** and the following onsetless morpheme or **ko**, comprising **k** and the epenthetical element /o/ as the structures below show. The surface realisations are indicated to the left with the deleted segment of **kɪ** in parentheses.

- 1a. È yin k(i) a tɪn -mẹ ==> È yin ká tɪn -mẹ
 1_{SG}. mother FOC ~3_{SG}~ call -PST
 'It was my mother that called her.'
- b. à wɛnɪ wari k(i) o mu -mẹ ==> à wɛnɪ wari ko mu -mẹ
 ~3_{SG}~ walk house ~FOC~ clit go PST
 'It was house that she walked to'

As observed in some other natural languages such as Edo, a left-to-right deletion is in place wherein the vowel of the onset morpheme **kɪ** is elided. The onsetless vowel /á/ which translates as 3_{SG} in **1a** reassigns to **k** to derive **ka** while an epenthetical /o/ reassigns to **k** to derive **ko** in **1b**.

It is important to note that /o/ is inserted even though the construction conforms to the ~CV~ structure of the language. That is, /o/ is inserted in the environment of an onset morpheme **mu** 'go'. Two interpretations are therefore apparent from the data above: that the focus marker **kɪ** becomes **ka** in the environment of the onsetless morpheme [a] 'her' or that **kɪ** becomes **ko** also in the environment of an onsetless /o/ epenthesis, as the schema in **3** and **4** below illustrate:

3. [kɪ] ==> [ka] / [a] # -----
 4. [kɪ] ==> [ko] / /o/ # -----

The resultant ~FOC~ markers, **ka** and **ko** in **1a** and **b** are dual constituent morphemes consisting of the residual consonant of the focus marker, /k/ and the onsetless morpheme [á] 'her' in **1a** and the epenthesis o in **1b**.

Combinations such as these, in which the derived morphemes [ka] and [ko] are inherently dual constituents but are interpreted simply as ~FOC~ markers, are prevalent in Izón focus constructions. Such diverse manifestations are a bane to teachers and learners of the language. The constraint, therefore, is how to decipher the morpho-phonological constituents of each focal marker, their diverse indicators, and the focus elements in constructions. For learners, understanding the triggers of vowel elision, vowel insertion, reassignment, and tonal reassociation is vital for interpretability.

1.2. The aim and objectives of the study

This study aims at identifying the focus marker/element and its variants in Izón focus constructions. The purpose is to deconstruct the inherent features that account for its diverse manifestations in structures, as it co-occurs with other constituents in syntactic frames. The objective of the present study therefore, includes several aspects geared towards the following goals:

- to identify the focus marker of Izón
- to determine if focus is marked by preposing or postposing the focal element
- to identify the phonological processes involved in the variants identified and
- to ascertain the dual component nature of derived ~FOC~ markers.

2.0. Phonological processes

Essentially, four phonological processes capture the seemingly changing features exhibited by the Izón focus marker **kɪ**, as displayed in competent speaker's daily interactions and required by



learners for understanding its distinct components in constructions. They include: **elision/deletion**, **reassignment**, **insertion** and **tonal reassociation**. For clarity, these terms, which constitute the major phonological processes observed in the derivation of Izón focus constructions, are defined.

- i. **Elision/deletion:** This simply refers to the deletion or omission of one or more segments in a word, phrase, or syllable. Though also productive in slow speech for some natural languages, it is more common to omit segments, which can be consonants or vowels, depending on parametric variations in languages. Elision is very productive in rapid speech even in languages, Izón inclusive. Kekai, (2016) acknowledges that words like **bára** ‘hand’ are realized as **brá** in the Kabu dialect of Izón and some other dialects. That in the environment of approximants like the liquids /r/ and /l/, V₁ is often elided. This is also observed in the Ogbe-Ijó dialect. Deletion may occur at word boundary, word initial or medial positions. However, elision/deletion is often governed by certain phonological constraints based on the syllable structure pattern of the language. For instance, in Izón, vowels are constrained from occurring sequentially in constructions. What this means is that, peradventure a morpheme with an open syllable³⁰ morpheme precedes an onsetless morpheme, depending on several factors and mostly conditioned by ease of articulation in rapid speech, either the final vowel at word boundary or that of the onsetless morpheme is elided. This phonological process is common in Izón focus construction and will constitute one of the processes employed for the analyses in this study.
- ii. **Reassignment:** Sound reassignment in linguistics refers to a sound change in which a sound segment is replaced with a different one in a language. In most cases the replaced sound is completely elided for the insertion of a new sound, while in some others the sound changes to become like a following one. Such sound changes are often environmentally conditioned, occurring only in certain environments, or it may be a general change to the speech sound that exist over time. The former seems to fit our purpose as rightward reassignment in focus constructions take place only to avoid violation of the vowel-cluster constrain. Hence, the onset vowel of the focus marker gets deleted when it occurs in contagious with an onsetless morpheme. This phonological process is also deployed in this study.
- iii. **Epenthesis:** Also called **vowel** insertion, epenthesis is a phonological process in which a vowel is inserted into a word or phrase. It is mostly done for ease in pronunciation, to conform to some language-specific constraints such as for separating vowels in hiatus, breaking consonant clusters or even as a poetic device. Vowel insertion can be found in different languages and dialects and affects the phonetic structure of words. It is common in African languages and Izón is not an exception. Observation reveals that in Izón focus constructions, vowel insertion occurs after the elision of the vowel segment of the focus marker of the language. Though the status and function of the inserted vowel in Izón focus constructions is yet to be determined, as it surfaces only in certain environments, this phonological process will constitute one of the theoretical frameworks employed for analysing the Izón focus constructions to ascertain its varied structural representations.
- iv. **Tonal re-association:** This is the process in which a floating tone associates with the tonal tier of a preceding or succeeding tone thereby resulting in tonal change. Since tones operate on separate tiers, Goldsmith (1976), when a sound is elided, the floating tone docks to the next available tone-bearing segment sometimes resulting in contour

³⁰ Izón is an open syllable language.



tones. Izón, being a pitch accent language in which some syllables or morphemes with sequential tone types are given equal prominence (Ndimele and Efere, 2003), downstep (\downarrow), a contrastive drop in tonal pitch from a preceding tone (Leben, 2014) or upstep (\uparrow), a phonemic upward shift or raising in tone between syllables or morphemes is apparent (cf Kekai, 2016). Consider the data below with sequential tone, resulting in an upstep low in **5a** and **b** and a downstep in **5c** and **d**, in the constructions.

5a. /b́iɛn/ # /ɛ̀yó/ => [bǝ́ɛ̃ j'ó]	deficate # place	'toilet'
b. /àndá # ò zì/ => [and'òzi]	wrestle # drum	'wrestling drum'
c. /wùrù # bóú/ => [wùrùb \downarrow ou]	alkohol # drink	'drink (alkohol)'
d. /bèni # zúu/ => [bèni \downarrow zuu]	water # fetch	'fetch water'

The illustrations in **5a** to **d** above show that two phonological processes may take place when contrastive as well as like tones occur in series in Izón after the deletion of vowels before word boundaries: an upstep (the heightening of contrastive tones) or downstep (the lowering of a sequence of lows).

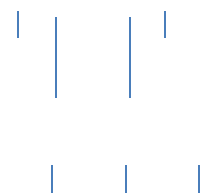
In focus constructions, having elided the vowel segment of the ~FOCm~, the tone is left stranded; it thus docks to the next available tone-bearing unit ~TBU~ and reassociates with V₁ of the morpheme across word boundary as shown in **6** below.

6. **buru be ába k̀i emi** ==> **buru be ába k(i) \downarrow emi**
 yam ~DET~ barn ~FOC~ ~PRS~
 'The yam is in the barn'

This tonal reassociation and phonological processes involved are better explained using the autosegmental principles proposed in Goldsmith (1976) which posits that, all segments are autonomous as such, should be represented separately in tiers as shown in the illustration for the construction, **sán # ɛ̀yó** ==> [sán \uparrow yó] 'washroom' in Fig 1 below where V₁ across word boundary is elided and the tonal segment linked to the following ~TBU~.

FIG 1. **sán # ɛ̀yó** ==> **[sán \uparrow yó]**

CV Tier:	C	V	#	V	C	V	==>	C	V	#	V	C
V												
C Tier:	s			j				s			j	
V Tier:		a		e		o			a		e	o
Tonal Tier:	[+H]			[-H]		[-H]		[+H]			[-H]	
[+H]												



As is obvious in Fig 1, V₁ of the onsetless morpheme across word boundary is delinked because it is elided in the structure and its low tone progressively reassociates with that of the succeeding high, resulting in an upstep tone.

The sequential ordering of tones in Izón constructions led to Williamson (1983) selection of a convenient convention for marking tones in Izón and adopted for this study namely that:

- An initial +H tone (') is marked.
- An initial low tone (') is left unmarked.
- A change in tone from a preceding tone is marked.



- d. Where there are no changes after the initial tone, subsequent tone bearing segments are left unmarked.

Since tone plays a vital role in the semantics of morphemes both in isolation and when co-articulated with other morphemes in constructions, a convention of this nature will not only make for ease and convenience in tone marking but will also be relevant for the deconstruction and interpretation of the tonal changes observed after the elision of the onset vowel of the focus marker **kì**.

3.0. Data and methodology

The data for this study are drawn from spontaneous utterances of Izón competent speakers as they went about their day-to-day activities. This was achieved with the help of a hyper-sensitive audio Wave pad application downloaded from the Google Play Store onto a cell phone. Being a native speaker of Izón, some data also fall within the purview of intuitive knowledge. Personal interviews and interactions with native speakers of **Mein**, **Kabu** and **Gbaramatu** dialects served to justify the claim that **kì** is the focus marker of the language and further distinguish the similarities or otherwise of **kì** in sentences, its co-occurrence features and variants conditioned by extraneous factors.

Of particular importance is how to identify through the associative relevant phonological processes, the distinctive features of **kì** in different environments in constructions, the triggers and the changes it undergoes to derive the surface realizations observed. The constructions were analyzed using the four processes identified as contributing to the interpretation of the diverse structures of the focus marker. The examples below serve to illustrate the phonological processes described with **Tare**, a Personal Name ~PN~, being the focus and preposed element of the ~FOCm~ **kì** in both constructions. While in sentence 7, the ~FOCm~ precedes an onsetless morpheme, **àru** ‘canoe’, in sentence 8 it precedes an onset morpheme, **dáa** ‘hook’. Hence, the surface realizations of **kì** are different in both structures. Note the differences in **kì** in addition to the changes in the tones of the structures. In the rest of this study, all deleted segments are in parenthesis.

	Underlying representation	Surface realization
7.	Tarí k _ì àru fẹ́ -mẹ ~PN SBJ~ ~FOC~ canoe ~OBJ~ buy -PST ‘It was Tare that bought the canoe.’	=> Tarí k(i) àru fẹ́-mẹ =>Tari ka [↓] ru fẹ́-mẹ
8.	Tarí k _ì dáa tí-mí-mẹ ~PN~ ~FOC~ hook ~RET~ ‘It was Tare that was hooking.’	=> Tarí k _ì dáa tí-mí-mẹ

The reader will notice that in both sentences 7 and 8, the focus is on Tare. However, while the vowel of **k_ì** is elided in sentence 7, the vowel in sentence 8 remains intact. After elision, the tone of the vowel is displaced as it realigns with the following tone of the ~TBU~ of the onsetless morpheme to its left. This tone reassignment results in a downstep tone. Conversely, in sentence 8, the tonal and vowel segments of the ~FOCm~ **k_ì** stay structurally stable since the structure follows the ~CV~ pattern of the language, with the onset morpheme **k_ì** preceding the onset morpheme **dáa** ‘hook’.

A close examination of the environmental features of both structures shows that an onsetless morpheme succeeds **k_ì** in sentence 7, unlike in sentence 8, where an onset morpheme follows it. Therefore, the immediate question is how a non-native speaker and learner can determine the factors affecting such stable structures in sentence 8, compared to the unstable one in sentence 7. The straightforward answer is that vowels occurring in sequence across word or morpheme boundaries are not permitted in the language; hence, elision deletes one of the vowels, in this case,



the vowel to the right, and reassigns the vowel across the word boundary to the stranded consonant, **k**. The stability and resistance to elision in 8 are due to the presence of an onset morpheme across the word boundary, namely, **dáa** ‘hook’, which aligns with the ~CV~ syllable structure of the language.

In the rest of this paper, the co-occurrence features of the ~FOCm~ **kí** with onsetless and onset morphemes will be examined and thoroughly analysed to identify the underlying morpho-phonological processes that produce such variations. Any other phonological processes that may be incidental to the analysis of the Iẓón ~FOCm~ will also be discussed.

3.1. **kí** preceding onsetless morphemes in constructions

Iẓón employs a total of nine (9) vowels neatly harmonized into three sets following their tongue root position during articulation. While the third set is a neutral low-vowel /a/ and may occur with any of the two other sets, the harmony system constrains the two other sets of vowels, i.e., plus and minus Advance Tongue Root ~+ATR~ vowels, from co-occurring within lexical formatives. The harmony system, just like tones, contributes to the semantic distinctions of morphemes. The two sets may, however, co-occur in post-lexical formatives. The vowels are captured in 9 with some morphemes to illustrate the contribution of the harmonized sets to distinct meanings in 10.

9. Set i. /i, e, o, u/ ~+ATR~
 Set ii. /ɪ, ɛ, ɔ, ʊ/ ~-ATR~
 Set iii. /a/ ~NEUTRAL~
 ~+ATR~ ~-ATR~

10.

- | | | | | |
|----|-------|------------|--------|--------------|
| a. | béin | ‘full’ | bẹ́in | ‘cross’ |
| b. | fúru | ‘steal’ | fụ́rụ | ‘smell’ |
| c. | téi | ‘play’ | tẹ́i | ‘leave’ |
| d. | beri | ‘ear’ | bẹ́rɪ | ‘widen’ |
| e. | gbóun | ‘obstruct’ | gbọ́un | ‘break open’ |

The vowel of the ~FOCm~ **kí** falls under the ~-ATR~ group in the Kabu dialect but copies the ~+ATR~ feature of a succeeding vowel when it precedes it. Thus, its surface form could be + or ~-ATR~ depending on the ~ATR~ feature of the succeeding vowel.

The nine vowels can occur at word initial, medial, and final positions. Observation of Iẓón competent speakers’ interactions reveals that vowel clusters may occur in lexical formatives, especially for **Kabu**. Hence, morphemes such as, **bái** ‘tomorrow’, **tíẹ** ‘stand’, **fẹ́i** ‘buy’ etc. can be found in its lexicon. However, when an onset morpheme precedes an onsetless morpheme in constructions, either the vowel before the word boundary or the vowel of the onsetless morpheme across the word boundary may be elided. This probably accounts for why the vowel of **kí** often elides when it precedes onsetless morphemes. The data in 11 drawn from language speaker’s intuitive knowledge illustrate the varied nature of **kí** in focus constructions. The elided vowels are enclosed in parenthesis. Consider the structures below.

11.

- a. e yin kí oru kari -yi ==> e yin k(i) oru kari -yi
 1_{SG} mother ~FOC~ idol worship ~PROG~
 ‘It is my mother that is worshipping idol’
- b. fún fei dou-yi oweí kị ẹmọmọ ari -mẹ ==>
 fún fei dou-yi oweí k(i) ẹmọmọ ari -mẹ
 book buy ~PROS~ man ~FOC~ ~COMM~ talk ~PST
 ‘It is the man who is about to buy the book that talked.’
- c. Tári ereinbíri kị bó -mẹ ==> Tári ereinbíri k(i) ò bó -mẹ
 ~PN~ midday ~FOC~ come ~PST
 ‘It was at midday that Tare came.’
- d. è daụ kí enì arú fẹ́i -mẹ ==> è daụ k(i) ènì arú fẹ́i -mẹ



- ~1SG~ father ~FOC~ ~1SG~ dress buy ~PST~
 ‘It was my father that bought my dress’.
- e. Èbiyè Tárí fún kị kàn -mẹ ==> Èbiyè Tárí fún ki kàn -mẹ
 ~PN~ ~PN~ book ~FOC~ tear ~PST~
 ‘It was Tari’s book that Ebiye tore.’
- f. bè má kị íngò dẹ̀n -nìmi ==> bè má k(ì) ingo dẹ̀n -nìmi
 ~DET~ ~FEM~ ~FOC~ poor ~DEG~ ~PRS~
 ‘It is she who is the poorest’
- g. e yin k(ì) ọ̀ba bulu yọ̀. -mọ -mẹ ==>
 e yin k(ì)[↑] ọ̀ba bulu yọ̀. -mọ. -mẹ
 ~1SG~ mother ~FOC~ tributary inside paddle ~DIR~ ~PST~
 ‘It was my mother who paddled towards the tributary’
- h. á. yin. k(ì) ube fẹi – mẹ ==> á yin k[↑]ube fẹi – mẹ
 ~SG~ mother ~FOC~ pear buy – PST
 ‘It was her mother who bought the pear.’

In 11a, b, and d, all the focus markers precede onsetless morphemes as such, the vowels of **kị** namely, /i/ gets elided. V_1 of the onsetless morphemes across word boundary is then assigned to **k**. The resultant morphemes are dual unit morphemes composed of **k** and the succeeding onsetless morphemes coarticulated in rapid speech. These differ from 11c and e where an /o/ epenthesis is inserted into the structure and assigned to **k** in 11c and **kị** remains stable in 11e respectively. The stability of the focus marker in 11e is attributable to the need for conformity with the ~CV~ syllable structure constraint of the language. The data indicate that the ~FOCm~ of the language is heterogeneous as it is realized as **ko**, **kẹ**, **ke**, **ki**, **kọ** and **ku** in 7a, b, d, f, g and h. The vowel in **kị** can therefore phonetically change its structure corresponding to the nine vowels of the language. Based on the three rules proposed below, namely:

Rule 1: Delete the onset vowel of the ~FOCm~ element iff the segment succeeding it is a vowel or an onsetless morpheme. This is to conform to the ~CV~ constraint of the language.

Rule 2: Reassociate the floating tone of the elided vowel with that of the tone of the succeeding morpheme. This will result in tonal change where -H+H==>downstep low ($H^↓H$) and a +H+H==>upstep high ($H^↑H$). E.g.

Rule 3: Reassign V_1 of the onsetless morpheme to the remnant consonant **k** of the ~FOCm~ **kị**

A look at the data in 11c and e shows that **kị** manifests differently when it co-occurs with onset morphemes, as the next section will exemplify.

3.2. ki preceding onset morphemes in constructions

Ịzọ̀n employs a total of thirty consonants that are not permitted to occur in clusters. However, peradventure they do, a vowel insertion occurs. The inserted vowel may be semantically relevant to the interpretation of the construction even though its main function is to block the occurrence of consonant clusters. However, Kekai (2016) posits that the elision of a vowel segment may result in consonant clusters, especially within the environment of liquids in some dialects of Ịzọ̀n, such as Kabu. This is also recently observed in the Ogbe-Ijọ dialect. Hence, morphemes like **bára** ‘hand’, **bịrẹ** ‘plantain’, and **kịlẹ** ‘wean’ are pronounced, **bra**, **brẹ** and **kle** respectively in these dialects. As opposed to the focus constructions examined above where the co-occurrence of **kị** with onsetless morphemes results in vowel elision, tonal reassociation and vowel reassignment, it seems to be the



case that in constructions where the ~FOCm~ **kí** precedes consonants, the structure of the resultant ~FOCm~ may vary: It may remain stable or go through the phonological processes of elision, insertion, reassignment and tonal reassociation as the data below, drawn from native speakers' interaction show.

12.

- a. e yin. wáři k(i) o mu -dọ
1_{SG}~ mother house ~FOC~ ~CLIT~ go ~PFV
'It is home that my mother has gone to'
- b. endi bẹ akí ni. eri agọnọ k(i) o tua
fish _{DET} take clitic grill top ~FOC~ ~CLIT~ put
'Place the fish on the grill'
- c. amínì be búọ-dọ kuraị k(i) ó fun-wari o sùọ -mẹ
~3_{SG}~ ~DET~ pass ~PFV~ year ~FOC~ ~CLIT~ school ~CLIT~ enter ~PST
'It was last year that she went to school'
- d. eréma pike k(i) o pua-si -mẹ
woman morning. ~FOC~ ~CLIT~ fish ~PST
'It was in the morning that the woman went fishing'
- e. e daụ bubori efie k(i) o. yọụ-pụa. -minimi
~1_{SG}~ father evening time ~FOC~ ~CLIT~ travel ~FUT
'My father will travel in the evening'

In all the examples in 12a through d, the vowels of the ~FOCm~ **kí** get elided, an epenthetical /o/ is inserted and reassigned to **k** to derive **ko** even though they are succeeded by onset morphemes. A close look at the semantics of the focus elements shows that /o/ surfaces when time adverbials and place arguments are preposed. This accounts for why **wáři** 'house' and **eri agọnọ** 'top of grill', being place arguments, are the foci in 12a and b, and **búọ-dọ kuraị** 'last year' **pike** 'morning' and **bubori efie** 'evening' being time adverbials are the foci in 12c, d and e. Two assertions are apparent on the insertion of /o/ epenthesis:

- i. It surfaces when the focus element is a place argument and
- ii. It surfaces when the focus element is a time adverbial.

As indicated above, a stable **kí** is also possible in focus construction where an onset morpheme precedes it. In which case, the vowel of the ~FOCm~ is neither elided nor is there an epenthesis. The implication of this is that the surface realisation of the structure remains as it were in the underlying form, as evidenced in the structures below, drawn from competent speakers' interactions.

13.

- a. Ebi Tare bina-arau kị gbàa - mẹ
~PN~ ~PN~ sister. ~FOC~ say ~PST
'It is said that Ebi is Tare's sister'
- b. Èbiye kị fịyai fị -mẹ
~PN~ ~FOC~ food eat ~PST
'It was Ebiye that ate the food'
- c. Tare Ebiye fùùn kị kàan -mẹ
~PN~ ~PN~ book ~FOC~ tear. ~PST
'It was Ebiye's book that got torn'
- d. Preyé fùlọ kị tọn -yi
~PN~ soup ~FOC~ serve ~PROG
'It is soup that Preye is serving'



As the data in **13a - d** show; unlike the data in **12c - e**, all the ~FOCm~ markers **kɪ** are stable. The vowels are not elided, and no epenthetical element is inserted as such; the structures are devoid of all the phonological processes, namely, elision, insertion, reassignment and reassociation of tone observed in **12**. This is because all the structures conform strictly to the ~CV~ structure of the language. In **13a**, for instance, **kɪ** precedes **gbàa** ‘say’ an onset morpheme in the same way as it precedes **fɪyɪ** ‘food’, **kàan** ‘tear’ and **tɔn** ‘serve’ in **13 b-c**.

A pros statement can thus be made that the ~FOCm~ **kɪ** may elide its vowel segment and insert an /o/ epenthesis dictated by the presence of a place argument of time adverbial as foci when it precedes an onset morpheme or remain stable in the same environment but without place arguments and time adverbials as foci. These variations observed in focus constructions as regards the ~FOCm~ lead to the conclusion made herein that in Izon, the basic ~FOCm~ is **kɪ** but having elided its vowel segment, an epenthetical element /o/ identified as a semantic role marker reassigns with it to derive **ko** in conformity with the language’s ~CV~ syllable structure. Similarly, having elided its vowel, **k** may also be reassigned with an onsetless morpheme that follows it to derive dual unit morphemes with the ~FOCm~ **kɪ** taking on the forms: **ki, ko, ku, ke, ka** etc. Finally, the ~FOCm~ may also remain stable in the environment of onset morphemes without any of the phonological processes taking place.

4.0. Conclusion and recommendation

This study sought to identify and examine the Izon focus marker, having observed that there is variation in its surface realization, resulting in pedagogic challenges for Izon teachers and learners. To be able to adequately capture the differences in the form of the ~FOCm~ in structural representation for pedagogy and learnability, four phonological processes, namely, elision, epenthesis, tonal reassociation and vowel reassignment, were deployed, having observed that these processes surface in Izon focus constructions. These processes were thus employed for the elucidation and analysis of ~FOCm~ in structures. Having isolated the morpheme **kɪ** as ~FOCm~ of the language, analyses revealed that focal elements are often preposed, thus, conforming to the language’s Head initial parameter settings following Chomsky (1981) and Chomsky & Lasnik (1993). The analyses also revealed that the ~FOCm~ can take on different forms depending on the features of the sound in its environment. Thus, if the following morpheme is an onsetless one, the vowel of **kɪ** is elided and reassigned to V₁ of the succeeding onsetless morpheme to derive any form corresponding to the nine canonical vowels of the language. **kɪ** can thus become, **ki, ko, ku, ke, ka** etc.

Conversely, where the morpheme across word boundary is an onset morpheme, **kɪ** either remains stable or an **o** epenthesis is introduced, translating as the focus element with an inherent time adverbial and a place argument status. In which case, **k** also reassigns to /o/ to derive **ko**.

Tones being the sole preserves of vowels, the floating tone of the ~TBU~ of the ~FOCm~ **kɪ** docks onto the ~TBU~ of the onsetless morpheme following it after the elision of the vowel housing it, reassociates with **k** to derive either an upstep or downstep depending on the features of the tone of the vowel to which it is reassociated. These pose challenges for language teachers and learners as the canonical vowel is often not identified in analyses. The conclusion, therefore, is that the variants of **kɪ** could be **ka, ko, ke, ku**, etc., depending on the features of the morpheme following it in constructions.

We recommend the inclusion of strategies that will isolate the phonological processes participating in the surface forms of focus constructions. Such strategies should include drills on vowel and consonant deletion, vowel insertion (technically called epenthesis), tonal reassociation, etc. These



strategies will help alleviate the task of understanding the intricacies and idiosyncrasies manifested by the Izon marker **ki** in focus constructions.

4.1. Suggestions for further studies

The upcoming research aims to explore how the Mein, Kabu, Gbaramatu dialects articulate the focus marker **ki** in various constructions. With around twenty-eight dialects of Izon, we anticipate that the overt manifestation of **ki** might differ significantly among other dialects. However, we expect that the findings herein will not only shed light on these dialects but also contribute valuable insights that could reflect broadly on language universals applicable to this and many other languages. Further investigation on these and other dialects within the Ijoid group is suggested. Such research should focus on employing experimental methods composed of learner-centred drills for acquiring new concepts, structural forms, and interactions within more natural and pragmatic settings to encourage learner engagement in pedagogy.

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Abbreviations

+ ATR	Plus Advance Tongue Root
-ATR	Minus Advance Tongue Root
Clit	Clitic
FOCm	Focus Marker
FUT	Future
OBJ	Objective
PFV	Perfective
PN	Personal Name
PRS	Present
PST	Past
Q	Question
RES	Resumptive
RET	Retrogressive
SBJ	Subjective
TOP	Topic
2SG	Second Person Singular
3SG	Third Person Singular



POLITENESS AS POWER IN YORUBA TRADITIONAL RELIGION: EXAMINING (IM)POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN *IJALA* POETRY

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Abstract

This study explored the dynamics of politeness and impoliteness strategies as expressions of power in Yoruba traditional religion, particularly through the lens of *Ijala* poetry, a traditional Yoruba oral art form often associated with hunters and deities. The motivation for the study stemmed from the need to understand how politeness and impoliteness are strategically employed in Yoruba religious contexts to assert authority, negotiate status, and manage relationships with deities. The study aimed to analyze how these strategies serve as mechanisms of power within *Ijala* poetry. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, the study examined selected *Ijala* poems that depict interactions between humans and Yoruba deities, focusing on speech acts, verbal exchanges, and contextual interpretations. Three major findings emerged: first, impoliteness strategies were often used to challenge or provoke deities to demonstrate their power; second, politeness was employed to show reverence and establish rapport; third, both strategies were context-dependent, influenced by the deity's nature and the speaker's intent. The study concluded that politeness and impoliteness in *Ijala* poetry are critical tools for managing power dynamics and reinforcing social hierarchies in Yoruba traditional religion. The findings contribute to the broader understanding of Yoruba oral traditions and their role in religious and cultural discourse.

Keywords: Politeness, Impoliteness, Yoruba traditional religion, *Ijala* Poetry, Power Dynamics

Introduction

The Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria have a rich cultural heritage characterized by a vibrant oral tradition that has been passed down through generations (Adeniran 2014). Among the various forms of oral literature that exist in Yoruba culture, *Ijala* poetry stands out as a significant genre (Adegbite 2015). Traditionally associated with hunters and deities, *Ijala* poetry is more than a mere form of entertainment; it serves as a medium for expressing reverence, conveying wisdom, and negotiating relationships with both humans and the divine (Ogunbiyi 2012). The poetry is filled with rich language that can range from respectful and deferential to confrontational and provocative, depending on the context (Omoniyi 2011). In Yoruba cosmology, deities (*òrìṣà*) such as Ogun, Orunmila, and Sango play essential roles in human affairs, and *Ijala* poetry is one of the mediums through which humans engage with these powerful beings (Ndlovu 2018). Understanding the language used in these poems is crucial for comprehending how power dynamics are managed in Yoruba religious contexts (Harris 2006). However, despite the significance of *Ijala* poetry in Yoruba culture, there has been limited scholarly attention on how politeness and impoliteness strategies are strategically employed within this genre to manage power relations (Scollon and Scollon 2001).

While previous studies have explored the thematic and stylistic elements of Yoruba oral literature, including *Ijala* poetry, a research gap remains in understanding how politeness and impoliteness



function as communicative strategies in these texts (Omoniyi 2011; Ogunbiyi 2012; Adeniran 2014; Adedina 2024). Politeness theory, developed by scholars like Brown and Levinson (1987), has been widely applied in analyzing various forms of discourse to understand how speakers explore social hierarchies, express power, and build relationships. However, the application of politeness theory to Yoruba oral traditions, specifically *Ijala* poetry, is underexplored. Most existing studies on Yoruba oral literature focus on themes, symbolism, and cultural values but often overlook the subtle ways in which language is used to assert authority, challenge power, or show reverence within religious and cultural contexts. This study addresses this research gap by investigating the use of politeness and impoliteness strategies in *Ijala* poetry, particularly in relation to the portrayal of Yoruba deities. The research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how these strategies are contextually applied to reflect and reinforce social hierarchies and power dynamics in Yoruba traditional religion.

The objectives of this study are threefold. First, the study seeks to analyze the use of impoliteness strategies in *Ijala* poetry to understand how they are employed to challenge or provoke deities to demonstrate their power. Focusing on poems such as *Ijala* for Ogun, *Ijala* for Orunmila, and *Ijala* for Sango, the research aims to uncover the verbal techniques and speech acts used to challenge the authority of these deities. Second, the study explores how politeness strategies are used to show reverence and establish rapport with the deities. This study aims to reveal the ways in which respectful language and deferential expressions are strategically used to build positive relationships with powerful beings. Third, the study examines the context-dependent nature of both politeness and impoliteness strategies, considering how the choice of strategy is influenced by the deity's nature and the speaker's intent. These objectives are geared toward providing a deeper understanding of the role of language in the spiritual and social lives of the Yoruba people and the significance of oral traditions in maintaining religious and cultural values.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both linguistic and anthropological scholarship on Yoruba oral traditions and religious practices. Applying the concepts of politeness and impoliteness to the analysis of *Ijala* poetry provides a fresh perspective on how language functions as a tool for negotiating power and reinforcing social hierarchies in Yoruba traditional religion. It extends the application of politeness theory beyond Western contexts to a non-Western, indigenous setting, thereby enriching our understanding of how different cultures use language to manage relationships and express authority. Furthermore, the study provides insights into the challenge of Yoruba oral literature, revealing its role not just as a form of artistic expression but also as a means of engaging with the divine and exploring the spiritual context. This research also has practical implications for the study of African oral traditions and can serve as a foundation for future studies exploring the intersections of language, culture, and religion in other indigenous contexts.

Literature Review

This section explores the concept of politeness and its theoretical underpinnings, particularly as articulated by Brown and Levinson, and examines its relevance within African oral traditions. It examines how politeness functions as a pragmatic tool for managing social relationships, power dynamics, and face-threatening acts. Drawing on examples from Yoruba *Ijala* poetry and broader African oral practices, the review underscores how politeness and impoliteness strategies are culturally adapted to express reverence, assert authority, and negotiate human-divine relationships in traditional African societies.

The Concept of Politeness and Its Application in African Oral Traditions

Politeness theory, originally developed by Brown and Levinson (1987), provides a framework for understanding how speakers use language to manage social relationships and maintain face in interactions. The theory posits that politeness strategies are employed to mitigate face threats and manage social hierarchies, focusing on the concepts of positive face—the desire to be liked and



admired—and negative face—the desire to be free from imposition (Brown and Levinson 1987). Jegede, Yusuf, Aliyu, and Aladetan (2024) note that politeness is a crucial aspect of human communication that helps maintain social harmony and mitigate potential conflicts. It involves the use of linguistic strategies to show respect, deference, and consideration for others in interactions. Politeness can manifest through positive strategies, which seek to establish rapport and solidarity, or negative strategies, which emphasize respect for personal space and autonomy (Singh et al. 2024). In digital interactions, politeness plays a significant role in shaping discourse, as seen in online debates where courteous language fosters constructive discussions and reduces hostility (Jeong and Chiu 2024).

The concept of politeness is also tied to power dynamics, where individuals of higher status may dictate the level of politeness in communication, as observed in literary interactions and public discourse (Suparno et al. 2023; Jegede 2024a;). Beyond everyday interactions, politeness is often strategically employed in various contexts such as politics, media, and literature. For instance, political debates highlight how gender influences the use and perception of politeness, with female candidates often expected to exhibit more courteous behaviour (Hinck et al. 2023). In journalistic discourse, politeness strategies in headlines help shape public perception of crime and legal proceedings (Jegede 2024b). Additionally, cultural and linguistic factors influence politeness norms, as seen in the use of Singlish particles to navigate face-threatening speech acts in Singaporean English (Lai and Tan 2022). The digital age has further transformed politeness by redefining its function in online interactions, where users negotiate status and power through language choices (Trifiro et al. 2021; Wang 2021). These studies underscore the multifaceted nature of politeness and its evolving role in contemporary communication.

In the context of African oral traditions, including Yoruba *Ijala* poetry, these concepts offer valuable insights into how language is used to explore complex social and religious dynamics. For instance, politeness strategies in Yoruba oral literature often reflect an important balance of deference, respect, and authority, demonstrating how speakers negotiate their social roles and relationships with the divine. Researchers have applied politeness theory to various African languages and oral traditions, revealing that similar principles govern interactions, though the specific strategies and their applications can vary significantly across cultures (Harris 2006; Ndlovu 2018). In the Yoruba context, *Ijala* poetry serves as a prime example of how politeness and impoliteness strategies are significantly incorporated into the domain of oral expression. *Ijala* poetry, traditionally associated with hunters and deities, is rich in linguistic features that reflect the poet's relationship with the deities and the social order (Adegbite 2015). Politeness strategies in *Ijala* often involve praising deities, expressing reverence, and acknowledging their power, which aligns with the broader principles of maintaining positive face and showing respect (Ogunbiyi 2012). Conversely, impoliteness strategies may include challenging or provoking deities, which can be seen as a way to assert the speaker's own authority or test the deity's power (Omoniyi 2011). Applying Brown and Levinson's framework to these poetic forms allows scholars to gain deeper insight into how Yoruba poets use language to explore interactions with the divine and negotiate social hierarchies within their religious and cultural context.

The Role of Oral Poetry in Yoruba Culture and Religion

Ijala poetry is a central component of Yoruba oral literature, significantly tied to both cultural and religious practices. Traditionally performed by hunters, *Ijala* serves as a means of expressing personal achievements, invoking spiritual power, and engaging with deities. This poetic form is characterized by its use of elaborate imagery, rhythmic patterns, and repetitive structures, which are designed to capture the listener's attention and reinforce the poem's thematic elements (Ogunbiyi 2012). The content of *Ijala* often revolves around themes of bravery, divine intervention, and moral lessons, reflecting the values and beliefs of Yoruba society. As such, *Ijala* not only functions as a



form of artistic expression but also plays a vital role in reinforcing cultural identity and social cohesion among the Yoruba people (Adegbite 2015).

In the context of Yoruba traditional religion, *Ijala* poetry holds significant spiritual and ritualistic importance. The Yoruba pantheon includes a diverse array of deities, each associated with specific aspects of life and nature. *Ijala* poems frequently address these deities, invoking their power and seeking their favor or protection. This interaction between humans and the divine is central to Yoruba religious practices, where verbal expressions of praise, supplication, and even challenge are used to manage relationships with the deities (Omoniyi 2011). For instance, poems dedicated to Ogun, the god of iron and war, might emphasize themes of strength and valor, while those dedicated to Orunmila, the deity of wisdom and divination, focus on knowledge and foresight. These thematic elements reflect the deities' attributes and their roles within Yoruba cosmology, showcasing how *Ijala* poetry serves as a medium for both religious devotion and cultural storytelling.

The role of *Ijala* poetry extends beyond mere performance to include its influence on social and ritual practices. Poets, or bards, who perform *Ijala* are often regarded as intermediaries between the human and divine spheres, possessing the ability to articulate complex spiritual concepts and invoke supernatural forces through their craft (Ogunbiyi 2012). The performance of *Ijala* can occur in various settings, including festivals, rituals, and community gatherings, where it functions as a vehicle for communal expression and reinforcement of shared values. Furthermore, the poetic form contributes to the preservation and transmission of oral traditions, ensuring that cultural narratives and religious practices are maintained across generations (Adegbite 2015). Through its dynamic and diverse role, *Ijala* poetry exemplifies the rich interplay between language, culture, and religion in Yoruba society, revealing its significance as a cornerstone of Yoruba oral tradition and spiritual life.

Power Dynamics and Language in Yoruba Traditional Religious Practices

In Yoruba religious practices, language plays a crucial role in managing power dynamics and establishing social hierarchies. The Yoruba pantheon, consisting of numerous deities, each presides over different aspects of life and nature, and interactions with these deities are mediated through carefully crafted language (Adeniran 2014). Yoruba religious discourse often employs linguistic strategies to reflect and negotiate the power relations between humans and the divine. For instance, in rituals and prayers, the use of honorifics, elaborate praise, and supplications function to display reverence and acknowledge the deity's superior status (Ogunbiyi 2012). These linguistic practices are integral to maintaining harmony in religious interactions and ensuring that the appropriate respect is given to the deities, thereby reinforcing the social and spiritual order within the Yoruba community.

In addition to formal reverence, Yoruba oral traditions, including *Ijala* poetry, utilize both politeness and impoliteness strategies to explore the complex power dynamics inherent in religious practice (Adegbite 2015). *Ijala* poetry often reflects the dual nature of the deities, portraying them as both benevolent and fearsome. For example, in addressing Ogun, the deity of iron and warfare, poets might use aggressive language to evoke his formidable power while simultaneously employing respectful phrases to acknowledge his protective role (Omoniyi 2011). This strategic use of language allows the poet to negotiate the boundaries of divine authority and human agency, illustrating the important balance between challenging and appeasing the deities. Through such poetic expressions, the Yoruba community maintains a subtle understanding of their deities' power and the appropriate modes of interaction.

Furthermore, the performance of *Ijala* poetry serves as a social and ritualistic act that reinforces and negotiates power dynamics within Yoruba religious contexts (Harris 2006). The act of reciting poetry in communal and ritual settings allows poets to assert their own authority and position within the community while simultaneously engaging with the divine. The language used in these



performances not only reflects but also shapes the power relations between the poet, the audience, and the deities. Analyzing these interactions provides scholars with insights into how Yoruba oral traditions function as mechanisms for managing and expressing power within both the spiritual sphere and the social structure (Ndlovu 2018). Thus, Yoruba religious practices, through their linguistic and performative elements, offer a rich field for examining how language mediates power and authority in cultural and spiritual contexts.

Language and the Representation of Deities in Yoruba Oral Literature

In Yoruba oral literature, the representation of deities significantly influences language use, reflecting both the characteristics of the deities and the cultural values associated with them. Deities in Yoruba traditional religion are imbued with specific attributes and powers that are articulated through language in various oral forms, including *Ijala* poetry, folk tales, and praise songs (Ogunbiyi 2012). For instance, the language used to address Ogun, the deity of iron and war, often emphasizes strength and aggression, aligning with his martial and protective qualities (Adegbite 2015). The poet's choice of words and expressions serves to evoke Ogun's formidable presence while simultaneously acknowledging his role as a protector. This strategic use of language not only reflects Ogun's divine nature but also reinforces his significance within the Yoruba cosmology and social structure.

Similarly, the depiction of Orunmila, the deity of wisdom and divination, employs language that reveals his intellectual and prophetic attributes (Omoniyi 2011). In *Ijala* poetry dedicated to Orunmila, the language often revolves around themes of knowledge, foresight, and spiritual guidance. Phrases that emphasize Orunmila's role as the "witness to destiny" or the "bringer of dawn" are indicative of the respect and reverence accorded to him as a source of divine wisdom (Adeniran 2014). This linguistic portrayal not only reinforces Orunmila's status as a central figure in Yoruba traditional religion but also emphasizes the cultural value placed on wisdom and insight within the community. Through this subtle language, poets and performers articulate and maintain the deity's revered position in the spiritual and social spheres.

The influence of deities on language use extends to how oral literature shapes and is shaped by the interactions between humans and the divine. In *Ijala* poetry, for example, the language used can both challenge and appease deities, reflecting the challenge of these relationships (Harris 2006). The use of impoliteness strategies, such as invoking the deities' fearsome aspects, serves to test their power or assert the speaker's own authority, while politeness strategies reinforce respect and establish rapport (Ndlovu 2018). This dynamic interplay between respect and challenge in the language reflects the broader Yoruba understanding of deities as powerful and complex beings whose influence permeates all aspects of life. Through these linguistic interactions, Yoruba oral literature provides a rich domain of how language mediates relationships with the divine, shaping both the spiritual experience and the cultural identity of the Yoruba people (Ogunbiyi 2012).

Politeness and Impoliteness Theories: An Overview

Politeness and impoliteness theories are central to the study of pragmatics, exploring how language is used to manage social relationships and navigate power dynamics. The primary proponents of politeness theory are Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, whose seminal work *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* was published in 1987. Their theory introduces the concepts of positive and negative face, which are crucial for understanding politeness strategies. Positive face refers to the desire to be liked and admired, while negative face pertains to the need for autonomy and freedom from imposition (Brown and Levinson 1987). According to the theory, speakers employ various politeness strategies to protect both their own and their interlocutor's face, including indirectness, mitigation, and politeness markers. The theory identifies four main strategies for maintaining face: bald on record (direct communication), positive politeness (enhancing social



closeness), negative politeness (minimizing imposition), and off-record (indirect communication) (Brown and Levinson 1987).

In contrast, impoliteness theory, developed by Jonathan Culpeper in the early 2000s, addresses the ways in which language can be used to undermine face and create conflict. Culpeper's work, particularly his 1996 article "*Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness*" and subsequent book *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offense* (2005), expands the understanding of how language can function not only to maintain but to challenge or disrupt social harmony. Impoliteness theory categorizes various strategies used to affront face, such as direct insults, derogatory remarks, and aggressive speech acts. These strategies are designed to diminish the recipient's positive face or impose on their negative face, often reflecting power struggles or social conflict (Culpeper 1996, 2005). The theory is notable for its focus on the intentional use of language to cause offense and disrupt social norms, providing a framework for analyzing conflictual interactions in various contexts.

Both theories have broad applications across different fields, including sociolinguistics, communication studies, and cultural analysis. Politeness theory is used to analyze how individuals navigate social hierarchies and maintain relationships in contexts ranging from everyday conversations to formal negotiations (Holmes 1995). It has been particularly influential in understanding cross-cultural communication, where politeness norms can vary significantly between cultures (Scollon and Scollon 2001). Impoliteness theory, on the other hand, is applied to examine conflict and power dynamics in interactions, including political discourse, media communications, and interpersonal relationships (Culpeper 2005). Both theories offer valuable insights into how language functions as a tool for managing social relationships, whether through enhancing harmony or creating discord.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research design to explore the use of politeness and impoliteness strategies in *Ijala* poetry within Yoruba traditional religion. Data for the study were drawn from three selected *Ijala* poems dedicated to the Yoruba deities Ogun, Orunmila, and Sango. These poems were chosen based on their prominence in Yoruba oral tradition and their representative nature of the genre. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select these poems, ensuring that they encompass a range of strategies relevant to the study's objectives. The selection criterion included the prominence of the deity in Yoruba traditional religion, the richness of the linguistic content, and the availability of well-documented versions of the poems. Data collection involved transcribing the poems from audio recordings and written texts into a digital format. The collected data were then subjected to qualitative content analysis. This analysis focused on identifying and categorizing instances of politeness and impoliteness strategies within the poems, examining how these strategies were used to challenge, revere, or negotiate relationships with the deities. Specific attention was given to the context in which these strategies were employed, the linguistic techniques used, and the impact of these strategies on the portrayal of power dynamics. The findings were interpreted in relation to the broader Yoruba religious and cultural context, providing insights into the role of language in managing power and respect within this tradition.

Results

This section analyzes the politeness and impoliteness strategies in three selected *Ijala* poems: *Ijala* for Ogun, *Ijala* for Orunmila, and *Ijala* for Sango. Each poem is examined for the use of speech acts, verbal exchanges, and context to understand how these strategies serve as mechanisms of power within the Yoruba religious context. Three major findings are drawn from each *Ijala*: (1) the use of impoliteness strategies to challenge or provoke deities, (2) the employment of politeness to show reverence and establish rapport, and (3) the context-dependence of both strategies influenced by the deity's nature and the speaker's intent.



1. *Ijala* for Ogun (Òríkì Ògún)

Excerpt 1:

"Ògún májèjèjé, Ògún alágbèdè-mérin-máyé"

("Ogun who drinks blood, Ogun, the blacksmith of the four corners of the earth")

This excerpt uses an impoliteness strategy by emphasizing Ogun's fearsome and destructive traits. The phrase "Ogun who drinks blood" is a bold invocation of the deity's violent and ferocious nature, portraying him as a force capable of extreme brutality. Focusing on this aspect, the speaker aims to challenge Ogun, using aggressive language to provoke the deity into asserting his power and confirming his authority. This impoliteness strategy not only reveals Ogun's raw strength but also suggests a relationship between the speaker and Ogun that is complex, possibly marked by fear, respect, or a need to witness the deity's power in action. The reference to Ogun as the "blacksmith of the four corners of the earth" adds to his omnipresence and supreme authority, reinforcing his status as an influential and formidable figure in Yoruba cosmology.

Excerpt 2:

"Ògún nì í jó k'ó má pa olójú méjèjèjì"

("Ogun dances not to kill the innocent")

In this excerpt, the speaker uses a politeness strategy to show respect and reverence for Ogun by emphasizing his sense of justice and moral integrity. The phrase "Ogun dances not to kill the innocent" portrays the deity as not only powerful but also wise and discerning in his actions. This acknowledgment of Ogun's capacity for controlled destruction creates an image of a deity who, despite his immense power, exercises discretion and refrains from unnecessary violence. revealing Ogun's restraint allows the speaker to establish a respectful relationship, appeal to his fairness, and align with his divine principles of justice. This expression of deference also works to cultivate rapport between the speaker and Ogun, portraying the deity as approachable through righteous conduct and reverence. This politeness strategy recognizes Ogun's dual nature as both a fearsome and a just protector, fostering mutual respect.

Excerpt 3:

"Àjàlù méjì, Ìjà ònà kílí fí í ẹ̀ méjì"

("Twin disaster, the road's fight cannot last twice")

This excerpt illustrates the context-dependent nature of both politeness and impoliteness strategies, revealing Ogun's complex role as both a protector and a destroyer. The phrase "Twin disaster" evokes Ogun's capacity for causing calamities, revealing his formidable power. At the same time, "the road's fight cannot last twice" suggests the inevitability of Ogun's decisive actions, which may either end conflict or further his destructive force. Depending on the speaker's relationship with Ogun and the context in which the statement is made, this phrase could serve different purposes. As a form of politeness, it could be an appeal to Ogun's sense of mercy, recognizing his ability to bring swift resolution and avoiding further conflict. Conversely, it can be interpreted as a veiled impoliteness, challenging Ogun's unpredictability and urging him to act wisely, preventing repeated disaster. This duality showcases the strategic use of language in managing relationships with deities in Yoruba cosmology.

2. *Ijala* for Orunmila (Òríkì Òrúnmìlà)

Excerpt 4:

"Òrúnmìlà, ẹ̀léríí ipín, Ọ̀ba tó ń wọ̀ bàtà kùkùrú tíí fò léré"

("Orunmila, witness to destiny, the king who wears short sandals but leaps in style")



This line exemplifies a politeness strategy through the expression of admiration and respect toward Orunmila, the deity of wisdom and divination in Yoruba cosmology. Referring to Orunmila as "ẹlẹrì ípín" (witness to destiny) positions him as a powerful overseer of human fates, acknowledging his omniscient and guiding role. The second part of the phrase, "Ọba tó ń wọ bàtà kùkùrú tí fò lẹrẹ" (the king who wears short sandals but leaps in style), enhances this reverence by revealing Orunmila's unique combination of humility and excellence. The imagery of short sandals suggests simplicity and modesty, while the description of his leaping in style conveys grace and agility, symbolizing his ability to transcend earthly limitations with ease and wisdom. Using these respectful descriptors strengthens the speaker's bond with the deity, appealing to his favor through admiration and deference.

Excerpt 5:

"Eni ò mò ó tàbí ọ̀dàkà, kò lè dáfá fún ara rẹ"
("He who does not know him cannot divine for himself")

This excerpt demonstrates an impoliteness strategy by indirectly challenging those who lack reverence or understanding of Orunmila, the deity of wisdom. The phrase emphasizes the futility of attempting to engage in divination without acknowledging or fully grasping Orunmila's wisdom and power. Stating that "he who does not know him cannot divine for himself" reinforces Orunmila's authority as the ultimate source of knowledge and insight. The impoliteness here is subtle but effective, as it belittles the ignorance of those who might try to bypass Orunmila's guidance. This approach asserts the deity's superiority, emphasising the importance of respect, understanding, and adherence to the divine order. In essence, the phrase not only reveals Orunmila's indispensable role in divination but also serves as a reprimand to those who dare to neglect or underestimate his significance.

Excerpt 6:

"Àgbà tí ń fì ọ̀kìtì-òye tọ ojúmọ̀ rọ"
("The elder who brings the dawn with the cloak of wisdom")

This line demonstrates the context-dependent nature of politeness strategies. In contexts where wisdom and knowledge are highly valued, the phrase shows reverence to Orunmila by calling him the "elder who brings the dawn with the cloak of wisdom," emphasizing his role as a guiding force of enlightenment and understanding. Associating him with the dawn, a symbol of new beginnings and illumination, enhances Orunmila's status as a source of wisdom and foresight. This usage establishes a respectful tone, acknowledging the deity's intellectual superiority. However, this politeness can also serve as a subtle challenge to others, urging them to recognize their own limitations in comparison to Orunmila's vast knowledge. It places the responsibility on those less wise to defer to his judgment, reinforcing both his esteemed position and the expectation of humility from others in his presence.

3. *Ijala* for Sango (Ọ̀ríkì Sàngó)

Excerpt 7:

"Sàngó Olúkòso, Olúgbóná á yèréyé"
("Sango Olukoso, The Lord who spreads fire gracefully")

This phrase exemplifies a politeness strategy by glorifying Sango's mastery over fire and his imposing nature. Referring to him as "The Lord who spreads fire gracefully" reveals not only his control over a dangerous element but also the elegance with which he wields his power. The juxtaposition of fire, typically seen as a force of destruction, with the word "gracefully" emphasises



Sango's divine control and precision. This elevates his status and evokes admiration, establishing a tone of reverence and respect for the deity's authority. Emphasizing his ability to handle power with grace fosters a respectful relationship, acknowledging Sango's might while also praising his balance of strength and refinement. This portrayal encourages deference and awe from the audience, reinforcing Sango's place as a revered and powerful figure in Yoruba cosmology.

Excerpt 8:

"Sàngó o! A má gbérù àrá kó nílé"

("Sango! Who hurls bolts of lightning without resting")

This line demonstrates an impoliteness strategy by provoking Sango and emphasizing his unyielding nature. The description of Sango as one who "hurls bolts of lightning without resting" reveals his relentless power and aggression, portraying him as a deity of unstoppable force. This verbal challenge subtly dares Sango to prove his might, invoking his characteristic anger and ferocity. Drawing attention to his ceaseless activity, the speaker both reveres and provokes Sango, motivating him to take action. This approach can be seen as confrontational, where the speaker's acknowledgment of Sango's power is tempered with a bold challenge to unleash it. The impoliteness lies in the implicit dare, encouraging Sango to respond to the description of his tireless efforts, and in doing so, the speaker acknowledges Sango's superiority while also engaging in a provocative exchange typical of Yoruba oral traditions.

Excerpt 9:

"Bí a bá mò, àà rẹ̀, àà tó iwà lóṛa"

("If we know his way, we shall tread with care")

This excerpt illustrates the context-dependent nature of politeness, particularly when dealing with powerful deities like Sango. The line conveys a cautious strategy that hinges on understanding Sango's temperament. Stating, "If we know his way, we shall tread with care," the speaker shows deference, implying that one must approach Sango with awareness and respect to avoid provoking his wrath. Depending on the context, this could either be interpreted as a respectful acknowledgment of Sango's unpredictable and fierce nature, or it might serve as a subtle critique, implying that Sango's volatility necessitates careful behavior. This duality reveals the challenge of Yoruba oral traditions, where politeness and impoliteness can shift based on the speaker's intention and the circumstances. The speaker's awareness of Sango's nature allows for the strategic use of language to either mitigate conflict or respectfully engage with his authority.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the selected *Ìjálá* poems—*Ìjálá* for Ogun, Orunmila, and Sango—illustrates the strategic deployment of politeness and impoliteness within the discourse of power in Yoruba traditional religion. These strategies are not merely rhetorical but deeply embedded within socio-religious frameworks, reflecting the dynamic negotiation of reverence, authority, and identity. The first major finding is the functional use of impoliteness strategies to provoke or challenge the deities, thereby prompting them to affirm their power. For instance, in *Ìjálá* for Ogun, the invocation "Ògún májèjèjé, Ògún alágbèdè-mérin-máyé" ("Ogun who drinks blood, Ogun, the blacksmith of the four corners of the earth") exemplifies what Harris (2006) terms "ritualised confrontation" in African discourse. This phrase aggressively foregrounds Ogun's violent and assertive persona, positioning the speaker as one who dares the deity to reveal his potency. Similarly, in *Ìjálá* for Orunmila, the assertion "Ènì ọ̀ mò ọ̀ tàbí ọ̀dàkà, kò lè dáfá fún ara rẹ̀" ("He who does not know him cannot divine for himself") reflects a dismissive stance toward the ignorant, reaffirming Orunmila's epistemic authority. This aligns with the observations by Singh et al. (2024) that impoliteness strategies often reinforce hierarchical boundaries and role legitimacy in discourse. Likewise, in *Ìjálá* for Sango, the phrase "Sàngó o! A má gbérù àrá kó nílé" ("Sango! Who hurls bolts of lightning without resting")



serves as a performative provocation, daring the deity to validate his mythic aggression. This usage aligns with findings by Jegede et al. (2024) who argue that impoliteness in ritual discourse functions not as a breakdown of decorum but as a rhetorical strategy for eliciting divine response and asserting proximity to power.

The second major finding reveals that politeness strategies are central to establishing reverence and maintaining relational harmony with the deities. These strategies help frame the speaker as respectful, discerning, and aligned with divine attributes. In *Ìjálá* for Ogun, the phrase “Ògún ní í jó k’ó má pa olójú méjèèjì” (“Ogun dances not to kill the innocent”) reflects what Suparno et al. (2023) describe as “deferential politeness,” where power is acknowledged but framed within a moral lens. Ogun is presented not merely as powerful, but as just—an attribute that invites veneration. In *Ìjálá* for Orunmila, the line “Òrúnmìlà, ẹlẹ́ríí ipín, Ọba tó ń wọ bàtà kúkúrú tíí fò lére” (“Orunmila, witness to destiny, the king who wears short sandals but leaps in style”) employs poetic elegance to elevate the deity’s wisdom and agility, aligning with the positive politeness strategies outlined by Jeong and Chiu (2024), which build solidarity and shared values between the interlocutor and the subject. In Sango’s praise, “Sàngó Olúkòso, Olúgbòná á yèréyè” (“Sango Olukoso, The Lord who spreads fire gracefully”), the deity’s fearsome attribute—fire—is softened through aesthetic admiration, reflecting the strategic balancing of respect and caution. This mirrors Jegede’s (2024) observation that in religious discourse, politeness not only mitigates social distance but also reaffirms ritual and moral order.

The third finding concerns the contextual flexibility of politeness and impoliteness strategies, which are shaped by the nature of the deity and the speaker’s pragmatic intent. This dimension reinforces the argument by Doni Suparno et al. (2023) that politeness must be redefined as situationally and culturally contingent, particularly in contexts where power, reverence, and spirituality intersect. For example, the *Ìjálá* line for Ogun, “Àjàlù méjì, Ìjà ònà kǐí fí í ẹ́ méjì” (“Twin disaster, the road’s fight cannot last twice”) is a polyvalent utterance. Depending on tone and context, it may function as a warning, a lament, or a plea—thus oscillating between impoliteness and cautionary reverence. Similarly, “Àgbà tí ń fí òkìtì-òye tó ojúmọ̀ rọ̀” (“The elder who brings the dawn with the cloak of wisdom”), addressed to Orunmila, is both praise and an indirect reminder of human limitations. Such instances support the findings by Harris (2006) and Adedina (2024) that African verbal arts frequently rely on ambiguity and duality as communicative resources for navigating status and power. In the case of Sango, the line “Bí a bá mò àà rẹ̀, àà tó iwà lọ́rà” (“If we know his way, we shall tread with care”) articulates strategic caution. This aligns with Doni et al.’s (2023) conception of politeness as “an anticipatory act,” where speakers navigate unpredictable authority figures through pragmatic mitigation.

Consequently, this study affirms that Yoruba *Ìjálá* poetry employs politeness and impoliteness not merely as stylistic choices but as mechanisms for negotiating power, deference, and identity within the religious cosmos. The invocation of impoliteness to challenge or awaken divine forces parallels the Yoruba belief in reciprocal agency—where human invocation invites divine response. Conversely, the strategic use of politeness affirms social and cosmic hierarchies, reinforcing the centrality of order, discipline, and respect. In line with Adedina’s (2024) exploration of retributive justice in Yoruba cosmology, these strategies reflect an ethical framework where speech acts have both ritual and moral consequences. This analysis contributes to the expanding scholarship on African pragmatics, particularly in its attention to the intersection of tradition, orality, and power. This study also situates Yoruba *Ìjálá* within global discussions on politeness theory, while affirming its cultural specificity and enduring rhetorical sophistication.



Conclusion

This study has examined the use of politeness and impoliteness strategies in *Ijala* poetry as mechanisms of power within the context of Yoruba traditional religion. Through the analysis of three selected *Ijala* poems—*Ijala* for Ogun, *Ijala* for Orunmila, and *Ijala* for Sango—it was revealed that these strategies are crucial for negotiating relationships with deities, asserting authority, and reinforcing social hierarchies. Impoliteness strategies were found to challenge or provoke deities to demonstrate their strength, while politeness strategies were used to show reverence and establish rapport. Both strategies were highly context-dependent, shaped by the nature of the deity and the speaker's intent, revealing the challenge of Yoruba oral traditions. The study emphasises the significance of *Ijala* poetry not only as a cultural expression but also as a dynamic tool for managing power dynamics within religious discourse. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of how language functions in the religious and cultural practices of the Yoruba people, providing valuable insights into the interplay of respect, power, and spirituality in their worldview. Further research could explore these dynamics in other forms of Yoruba oral literature and religious practices.

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APPENDIX

ÒRÍKÌ ÒGÚN

(Praise Poetry for Ogun, the God of Iron and War)

Ògún làkáàyè,
 Ọ̀ṣin Mọ̀lẹ̀, ẹnì tí gbogbo ọ̀nà n bọ sí,
 Ọ̀gún májẹ̀jẹ̀,
 Ọ̀gún alágbèdẹ-mérin-máyé,
 Kò sí ohun tí a fí irin ẹ̀ tí Ogun kì í mọ̀.

Ọ̀gún aláda méjì,
 Ó fí ọ̀kan sàńko, ó fí ọ̀kan yèna,
 Ọ̀jọ̀ Ogun n tí ọ̀kẹ̀ bó,
 Asọ iná lo mú bọra,
 Èwù èjẹ̀ ló wọ́ lówó.

Ọ̀gún onílẹ̀ owó,
 Olóna ọ́lá,
 Ọ̀gún onílẹ̀ kòngòn kòngòn ọ̀run,
 Olómi ní ilé, f'ẹ̀jẹ̀ wẹ̀.
 Olàsọ ní ilé, f'ímọ̀-kímọ̀ bọra.

Ọ̀gún apon lẹ̀yìn ijù,
 Ẹ̀gbẹ̀ lẹ̀yìn ọ̀mọ kan,
 Ọ̀gún méje lógun mi:
 Ọ̀gún Alára ní n gb'aja,
 Ọ̀gún Onírẹ̀ á gb'agbò,
 Ọ̀gún Ìkòlẹ̀ á gb'agbìn,
 Ọ̀gún Ìlẹ̀ á gb'èsùn isù,
 Ọ̀gún Akírìn á gb'awọ̀ agbò,
 Ọ̀gún Elémòndò, ẹ̀ran àhùn ní jẹ,
 Ọ̀gún Mákindé tí dógun lẹ̀yìn odi.

Bí o bá gbà tápà, a gb'abòkì,
 A gbà ùkùùkù, a gbà kẹ̀mbèrì.
 Àjàlù méjì,



Ìjà ònà kílí fí í ẹ̀ méjì.
Ògún nì í jó, kó má pa olójú méjèèjì.

Ẹ̀jẹ̀ níbo là tí gbé pàdé Ògún?
A pàdé Ògún níbi ìjà,
A pàdé ẹ̀ níbi itá,
A pàdé ẹ̀ níbi agbára ẹ̀jẹ̀ tí ń sà,
Agbára ẹ̀jẹ̀ tí ń déni lórùn bí omi àgò.

Bómọ̀dé bá ń d' alẹ̀,
Kí ó má ẹ̀ dá Ògún!
Ọ̀rọ̀ Ògún le e wò,
Ará Ògún kàn: gò! gò! gò!

ÒRÍKÌ ÒRÚNMÌLÀ

(Praise Poetry for Orunmila – the Deity of Wisdom and Divination)

Òrúnmìlà, ẹ̀lẹ̀rìí ipín,
Ọ̀ba tó ń wọ̀ bàtà kùkùrú tíí fò lére,
Alákòóso ayé àti ọ̀run,
Ará Ilé-Ifẹ̀, ọ̀lọ̀jọ̀ tí kò sẹ̀yìn nímọ̀.

Ènì ọ̀ mọ̀ ó tàbí ọ̀dàkà, kò lè dáfá fún ara ẹ̀,
Òrúnmìlà tí ń ráyé wáyé, tó mọ̀ ohun gbogbo sáájú,
Àgbà tí ń fí ọ̀kìtì-òye tó ojúmọ̀ rọ̀,
Asẹ̀yọ̀rí ọ̀mọ̀ aráyé, apeṣẹ̀ ohun rere.

Alábáyọ̀ tí kò gbagbé ẹ̀ni kankan,
Alàgbọ̀n sísẹ̀, ọ̀lọ̀gbọ̀n sòro,
Ìràwọ̀ àtẹ̀lẹ̀wọ̀ ẹ̀ni tí ń mọ̀ ojọ̀,
Onímọ̀ ojọ̀ tí kò tii dé,
A kì í dá Ifá, ká fọ̀; Ifá a dá, ó dáa.

Baba àgbọ̀n, onípa àṣẹ̀,
Ajùmòbí ọ̀run tó mọ̀ ipò aráyé,
Akọ̀là ọ̀rọ̀, àtẹ̀lẹ̀wọ̀ ayé,
Tí ń kó gbogbo àṣẹ̀ sórí ojú Ifá.

Aláwò Mẹ̀rindínlógún,
Tí ó mọ̀ orí, tí ó mọ̀ iwà,
Tí ń sọ ohun tí kì í hàn sí ojú,
A dá ọ̀mọ̀ lójú, kó lè bọ̀ lórí.

Òrúnmìlà, ẹ̀ni tí Olódùmarè fí ọ̀gbọ̀n jù lọ,
Ẹ̀lẹ̀rìí ipín, akóni alákiyèsí,
Baba tó ń sọ ohun tó burúkú di rere,
Oníwà pẹ̀lẹ̀ tó mọ̀ ibi tí orí yíò yọ̀.

Kábíyèsí ọ̀run, asọ̀rò-ma-fọ̀,
Baba àtọ̀runwa, olùtọ̀ ipinnu aráyé,
Èdùmarè gbà á láàyè ká fí ọ̀gbọ̀n sàkóso,
Òrúnmìlà, kó bá wa dáfá rere.



ÒRÌKÌ SÀNGÓ

(Praise Poetry for Sàngó, the Deity of Thunder and Justice)

Sàngó Olúkòso,
Olúgbóná á yèréyé,
Ọba tí ń jà lójú àrà,
Aláṣe tó ń gbóná ilé ayé,
Tí ń ju àrà, tí ń da mánámáná.

Sàngó ọkan t'Ólórún dá,
Arińtẹlẹ ọrun, ẹni tí kò pé kúrò nípò,
Ọba tí ń jà lójú ẹfúùfú,
Ọmọ Ọya, akọ tí kì í fọrọ ẹrẹ.

Sàngó o!
A má gbérù àrà kó nílẹ,
Ọba tó ń yí igi dánígbo,
Ọba tó mọ ibi tí ọjò gbẹyà,
Ẹniyàn àtàwọn ọrun ń bẹrù rẹ.

Tẹmí l'Ọrun, mọ bẹbẹ l'ẹsẹ rẹ,
Bí a bá mọ àà rẹ, àà tó iwà lóra,
Ọba aláṣe, ẹni tí ibànújẹ kì í tán lẹyìn rẹ,
Ọba tó mọyì, tó mọ ètò, tó mọ ilànà.

Sàngó, ajé àrà ló l'ètẹ,
Tí ń wọ aṣọ pupa bí ẹjẹ,
Tí ń gbá àrà gẹgẹ bí ọba tó dákẹ,
Tí ara ń sán bí omi ojú ọrun.

Sàngó, kábíyèsí,
Adájọ ayé àti ọrun,
Tí kò sọrọ láláì gbìyànjú òtítọ.
Tí kò fọwọ bọnà, tó ń fẹsùn wí níwájú Olódùmarè.



THE IMPACT OF CLASS SIZE ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT PRIMARY AND SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN FAGGE LOCAL GOVERNMENT, KANO STATE

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Abstract

Some researchers, educationist and languages scholars' assume that there is low-level achievement in the English language teaching and learning among Nigerian secondary school students. Some of the factors that this situation is classroom characteristic of which large class size is fundamental. The aim of this study is to investigate the influence of class size on learning English language at primary and secondary school levels in Fagge local government area of Kano State. To achieve this, Richards (1949) four-group experimental design was used. 269 respondents were divided into four groups and taught English for thirteen weeks. 239 respondents wrote the post-test. Data from the post-test were analyzed using chi square and ANOVA. Results show that linguistically no improvement in the achievement of learners in large classes compared to those classes with small number of learners. Likewise, classes with less number of students give ease to teacher assessment and learners contribute actively in classroom discourse than classes with high number of students. In sum, large classes have adverse effects on learning English in Fagge local government. The proficiency, competence and standard of English are fallen given that each learner has individual peculiarity within each class. Part of the recommendations is that approaches that show preference on individualization, grouping, and use of language teaching supports and theorization of innovative models in respect of class size be considered.

Keywords: size, teaching, learning, coefficient, proficiency.

Introduction

Nigeria, as the leading country in Africa, class size has become its major obstacle in all institutions of learning and something unavoidable due to the population boom of 237.136,277 million as the reality in the majority of developing countries in Africa. The estimate population of Kano State is 16,253,549 million; the state population has seen a significant growth of 64.5% since the 2006 census while. Fagge local government population is 335,200, it is obvious that a lot of Englishes abound (Kachru, 1995 Minzali 2003 & Bamgose 2022). "One of such is English as second language (Graddol, 2006). However, English is not indigenous in Nigeria. Then it has an official status in the country thus as second language in the context (Richards, 1985). In addition, most learners of the English language in Kano State, Nigeria begin to adopt declarative and practical knowledge in respect of English outside the home setting precisely in school. Therefore, the English language is viewed as second language to the majority, in Kano State apart from Arabic language. An assessment of the English language learned in generality of Kano State Primary and Secondary Schools particularly Fagge Local government shows some rudiments that are not in line with those in the native-like English. Despite that, this category of English is closer to that of the native English in comparison with other varieties of Englishes in Nigeria (Jibril, 2000).

Despite, the English language is regarded as second language in Nigerian context, and achieve official status as stated in the fourth edition of the Nigeria National Policy on Education (NPE)



being language of education serving as medium for instructions at different levels of the Nigerian educational enterprises (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended recognizes it as the official language of different domains. In addition, an instrument that serves as unifying factor amongst the diverse ethnic and multilingual people from divergent ethnolinguistic backgrounds. Conversely, the status of English in a dynamic world justifies learning English with the ambition of attaining a native-like or near native like competence and proficiency that will help one to become invaluable to humanity, the society and self.

Since English is a core subject at both primary and secondary schools levels of the Nigerian educational enterprise, it is anticipated that all the learners registered into various categories of education learn the English language as a prerequisite for their academic excellence, business prestige and progress. However, a good number of the learners of English in Nigerian schools learn the language virtually in large classes (Muhammad 2021). In one of the surveys reported on the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Programme in some parts of the Northeastern Nigeria, the teacher-student ratio is 1:135 (Bukar 2020). Another finding submits a teacher-student ratio of 1:200 for English in the urban secondary schools in Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (Jibril 2010). In another study by Chapman (2010), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2010) among others indicate the existence of large classes for English studies in many countries of the world.

Large Class

'Large' can be: the class is significantly larger than expected in which the available teaching and learning resources, human and material can no longer be equal the number of pupils/ students if you desire individual attention for the students." (Charalampos, 2019:83). In addition, a large class can vary from 22 in US elementary schools to up to 150 in an African classroom." Conversely, in Nigeria, sections 2:14(d), 4:19(g) and 5:27 of the NPE stipulate a teacher-student ratio of 1:25, 1:35 and 1:40 for pre-primary, primary and secondary education, respectively (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Therefore, this study anchored on the provisions in the NPE defining a large class at all levels of education to be a class with a size of 1: 40 students.

It is interesting to note that, large classes are the most common problems in most educational enterprises in developing countries, particularly Nigeria, which is no exception. It has been area of concern posing numerous glitches for lecturers/ teachers at various levels of education (i.e Primary, Secondary and higher institutions of learning). Although, there have been a number of opposing views regarding the impacts of class sizes. McDonald (2013) states that, "less number of students in class have slight or no influence on student achievement in elementary school". In line with Krueger (2003) "there is no much or reliable correlation between number of students in class and student performance". In the contrary for Mueller (2011) "a reduction in class size has no effect when a half-baked or inexperienced teacher is present." There is also the assumption that less number of students/pupils in a class provides healthier learning environment also highlights that large classes yield a negative effect on student retention. Conclusively, McDonald and Shaw (2013) emphasize that student-teacher ratio in ordinary level of education have a significant influence on teaching and learning; while, Arzt, (2011) "demonstrates that rising enrollment has detrimental and weighty consequences on student satisfaction in school".

It is interesting to note that both class size and student enrolment have a negative impact on students' summative and formative assessments of courses and instructors. In addition, "class size seems to be detrimental to pupils/students' insights of the writing process, consequent to the instructional variation teachers make when the number of students/pupils in the class increases; while class size has long been known to have an impact on students' performance in face-to-face settings, (Schmidt 2011: 5)



Negative Impacts of Large Class on Students' Learning Situation

Class sizes affect quality teaching and learning. As overcrowded classroom situations deter teachers' consideration to individual learner and reduce the progress in the teaching and learning activities. However, period allotted to teachers is meant to cover the rudimentary trainings only but no extra time to attend to special learners as expected in learning situation. Subsequently, in large classes, the time teachers spend with special children is very limited, invariably they consciously or unconsciously neglect them because of little time allocated for each lesson would not be enough to cater for their need..

Teaching in large classes appears to be problematic because of the propensity of the teachers to pay attention on centered instructions alone. Ibrahim (2020) "points out that number of learners in the class can result in teachers to leaving student/pupils centered learning strategy to focusing more on teacher centered activities". For of this, instruction approach becomes the philosophy of teaching. Class sizes impact students/pupils to demonstrate some learning attitude such as not responding to some questions posed by the teacher in the class rather expecting the teacher to spoon-feed them with the required response to questions during test or class exercises. In addition, Earthman (2002) reveals, "large classes are obstruction to achievement of learning objectives and they also reduce the completion of learning activities. In such situations, achieving quality lesson delivery may be difficult for the teachers and quality learning may not take place".

Positive Impacts of Small Class on Students' Learning activities

Richard (2006) "small class was found to have enhanced students' effective learning and academic success, and there is a relationship between the number of students in a class and their academic success." Added "teaching and learning quality, academic success is very much higher in small classes than in large classes and that small class can also enhance the quality of support for individual students. This can have a positive impact on their teaching and learning performance. Green (2000) indicates that the lessening of class size especially in the early primary schools could improve students' academic performance. In addition, some factors identified by Stoffels (2005) affecting teaching and learning in large classes, include

Insufficient space in the class because of overpopulation. In addition, lack of chances for all students/pupils to become active members in the class instead of being passive.

Glitches of Teaching Large Classes in Fagge Local Government Schools

Some of the glitches associated with teaching large number of pupils/students in a class in Nigeria with particular reference to Fagge local government schools, Kano State are numerous, despite efforts made by the teacher to enhancing teaching and learning materials by improvisation are with number of difficulties. There is the issue of lack of conducive classroom environment, which provides the avenue to classroom structure of interactional discourse approach between teacher/student is highly inadequate.

Some of these glitches in teaching large number of pupils/students in class are;

- I. The inability to organize quizzes exercises or tests on weekly or monthly basis.
 - II. The inability to mark pupils' /students' scripts and provide feedback in a timely manner
- ; The difficulty of identifying truant pupils/students during teaching and learning activities;
The problem of the appropriate use of teaching and learning materials.
Lack of public address system to cater for the number of pupils/students in the class



In addition, where there was issue of constant electric power supply constitute another problem. There is the difficulty of marking assignments, class work and test scripts to provide formative and summative result on timely basis.

It is very difficult for the teacher to identify those special pupils/students with different challenges to provide the needed assistance especially low learners. In addition, identify introverts or extroverts. Also those pupils/students in the habit of absenteeism regular attenders in the class, (Aransi 2017).

Furthermore, Todd (2006:2) other factors, which can also impact the discernment of the size of large classes include “the students’ age, the level of their educations, their motivation factors and class size in which teaching and learning is conducted.”. There is relativism in class size as policy differs from one country to the other. However, according to some literature on large classroom in North America and Western Europe there is ambiguousness on the issue of which class become too large and adversely affects the quality, proficiency and standard of education, as in some cases, classes of 30 are define as large and necessitate reduction (Benbow et al. 2007:5):

Quite a number of studies have been conducted examining the influence of class size in order to ascertain their effects or otherwise on teaching and learning of the English language, which will invariably lead to decision making by the stake holders both Ministry of education and State Basic Education Board. Interestingly, “Large classes are reality for most English language teachers in most developing countries like Nigeria. “Teachers encounter problems of class size more than number that facilitates language teaching and learning.” (Todd 2006:1).

The Problem

The problem of the study is premised on the assumption that there seems not to be any significant improvement in the performance of students in practical declarative knowledge as far intellectual capability, assertiveness and drive, linguistic background, teachers, peer influence as far as teaching and learning of the English language is concerned in Fagge local government schools, Kano State, Nigeria. Students/pupils communicative competence, proficiency in primary/secondary schools in most of the local governments in Kano state in learning the English language would provide information that teaching of English language standard is falling drastically. Therefore, the present study assumes that one of the major reasons of this dropping in terms of language competence/performance is rooted in the class size. The study was design to investigate the impact of large classes on the teaching and learning of the English language. It is anticipated that, the findings of the study will not only contribute to existing debate on the impact of large classes on language teaching and learning but also provide suggestions that will improve learning teaching and learning of language at Fagge local government, Kano State Nigeria.

Hypotheses:

1. There is no substantial improvement/ change in students’ /pupil’s language proficiency development amongst the students/pupils taught in big classes and those taught in small classes;
2. There is no substantial change/transformation in students’ /pupil’s contribution in the formal classroom structure of interactional discourse amid students learning of the language between those in big classes and their counterparts in small classes.

Methodology

The research design of this study is anchored on the four-group design of Richard Solomon (1949) research approach. The population of the study is the 300 students/pupils in Fagge local government. Kano State. However, 269 respondents were selected to serve as sample size of the study according to Kreicy and Morgan (2006) statistical procedure of population and sample. The pupils and students were divided into four groups: Government Secondary School, Kuka and Fagge Special Primary School to serve as experimental group and control group (1) while Maman Vice Adamu



Secondary School, and Kwaciri Primary School as control group (2) lastly, Maryam Abacha Girls' Secondary School as control group (3). However, respondents in the first experimental and control group were made to partake in the pre-test. Conversely, substantial part of the study made all respondents of the study involved in the post-test, which serve as summative. Language test and observation form part of the instrument for data collection. The instruments used in collecting data for the research work fully subjected to validation and therefore achieve reliability. Correlation coefficients of 0.66 and 0.79 via Pearson product correlation coefficient statistical procedure analysis.

Table 1: Mean Scores for Pre-test

Group	Total score	N	\bar{X}	SD
EG	6580	105	49.26	2.51
CG1	1030	30	475	2.56

Some key topics on basic writing skills and listening skills were taught to the respondents in each group for a period of 35 minutes five times a week. While respondents as per experimental and control group were taught listening skills via whole class approach, also those in control groups 2 and 3 were also examine. However, two hundred and (249) forty nine respondents sat for the post-test. Simple percentile, chi square and analysis of variance were used in analyzing the outcomes of the post-test.

Results

Hypothesis 1: There is no substantial improvement/ change in students'/pupil's language proficiency development amongst the students/pupils taught in big classes and those taught in small classes

Table 2: Mean Scores for Post-test

Group	Total score	N	\bar{X}
EG	6509	102	37.74
CG1	1121	29	44.38
CG2	5326	115	41.21
CG3	1665	30	59.37

Table 2 result indicates that the mean score for the experimental group in the post-test is 37.74. and those in control group one (1), a mean score of 44.38 while those in control group two (2) had mean score of 41.21. However, those in control group 3 scored mean score of 59.37.

Table 3: Class Size and Learners' proficiency in learning the English language

Sources of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P	F _{crit}
Between groups	20712	5	7581	57	0.02	2.6049
Within groups	24576	242	99			
Total	45288	247				

F value 57 > F_{crit} 2.5048 at α 0.01

Table 3 is a strong indications that the F Value (57) is greater than the F critical at P = 0.02 (2.5048). So, the statement that there is no significant variation as per students/pupils' linguistic development between those students/pupils taught in the large classes and those taught in smaller classes countered by the study.



Hypothesis 2: There is no substantial change/transformation in students'/pupil's contribution in the formal classroom structure of interactional discourse amid students learning of the language between those in big classes and their counterparts in small classes.

Table 4: Differences in respect of active participation in classroom discourse between students in the two categories (large and small classes)

Group	Participated%	No Participation %	Row sub-total
EG	31(57.25)	69 (42.75)	100
CG 1	58 (57.25)	42 (42.75)	100
CG 2	42 (57.25)	58 (42.75)	100
CG 3	77 (57.25)	30 (42.75)	100
Column sub-total	205	195	400

$$\chi^2_{\text{cal}} = 90.85 > \chi^2_{\text{crit}} \text{ at } \alpha 0.04 = 6.82$$

Based on the result obtained χ^2_{cal} of 90.85.02 that is greater than χ^2_{crit} of 6.82 at $p = 0.05$, therefore the assumption that there is no substantial variation as per students/pupils involvement in classroom discourse among the classes with more than required number of learners and those with less number is rejected based on the statistics above.

Discussion

Ineffective teaching and learning are negatively impacted by excessive class sizes in most primary and secondary schools in Kano state with particular reference to Fagge local government. Therefore, the study found that there is major differences in language development between students/pupils taught in class with higher number of learners using whole class method with their counterparts with small number of students in the class using the same strategy. Furthermore, there is substantial change in the communicative proficiency development amongst students taught in large classes using whole class method and those taught in class with less number of students with the assistance of language teaching aids, grouping and pairing. This finding is consistent with those of Earthman (2002), who found a significant negative correlation in the class size.

In addition, Earthman and Thiele (2016), found that class size had a negative impact on students' participation in class. This also is very consistent with the findings of Benbow et al. (2007) and Blatchford et al. (2007.)

Blatchford et al. (2007: 162) add "... as the class increased, the number of interactions with individual pupils decreased, and this adversely affected pupils' progress." One of the findings of this study indicate that there is a little variation in academic progress amongst those students in large classes with those in small classes in respect of quasi-communicative language skills.

Taking a cursory look at the result on table 4, indicates that classes with large number of students have negative consequence on students'/pupils' appraisal and active participation in the class discourse. This agrees with Toth. and Montagiga (2002:14) who assert that: "Similarly, to McLoed, he found that English teachers in Nigeria who taught in classes of 100-200 students/pupils encountered a range of problems in teaching".

Shamin et al. (2007:14), state that "large classes serve as challenge in respect of assessing learning and providing feedback to learners. Added, resulted in the "inability to recognize difficulties of learners, failure to recognize the progress learners make, failure to measure students individually, inability to provide a remedy based on the feedback loft from the valuation. This suffice to say that the skill in question and the goal of a lesson or English studies learning unit play a crucial role in the impact of class size in assessing learner in ESL classrooms. When the goal is listing items or providing short answers, large classes portend fewer problems.



Ur (1983:12) asserts that “ Class size could impede respective learners’ chances of participating actively in classroom discourse because of distraction as a result of the number of the pupils’/students.” “ added, in a class of twenty to thirty students, even if every student speaks, he will only do so for an average of a minute or two, and will be a silent listener for the rest of the lesson.” Markee (1997:38) states that, “For example, in a teacher-fronted class of sixty learners, a teacher who gave equal time to all students could not allow any one individual to speak for more than 1 minute during a 1-hour class period.” Conclusively, there is a strong relation between the findings of the two researches above, that the time allotted to learners could not offer much opportunities using whole-class methodology in teaching those classes with high number of students’ a better chance to contribute actively in the class discourse.

Conclusions

It was concluded that larger classes reveal detrimental effects, with a decline in the number and worth of student-teacher class interactional discourse, lower levels of student involvement as per the subject matter. Conversely, there is a decrease in student’s motivation and participation in class, all of which eventually result in a lesser value of education for both the teachers and students. However, this could be deduced that if urgent measure were not taken, the standard of education in Nigeria would continue to experience downfall or suffer a complete failure.

It is clear statistically that the current situation reveals learners’ would experience a very gloomy communicative competence in the English language there by turning the students into a half-baked, semi-lingual in the English language. Finally, the study unveils that most secondary and primary schools learners of English studies in Kano State do learn it in classes that are more than 70 students, that ranging from 70-80 up to 120 to 150 per class.

Recommendations

The following are recommendation to the findings of this study:

- I. The government should employ qualified teachers via states ministries of education. In addition, more classrooms should be built for both primary and secondary schools with equivalent financial support, teachers and enough resources.
- II. In addition, the number of students/pupils enrolment should be equal to the classes and resources on ground.
- III. Student-to-teacher ratio should be encouraged to reduce additional hardship to teachers and overcrowded classes.
- IV. The government should join forces with other non-governmental bodies, community development associations such as parent-teacher associations, philanthropists, banks and companies to assist in providing enough classes that would cater for the number of students.
- V. teacher should be encouraged to go for training programmes that would add to professional and pedagogical skills of teaching learners to maintain large classes.
- VI. Teachers should encourage language learners to develop the culture of self-reading extensively or intensively and attaining extra mural lessons.
- VII. There is need for teachers to develop techniques and theorizing methods that would cater for the teaching instruction in large classes.
- VIII. Periods allotted to teaching and learning time for large classes should be changed to a maximum of 90 minutes and/or 60 minutes per period.



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LANGUAGE AS A MEANS OF SUSTAINABILITY: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTIONS OF LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY, CULTURAL PRESERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

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Abstract

This article explores language as a means of sustainability, focusing on its interconnectedness with linguistic diversity, preservation of culture and ecological awareness. Language, a fundamental aspect of human, social, economic and environmental sustainability, plays a pivotal role in driving and influencing cultural identity (both intangible and tangible cultural heritage), social integration and ecological consciousness. It is, therefore, surprising that language is neglected in the conventional sustainability discourse. However, employing qualitative research based on Leech's five characteristics of language (informative, expressive, directive, aesthetic and phatic) and a critical review of extant literature, this study examines the vital role of language in contributing to the goals and targets of sustainability. The study employs purposive sampling method in the selection of twelve (12) Respondents, four (4) each from Obinze Military Barrack, Umuanunu Community and the Sustainable Environmental Studies Department in FUTO, all in Owerri West LGA of Imo State. The study reveals that language serves as a repository of collective memory, safeguarding cultural identities from erosion. Linguistic diversity fosters social cohesion and empathy, void of cultural stereotypes. The study concludes that language shapes perceptions and behaviours toward sustainability by encoding ecological knowledge and influencing public attitudes through language-based environmental campaigns. Moreover, culturally sensitive language was found to strengthen the corporate-community relationship and trust among communities, especially in the Barrack where multilingualism plays a role. Therefore, this study recommends integrating language within relevant projects and reminds sustainability advocates that diverse language use and respect for culture are crucial for sustainable global transformation.

Keywords: Language; Sustainability; Culture; Social integration; Environmental awareness

Background of Study

In recent decades, the concept of sustainability has gained significant attention worldwide, as societies seek to address challenges that threaten ecological stability, economic security, and social well-being. Traditionally, sustainability discourse has been dominated by three core dimensions: environmental, economic, and social sustainability (United Nations, 2015). However, Maffi (2001) among other researchers, suggests that true sustainability can be achieved by incorporating cultural structures, especially linguistic diversity, as a basic component. Language, the ultimate mode of communication, is also the only channel of transmitting cultural knowledge, values and practices that impact sustainable development.



The variety of languages and dialects used by different populations is a primary contributor to cultural diversity. Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (2008) argue that languages are a means of comprehending and engaging with reality in unique manners, particularly for indigenous peoples and locals. For these people, languages accompany their territory, care for nature, and identity in a national framework. Each language carries sets of information necessary for the protection of nature and for fostering societal harmony. Due to globalisation, urbanization, and policies that promote a single language, linguistic diversity is increasingly under threat. This decline is a knowledge loss that jeopardises cultural conservation and sustainable development (Brenzinger & de Graaf, 2006).

In addition, social integration, infrastructure, and environmental awareness—key elements of sustainability—are extensively influenced and shaped by language. The discourse in each society affects the way people understand environmental issues, the way information about the environment is communicated, and the way they participate in conservation (Mühlhäusler, 2003). As reported by Berkes (2008), traditional ecological knowledge that is usually stored in indigenous languages is critical for biodiversity conservation, as it contains millennia-old knowledge about the ecosystems and natural resources. Besides, Linguistic diversity and cultural respect are essential for social cohesion and the development of sustainable communities, as they foster a sense of inclusivity, mutual understanding, and respect among different cultural groups (Piller, 2017).

Despite its clear connection to sustainability, language is often overlooked in mainstream sustainability discourses and policies. The dominant approaches to sustainability often focus on economic and environmental dimensions, with limited attention to the social and cultural aspects of sustainability that are closely linked to language and communication. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implicitly acknowledge the importance of inclusivity and cultural respect but do not explicitly address language as a core element of achieving sustainability (UNESCO, 2016).

This study aims to provide a comprehensive and original research-based perspective of language as a means of sustainability by exploring its role in preserving cultural identity and heritage, promoting social integration and cohesion in multicultural societies, and raising environmental awareness. This study will focus on how language is used to communicate information and values and the impact it has on shaping the way societies perceive and interact with the environment. This research employs Leech's (1981) five characteristics of language (informativity, expressiveness, directive function, aesthetics, and phatic function) as a framework to measure the features of language and provide an analysis of their influence on sustainability practices and goals.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the role of language in preserving customs and traditions
2. To investigate how linguistic diversity and cultural respect can promote social integration and cohesion in multicultural societies
3. To examine the impact of language on environmental awareness and how it shapes people's perceptions and behaviours towards ecological issues and
4. To analyse the influence of language on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its effectiveness in promoting ethical business practices that support sustainability goals.

Research Questions

1. How does language contribute to the preservation of cultural identity and heritage?
2. In what ways does linguistic diversity promote social integration within diverse communities?
3. How does language influence environmental awareness and shape public perceptions of ecological issues?
4. What role does language play in corporate social responsibility, and how does it affect the communication of sustainability initiatives?



Significance of Study

This study is significant for several reasons:

Cultural Preservation: It highlights language as a tool for preserving cultural heritage and identity, which is critical for maintaining diversity in an increasingly globalised world. Understanding language's role in cultural sustainability can guide policies that protect linguistic diversity and cultural heritage.

Social Cohesion: By examining how linguistic diversity promotes social integration, this study provides insights into how language fosters community bonds, inclusion, and understanding in multicultural societies. This is vital for policymakers and educators seeking to build cohesive, inclusive communities.

Environmental Advocacy: This study underscores the importance of language in environmental awareness, showing how linguistic expressions and narratives shape ecological perceptions. Environmentalists, educators, and campaign designers can use this insight to craft language-sensitive approaches to raise environmental consciousness.

Corporate Responsibility: The research sheds light on how culturally sensitive language can enhance CSR efforts, fostering trust and transparency between businesses and local communities. Businesses can use these findings to improve their communication strategies, aligning their sustainability practices with the cultural values of the communities they serve. Overall, the study contributes to the field of sustainability.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses Geoffrey Leech's (1981) five functions of language—informative, expressive, directive, aesthetic, and phatic—as a framework to explore language's contribution to sustainability. Each function reveals unique ways language interacts with cultural preservation, social integration, and environmental awareness, highlighting its role in a holistic approach to sustainability. The informative function of language is crucial for sharing knowledge and disseminating information, especially on ecological and cultural matters. In the context of sustainability, language serves as a vehicle for transmitting environmental knowledge, scientific discoveries, and cultural values. For instance, indigenous languages often convey specific ecological knowledge about local flora, fauna, and ecosystems, fostering community-based conservation practices (Berkes, 2008). This function underscores language as a tool for environmental awareness, aiding in educating communities on sustainable practices and bridging generational knowledge.

The expressive function of language allows individuals and communities to articulate emotions, values, and identities. This function is critical in preserving cultural identity, as language enables people to express their unique cultural heritage and worldview. For marginalised or indigenous communities, language loss can result in a loss of cultural pride and identity (Fishman, 1996). By facilitating the expression of cultural practices and beliefs, language contributes to cultural sustainability, helping communities maintain a connection to their heritage and fostering social cohesion and self-worth.

The directive function of language is used to influence behaviour, making it an essential tool for mobilising communities around sustainability goals. Through language, leaders, educators, and policymakers can encourage sustainable actions and compliance with environmental regulations (Mühlhäusler, 2003). For example, public campaigns on recycling, conservation, or energy efficiency rely heavily on directive language to guide community actions. The directive function



also plays a role in establishing social norms around environmental protection and cultural preservation, empowering individuals to contribute actively to sustainability efforts.

The aesthetic function of language pertains to the beauty and artistic expression embedded in cultural practices, literature, poetry, and other forms of verbal art. Language contributes to sustainability by preserving and celebrating the artistic expressions of diverse cultures, enriching humanity's intangible cultural heritage (Maffi, 2001). The aesthetic function encourages the appreciation of linguistic diversity and helps sustain cultural identities by showcasing the unique beauty of each language. Additionally, it fosters environmental appreciation, as many indigenous narratives, songs, and stories embed ecological wisdom that reinforces connections to nature and encourages environmental stewardship.

Finally, the phatic function of language is centred on building social relationships and maintaining social bonds through communication. This function supports social integration by fostering inclusive dialogue, promoting cross-cultural understanding, and reducing social barriers in multilingual societies (Coulmas, 2005). In sustainability contexts, the phatic function is essential for engaging diverse groups in dialogue on global issues like climate change and cultural preservation. It facilitates a sense of belonging and collective responsibility, which is critical for community-based initiatives and cooperation across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Applying Leech's Framework to Sustainability

Using Leech's language functions, this study will explore how language supports various sustainability dimensions. The informative and directive functions emphasise language's role in spreading environmental awareness and guiding sustainable behaviour, while the expressive and aesthetic functions focus on preserving cultural identities and artistic heritage. The phatic function highlights language as a tool for social cohesion, crucial for fostering inclusive, sustainable communities. By examining these functions, this framework underscores the need to integrate language more fully into sustainability discourse, recognising it as a fundamental resource for achieving a socially, culturally, and environmentally sustainable future.

Literature Review

Linguistic diversity refers to the variety and uniqueness of languages within specific regions or communities, and it plays a pivotal role in shaping and preserving cultural identity. Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (2008) argue that linguistic diversity is foundational to cultural identity, as language acts as a repository of collective memory, cultural knowledge, and values. For many communities, language is a primary marker of identity, embedding worldview, historical experiences, and social practices that define a people (Edwards, 2009). When linguistic diversity diminishes due to globalisation, dominant language policies, or cultural assimilation, it often leads to an erosion of cultural identity, as languages encapsulate unique ways of understanding the world and relating to others (Crystal, 2000).

Fishman (1996) highlights that language loss is closely tied to cultural loss, particularly in indigenous communities where cultural heritage is passed down through oral traditions. He emphasises that language revitalisation efforts are crucial for maintaining cultural identity, as languages are central to expressing and sustaining a group's values, beliefs, and historical memory. For instance, in Native American communities, efforts to revitalise languages like Cherokee and Navajo are seen as part of broader cultural preservation initiatives, as these languages carry knowledge of tribal customs, myths, and practices that are unique to those cultures (Hinton & Hale, 2001).



Furthermore, Maffi (2001) introduces the concept of “biocultural diversity,” where linguistic diversity is interconnected with biodiversity, especially in indigenous communities. Languages often encode ecological knowledge specific to local environments, thus helping communities maintain sustainable practices and a harmonious relationship with nature. This interconnectedness between language, culture, and nature emphasises the importance of linguistic diversity for both cultural and environmental sustainability, highlighting how language embodies a culture's relationship to its surrounding environment.

In the view of Mühlhäusler (2003), language plays a crucial role in shaping environmental perceptions and raising awareness about ecological issues. Language is essential in ecolinguistics which investigates the intersections of language, environmental awareness and people's attitudes towards nature, language is essential and influences environmental consciousness and attitudes toward nature. He argues that people's perception of ecological issues depends significantly on linguistic choices as some parlanges have more ecologically descriptive metalanguages than others, thereby providing speakers with better understanding of their natural environment.

Particularly, local dialects play significant roles in promoting sustainable practices as they embody the right erudition and metalanguages specifically used in describing ecosystems, biodiversity (Berkes, 2008). For instance, Igbo language has such languages for describing nature and its occurrences, just like Huntington (2000) observed that specific natural phenomena and different seasons can be expressed Alaskan native languages, revealing the people's deep understanding of their ecologies. This type of understanding occasioned by the structure of their language promotes conservation principle and the consciousness that steers balanced interactions with the environment.

Furthermore, environmental awareness campaigns stimulate behavioural change and attitudes are a result of language choice. The use of metaphors, narratives and environmental terminologies in discourse greatly influence the value placed on the ecosystem (Stibbe 2015). For instance, using economic terms such as “natural resources” to describe the environment may promote a commodified view of nature, whereas phrases that emphasise interconnectedness or stewardship foster a more sustainable mindset. This highlights the power of language in framing ecological issues and shaping collective environmental consciousness. Moreover, Pinner (2019) notes that language education can promote environmental awareness by integrating ecolinguistic elements into curricula, encouraging students to critically examine language's role in shaping ecological attitudes. By analysing language's influence on environmental discourse, educators can raise awareness among students and foster a generation that is more conscious of environmental issues.

Sustainability which is traditionally discussed in the context of environmental, economic, and social dimensions cannot be achieved independent of language. However, the role of language is an emerging yet often overlooked aspect. According to Mühlhäusler (2003), language is central to how communities perceive and interact with their environment, shaping both ecological attitudes and behaviours. Maffi (2001) also emphasises the concept of “biocultural diversity,” where linguistic diversity is seen as interconnected with biodiversity, as indigenous languages often encode extensive knowledge about ecosystems. Hence, linguistic diversity is essential for preserving cultural identity, especially for communities whose traditions and knowledge are transmitted orally. Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (2008) argue that languages are repositories of unique cultural heritage, housing the “cultural DNA” of a society. Indigenous languages hold a wealth of knowledge about sustainable living and environmental conservation. Fishman (1996) highlights that language revitalisation efforts are crucial for sustaining cultural identity, especially in minority communities where language loss equates to cultural erosion.

Significantly, language serves as a medium for social integration, promoting cohesion in multilingual societies and helping bridge cultural differences. Coulmas (2005) suggests that



multilingualism fosters greater empathy and understanding, facilitating coexistence in diverse communities. In a study by Piller (2017), it is shown that language can support social sustainability by reducing exclusion and fostering a sense of belonging among marginalised groups. Additionally, languages act as social tools for sharing environmental practices and policies, which is necessary for sustainable development across diverse sociolinguistic landscapes (Evans, 2010).

The role of language in promoting environmental awareness is well-documented, particularly through indigenous knowledge systems. According to Berkes (2008), indigenous languages often encapsulate detailed ecological knowledge that can enhance biodiversity conservation. For instance, Huntington (2000) explains how Alaskan native languages contain terms and expressions that describe specific environmental phenomena, reflecting the communities' deep understanding of their local ecosystems. Moreover, Leclère (2018) discusses how language influences environmental perceptions, as communities with a rich ecological vocabulary may demonstrate greater environmental stewardship.

Incorporating language and cultural awareness in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is increasingly recognised as essential for sustainable business practices. Matten and Moon (2008) argue that culturally informed CSR practices are more effective, especially in regions with diverse linguistic landscapes. Husted and Allen (2006) emphasise the need for CSR strategies that consider the local language and culture, as this fosters trust and engagement in host communities. By respecting linguistic diversity, corporations can strengthen their social license to operate and contribute to sustainable development in a way that aligns with local cultural values.

While existing literature underscores the importance of language in cultural preservation and environmental awareness, there is limited research connecting linguistic diversity explicitly to sustainability frameworks (Pennycook, 2007). Additionally, more empirical research is needed to measure the impact of language-focused sustainability initiatives, particularly in multilingual and indigenous communities (Brenzinger & de Graaf, 2006). Future studies could benefit from cross-disciplinary approaches that combine linguistics, ecology, and cultural studies to build a holistic understanding of language's role in sustainability.

Methodology

A qualitative research methodology is adopted to capture the nuanced relationships between language and sustainability practices across cultural and environmental contexts by exploring participants' perceptions regarding these concepts. Purposive sampling method was used in the selection of twelve (12) participants, who are all above forty years, four (4) persons each, in 34 Artillery Brigade Obinze Army Barrack Owerri, Umuanunu Community in Owerri West LGA Imo State, and the Sustainable Environmental Studies (SES) Unit of the Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Procurement, Environmental and Social Standards (CE-sPESS), Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. All the case studies are in Owerri West Local Government Area of Imo State. The two communities represent varying degrees of linguistic diversity; Obinze Army Barrack have speakers of different Nigerian languages and the general language is Nigerian Pidgin and English, Umuanunu is an Igbo speaking Community with Nigerian Pidgin and English-Speaking residents, while SES is a department with established corporate social responsibility, and they relate with communities to promote cultural sustainability and environmental awareness. By examining specific cases within communities, the study seeks to identify patterns of how language fosters cultural identity, social cohesion, environmental consciousness, and ethical business practices. This approach enables a detailed understanding of language's role across diverse social and ecological landscapes, making it ideal for analysing cultural and linguistic variations.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including community members, cultural leaders and environmental advocates. Interview questions were designed to capture



participants' views on how language influences cultural preservation, social integration, and environmental practices. Data from interviews are analysed descriptively, incorporating Geoffrey Leech's language functions to identify how language fosters cultural preservation, social integration, environmental awareness and CSR thereby, understanding how language shapes and contributes to sustainability.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers obtained informed consent from all participants prior to data collection, explaining the purpose of the research and ensuring they understand their right to opt-out at any time. Moreover, the identities of all the participants remain anonymous for confidentiality. Finally, the researchers were very sensitive to the issues of cultural norms and practices while engaging with the participants.

Data Presentation

The interview questions cover the four key areas of Preservation of Customs and Traditions, Linguistic Diversity and Social Integration, Environmental Awareness and Corporate Social Responsibility. We present the questions and summary of responses from each community in the tables below:

Obinze Military Barracks

Questions	Responses
1. How does language shape your cultural identity? Can you share examples of how language has been used to promote cultural preservation in your community?	Language is central to our cultural practices. We use it to express our values and beliefs. Yoruba is my language, a key part of my identity. Yes, I speak it to my children and tell them folk stories and traditions of my people. We read our bible and pray in Yoruba, so they speak it.
2. In what ways does linguistic diversity affect social integration in your community? What initiatives have you put in place to promote respect for linguistic diversity among community members?	In our barrack, we have people from different linguistic backgrounds. While it can be challenging, it also enriches our community. Our languages help us maintain our cultural heritage, especially during community events where we sing and dance in our native tongues. and we also encourage the learning of other languages spoken within the community. Cultural exchange programs help foster respect and appreciation for linguistic diversity.
3. What role does language play in environmental awareness campaigns in your community? Can you share some examples?	Language plays a big role in how we communicate environmental issues. We use Pidgin and English language to ensure everyone understands the importance of protecting our environment. Yes, we keep waste baskets and post public notices at strategic corners. For instance, "do not urinate here, no dumping of refuse, post no bill" etc.
4. How does language influence the communication of sustainability initiatives in your community?	In our sustainability initiatives, we use English language which everyone understands, whether it's through community meetings or public announcement.



Umuananunu Community

<p>1. How does the use of your native language contribute to the preservation of local customs and traditions within your community? Any examples?</p>	<p>Through Igbo, our native language, we pass down stories, proverbs, and cultural practices that define our identity and beliefs, teaching younger generations about our history and the importance of our traditions. Language not only shapes our identity but also influences how we perceive and interact with our environment. It's a powerful tool in sustainability efforts.</p> <p>We use Igbo in various cultural ceremonies and storytelling sessions, as it captures the essence of these cultural practices. For instance, during the New Yam Festival (Iri Ji), Igbo is used to narrate the history and significance of the festival, ensuring that younger generations understand and appreciate their heritage.</p>
<p>2. How does linguistic diversity influence social cohesion and integration in your community?</p>	<p>While Igbo is our primary language, linguistic diversity within our community can sometimes lead to challenges in communication. However, we've learned to embrace this diversity as a strength, using translation (to English) to ensure everyone is included. We encourage community members to learn and speak Igbo, the language of the immediate environment for social cohesion and integration.</p>
<p>3. How do you believe language shapes the way your community perceives and engages in environmental issues?</p> <p>Are there particular words or phrases in your language that convey ecological concepts more effectively than in other languages?</p>	<p>We use our local language to teach children about the importance of preserving our environment, like not cutting down trees unnecessarily, especially economic trees.</p> <p>Igbo contains rich proverbs and sayings that emphasise living in harmony with nature and convey ecological concepts effectively, which help shape our community's environmental consciousness. For example, "anyi na-echebe ala" (we are protecting the land), osisi niile awugh nku (not every tree is firewood), anyi na-agwochasi iyi anyi (we cleanup our stream often) are powerful phrases used in environmental campaigns.</p>
<p>4. Do local businesses in your community incorporate cultural and linguistic considerations into their CSR initiatives, how?</p> <p>Can you provide examples of successful collaborations between local businesses and community leaders that promote both cultural preservation and environmental sustainability?</p>	<p>In our community meetings, language is crucial for ensuring everyone is on the same page regarding sustainability projects.</p> <p>Local businesses often incorporate Igbo cultural and linguistic elements into their CSR initiatives, such as using Igbo in community outreach programs or sponsoring cultural events.</p> <p>One successful collaboration involved a local business partnering with our community to develop a sustainable farming project. They worked closely with community leaders to ensure the project was culturally sensitive and communicated effectively in Igbo.</p>



SES (CE-sPESS) FUTO

1. How do you see the relationship between language, cultural traditions, and environmental stewardship in the communities you work with? Any examples of how these are communicated through local languages?	We recognize the connection between language, cultural traditions and environmental stewardship and their importance in promoting sustainability. Traditional ecological knowledge is often communicated through local languages, emphasizing sustainable practices. In our work, we've seen how Igbo proverbs and stories teach important environmental lessons. For instance, the proverb, "A tree does not make a forest," highlights the importance of community and collective action in environmental conservation.
2. How do you promote respect for linguistic diversity as a means of fostering social integration in your initiatives? Have you encountered any barriers related to language that hindered community participation in environmental projects? If so, how did you address them?	We promote linguistic diversity by using multiple languages in our outreach efforts and ensuring that all community members can participate in environmental initiatives. Language is a tool for us to communicate our CSR initiatives effectively. We tailor our message to resonate with the communities we work with When language barriers arise, we use translation services and work closely with community leaders to find solutions that ensure everyone is included and informed.
3. How does the language used in your outreach efforts affect public understanding of ecological issues? Are there specific linguistic strategies you employ to engage diverse audiences in environmental advocacy?	We've seen firsthand how language can bridge gaps in understanding between different communities and help in promoting environmental consciousness. The language used in our outreach efforts significantly affects public understanding. We tailor our message to be culturally relevant and accessible, often using Igbo to convey key environmental messages. We employ linguistic strategies such as storytelling, proverbs, and local idioms to engage diverse audiences in environmental advocacy.
4. How do you collaborate with corporations to ensure that their CSR efforts are culturally sensitive and linguistically inclusive? What role do you believe language plays in shaping corporate accountability regarding environmental sustainability?	Our research shows that when sustainability messages are communicated in local languages, they are more effective in reaching and impacting the target audience. Hence, we collaborate with corporations to ensure their CSR efforts are culturally sensitive and linguistically inclusive. This involves working closely with them to develop messaging and programs that resonate with the community. Language plays a crucial role in shaping corporate accountability. By communicating clearly and effectively in the community's language, corporations can build trust and demonstrate their commitment to environmental sustainability.



Data Analysis

1. Language and Cultural Preservation

The data reveal that language is essential to cultural preservation. Participants in Obinze barracks and Umuanunu admitted that cultural norms, identities and values are better conveyed with the use of indigenous languages as there are some natural phenomena that lack the corresponding English equivalent. For example, respondents from Umuanunu community noted that more than being a medium of communication, language embodies their philosophy, ideology and heritage. Hence trying to translate this natural heritage into English at times, makes them lose their true meaning and places less value on them. This finding brings Fishman's (1996) argument to line, he observed that language loss poses a threat to people's cultural identity and continuity. The analysis revealed that languages like Igbo, with rich oral traditions are sources of cultural sustainability and community history, which helps in connecting them to their past, preserving language, maintaining their present connections and future pride. Leech's expressive and aesthetic functions of language are highlighted here as people transmit their ideology and cultural heritage, which describes them and strengthens their mutual pride and identity. This study pushes for the preservation of people's norms and values evident in their linguistic and cultural diversity, as this is critical in preserving their heritage amidst globalization, which favours dominant (most times, foreign) languages at the expense of indigenous ones.

2. Language and Social Integration

Language emerged as an important facilitator of social integration within multicultural contexts. For example, the interviews conducted in Obinze Military Barracks suggest that multilingualism enhances respect and understanding among different groups because all participants speak at least three of (English, Nigerian Pidgin, Igbo, Efik, Igala, Yoruba and Hausa) languages. People from diverse cultures are exposed to linguistic diversity through which they learn other people's language and culture thus, interact with one another, fostering inclusion and cohesion. This supports the argument made by Piller (2017), which states that language is integral for achieving social cohesion and creating inclusive environments. The emphasis on social bonding and relationship-building, in connection with the phatic function of language, was predominant in this case. The study demonstrated that cultural festivities and community interactions at the bilingual and multilingual level promoted empathy and cooperative behaviours, dismantling stereotypes, and constructing a shared identity. In promoting social integration, language also encourages peace instead of cultural conflicts thereby fortifying community relations which are crucial for social sustainability.

3. Language and Environmental Awareness

Another key objective from the analysis was language's impact on environmental awareness. Participants from both communities often referred to specific ecological expression in their language (idoi - flood, iyi-stream, ifufe – wind etc). This finding substantiates Berkes (2008), who requires that indigenous language captures traditional ecological knowledge critical to conservation practice. For instance, participants noted that the application of some words and expressions in their language (and English in public notice, for those in the barrack) encapsulates thoughts regarding environmental management and eco-friendly land use, impacting their observation and interaction with the natural environment. This finding concurs with Leech's informative function whereby language serves as a tool for conveying knowledge. Through linguistic descriptions of nature, individuals acquire in-depth understanding of ecosystems and sustainable living. Directive language used in ecological campaigns was also discovered to influence behaviour towards conservation and sustainable living. These results underscore the importance of language in engendering environmental awareness, as language is a medium for ecological knowledge transmission and guiding towards sustainable living.



4. Corporate Social Responsibility and Language

The study also explored how language influences CSR, especially in terms of ethical communication and cultural sensitivity. From the interview responses of SES Department representatives, they explained that language (of the immediate community) is used strategically in communicating sustainability goals to the public. They affirm the use of culturally sensitive language in CSR initiatives to promote better relationships with local communities and show respect for cultural values. This finding concurs with Husted and Allen's (2006) argument that CSR activities rooted in linguistic and cultural sensitivity are more efficacious and well-received.

Here, Leech's directive and informative functions come into play, as language helps the communities and the SES department to guide public behaviour and inform stakeholders about their environmental and social responsibilities. Through language that evokes cultural values and constructions of identity, SES department encourages social integration and environmental awareness to build trust with stakeholders. The analysis reveals that language in CSR can transcend cultural differences to facilitate partnerships in favor of sustainability goals.

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the importance of language as a foundational element in sustainability efforts across cultural preservation, social integration, environmental awareness, and CSR. In the realm of cultural preservation, language serves as a repository of collective memory, safeguarding cultural identities from erosion. Socially, language fosters cohesion, with multilingualism promoting inclusivity and understanding in diverse communities. Environmentally, language shapes perceptions and behaviours toward sustainability by encoding ecological knowledge and influencing public attitudes through language-based environmental campaigns. Corporate social responsibility also benefits from linguistic sensitivity, as culturally aligned language use strengthens trust and community relations. The functions of language identified by Leech—informative, expressive, directive, aesthetic, and phatic—are evident across these dimensions, revealing language's comprehensive role in promoting a sustainable world. The study highlights the need for sustainability frameworks to integrate language as a critical resource, not only for communication but as a driver of cultural respect, social inclusion, and environmental stewardship.

In conclusion, these findings call for policies that recognise and support linguistic diversity as part of sustainability efforts. By valuing language, sustainability advocates and policymakers can foster a more inclusive approach to sustainability, where cultural heritage, social cohesion, and ecological awareness are harmonized for the benefit of current and future generations.

Summary and Findings

This study investigated the role of language in promoting sustainability, focusing on its contributions to cultural preservation, social integration, environmental awareness, and corporate social responsibility (CSR). A qualitative approach was used and data gathered through in-depth interviews with the help of Leech's five functions of language (informative, expressive, directive, aesthetic, phatic) as a theoretical framework to inform the data. The results demonstrate the transformative role of language for sustainability through building cultural identities, forming societal interfaces, raising environmental consciousness, and following fair trade business ethics. In specific terms:

1. Preservation of Language and Culture: Language was found to be important in the preservation of culture. All the respondents maintained that their mother tongue holds their values, histories, and unique worldviews. Language acts as a vessel for culture, which is used to pass on traditions, stories, and practices from one generation to another. This aligns with the expressive



and aesthetic functions of language, which are in keeping with its function in preserving cultural diversity. Loss of language, by the research findings, has the potential to wipe out not only words but also lifestyles and cultural identities.

2. Language and Social Integration: Multilingualism within communities turned into an empowering tool of social integration, enabling speakers from various backgrounds to talk respectfully and empathetically to each other. Phatic language (language for bonding) became critical to enable a sense of community and belonging. Participants emphasised that multilingual communication enables respect, reduces cultural stereotypes, and builds an inclusive society. Language thus enables social sustainability by imparting cohesion and preventing cultural fragmentation.

3. Ecological Awareness and Language: Language was also found to be accountable for its role in shaping ecological awareness and conduct. Native languages often contain ecological understanding incorporated within them, offering groups the suitable land and resource utilization. Language's directive and information functions were evident in green campaigning, where language raised awareness and generated conservation conduct. By representing ecological knowledge and casting sustainability messages, language serves as a middleman between humans and nature, promoting environmental responsibility culture.

4. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Language: Culturally sensitive language was found to strengthen the corporate-community relationship and trust among communities, especially in the Barrack where multilingualism plays a role. The directive and informative roles of language helped firms to communicate their sustainability actions and ethical business practices more effectively, especially when using language in line with local cultural values. Our respondents reported that firms which use cultural and linguistic context in communication build stronger, open relationships with communities, and hence social and environmental sustainability.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that language is a fundamental component of sustainability. It not only preserves cultural identities and promotes social cohesion but also influences environmental perceptions and corporate accountability. The study suggests that sustainability frameworks should incorporate language as a critical resource for fostering inclusive, culturally aware, and ecologically responsible societies. Understanding linguistic diversity is essential for creating a world where sustainable practices are both respected and widely adopted.

Recommendations

Future studies could explore language's role in specific sustainability sectors, such as climate adaptation and environmental justice, for a more targeted understanding of its impacts. These insights contribute to the broader discourse on sustainability by highlighting the often-overlooked role of language in achieving cultural, social, and ecological harmony.

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