The Socio-Cultural Implications of Ọmaba Eziani, Nsukka Paralinguistic Displays

By

Ihedigbo Ruth Ebere
Dept of Linguistics/Igbo and Other Nigerian Languages
University of Nigeria Nsukka
ebereihedigbo@gmail.com
08034722818

Ihedigbo Lucky Nnaemeka
Dept of English and Literary Studies
University of Nigeria Nsukka
luckyihedigbo@gmail.com
&
Ozioko, Martin Madueke
Dept of Linguistics/Igbo and Other Nigerian Languages
University of Nigeria Nsukka

Abstract

This study examines the socio-cultural implications of Ọmaba Eziani, Nsukka paralinguistic displays. The objectives of the study are to find out different paralinguistic displays of Ọmaba Eziani, Nsukka, and interpret the socio-cultural implications of such paralinguistic displays. The data were gathered from oral interview, participant observation and from secondary sources such as libraries. The theoretical framework is contextualism. After the analysis, the following paralinguistic features were found out: *Ịmịọnụ* (acknowledgement of Ọmaba's presence in the land) dance steps, gun shots, throwing and catching of knife, colours and other displays. These features have socio-cultural implications to the Eziani, Nsukka people which may be positive or negative.

Keywords: *Socio-cultural, Implications, Ọmaba, Nsukka, Paralinguistic features*.

Introduction

Eziani, Nsukka has a very rich masquerade tradition to the extent that every village has a masquerade shrine with festivals associated with it. Eziani, Nsukka cultural area is divided into two namely Igbo-Odo and Igbo-Ọmaba. The towns that celebrate Igbo-Odo in Eziani, Nsukka are towns like Aku Nwandiewo, Eha-Mufu and Ukehe town, while those that celebrate Igbo-Ọmaba and are grouped as Igbo-Ọmaba include Eziani, Nsukka, Opi, Eziani, Nsukka main town, Lejja, Eha-Alumona, Obimo, Edem, Enugwu Ezike and Eziani. Eziani, Nsukka is our reference area.

History has it that Ọmaba is an ancestral spirit of the dead coming back to visit its people, history goes further to say that it all started when a woman working in the farm carrying her baby at the back noticed that the baby was kept uncomfortable by something she couldn't explain. The baby started crying uncontrollably and the mother had to run back home and the elders were consulted. They too consulted a native doctor to prepare a charm that will stop whatever it is that was disturbing the child, but instead, the situation worsened. They then consulted a diviner who communicated with the ancestors and was told that the baby is being disturbed by their visiting ancestors who are also angry that the people are stopping them.

The ancestor made a demand for appeasement and told them that they will be coming to visit them every two years and admonished them to adhere strictly to their rules because any disobedience has grave consequences. The ancestors do not only come to visit they also come to take away evil, hardship, bad omen, sickness from them, and grant their request for good fortune, protection, fruitfulness, child-bearing etc. Ọmaba provides all these for them when they go back to the underworld which the people will show appreciation for in their next world. This instituted the welcome and sending off ceremonies of Omaba culture in Eziani, Nsukka.

In Eziani, Nsukka, Ọmaba is known to belong to *Ndimaaezechitoke* which is the messengers of god. The entire Ọmabe Eziani, Nsukka can be divided into two which are the entertainment type and the ritual type. The ritual type is restricted to be seen only by the matured males and few privileged and titled adult women, while the entertainment type is the one any person can see at any time or place.

The entertainment types include: Oriokpa, Echaricha, and Ujam. On the other hand the ritual types include Ezugwu-Utobo, Edi, Udele-Adaku, and Owuru.

Each of these enlisted masquerades has a distinct function from another and thus has unique way of attire that is necessitated by the function of the masquerades. For example; the beauty of Ujam denotes how wealthy the village that owns it is. That is why anything about Ujarn must be beautiful starting from head to toe. The same goes for Oriokpa, its attire is necessitated by the physical activities it does and so on to the others.

There are some prestigious ranks in the Ọmaba cult, that is given to both male and female which are Asogwa and Oyima respectively, the Asogwa and Oyima see to the administrative matters and the new intake or new initiations into the cult, to ensure that the cult maintains its secrecy and sanity. In Eziani, Nsukka, Ọmaba has many roles it plays in the lives of the people; these roles could be religious, political, or social-cultural.

Religiously Ọmaba serves as the link of communication between the living and the dead. They are the ancestral spirits which relay the messages of the living to *Ezechitokeabiama* the supreme God. The political role which Ọmaba plays is that it confers the *Arua*-symbol of authority to the successor of a diseased elder of a clan. During the conferment of the *Arua* symbol, the masquerade assumes the position of the diseased (chief priest) and then performs the ritual rites in which the object to be handed over to the successor is consecrated. Lastly but not the least is the sociocultural role. Oriokpa is used to curtail the nefarious deeds of the people; this makes people to behave themselves to avoid public humiliation and satire by Oriokpa masquerade. The history of Ọmaba remains intact but the culture of Ọmaba has undergone a lot of changes due to civilisation brought to Igbo land by the Europeans and the subsequent colonization that followed it which has holistically affected every aspect of lgbo land including Eziani, Nsukka and their Ọmaba masquerade in all its ramifications ranging from masquerade out fit to the limitation of its authority. Example formally ọyọyọ (rattle) and snail were used as decorative objects on the Ọmaba but have been replaced by metal buttons, stockings and shoes.

These are new introductions as parts of the masquerade's outfit. Regardless of all these, Ọmaba is still central to Eziani, Nsukka life and history.

So many who gather to watch Ọmaba perform, just watch them for entertainment, they entertain themselves by watching them not paying attention or taking note of their paralinguistic displays and their implications. This study is undertaken to bring to the knowledge of the vast audience of Ọmaba, the socio-cultural implications of their para-linguistic display.

This study is a descriptive one. The methods of data collection employed are oral interview and participant observation. The respondents were randomly selected and interviewed. These respondents are 20 males aged between 20-80 who are Ọmaba initiates. The data gathered from the oral interview were analysed using the theory of contextualism. Secondary sources like the libraries helped in the literature review.

Conceptual Review

Ọmaba masquerade

Masquerade implies a form of disguise. It involves a mask, which is an object worn over or in front of the face to hide the identity of a person anti by its own features to establish another being. It is believed to be the dead in disguise that have come visiting the living. Obiechina (1978), states that: the masquerade ceremonies are the interaction between the Igbos and their ancestors, that have come to show themselves and go back to the underworld. To add to this Nwadike (2003) maintain that the dead and the living have interactions through the drama of masquerades. One can deduce that Ọmaba is a means of interaction between the living and the dead and as such an agent of cultural discipline. From Ugonna (1984: 1)'s point of view, he states that most people refer to Igbo masquerade as any figure that is masked, even with its eyes, legs and arms are exposed to the spectators or a special type of sacred character.

Nzekwe (1981: 134) posits that masquerades are the physical representation of the ancestral spirit. The popularity of Ọmaba Eziani, Nsukka made Meek (1930) opine that Odo and Ọmaba arc secret cults that was rooted to Igbo Eziani, Nsukka tradition and that there is no community in Eziani, Nsukka that does not have

Ọmaba or Odo festival. This support the view that Omsbe is central to Eziani, Nsukka people. It is worthy of note that there are categories of masquerades in Igbo land. Ifemesia (1979) opines that: Igbo secret societies are of two major types-those which were secret largely because they were not open to woman and children, they are not even open to all adult males. To add to this Soyinka (1976) opines that masquerade is the ancestors of the people and families of dead relatives, at the same time, a men secret cult that concerns traditional feasts of worship. At this juncture, masquerade does not only resolve issues, it also serves as a source of entertainment as a result, some of them are highly and attractively decorated and it is passed from generation to generation. Frank Willet in his African Art (1970) posits that, The traditional art and masks have social purposes like, religion, justice, healing, education, war and politics. The aforementioned give the masquerade its divergent roles in the society, some were delegated secret-role, social-role, protective-role while others were the entertainment type It has been observed that there is a whole hierarchy of masks, extending from the highest great spirits masks which appear only in the decisive moments of the life of the tribe, through the smaller masks which may act for example as judges, peace makers, nocturnal expellers of witches, the souls of the dead or protective spirits, right down to the masks which act as entraining buffoons, though without wholly abandoning the weirdness of the spirit world, to show the mighty of the masquerade Achebe (1958) states that Egwugwu masquerade was used to settle dispute, such as murder case, land dispute etc and that the decision of the masquerade is final and unquestionable. Aniako C. (1978) observed that Ọmaba is central to the Eziani, Nsukka social and cultural organization in so far as it is utilised as an agent of social control and helps to impose moral sanctions on interpersonal and intergroup relationship and behaviour.

Ọmaba has dramatic elements that make it to be seen as drama for some scholars. Amankulor (1981:16) states that, Ọmaba is regarded as a traditional drama because it involves drama, music, and miming which makes use of the totality of all arts available to a particular community as its raw materials. The practice of drama is dominated by cultural convention and ethics. Traditional drama in African society is always characterised by exterior factors such as religion, rituals, ceremony and quest for livelihood. In this study we gathered that Ọmaba is the spirit that mediates between the living and the dead, and it is being represented by human

disguise, exhibiting the features of the spirit it is representing and at the same time intercede in their prayers and worship to the gods.

Para-linguistic features

Para-linguistics are the aspects of communication that do not involve words. They add more meaning to what is said; these may be in form of body language, gestures, facial expressions, tone and pitch of voice. Symbols, decoration and dressing are all examples of paralinguistic features. Ozioko (2007) maintains that Ọmaba is produced by indigenous artists who are rich in creative and imaginative things, good at beautiful judgment and creating attracting works that form part of the masquerade's outfit as well as other objects used in the cult for different purposes. These arts works have some para-linguistics features imbedded in them that is why Ogbalu (1975) said that masquerade can be repulsive with an unprecedented outfit to subject the enemy to flight in the war front, this suggests that Ọmaba uses also para-linguistic features to compel people to act in one way or the other.

Aniakor C. (1987), Concord in his view believes that Ọmaba has some paralinguistic display when he said that as the Ọmaba spirit approaches, one is usually enthralled or enamoured by their appearance Red and white plumes adorn the heads, their faces lit and define by horizontal linear radiations of white threads from the eye area to the back of the head, some of the design motifs found on the Ọmaba like any other Igbo masquerade have meaning attached to them. On This, Aniakor (1978) again said that: 'The linear radiations are meant to simulate the facial strips of a leopard while red feathers that stick out of the face simulate the leopard whiskers.

Okpewho (1992) reveals that in African theatre, costumes in the traditional theatre are of great importance when he says,

> The actor strives by means of costumes and gesture to bring to life the Mores and costume of the ancient one cannot ultimately talk about the source of the Negro-African theatre without mentioning its two progenitors music and dance, song and choreography.

He is also of the opinion that there is more to music and drama than just the rhythm, drama and song. It has more meaning attached to it. That is why,

Music helps to generate and sustain a desired level of physical upliftments for the actors and the audience alike to structure aspect of dramatic activity and to celebrate an occasion or event as cultural fulfillment. We observed that Ọmaba does not only communicate verbally but with its para-linguistics features and other cultural embodiments.

Theoretical Studies

Socio-cultural theory

Socio-cultural theory emanated from the work of seminal psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who believed that parents, caregivers, peers, and the culture at large were responsible for developing higher order functions. To Vygotsky, people have to interact with others to learn, as the information gotten is the basics to integrate on individual level Vygotsky was a contemporary of other great thinkers such as Freud, Skinner, and Piaget, but his early death at age 37 obscured his work till lately when his work came to the limelight and became influential in areas such as education, cognitive psychology and child development. Socio-cultural theory looks further not just to see adults and peers influence individual learning, but also on how cultural beliefs and attitudes impact and how instruction and learning take place.

The study of Vygotsky shows that, children are born with basic biological constraints on their minds. Each culture, however, provides what he referred to as 'tools of intellectual adaptation.' These tools allow children to use their basic mental abilities in a way that is adaptive to the culture in which they live. For example, while one culture might emphasize memory strategies such as note-taking, other cultures might utilize tools like reminders or rote memorization

Cultural theory

This term has been applied to diverse attempts to conceptualize and understand the dynamics of culture. Historically these have involved arguments about the relationship between culture and nature, culture and society (including material

social processes), the split between high and low culture, and the interplay between cultural tradition and cultural difference and diversity.

The works of Raymond Williams. *The Long Revolution* (1961) and E. P Thompson. *The Making of the English* Working Class (1963) has been particularly influential in the development of post-war British cultural theory. Williams' emphasis on culture as a whole way of life and Thompson's emphasis on culture as the way in which groups handle the raw material of social and material existence opened up new ways of thinking about culture in particular uncoupling the concept from a narrow literary and aesthetic reference.

The so-called Culturalist reading of the term developed by both Thompson and Williams was subsequently challenged by other more obviously structuralist interpretations. These emphasized the external symbolic structures of culture, as embodied in cultural languages and codes, rather than it's lived forms. In this formulation culture could be read as a signifying system through which the social world was mapped. The structuralist version of cultural theory was also strongly informed by Louis Althusser's version of Marxism. Althusser offered a reworking of Marxist theories of ideology which gave greater scope to the efficacy of the ideological realm.

The concern to recognize the efficacy of cultural practices in Aithusser's writings was further developed within cultural theory by the appropriation of the ideas of Antonio Gramsci, his work opened up new ways of conceptualizing the role of culture and cultural practices in class formations and class alliances and in particular, gave great weight to the role of culture in securing forms of political and moral leadership and authority. The influence of Grarnsci's ideas was particularly important in helping cultural theory move beyond the impasse created by the tensions between competing culturalist and structuralist perspectives in the 1970s. A central thrust of Foucault's influence has been to shape a more discursive understanding of cultural languages and of the interconnection between power and representation. The interplay between race, ethnicity, and culture has also emerged as a central concern of contemporary cultural theory. This has often been via a critique of the forms of ethnicity assumed within the tradition of British cultural theory associated with Williams and Thompson or

what Paul Gilroy has termed the morbid fascination with Englishness. Cilroy's notion of the Black Atlantic represents an attempt to envisage cultural processes outside the restrictions imposed by nationally delimited conceptions of culture. In this sense, it has much in common with Edward Said's work on Orientalism, which examines not only the internal dynamics but also the external determinants of cultures.

Western conceptions of culture and civilization are depicted as having been formed against a process of naming and symbolically subordinating the Oriental. Feminist arguments have also exerted an important influence on recent cultural theory. Looming large here has been the interplay between feminism and psychoanalysis. This has led to much discussion about the ways in which gender identities are formed within cultural languages and through cultural practices. Recent work on memory, fantasy, and gender performance has been especially suggestive. The findings and assumptions of the culture theory is in line with the current study as it is a culture based research, which emphasise the way people live and the socio-cultural aspect of their lives, even though different scholars have different views they are all narrowed down culture.

Empirical Studies

Chidi, U. (2011) studies Social Change and Ọmaba a Critical Ethnography, to compare the practice of Ọmaba tradition as of old and today. The data gotten through primary and secondary sources reveal that Ọmaba that use to govern the people has been emasculated, by two powerful weapon known as education and Christianity, to elaborate this he says:

> On a certain Sunday in early 2006, an Oriokpa was pursued by a drove of the catholic faithful who now are more in number than the traditionalists at the behest of a catholic priest, caught and unmasked in the glare of publicity and nothing else happened. Few years earlier, this act would have resulted catastrophic clashes.

This work could be seen as similar to the current study in the area that indicates what Ọmaba tradition is and its functions to the people of Eziani, Nsukka but differ in the area where the work went further to enumerate the enormous change Ọmaba tradition has gone over the years due to social factors as mentioned above,

while the current research will not discuss about changes in Ornabe tradition but the paralinguistic features and the socio-cultural implications.

Okoro (2012) examined unified festival and attainment of unity in Mkpunator community, in an attempt to use festival to dissolve the conflict between the Mkpunator communities. The study reveals through Primary and secondary data that the conflict erupted since the advance of Christianity in the community between the proselyte and the traditionists, and that festival can be used to resolve it, as festival makes for harmony.

The relatedness of this work and the ongoing work is that they are studies done under culture, which talks about the social life of the people of Eziani, Nsukka, they look into the society and culture of Eziani, Nsukka people, but they differ in the area of concentration because the work under review perused the disunity in Mkpunator while ongoing study relies on the paralinguistic features of Ọmaba Eziani, Nsukka and the socio-cultural implications.

Ezesinachi J. (2014) examine "the dramatic element in Onunu festival of Okpuje Eziani, Nsukka" to determine if Onunu Okpuje festival is a form of traditional drama, to achieve this, data was sourced through primary and secondary sources. The study reveals that Onunu Okpuje is qualified to be called drama for having all the features that qualifies a drama.

The study under review and the current work are similar in the sense that they both study culture and the culture is narrowed down to Ọmaba festival in Eziani, Nsukka Local Government Area. But this reviewed study differ from ongoing research, because while the former was looking into the dramatic aspect of Onunu festival, the current one is looking into the para-linguistics features of Ọmaba Eziani, Nsukka and its social-cultural implications. The study at hand also looked into the literature on ceremonies of Ọmaba under the research of: Onyebuehi (2016) examined Ethno musicological study of Ọmaba Uturu Nweze Enunu of Nguru Eziani, Nsukka to describe the structure of musical element and ethno musicological contents, from the data gotten through primary and secondary sources, the study reveals that the music was presented with human voice and it is an integral part of Ọmaba music assemble, the music is also homophonic in

texture with xylophone being central to other musical instruments like slit drums, clapper less bell, perforated bamboo, elephant tusk and drum by cylinder. The reviewed study is similar with ongoing research because they are both a study done on Ọmaba tradition but differ the reviewed perused aspect of Ọmaba music the on research focuses on the paralinguistic features of Ọmaba and the socio-cultural implications.

Iyida K. (2017) studies *Mmemme Ọmaba Imufu Enugwu-ezike*, the research intend to examine the preparation ceremonies of *Ọmaba Imufu Enugwu-ezike*, and also looked into the names of Ọmaba, songs; roles and importance of women in the festival, the research maintains that the information gotten through oral interview depicts that women are quintessential in the festival, while the names of the masquerades determine its functions, the song helps to alleviate the spirit of the festival. The origin of the masquerade was not known and so the people determined how the ceremony is done.

The similarities existing between this study and the ongoing research are that both studies are on culture and at the same time on Ọmaba in Eziani, Nsukka Local Government Area. But differ in their area of concentration, the study under review focuses on the ceremonies associated with Ọmaba, masquerades, while the current study focuses on the para-linguistics features of Ọmaba, Eziani, Nsukka and its socio-cultural implications.

Theoretical framework

The chosen theoretical framework for this study is contextualism. This is the preferred framework because Ọmaba Eziani, Nsukka festival and all accompanying paralinguistie features are all contextual as such performances cannot be seen outside the Ọmaba festival periods.

The theory of contextualism was propounded by Clifford Greetz (n.d) but Anis and David (1978) gave this theory a boost when they described contextualism as a collection of views in philosophy, which the context in which an action, utterance, or expression can be understood. Contextual approaches go back to nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when scholars asked to what extent literary text were rooted in the historical, economical, philosophical, religious, etc, contexts of their

production. While after the Second World War, contextual approach especially the Marxist tradition, were initially regarded as outdated, they have had a major comeback over the last two decades in approaches like new historism, cultural materialism, and cultural studies.

To Schaffer contextualism is a theory about knowledge claim and hence is not a theory of knowledge but a complainant to anything of knowledge. Malinowski (1920) makes an apt observation about contextualism which is appropriate. He states that the text, of course, is extremely important, but without the context, it remains lifeless. He also states that the whole nature of pertbrmanee, the voice and the mimicry, the stimulus and the response of the audience means as much to the natives as the text and the performance has to be placed in its proper time setting-the hour of the day, and the season.

Nketia (1974) also notes that it is important to keep in mind the actual context or situation in which particular texts are used because style, form, subject mailer and meaning arc also governed by this. Many more scholars such as Rysiew (2001), and many others have made their contributions on contextualism.

Generally speaking, contextualism describes a collection of views in philosophy which emphasis the context in which an action, or expression occurs, and argues that, in some important respect, the action, utterance, or expression can only be understood relative to that context (Annis & David, 1975). Contextulists believe that songs have their integrity, impact and realization only within the scope of performance which is done on specific occasion.

Some Ọmaba Eziani, Nsukka paralinguistic displays and their socio-cultural implications.

Ịmịọnụ **(The acknowledgement of the presence of Ọmaba in the land)**

During this season, an acknowledgment of Ọmaba's re-visit to the land of the living from the wilderness is observed. This is done during the twelfth day of the ninth month (*Ọnwa itegnan)* and it is done alongside with ancestral festival *Ndushi*. This is done at night with extensive jubilation amidst food and drinks. As the music play till night the Ọmaba entourage goes to cut any *ọkrọ* stem they see on

the way. All leftover materials from rebuilding the shrine are used in making camp fire. People demonstrate their agility and vigour by jumping over the fire. After, all this people retire to their different homes at dawn exhausted from the night's activities. The cutting down *ọkrọ* stem passes two messages to the women that prepare the Ọmaba's food and to the community at large. These messages are: (I) that Ọmaba does not eat *ọkrọ* soup and (2) the slipperiness of *ọkrọ* connotes easy fall and Ọmaba masquerade must not fall whether on its own or being pushed by someone. Anyone who pushes Ọmaba to fall is punished severely. That is why they have the proverb *kama eda-rnaa niaa were ije* instead of the masquerade to fall while running let it walk.

The colours on the Ọmaba's attire

The colours speak for the Ọmaba, it exhibits the heart of the spirit and the attitude of such mask. The red strip denotes danger, that is why it is used to tie to anything that is dangerous or that is harmful. In the Omabc tradition the red colour is used to set boundary or restrict people from entering certain places. The white denotes purity, friendliness and harmlessness. That is why most of the masquerades have white colour first before other colours are exhibited to denote the other elements of attitude in them that is contrary to the attitude of the white. The mixture of colours is to inform the populace about the entire attitude embedded in the masquerade. The black colour speaks of inexplicable power and might of the thasquerade. This is mostly found with the deadliest and the most sacred mask. The masking tradition is full of secrets and deaths and is the black colour that is used to represent it. The yellow colour symbolises appeasement. The Ọmaba tradition is full of strictness which the people cannot adhere to hut resort to appeasement that will mellow the temper of their ancestral spirit. Yellow symbolises that the mask is appeaseable and has the tradition of being appeased.

The Ọmaba's dancing steps

The way each of the different types of Omahe dances depends on what it represents. The *Ujam* dancing steps denotes the hierarchy and elegance of the masquerade. That is why people will always argue among themselves about the best performing U/am. This is because they, the *Ujam* mask, are highly regarded and looked upon as the highest mask. They entertain people with their best dancing steps; This is to say that they do not only come to bless their people but to

entertain them also. When the *Ujam* dramatizes its dancing skills, at a point it will jump up with the arm in the air and stand still for seconds for people to praise its performance. The people chorus *yeah* at its landing on ground after each jump and showers praises on it. This jumping up and down signifies that though Omaba is highly placed, spiritually, it can still interact with mere humans.

The dancing denotes the bond between the people and the mask. It brings the highest entertainment to the people. On the other hand the Oriokpa does not know how to dance, it ridicules itself in trying to dance. It uses its ridiculous skill also to clear ways for the higher rated masks like, Ujam, Ezugu Utobo, Edi, among others. This dance is used to riddle some initiates who do not know how to dance and also to show that even in the spirit realm, there is hierarchy and respect as the lower masquerade clears the way for the higher ones during such dance.

Gunshot

Gun shots are used in the Ọmaba festival. Officially it is used mostly during main events which is the first home coming of the spirit and during the general gathering of the different masquerades from all the villages that make up the community. The hand-held guns are used as an instrument of appreciation of the presence of the ancestors. The sound instills fear in the people's mind to connote that a dreaded spirit is amidst them, the spirit that can harm just as the gun.

Whenever the gun is shut, the *Oriọkpa* type of mask will run into the cloud of smoke dancing, jumping up exhibiting joy of home coming. Secondly, just like the Igbo believe that gunshots can announce the arrival of the spirit of the dead in the spirit realm, here, gunshots are also used to announce the arrival of spirits in the human realm.

Initiates jumping over camp fire

The camp fire is devised to illuminate the village square at night, also to burn all the unused materials during the renovation of the shrine. Some young initiates do roast yams at the camp fire since it is an all night camp, to help themselves.

Camp fire is also used to remove the fear in the younger initiates, when they summon enough courage to join others in jumping over the fire to show their

agility and vigour. The fire also speaks for the Ancestral spirits that it does not allow its children go through pains for it protects them as no initiate can fall into the fire or be burnt by the fire.

Throwing up and catching the knife

Ọmaba Spirit is said to be Omniscience and the most accurate spirit there is. In the case of throwing up knife and catching it, it does that to exhibit its dexterity in handling dangerous situations. The Ọmaba masquerade thrills the people with its craft of perfection. The entire attribute indicates that it is perfect in handling difficult situations of the people, not just spiritual but also physical.

Ọmaba masquerade gags their mouth with young palm frond

It is only the sacred type of Ọmaba known as *maa gba ọtọ* that gags its mouth with palm frond. And ties some on their heads or around their waist. This is to tell everybody that the spirit is not in the communicative mood, because of a particular ritual it is undergoing at the moment. It rarely mumbles sound to its colleagues. It becomes extremely dangerous and furious at this time and will automatically cast spell to any woman sighted. And surely the woman must die.

The masquerade conceal themselves with young palm frond

This happens mostly towards the raining season when the masquerade is at the verge of departure. By this time, its aggressiveness increases and is starts hunting for none initiates and defaulters to whip. It uses the palm frond to feign human being, in other not to scare it prey away.

Impersonation

Another para-linguistic feature of Ọmaba Eziani, Nsukka is its impersonation of a pregnant woman, a clown and a person whose leg is disfigured. In impersonating a pregnant woman, Ọmaba aims to send a message to the onlookers that he is in dire need of monetary help just as a real pregnant woman needs money to take care of the unborn child. Another sociocultural implication of the pregnancy is that it promises waiting mothers of pregnancy before it departs and also expectant mothers will be delivered of their babies safely. Ọmaba's involvement in pregnancy restores hope to Eziani women who are waiting and expectant mothers. Ọmaba also impersonates a clown who pads his buttocks with clothing materials

so that when he dances, the audience will be amazed and be willing to appreciate his entertaining style. Lastly, Ọmaba Eziani, Nsukka limps so as to make people think that he is not fit to run. As such, when people come closer to him with the mindset that he cannot run, Ọmaba Eziani, Nsukka grabs them surprisingly.

Ọmaba throws stones into people's houses where there is shouting. noise or shouting.

During the stay of Ọmaba in the land of the living, Shouting at the top of one's voice is highly prohibited, as well as quarrelling or fighting. This attracts the Masquerade. It could come to separate the fight by beating the hell out of the fighters. Or by throwing huge stones on top of the roof as a warning to stop the shouting especially at nights. Ọmaba is believed to be a spirit and so does not tolerate noise making. It therefore expects quietness among humans whenever it is the Ọmaba season. Shouting, noise making and fighting is a sign of disrespect to Ọmaba. This is why it punishes such people.

Summary

This work has examined an aspect of Ọmaba Eziani, Nsukka, which is some para-linguistic features and their socio-cultural implications. Efforts were made to define some concepts concerning the ongoing research, That was done in an attempt to make those concepts more explicit for better understanding. Such words like paralinguistic features, and Ọmaba masquerade were discussed.

The review of the related literature that relates to the culture and the tradition of Ọmaba masquerades were also documented. The theoretical and empirical studies are presented and the methodology employed in the data collection for the research study is also presented in the study.

The study identified some paralinguistic features of Ọmaba and their socio-cultural implications. Some of the paralinguistic features identified are *Ịmịọnụ*, colours of the attire, Ọmaba dancing steps, gun shots, initiates jumping over camp fire, throwing and catching of knife and gagging with young palm frond. All these identified paralinguistic features as can be seen from the study have socio-cultural implications.

Conclusion

This study has tried to expose the variety of ways the Ornabe masquerade communicates or passes across information through non verbal communication however we do not claim to have exhausted all that there is in the paralinguistic features but we have done justice to the ones which are mostly common and which their socio-cultural implications are well known to us as it relates to Ọmaba Eziani, Nsukka.

References

Achebe, C. (1958). *Things fall apart.* London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.

Amankulo, J.N. (1981) Mask an instrument for dramatic characterization in traditional society in Africa. *Theatre Review* 1(2), 55-61.

Aniako, C.C. (1878). *The Ọmaba cult and masking tradition in Eziani, Nsukka environment.* Enugu Fourth Dimension Publishers Ltd.

Annis, P. & David, S. (1978) A contextual theory of epistemic justification. *American Philosophical Quarterly.* 15, 213-219.

Chidi, U. (2011). Social change and Ọmaba: A critical ethnography Eziani, Nsukka *Journal of Humanities*, 12-21.

Clifford, G. (nd) The concept of person in religion and thought kippenberg: YME.

Duruji, (2005). Odo festival song. An Ngwuo oral poetry.

Ezesinachi, J. (2014). Dramatic element in the Onunu Festival of Okpuje M.A. thesis department of linguistic Igbo and other Nigerian languages.

Frank, W. (1970) *African Art.* Paris: Thames & Hudson.

Ifemesia, C. (1979). *Traditional humane living among the Igbo: A historical perspective*. Enugu: Fourth dimension publishers.

Iyida, K. (2017) Mmemme Ọmaba Imufu Enugu-Ezike. B.A. Project Department of Linguistics, Igbo and Other Nigerian Languages U.N.N.

Leuzinger, E. (1972). *Heart of the black African.* Anambra: Studio Vista Publishers.

Malinoski B. (1920) Classification particles in the language of Kiriwa. *Bulletin of school of oriental studies.* London Institution. Vol. 1(IV) 33-78.

Meek, C.K. (1930). *An ethnographical report on the people of Eziani, Nsukka.* Onitsha: Provision publishers.

Nketia, J. (1974). *The music of Africa.* New York. WW Norton.

Nwadike, I. (2003). *Agumagu ọdịnala Igbo.* Onitsha. African First Publishers Limited.

Nzekwe, O. (1981). *Masquerade in drama and theatre in Nigeria.* In J. Ongunbiyi (ed) *A critical Source book,* (pp. 31-135). Lagos publisher.

Obiechina, E. (1978) *Nsukka Studies in African Literature.* London: Heinemann.

Okoro, J. (2012) Unified festivals and attainment of unity in Mkpunato community of Nsukka. M.A. Dissertation. Department of Linguistics, U.N.N.

Okpewho, I. (1992) *African oral literature background, character and continuity.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Onyebuchi, C. (2016) Ethno musicological study of Ọmaba Uturu Nweze Enunu of Nguru Eziani, Nsukka. B.A. project. Dept of Linguistics, Igbo and Other Nigerian Languages. U.N.N.

Ozioko, S. (2007). Ọmaba as an agent of social control in Ede-Oballa. Eziani, Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. B.A. Department of linguistics and communication studies Abia State University Uturu Nigeria.

Rysiew, P. (2001). The contex-sensitivity of knowledge attributions. Noŭs, 35, 477 – 514.

Schaffer, J. (2004) Skepticism, contextualism and discrimination. *Phenomenological Research.* 69(1) 138-155.

Schaffer, J. (2004) Skepticism, contextualism and discrimination. *Phenomenological research.* 69(1), 138-155.

Soyinka, W. (1976). African literature and the ethnic imperative. *The alue tablit* volume 6. 34-42.

Taylor, M. (1989). *Primitive culture* (3rd ed.) Available at wikipedia.org/wiki/culture. Retrieved on 16/07/19.

Thompson, E.P. (1963) The making of the English working class. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.

Ugonna, N. (1984) *Mmonwu, a dramatic tradition in Igbo.* Lagos: University Press.

Vygotsky, L. (1960) *The psychology of Art.* England: Routledge Williams, R. (1961) *The Long Revolution.* London: Chatto & Windus Publishers.