
Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 19:7 July 2019

The Use of Imagery and Its Aesthetic Values in Igbo Riddles

John Odo Onu, Ph.D.

Department of Linguistics Studies

University of Benin

Benin City

Nigeria

onujohn6@gmail.com

Mobile: 08065193744

Ugwuoke Priscilla Ebere

Department of Linguistics, Igbo and Other Nigerian Languages

University of Nigeria

Nsukka

Nigeria

ebere.ugwuoke@unn.edu.ng

Mobile No. 08037786613

Abstract

The study investigates imagery and its aesthetic values in Igbo riddle. A riddle is a popular genre of oral literature that appeals to people of all ages, gender and status. A riddle is a literary genre that employs figurative language to evoke rich imagery and requires indigenous thinking before a response. The study sets out to identify and analyze the types of imagery used in Igbo riddles as well as their aesthetic values. The study was purely descriptive with qualitative approach. Data for the study were collected through oral interview and unstructured questionnaire. The study looked at symbolism, simile, personification, repetition, metaphor, satire and parallelism as some of the imagery embedded in the riddles. The findings of the study revealed that analogical

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 19:7 July 2019

John Odo Onu, Ph.D. and Ugwuoke Priscilla Ebere

The Use of Imagery and Its Aesthetic Values in Igbo Riddles

reasoning plays a critical role in the enunciation of the Igbo riddles. Igbo riddles involve logical association of themes in the question and responses. The study further showed that some Igbo riddles have more than one possible response however this does not pose challenges to participants in searching for the acceptable answer. Also, the study revealed that Igbo riddles are characterized by figurative meaning and employed both perceptual and conceptual imagery. The imagery paints the picture of a situation and at the same time evokes the appropriate emotion. The study also revealed that for one to understand the imagery employed in the riddles, one must be familiar with culture and the words themselves which form the responses to certain riddles. Finally, types of imagery such as symbolism, parallelism, repetition, simile, metaphor and personification are used to veil their meanings which enrich the human intellect and encourage hidden solutions.

Keywords: riddle, context, imagery, performance, aesthetic, and culture.

1. Introduction:

Riddling is one of the ways by which the Igbo people transmit their culture and tradition from one generation to the next. Riddling game is only performed in some few rural communities these days. The dying out of the performance of riddles in the communities that were known to be performing this game is partly attributed to the in-road of modernization, separation and migration of the youth to the urban areas from older people who would have been spending time with them. In most communities with electricity, reading, watching of videos and football matches has taken over riddling which was used for educating and developing the minds of the youth, and at the same time, a source of entertainment. The evening or night period that was used for riddling in rural communities is now used for different activities such as watching of video by the people. These activities have lead to the gradual disappearance of riddles which are our cultural heritage and there is need to document them for the present and the incoming generations.

Riddles constitute part of oral tradition literature. They are a legacy from the past, handed from one generation to another by word of mouth. Kyoore (2010) posits that riddles bind the generations together to experience the magic of archetype and through that the world is unveiled. For instance, the Igbo riddle: E nwere otu nna, mgbe o bula okporo gi, I gaghi aju (I have a certain father, when he calls you, you cannot refuse) the response of the

riddle is death (onwu). Death is no respecter of person. The implication of this riddle shows that death has no respect for age, gender, or status and as such no one can avoid one and equal. Kyoore (2010) further states that riddles are found in historic literature in nearly all cultures throughout the world. In Kyoore view, it is very likely that riddles might have spread through oral tradition as a means of fireside storytelling and education. This study shares the same view with Kyoore.

A riddle is a question or statement that requires ingenious thinking before a response. Riddles as a literary genre employ figurative language to evoke imagery. According to Abrams (1993) figurative language is defined as a language which deviates from ordinary language in order to achieve special meaning or effect. Abrams view, figurative language departs from ordinary language by changing the order and significance of words. In similar regard, Motebele (1997) states, that one of the most common means of constructing figurative language is the use of imagery. She goes further to say that imagery entails deserting an object or concept in terms of another by bringing out the similarities and differences between them. Identifying the imagery in riddle means that you know how to organize the universe within your minds. Also, Motebele (1997) mentions that organizational principles are discovered within the contest of riddles by creating a collision of meanings caused by a clash between literal and figurative meaning created by the montage of related images.

The Igbo people see riddling as a game for the young people through adults are also known to be active participants. Sometimes, adults perform riddles with children in riddling session where they share their riddles with them. Adults may also engage in the art. Riddles are also performed and transferred between children alone. The act of riddling among the Igbo is perceived as a means of knowledge transmission. This view is supported by Finnegan (1970:441) when she noted that among the Chaga of Tanzania, there are riddles used to threaten, to convey secret information and to effect indirect suggestion this implies that, these riddles are obviously for adults and this supports the view that adults take part in riddle performance in the Chaga culture just as the Igbo people do.

The Igbo people perceive riddles as a dialogic contest and the performance requires a riddler, a riddlee and an audience. It is the riddler who drops a riddle to the riddlee and they are required to give a response. There is turn taking in riddling session among the

Igbo, where one riddler presents a riddle to a riddlee and vice versa. The rule of the game does not allow one to lie, hide part of the truth or change the conditions of the contest to enable one win.

Igbo riddles have an opening procedure to prod an individual into riddling session and it is stereotyped. For instance the riddler says; gwa m, gwa m, gwa m, (tell me, tell me, tell me) the riddlee say; “koazian na nti ghere oghe” meaning say it, we are listening or waiting. The function of the opening formula is to establish the contextual situation of riddle exchange.

The performance of riddle among the Igbo is guided by understood rule. For instance, riddles are mostly performed at night as a form of social control so that time is not wasted. This therefore, is meant to train the child to follow time-lines and activities, so that they do not forget other given chores. Riddles can also be performed during the day time in schools.

Riddles are performed for a variety of purposes which include teaching and values, proof of intelligence and way of socializing the child into the poetics of the society. Scholars study riddles as a form of literary expressions by members of society because riddles reflect the environment and people’s intellectual dexterity. Riddles may play an important role in the holistic development of young people. Riddles do not only perform social and educational functions but also they include moral and cultural functions in the society. Traditional, Igbo riddle provide to the people strong sense of cultural value such as unity, respect, honesty and others. The values are important element in the proper development and the education of the youth. Some Igbo riddle are in structure, they may mention names or make reference to historical events. Undoubtedly, riddles develop a sense of observation and creativity in the people’s mind. Igbo riddles are an effective means of testing and improving the listeners ability to think very fast and accurately too. Ajayi (1990) supports this view when he notes, that riddling constitutes an impressive moral and intellectual exercise that develop the individual reasoning ability which is the key to good moral judgment such as uprightness and kindness. Socially, riddles bring people together to interact, compete and make friends with one another. Riddling creates a spirit of competitiveness among the players and also a spirit of togetherness for those who find themselves in the same group.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section concerns the review of relevant literature under conceptual, theoretical and empirical studies.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1.1 IMAGERY:

Imagery is a prominent feature in Igbo riddles. Agyekum(2013) defines imagery as a way by which oral and written literatures employ words to paint mental pictures that appeal to our feelings and our understanding. He further posits that imagery is basically based on comparison of items by listing their specific attributes and lining them up to see areas of resemblance and contrast. Giddon(1977) in his own view sees imagery as a term used to represent objects, actions, feelings, ideas, state of mind and sensory experience. He defined imagery as the images produced in the mind through the use of language. The use of imagery in literary art is to achieve concentration and forcefulness. Images which are drawn by using figures of speech such as metaphor, simile and personification serve the function of beautification. In this study, imagery is used to depict the picture represented in a person's mind. It is a concrete representation of a sense of impression, feeling and idea. They are mental and physical images that are produced by figurative language in the form of comparison based on association. Their meanings are always inferred from larger cognitive, cultural or environmental context.

2.1.2 Context

Context as a concept is what comes before and after a word, phrase or statement helping to fix meaning. Webster (1980) defines context as the whole situation, background or environment relevant to some happening or personality. Mbah and Mbah (2007) define context as many occasions in which oral literature is performed. In continuing, they say context is the setting of the oral performance, which helps to explain what is being done. There must be an occasion that necessitates the performance of oral literature. This occasion could be – a funeral ceremony, an installation, a marriage celebration or village festival. Oral literature is important but without the context, it is lifeless (Onuigbo, 2006).

2.1.3. Performance

Performance is an element in all oral art, and that is why some of the controversies about style of art can only be fully understood by reference to performance. According to Jakobson (1974:11) performance is defined as a form of expression which uses poetic language of which body is the vehicle that gives form to that which one wishes to communicate. Each act of performance is reflexive, creating an experience while reflecting upon this experience at the same time. Schechner (1982:15) in his own view considers performance as the retired behaviour. Onu (2014:22) defines performance as an interactive enterprise where a performer performs before a participating audience. He added that the skill and personality of the performer, the nature and reaction of the audience, the context and the purpose are essential aspects of a performance. Ihedigbo (2017) sees performance as any form of artistic display in the presence of an audience.

Bauman (1975:11) defines performance as

A mode of verbal communication which consists in taking responsibility of a performer with regard to the audience, by manifesting its communicative competence. This competence is supported in knowledge and talent and it possesses to speak in the socially appropriate way from the audience's point of view, the performer's expressive acts which are subject to evaluation according to their efficiency. The better the capacity, the more intense the experience will be, thanks to the pleasure offered by the intrinsic qualities of expressive acts.

Scheubs (1977: 89) sees performance as "underlying process of balancing, loosening, bending, twisting, reconfiguring and transforming the permeating eruptive energy and mood below and to the side of focused attention. Derrida (1978:12) describes performance as repetition of action. Schechner (1982:15) in his own view considers performance as the retired behaviour. In the case of this study performance is used to mean a collective activity which involves one or more performers and audience.

Turner (2002:13) asserts that:

performance is a didactic of flow that is spontaneous movement in which action and awareness are one and 'reflexivity'. In which the central meanings, values and goals of a culture are seen in action as they shape and explain behaviour. A performance is declarative of our shared humanity, yet it utters the uniqueness of particular cultures. We

will know one another better by entering one another's performance and learning their grammars and vocabularies.

In the context of this study performance is used to mean a collective activity which involves one performer or more as well as an audience.

2.1.4.Culture

Culture is described as the software of the mind by some scholars such as Andrew Milner and Jeff Browitt (2002). Milner and Browitt (2002) draws attention to four important kinds of meaning that attach to the word culture: an individual habit of mind, the state of intellectual development of a whole society; the arts; and the whole way of life of a group or people. In William Bascom's term, 'culture has been referred to as man's social heritage and as man-made part of the environment' (William Bascom, 1965: 27). In the present study, culture is understood as the way of life of Igbo people. A proverb is thus part of culture as it codifies and/ or reflects how people live. One of the most important issues in human life that proverb reflects is gender. Given that culture is dynamic, the construction of gender roles keep on adjusting to changing social, economic, and political imperatives, first as the language and literature that reflect the situation are to be.

1. Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on social constructivist theory propounded by Kjørholt (2004). Social constructivist epistemology approach presents childhood as a social construction and children as social actors. This theory is based on social constructionism and has engaged international researchers with interdisciplinary academic backgrounds – sociologists, anthropologists, historians, geographers, psychologists – who have contributed to the development of interdisciplinary childhood studies (Kjørholt, 2004). Social constructionism is drawn on the perspective of the social construction of oral tradition to explore children and their oral tradition. As the focus of this study on children's riddling practices, social constructionism theory is used as a concept for understanding children and their play culture.

This theory presents child as social actors and childhood as social construction. James and Prout (1990:i) explain it as an interpretative frame of explaining the way children are perceived and articulated in particular societies into cultural specific set of idea and philosophies, attitude and practice. The concept of children as social actors has emerged as a new paradigm in research with children by engaging children as active participant in the research process about their everyday life (Lancy & Montgomery, 2009). Based on this concept, researchers involve children as active subject who are competent to shape each other as well as to influence their social situations which shows that they have rich perspectives about their social world. Corsaro (2011) posits that children, through their peer culture and routine, achieve their autonomy and reduce adult control. This study emphasis that the fact that children in their play activities demonstrate their desire to achieve freedom from the rules and authority of adult and to gain control over themselves show that they are social actors.

Thus, Corsaro's notion of children as social actors as well as Kjørholt's analysis of children as social participants shows us that children are subject with the capacity to construct meanings in response to the social practices in which they guide themselves. The role of Igbo children play in the performance, interpretation and transmission of oral tradition and construction of knowledge through this process are made manifest in their riddling practice.

Children always appreciate information they gain from adult into their peer culture through their own way of doing and sharing. This notion of appropriation and sharing thus denotes that through interactive event children become parts of cultural system that create and maintain their cultural practices through their own way of teaching each other. This theory is relevant to the present study because it focuses on the notion of interactive event that pertain to children play practices within the context of dual interaction, which include peer interaction (children interaction with each other) and children interaction with adults.

Corsaro and Matinaro (2000) argue that an ethnographer should be an active participant in children pair relationships through taking part in their everyday activities in order to attain their full investment in ethnographic fieldwork activities. Silbery (1986) claims their success in ethnographic research lies in multiple methodological activities which include watching, listening and understanding children's social practices in their cultural contexts. These are what social constructionist theory stands to achieve in this study.

2.2 Empirical studies

Summer (1995) writing on the complex form and structure of riddling note that it is comparable to the proverb. This is usually highly metaphorical while the proverb is mainly connotative. In this way, riddle exhibit a wider and deeper scope of meaning,

operating and interpretation.

Similarly, Galit Hassan and David Shulman (1996) rightly assert that the riddle, both itself and its contextual embeddedness, is rich in existential context. This means that a riddle act can stand out on its own as a text and with its added advantage of the situational linguistic and cultural context that inform its being, a riddle contains a multiplicity of meaning. What is more, the things to be translated in the riddle included the audiences' perceptions of the riddle precedents set before them.

Magachi (2015) conducted a study on the pragmatic analysis of Ekegusii riddle. The study is based on a pragmatic analysis of Ekegusii riddles. He opines that riddles play an important role in educating not only children but also adults. The study categorized riddles into literal and metaphorical riddles. The study is anchored on relevance theory. The findings of the study revealed that Ekegusii riddles are classified into literal riddles which are interpreted and understood based on context and cultural knowledge. It also discovered that both children and adults take part in the riddling process and that context and cultural knowledge play a major role in interpreting and understanding Ekegusii riddles.

Gachanja and Kebaya (2013) carried a study on the pedagogical aspect of riddles: A critical examination of Abagusii riddles. Primary data for analysis was obtained from a field work conducted among children and adult purposively sampled from Abagusii community. The researchers engaged participatory and observational approaches in data collection. The paper investigated the various education values and skills inherent in the riddles and show that both the riddling and the riddle embody educational values. In this regard, the author emphasized that riddles should be embraced as an important teaching and instructional method.

Shuaibu (2014) in his work titled, "Hausa riddles and game pertinent to the development of Mathematical things: A reconstruction focus" examines how Hausa riddles and game could be used in the teaching of mathematics lesson. The author interviewed students, lecturers, and other members of the society in Kano to gather some examples of some Hausa riddles and games. The findings of the study revealed that there are so many numbers of Hausa riddles and games very relevant to the development of mathematical thinking which mathematics teachers and students could use to improve mathematics teaching and learning and at the same time can be used for recreational activities and psychological tension release.

Kyooore (2010) conducted a study on riddle among the Dagora of Ghana and Burkina Faso. The study examined closely riddles of Dagara people of West Africa, emphasizing the importance of the genre as a cultural tradition. The riddles are analysed were collected during a folktale narration session in the Nandom area of the upper west region of Ghana. The study argues that riddles as metaphors are a logical association of objects or human behaviour, and calls for inclusion of folklore of folklore study in elementary school curriculum.

Summary of the Reviewed Literature

The literature reviewed so far indicate that not much has been done in children's riddling as an academic exercise. More so, none of the reviewed works focused on Igbo riddles showing that no scholarly work has been done in Igbo riddles at least to the best of the researchers knowledge. It is this gap that the present study intends to fill to stimulate further research in Igbo riddling game.

2. METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methodology that was employed in carrying the study.

This study was purely descriptive with qualitative approach. It aim at describing the imagery in some selected Igbo riddles in the context and concept of Igbo culture. In this study, the population consisted of all the people in Nsukka Igbo culture area. The study employed purposive sampling to select participants. The sample was drawn from a population of young and old Igbo riddler's from male and female ages between 16 and 60, who volunteered to participate in the riddle performance. A total of 15 riddlers, 5 females and 10 males were used for the study. Fifteen riddlers were selected from six primary and secondary schools were sampled for analysis based on researcher's intuition as a native speaker. Data were collected through participant observation an oral interview. The method of data analysis was purely descriptive and focus was on the imagery in which the riddles are used in relation to the Igbo way of life.

3. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This section analyses fifteen (15) riddles which are presented with the focus on imagery in the riddles. Imagery is the creature of both mental and physical pictures so as to describe objects, events, human characters and their qualities either through indirect reference or in the, medium if figurative language. Figurative language depart from what users of the language know as the standard meaning of words or the standard order of words, in other to achieve special meaning or effect.

5.1.1 Use of symbolism in Igbo riddle.

RIDDLE 1

Riddler- E nwere umuaka ato. o buru na otu anoghi ya, abuo ndi ozo enweghi ike iru oru.
Gini ka m bu?

Riddlee- Ekwu

Riddler: I have three children. If one is absent, two cannot work. what is it?

Riddlee- hearth stone

RIDDLE 2

Riddler: E nwere otu nne. O buru na nwa ya anoghi ya, o gaghi eri ihe obula. Gini ka o bu?

Riddlee: nwa igu

Riddler: there is a certain mother when the child is not there, she cannot eat. What is it?

Riddlee: millstone

The picture created in the mind of this two riddles above is unity. Traditionally, Igbo riddles give especially the youths the strong strength of cultural values such as humility, honesty, and unity. It is clear that umuaka (children) and nwa (child) in riddle 1 and 2 respectively depicted working together. If one is absent, the remaining cannot work alone, the strength of the Igbo society as portrayed by its riddles is found on communal welfare based on cooperation and unity amongst its members. Therefore failure to accept the working together of the people implies failure to acknowledge that exist among them. The Igbo work as a unit and it is through that unity that they succeed in holding unto the adage “igwe bụ ike ma adiri na otu” (united we stand, divided we fall).

The unity implied in the two riddles symbolizes the strong communal spirit and value of the people. The riddler urges his members to work together since working as an individual implies, in the eyes of the community, a failure. This situation of individualism is the fear among members of the community and the Igbo riddlers being part of this community. This study observed was reacting to these fears in these riddles .

The two riddles abound in symbolism. The subject disguised in the riddle question are the ‘*ekwu*’ (hearth stone) and ‘*nwa igu*’ (a grinding stone) which are described as

“nwa”(child) and “umuaka”(children) actions in the riddles symbolize unity. The use of symbolism is very common in Igbo riddles.

3.1.2. THE USE OF SATIRE IN IGBO RIDDLES

Cohen (1973:195) defined a satire “as the criticism of a person, human nature, event, movement or institution by the use of ridicule, sarcasm, irony and humour in order to reduce the subject of absurdity”. In satire the aim is to explore an attack vice and folly. The Igbo oral artist including the riddlers often prefers to correct the fault, malice and follies through veiled expression rather than degrading or attacking a person openly. The riddle below demonstrates this assertion.

RIDDLE 3

Riddler: O were otu onye m nwere na-agaghi enye onwe ya nri mana o na – ebuga nri na ahia

Riddlee: nda (akpisi)

Riddler: I have a certain fellow that refuses himself food but sends it to the market

Riddlee: an ant.

The riddle paints the pictures of a rural community where one can see ant everywhere even in the roads especially when it rains and the ground is wet. The riddler employs the image of an ant to present his message. Grachanja and Kebaya(2013) posit that generally, ants are regarded as the most hardworking animal and that their behavior gives them the honor to be earning the simile “as hardworking as an ant”. This shows that riddlers have a close observation of nature and the environment. Ant are depicted in many cultures as dedicated and always determined to succeed in any undertaken. However, Igbo folktale has it that even though ants are perceived as hardworking they eat

very little as they like keeping the rest for future use.

By equating human behavior to that of ants, the riddle is drawing the attention of the society to some of the unattractive human behaviors. This also reasons the question of the essence of some human actions that negates their own well being. This riddle substantiates the Igbo adage which says “okpa aku eri eri lekwa ka onu di onye nwuru anwu”(one who gathers wealth without enjoying should look at the mouth of the dead person). The imagery created in the riddle is absurd. It does not make sense for one to leave his family to starve, only to take the food items to the market and sell them. The riddle is suggesting, it is bad that one’s love for money is making one deny him and the family food while taking the food items to the market and sell to strangers to enjoy.

By questioning the rationale behind such inhumane action, the riddle exposes such eccentricism in the society and satirically attacks the members of the society who practice such selfish behavior. The Igbo people employ satire to evoke imagery and provide amusement for the community. It is evident from the above that imagery in Igbo riddles satirizes certain behavior which society does not uphold. This gives to confirm Awedoba(2000) that riddles provide opportunities for critical observation and assessment of beliefs, norms and notions as well as behaviors, even if they end up confirming the status quo rather than subverting it.

3.1.3. USE OF PARALLELISM IN IGBO RIDDLES

Nypson(2001) defines the parallelism as the repetition of words , phrases or sentences that have the same grammatical structure or that restates a similar idea. Fabb (1997) in his own view sees parallelism as an organizing principle that divides the text into sections and requires the second half of each section to resemble the first half. Agyekum (2007) describes parallelism as sameness between two sections of a text.

In parallelism two things or ideas are always involved in a similar construction. In this study, parallelism is a poetic device by which the riddler brings together in a balanced relationship, ideas and images that may seem independent of one another. The examples below illustrate below the use of synonymous and antithetic parallelism in Igbo riddles. Synonymous parallelism in the situation where the proposition is repeated either totally or partially, the expression may be different but the meaning is either completely or nearly the same. Antithetic parallelism occurs with contrast so that the correspondence lines are by means of opposition sometimes by expression or sense only.

RIDDLE 4

Mgbe nwa onye kpuru isi nwuru asi na o bu aka oru amosu, kedu maka nwa onye amosu nwuru?

(when the blind person's child died, they said it is the work of the witch, but what about the witch's child that dies?)

This riddle paints the picture of ignorance. "onye kpuru isi" refers to a visually impaired person. Its usage here metaphorically means someone who is not a witch or an ordinary person who has not got a witchcraft powers. An ordinary person's child dies and people attribute it to witch hunting and a witch's child also died. The question then is, is the death of this child also attributable to the work of a witch? Why will a witch kill her own child? In this riddle, the Igbo always want people to reflect about their society and be positive about their way of life. The riddle encourages the person to also be curious and ready to find answers to new things as they occur. This is because society is dynamic. The imagery created in the riddle suggests that even the witch's child is not spared death how much an ordinary person's child. The imagery depicted in the riddle response

suggests that, there is something more powerful than all human beings. Through their remarks the riddles wonders why the witch who is regarded more powerful and miraculous and through whom the unseen and unknown are discovered and the lives and prospects of individuals and community are saved or destroyed should suffer such as ordinary being. The riddle provide avenue for the society to reflect on their belief system and paints the picture that as far as the destiny of the human being is concerned, the supernatural being controls our lives. The riddle employed parallelism as an imagery to present the message.

There is synonymous parallelism in riddle number 4. The blind person's child that died and the witch's child that also died are both expression about death.

RIDDLE 5

Kedu onye huru nzomukwu obu mgbe o na-aga ije n'ime nkata (abo)?

Who sees the footprint of a dove when it walks in a basket?

The above riddle paints the picture of secrecy. Secrecy is deliberately hiding information or behavior from other people (Kelly, 2002). In this study secret refers to knowledge permitted only to those who deserve it. Igbo riddles just like the riddles of other cultures are good reflection of the societal values such as honesty and respect for traditional norms viewed as a cultural practice that upholds the best tradition. The riddler uses "obu" (dove) in the riddle in the response to present the message. Dove is often use as symbol of peace in many cultures. When dove walks on the ground one finds it difficult to see its footprints not to talk about walking in basket. In the basket, the dove's footprints could not been seen, one can never know how a dove entered a basket through the appearance of its footprint. A dove normally will not be at where there are people. Even when it comes it will hide. When no one's attention is on it, it will then move to do

what it wants to do. The imagery in the riddle underscores the essence of secrecy and confidentiality regarding society and Igbo cultural practices.

RIDDLE 6

Kedu onye huru eze otu ebe o na-amu amu n'ime ulo?

Who sees the teeth of a vagina when it laughs in the room?

In this riddle “otu” (vagina) naturally, the position of it is such that no one can see or else you're permitted. As a result one cannot see it when it laughs and not to talk about seeing the teeth of it. The imagery in the riddle underscores the essence of secrecy and confidentiality and Igbo cultural milieu. Traditionally, “otu” (vagina) is not mentioned in plain language and issues relating to it not also discussed in public. The Igbo people regard vagina as the path that brings life. Respect and other moral activities concerning it are held secretly and in confidentiality.

The imagery in the riddle suggests that there is the need for individuals to learn the rules of etiquette regulating the society in order to safeguard the traditional norms and cultural values of the people.

Igbo riddlers who are observant and part of the society refer to a woman accepting her male counterpart in bed as vagina laughing. As the activities of the couple in bed are known to them only it is referred to by the riddle as the footprint of the dove in the basket. The activity of a man and woman in bed results to pregnancy. This suggests that the riddle refers to the pregnancy as tooth of the vagina. The riddle demands certain logics and induces critical thinking. The logic is embedded in a comparison of the dove that walks in a basket and vagina that laughs in the room.

3.1.4. THE USE OF PERSONIFICATION IN IGBO RIDDLES

Personification is a figure of speech in which a thing, an animal or an abstract thing is made human. Agyekum (2007) stated that personification endows animals, ideas, abstractions and inanimate objects with human form, character and sensibility and emotions.

Personification is a very popular imagery Igbo riddlers often employ to drive home their message and create more fun in the course of riddling. Each personified object is often made symbolic of some kind of good or evil attribute which the riddle wants to praise or condemn. Riddlers cleverly make the non humans behave an act like human being by use of certain verbs, adjectives, nouns and sometimes pronouns. The riddle below illustrates personification.

RIDDLE 7

Riddler: E nwere m otu enyi na-arụ oru n'ugbo oge nile mana o naghị akunye ihe n'ubi.
Gini ka o bu?

Riddlee: Ezi

Riddler: I have a certain friend that always farms and farms but he never sown. What is it?

Riddlee: pig

The above riddle create the image of occupation “ na-arx qrx xgbq oge nile” farm and farm in the riddle question depicts emphasis the riddle attaches to work. This suggests that people should work hard. The main tool use in farming amongst the Igbo is the hoe. It is used for clearing the land and weeding.

The pig performs similar activities as done by the people and it is useful to them. The pig uses its nose to remove grass and level the ground just as the hoe does on the farm but nobody will sow seed there. The pig does it in search of food and for pleasure.

Whether the pig gets the food or not it never loses hope in doing it because of the pleasure component it attaches to doing it.

The imagery in the riddle is suggesting that there are other things that can clear the land and not the hoe only as the people always do. This implies that people should add other innovations in doing their farm activities.

The riddle employs personification to present the message. “ezi”(pig) in the riddle response is a non human being which is endowed by the riddle with human character and sensibility. It is human beings that farm but in the riddle through the creative use of language, a pig is seen to be farming where no one sows for it. The effective use of personification in the riddle by the riddler does not only add beauty to the language but also depicts the creative and manipulation of language among the Igbo oral artist. The imagery in the next riddle depicts strength.

RIDDLE 8

Riddler:Anwu agbaa osisi iroko n’obi. Gini ka o bu?

Riddlee: qnwx

Riddler: A bee beats the iroko tree in the heart, what is it?

Riddlee: death grabs a young man

This riddle paints the picture of strength. “anwu agbaa” means a bee beats and this depicts the strength and character of this small insect known as bee. Iroko is one of the strongest trees in Igbo land. Even in the event of rain storm, when an iroko falls, the people are always surprised. The riddle response – death – teaches the people that death is not a respecter of person whether young, rich, poor, old, strong or weak. It comes unannounced and whoever it comes to call cannot refuse its call.

The riddle uses the imagery of personification to present the message. The riddle cleverly makes the non-human being “anwu” (bee) and “onwu” (death) behave and act like human beings by the use of certain verbs in the riddle and response respectively such as “agbaa”(beat) and “ejideela”(grab). Naturally, it is human beings that beat but in the riddle question it is used by a non-human being. The bee is endowed with human qualities, sensibility and emotions to act in this manner. In the riddle response, death a non-human entity is seen having the strength, ability and courage to grab a strong young man by the hand without fear.

3.1.5. THE USE OF METAPHOR IN IGBO RIDDLES

Metaphor occurs frequently in everyday’s speech and adds beauty to the language. Agyekum(2013) states that metaphor is a poetic device which concisely compares two things by saying that one is the other. In this study metaphor is a statement that one thing is something else which literal sense is not. The riddles below are metaphorically constructed.

RIDDLE 9

Riddler: E nwere m otu osisi na-eto oge nile mana onweghi mgborogwu. Gini ka o bu?

Riddlee; Mmadu

Riddler : There is a certain tree that grows but does not have root, what is it?

Riddlee: A human being

The riddle paints the picture of strength. Among the Igbo the word “too” which means “grow” is used for the development of a human being and a tree. The nominal “osisi” (tree) in the riddle question and “mmadu” (a human being) in the riddle response are used metaphorically in the riddle. The riddle refers to the human being as a tree that

has no root yet always grows. Here the tree is substituted for a human being. Physiologically, there is no correlation between a tree and a human being. However, in the riddle they (tree and human beings) are made to satisfy the same purpose. As Anang (2013:4) articulated, “metaphor deals with the unlocking of mystery, the unknown ... metaphor speaks about one thing in terms that suggests another, involving the presentation of facts of one category in the idiom appropriate to another, two things active together interacting and in the interaction producing meaning”. The riddle below laments about individualism.

RIDDLE 10

Riddler: Nnam ruru otu ulo o bu naani m na- ano n’ime ya. Gini n.a. o bu?

Riddlee: akpukpo ukwu

Riddler : My father built a certain house for me that I am staying in alone , what is it?

Riddlee : Footwear

This riddle paints the picture of ownership. The response to the riddle question is straight forward “akpukpo ukwu”(footwear). Footwear in the Igbo society is not shared. They believe that when someone has bad luck and you use the person’s footwear you will get that person’s bad luck. The message embedded in the riddle suggests that, individualism is taking a center stage in the Igbo society as oppose to communalism which is the traditional practices of the people. The riddle alludes to the rise of individualism in the Igbo society. This is so because an individual implied in the riddle as owner of the house depicts him as the only one allowed to staying in his house.

The riddle is seen as an attempt by the riddler to advise the society against individualism and expresses the danger that comes as a result of the negation of the

traditional practices (communalism) among the Igbo. The riddle laments the loss of communal practices in the community as individualism take the center stage. The riddle shows that members of the community are uncomfortable with the advent of individualism in the society since it encourages selfishness and greed which are widely regarded as vices among the Igbo people.

3.1.6. LOGIC IN IGBO RIDDLES

Maritain(1979:109) sees logic as “logic... means to help our reasoning correctly and efficiently in the attainment of truth. Reasoning is the process by which certainties are arrived at on the basis of known statement”. Igbo riddles reveal and demand certain logic in their performance. This induces critical reasoning or thinking on the part of the riddlers or riddles who take part in the riddle performance sessions. Gwaravanda and Maranda (2010) are of the view that the answer to a given riddle acts as a conclusion of the logical process and it May often in one word answer which is both precise and clear to the participants. All the different types of Igbo riddles and responses demand certain degree of analogy and it’s only the one word response that involves logical reasoning. The logic is always embedded in a comparison of two things or two types of behavior. Igbo riddles employ both inductive and deductive reasoning. Glovier(2005) sees inductive reasoning as involving extrapolation from experience to further conclusions. This implies that known issues can give information’s about unknown cases as the excerpt below illustrates

RIDDLE 11

Riddler: Nnukwu okuko ocha bi n’otu ebe ma ha anaghi ahu ibe ha anya , gini ka o bu?

Riddlee: Anya

Riddler: Two white hens incubating side by side but don't see each other, what are they?

Riddlee: Eyes

RIDDLE 12

Riddler: Nne m nwere otutu umu yichere akwa ocha ma no to onwe ha nso. Gini ka o bu?

Riddlee: Eze

Riddler: My mother has some children and they all wear white shirts standing close to one another. What are they?

Riddlee: Teeth

RIDDLE 13

Riddler: E nwere otu nne nwere ite abuo mana mgbe o bula e kujuru ha mmiri I mara na e nwere onye obia. Gini ka o bu?

Riddlee: Ara

Riddler: I have a certain mother with two pots and any time they are filled with water it means there is a stranger in the house, what are they?

Riddlee: breasts

In the excerpt above, the known cases are “nnekwu okuko ocha abuo” (two white hens), “akwa ocha abuo” (two white shirts), and “ite abuo” (two pots). The unknown cases are the things that resemble or have attributes similar to that of the two white hens, white shirts and two pots. These items are “anya”(eyes), “eze”(teeth) and “ara”(breast).

There is a logical analogy between the riddler and their responses in that just as two white hens are incubating side by side but they do not see each other, the two eyes

have similar attributes standing side by side yet they do not see each other. What these riddles demand some logical association of objects and actions.

Also, some children wearing white shirt, standing close to each other so as teeth are white standing cloth to each other on the gum and finally a certain two pots are filled with water means there is a stranger in the house, the breasts are two and only have water (breast milk) when a child is born. A new born baby among the Igbo is considered a stranger.

Igbo riddles empower the participants to cross check the acceptable riddle responses and manner that makes meaning of the riddle. This goes to concur with Awedoba (2000) that riddling equipped language user, among other things with analytical skills in some cases are similar to those language education seems to provide to students in schools.

Besides analogy, Igbo riddling process also relies on inference. Inference is a conclusion drawn about something on the basis of information that is available. Igbo riddles cover every sphere of life or nature making their content widely varied throwing big challenge to riddlers. For one to be able to be easily respond to the riddles, one need to have ample knowledge of the things in life and nature since the riddles require one to observe and discern various features that characterize his surrounding, hence demanding inference knowledge. Riddles whose enunciations is on natural feature are shown in the excerpts below

RIDDLE 14

Riddler: E nwere m umuaka ato, o buru na otu anoghi ya ndi ozo enweghi ike iru oru. Gini ka o bu?

Riddlee: Ekwu

Riddler: I have three children if one is absent two others cannot work. What is that?

Riddlee: hearth stone (tripond stand)

RIDDLE 15

Riddler: Nna m nwere otu nwa, mgbe obula o gawara ije nwa ahu n'onwe ya agawa ma o kwusi news ahu akwusi. Gina n.a. o bu?

Riddlee: onyinyo mmadu

Riddler: My father has a certain child, whenever he is walking the child is also walking and when he stops the child stops. What is it?

Riddlee: Human shadow

The above riddles require one to make inference on the similarities. “e nwere umuaka ato, o buru na otu anoghi ya, ndi ozo enweghi ike iru oru” (I have three children, if one is absent, two others cannot walk) who’s response is hearth stones requires one to make inferences on the similar ties between three children and that which appears in the environment with similar features. The same applies to the riddle. In “Nna m nwere otu nwa, mgbe obula o gawara ije nwa ahu n'onwe ya agawa ma o kwusi nwa ahu akwusi” (my father has a certain child, whenever he is walking the child is also walking and when he stops the child stops) whose answer is a human shadow. The human being is likened

to the inseparability of the shadow of the object that gives birth to it. Hence, the response to this riddle is based on close relationship.

In these two riddles cited above, inferential reasoning is invoked. The imagery used in the two riddles can only be deciphered through inferences hence demanding that Igbo riddlers should not be logical but also analytical. For one to come out with the acceptable response to riddle, one must be familiar with many aspects of reality to derive the appropriate response of the riddle from it. The implication of this is that one has to have broader knowledge of the immediate environment and culture for one to be able to decode the embedded meaning of imagery in the riddles

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study revealed that analogical reasoning plays a critical role in deciphering the correct response to Igbo riddle. All the different types of riddles and responses demand certain degree of analogy and that involves logical reasoning skills which assists the riddle as the work through possibilities and probabilities until the acceptable response is gotten for a given riddle. Riddling performance involves logical association of objects and actions rather than an association of themes in the riddle questions and responses

The study further revealed that Igbo riddles are characterized by figurative meaning and employed both perceptual and conceptual imagery. The imagery paints the picture of the situation on the same time evokes the appropriate emotion.

The study, further revealed that for me to understand the imagery employed in the riddles, one must be familiar with the culture and have the understanding of how the Igbo people disguise movement, shape, color, size and the words themselves which form the responses to certain riddles.

Also the study showed that Igbo riddles employed different types of imagery such as personification, satire, parallelism, metaphor as well as symbolism to veil their meanings which enrich the human intellect and encourage the hidden solution.

Finally, the study revealed that imagery in Igbo riddles depicts diversity of meaning and therefore is not subject to a single interpretation since the same riddles may be interpreted differently by different scholars and therefore the analysis of imagery in this study is based on the Igbo culture and contexts in which they were used.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the evidence of the findings in the study, the following conclusion can be drawn: the main purpose of the Igbo riddles is entertainment. However, apart from the entertainment that riddles give to the people, they also constitute a formidable moral, cultural, and intellectual exercise and are used as a medium for developing the people's reasoning power as well as skills in decision making.

More so, riddles empower the people with analogical and inferential Reasoning knowledge which serves as a tool for creative thinking.

In addition, Igbo riddles are association of ideas, objects and actions, rather than an association of themes in the questions and responses and since riddle is an exercise on the association of ideas which are derived from observation made of nature and human life, it affords an opportunity for Igbo riddles to be reinvented as well as learning the Igbo culture. The discussions made in this study confirm that the riddles are never literal due to their use of symbolic language, and the imagery in the riddles is revealed by the material world surrounding the people. Imagery in Igbo riddles paints the picture of the situation and at the same time evokes the appropriate emotion. The main function of imagery is pictorial.

REFERENCES

- Abrams, M.H. (1993). *A glossary of literary terms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Abugusii riddles. *International journal of Humanities and Social science* 3 (3), 111-118.
- Afrikaans University. www.uj.ac.za. Retrieved 8\06\2019.
- Agyekum, K. (2007). *Introduction to the literature* (2nd ed.). Accra: Media Design
- Agyekum, K. (2013). *Introduction to the literature* (3rd ed.). Accra: Adwinsa Publication
- Ajayi, B. (1990). Riddles and Yoruba child. *International Journal of Moral and Social Studies* 5(5)
- Anang, C.O. (2013). The Ga riddle: Its style and structure .M. Phil thesis, University of Education,
- Awedoba, A.K. (2000). Social roles of riddles, with reference to Kasena society. *Research Reviews*
- Bascom, N. (1965). *Folklore and Anthropology*. In A. Dundes (Ed.) *The study of Folklore*.
Eaglewood, Cliffs, New Jersey; Prentice-Hall. Pp25-33.
- Bauman, R. (1975). Verbal art as performance. *American Anthropologist*, 77, 8-11
- Cohen, B.B. (1973). *Writing about Literature*. Glenview, Illinois: Scot Foreman and Company
- Corsaro, W. and Motinari, L. (2000). Entering and observing children's world: A reflection on longitudinal ethnography of early education in Italy. In P. Christensen and A. James. (Eds.). Research with Children. 66-71. London: Palmer Press.*
- Corsaro, W.A. (2011). *The sociology of childhood* (3rd Ed.). California: Pine Forge Press.
- Derrida, J. (1978). *Writing and differences* .Minneapolis : University of Minneapolis Press
- Fabb, N. (1997). *Linguistics and Literature: Language in the Verbal arts of the Winneba World* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers
- Finnegan, R. (1970). *Oral Literature in African* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gachanja, W.M. and Kebaya, C. (2013). Pedagogical aspects of riddles: A critical examination of

Abagusii riddles. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 3 (3), 293-297.

Gachanja, M.N and Kebanya, C. (2013). Pedagogical aspects of riddles: A critical examination of

Giddon, J. A. (1977). A dictionary of literary terms. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Glover, T. (2005). *A practical study of argument*. London: Wadsworth Thomson.

Gwaravanda, E.T. and Masaka, D. (2010). Shona reasoning skills in Zimbabwe: The importance of

Riddle. Department of Humanities, Faculty of Arts, Great Zimbabwe University.

Ihedigbo, R. E. (2017). Theme and style of Igbo birth songs. Ph.D thesis, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Institute: Harvard University Press.

Jacobson, R. (1974). The socio-cultural significance of Ogoni festival among the Igbala people. M.A. dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

James, A. and Prout, A. (1990). *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: A contemporary issues in sociological study of childhood*. London. Palmer Press.

Kelly, A.A. (2002) *The Psychology of Secrets*. London: Academic\ Plenum Publishers.

Kjørholt, A.T. (2004). *Childhood as a social and symbolic space. Discourses on children as social participants in society. Ph.D Thesis, NTNU*.

Kyooore, P.K.S. (2010). A study of riddle among the Dagara of Ghana and Burkina Faso.

Magachi, A.L. (2015). A pragmatic analysis of Ekegusii riddles. M.A. Dissertation. Department of

Department of Linguistics and Languages, University of Nairobi.

Maranda, E.K. (2010). *Structural Analysis of Oral Tradition: The Logic of riddles*. Radcliffe

Maritain, J. (1979). *An Introduction to Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Mbah, B.M and Mbah, E.E. (2007) *Azuonye lectures on Igbo oral literature and stylistics*. Nsukka: ———University of Nigeria Press Limited.

Motebele, M. M. (1997) *Imagery in Southern-Sotho Proverbs and Riddles*. M.A. Thesis. Rand

New Series 16(2), 35-51

Nypson, C. (2001) *Literature made easy*. Tema: Folie Books.

Onu, J. O. (2014). Ethnopoetic study of Igbo oral funeral poetry in Elugwu-Ezike, Enugu state, Nigeria. Ph.D thesis, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Onuigbo, S (2006) *Essays and literary concepts in English*. Nsukka: Afro Orbis Publishing Co Ltd

Schechner, R. (1982). Collective reflexivity: Restoration of behaviour. In J. A Ruby (Ed.), *Crack in the mirror: reflexive perspective in anthropology* (pp.39-53). Philadelphia: Philadelphia Press.

Scheub, H. (1977). *Body and image in oral narrative performance: New Literary History*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Shuaibu, G.(2014). Hausa riddles and games pertinent to the development of Mathematical

Thinking: A reconstruction focus. *JOSR Journal of Mathematics*.9(4), 46-51.

Turner, N. (2002). *The ritual process, structure and anti-structure*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Webster, N. (1980) *Webster's new twentieth century dictionary of English language*. London:

Collins Publishers.

Summer,C (1995) Oromo wisdom literature. Addis Ababa: Gudina Tunisa Foundation.