

SOCIOLINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF URHOBOPROVERBS

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Abstract

This paper is a study of Urhobo proverbs from a sociolinguistic perspective in the socio-context of English as a second language in Nigeria. The analysis of the proverbs is done with a view to offer a fresh insight into the contributions of Urhoboculture and language to the Urhobo-English sociolinguistic context. Our data of fifteen randomly selected Urhobo proverbs were sourced and collected from competent Urhobo native speakers. They were analyzed using Dell Hyme's Ethnography of Communication to enable us relate our data to aspects of Urhobo world view and culture. Our findings reveal that Dell Hymes' acronym SPEAKING allows for a comprehensive understanding of the social-cultural implications of proverbs due to its explicit and analytic potentials. It is, therefore, recommended that since meaning is conveyed in the second language within the mediating role of the first language, a sociolinguistic study of L₁ speech patterns in the context of English as a second language should be encouraged.

Keywords: Ethnography of communication, proverbs, sociolinguistics, Urhobo culture and world view.

1. Introduction

Urhobo is one of the major ethnic groups in the present Delta State of Southern Nigeria. The language spoken by the Urhobos is known as the Urhobo language. The Urhobo nation, made up of about four million people, is composed of twenty-four kingdoms. Each kingdom speaks a distinct but mutually intelligible dialect of the Urhobo language (Akpofure-Okenrentie 206).

Proverbs are primordial aspects of the African tradition in general and the Urhobo tradition in particular. They are nuggets of wisdom that are relevant in modern day Africa. Yusuf and Methangwane (408) define proverbs as relatively short expressions which are usually associated with wisdom and are used to perform a variety of social function. Meider, the famous paremiologist, sees proverb as a “phrase, saying, sentence, statement or experience of the folk which contains above all wisdom, truth, morals, experiences, lessons and advice concerning life and which has been handed down from generation to generation” (117). Akporobaro observes that proverbs everywhere, Urhobo proverbs inclusive, are determined by socio-geographical experience (72). This is to say that the nature of the imagery and the forms in which the truth in proverbs are expressed, to a very large extent, reflect the socio-cultural milieu in which the people live. He further states that the repertoires of imagery implicit in the proverbs of the people of Southern Nigeria are different from those dominant in the proverbs of the North. This is because proverbs reflect the values, beliefs, hopes and aspirations of the people. This situation calls for a distinct study of the proverbs of any particular group of people.

Sociolinguistics studies how language relates to society. It draws insights and perspectives from sociology, anthropology and social psychology as well as from other areas of linguistic study. It is a field which examines the relationship between language and society and between the users of language and the social structures in which the users of the language live. Crystal sees sociolinguistics as a discipline which “studies language variation and use in relation to the cultural patterns and beliefs of man” (18). In the views of Holmes, sociolinguists are interested in explaining why we speak differently in different social contexts; the focus of sociolinguists is identifying the social functions of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning. This gives insight into the way language works as well as the social relationship that exists among users in a linguistic community (1). Akindele and Adegbite define sociolinguistics as “the relationship which exists between a language or languages and the culture and tradition as well as the politics of a particular community” (3). They state further that “it examines the interaction between the use of language and the social organization’s behaviour” (4). To Bussman, sociolinguistics is that discipline which developed from the co-operation of linguistics and sociology and it aims at investigating the social meaning of language system and of the common

set of conditions of language use and the linguistic and social structures (439). Hudson explains that sociolinguistics is “the study of language in relation to society” (4). In the opinion of Holmes, the aim of sociolinguistics is to move towards a useful framework which provides a motivated account of the way language is used in a community and the way the users employ language. Particular studies in sociolinguistics have demonstrated the importance of the social function of language and have also shown that it is often possible to find social explanations for aspects of linguistic structure (Kirsten, Malmjaer, 415). In the light of the above, this study is an attempt to find social explanations for Urhobo proverbs, an aspect of Urhobo language, in the Urhobo-English sociolinguistic context.

2. Proverbs and Socio-Culture

In every culture, there are nuggets of popular wisdom expressed in the form of concise sayings. These are usually known as proverbs. Other terms such as adage, maxim, precepts etc. are also used (Crystal 53). Crystal adds that in many cultures, especially in Africa, proverbs are important and common elements in ordinary conversations.

Whiting 1994 (cited in Mieder) summarizes a proverb as an expression which owes its birth to the people and testifies to its origin in form and phrase. A proverb expresses a fundamental truth, that is, a truism in homely language; often adorned, however, with alliteration and rhyme. Proverbs are representatives of the world view of the native speakers of a language and aspects of the cultural practices of a people are transmitted through proverbs (Mebitaghan and Obikudo 142). In the words of Olatunji, proverbs evolve from traditional lore, history and religion and are usually attributed to elders as they embody the wisdom of elders or ancestors in society (61). Although there are speculations that proverbs are at the verge of going into extinction, Mieder contradicts this by saying that “nothing could be further from the truth”. He categorically states that proverbs are very much alive and well (xi). Nwachukwu-Agbada observes that the proverb is considered one of the longest surviving non-material artefacts of a heritage (3). From pre-literate times, the wisdom of proverbs has been a lamp unto the feet of people in their social interactions. It is succinct and pungent, and it is used to add grandeur to an otherwise flat and ordinary speech.

Young people sometimes find it difficult to understand proverbs since the meaning is not easily decoded from the surface. This is because the language is elevated from the ordinary language of everyday communication.

Meanings in proverbs can be analogous to happenings in the real world. A proverb is based on the wisdom, beliefs, culture, experiences, history, etc., of a society and, it is, therefore, interpretable easily within the society. As Aziza and Mebitaghan observe, proverbs are non-universal but the cultural practices or moral values which they convey may abound in other cultures and could be made available for the dissemination of knowledge anywhere (3). Moreno argues that “proverbs are understood in relation to a background of assumptions and values, so they are primarily a social phenomenon” (46). Although proverbs are mainly used among the elders, they are sometimes used in interpersonal discourse by both the young and old in appropriate contexts. This context, Lamidi says, must include topic, participants, setting and subject matter (61). Moreno shares the opinion of Lamidi by saying that context is mandatory for their correct interpretation because they indirectly provide a message. They are learned through social interaction, for social purposes, and they promote social values.

Proverbs are interpretable within the cultural environment; in fact, proverbs are aspects of the socio-culture of a group of people. They constitute an interesting and informative source of folk knowledge that portrays certain cultural beliefs. They are an integral part of language; a spectacle through which a people see their culture. Tadi sums the usefulness of proverbs as follows:

As a communicative instrument, proverbs help in depicting the values, the norms, the aspirations, the likes and dislikes of the members of a society. Proverbs mirror the life of a people and guide them in their daily actions. Consequently, proverbs play an active role in the social life of a people as they advise, criticize, admonish or console one another. They help in conflict resolution, enrich the language philosophy, or reflect a people’s material and spiritual life (165).

Thus, proverbs are peculiar and unique to a people. The culture of the linguistic community plays a very important role in the use of proverbs, though some proverbs apply to all languages. In other words, some are of universal knowledge, but majority of the Urhobo proverbs are culture specific.

3. Theoretical Framework

Among the several sociolinguistic theoretical approaches, this study adopts Dell Hymes' (1972) Ethnography of communication. This is due to the relevance of Dell Hymes' acronym, SPEAKING, in accounting for such sociolinguistic variables as setting, scene, participants, ends, act sequence, instrumentality and genre in relating linguistic features to the socio-situational context. In what follows, a brief overview of the theory is presented.

As the name implies, ethnography is the description of different races and culture while communication suggests the human language, especially the spoken form. Dell Hymes' (1972) Ethnography of communication is "concerned not simply with language structure but with language use, with rules of speaking...the ways in which speakers associate particular models of speaking, topics, or message forms, with particular setting and activities" (cited in Coulthard, 30). Hymes' Ethnography of Communication accounts for participants at discourse, channels for transmitting messages, the codes, setting, genres, topics, comments generated from discourse, the events, and characters (Bello, 407). Wardhaugh (242) gives a breakdown of Hyme's Ethnography of Communication. He argues that Hyme's Ethnography of communication takes various factors that are involved in communication into cognizance. For the sake of convenience, he uses the acronym SPEAKING for the various factors he deems relevant in understanding how a particular communicative event achieves its objectives. These factors are explained below:

S- The *Setting* and *Scene* are important. The *setting* is the physical environment and time in which speech takes place while *scene* refers to the abstract setting or the cultural definition of the occasion. The setting and the scene of a linguistic event have a determining effect on it. The setting determines the type of communication that would ensue and of course the type of proverb that would be appropriate or inappropriate.

P- *Participant*. This refers to the parties involved in the communication. A market conversation will include a trader and customers, in a council of elders' meeting, the interlocutors could

involve the king and his chiefs. Again, the participants involved in a linguistic event determine the type of communication that ensues between them. For example, a child is not expected to use proverbs in conversation with an elder in Urhobo society.

E – *Ends* refer to the recognized and expected outcome of the communication. Every piece of communication has an outcome. The use of a proverb may have advice, rebuke, warning, praise, castigation or challenge as its end, just as haggling between a buyer and a seller, for instance, is targeted at out-doing each other in the bargain.

A – *Acts sequence*. This is the actual form and content of the communication. This represents the exact words used and how they are used, and how what is said relates to the present topic of discussion.

K – *Key* refers to the tone, manner, or spirit in which a message is passed across. The message could be light-hearted, humorous, precise, sarcastic, etc. The key is put into consideration when communication takes place. The key should be reflective of the topic for communication. Where the key does not match what a person is saying, people would pay attention to the key. Key here relates to the interpersonal function of language following the Hallidayan systemic functional grammatical model (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Bloor and Bloor, 2004; Eggins, 2004).

I – *Instrumentalities* as the name suggests has to do with the medium for passing the message across, and this could be written or spoken. This also refers to the form of speech used such as the language, dialect and the register that is employed, which could also be formal or informal.

N – *Norms of interaction and interpretation* refer to the specific behaviour associated with communication and how these behaviours are viewed. In other words, these are the norms or rules that govern speaking. There are norms of interaction and norms of interpretation. Norms of speaking are the specific behaviours and properties that are attached to speaking, while norms of interpretation relate to the number of interpretations to be placed on norms of interaction by someone who does not share them (Longe, 70).

G – *Genre* refers to the precise type of utterance, such as poems, proverbs, prayers, etc. Of course, the occasion determines the genre. In a festive mood, for instance, one is expected to use songs

that would reflect the mood while in a council of elders' meeting in Urhobo land, proverbs are employed to embellish speech.

As outlined above, Hymes' Ethnography of Communication shows that communication is a complex activity that requires expertise on the part of the speaker and the listener. These communication codes given by Hymes would guarantee success when applied in strict compliance. Herein lies Dell Hymes communicative competence which can "be seen to consist of factors which are non-language, a point which is often neglected by many exponents of the concept" (Longe, 10).

4. Source of data and Methodology

The data for this study are sourced from competent native speakers of Urhobo language. The speakers were observed and recorded without prompting to avoid manipulation in the natural context of use. Among the proverbs collected, fifteen are randomly selected, transcribed into written form and presented as Data 1 to Data 15 for this study. While indicating the typology of the proverbs using Adedimeji's (2003), Dell Hymes' acronym, SPEAKING is applied to analyse each proverb to reveal the context and situation of use of the proverbs. This will enhance the understanding of Urhobo proverbs in the context of English as a second language in Nigeria.

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

DATA 1

ACT SEQUENCE

URHOB0: okp̣onẹṭeyagheṇẹṭfe

ENGLISH: Big yam tubers grow despite the beetles.

ANALYSIS/MEANING: Despite the challenges and obstacles in life, one must survive.

TYPOLOGY: philosophical/analytical.

SETTING: TIME AND PLACE: in the evening, home.

SCENE: A grown up child who is finding life experiences difficult complains to the father about the challenges he is facing. The father encourages him through this proverb that despite his challenges he would be successful in life.

ADDRESSER: father.

ADDRESSEE: son.

ENDS: to encourage the son and make him believe in himself; the father wants him to see beyond the present challenges and be hopeful and have a positive outlook to life. This underscores the optimistic view of life by the Urhobos.

KEY: sober tone.

DATA 2

ACT SEQUENCE

URHOBOS: aye da rho n'ovwrovroroye, odjayeeje-ẹ.

ENGLISH: Even if a co-wife is bigger than the other, it does not stop them from choosing things.

ANALYSIS: this proverb draws from the Urhobo cultural concept of polygamy. The average Urhobo traditional man is polygamous and the position of seniority among the wives is determined by virtue of who was married into the home first. This proverb dwells on respect for position and order among the Urhobos. No matter how wealthy and strong you may be, the Urhobo culture has respect for position and age.

TPOLOGY: didactic.

SETTING: TIME AND PLACE: in the evening, at the family head's home.

SCENE: The proceeds from a sale of family land are being shared among the members of the family and there was a controversy between two members of the family about whom should be considered first.

ADDRESSER: a member of the family (male).

ADDRESSEE: the rest members of the family (all males).

ENDS: to ensure fairness and equitable distribution of the proceeds from the sale of a family land.

KEY: serious.

DATA 3

ACT SEQUENCE

URHOB0: ɔrokpogh'urher'ikokodiakpogh'uyovwirɔye

ENGLISH: he who shakes a coconut tree shakes his own head.

ANALYSIS: the coconut tree is regarded as an upright, strong and generous plant in Urhobo culture; therefore he who wants to shake (destroy) it shakes or destroys himself. It means that he who plots the downfall/evil against an upright person plots evil against himself.

TYPOLOGY: philosophical.

SETTING: TIME AND PLACE: in the afternoon, at a ceremony.

SCENE: the spokesman (ɔtota) sees a man who is adjudged upright and generous and he begins to eulogise him as a means of soliciting for cash gifts from him. In this social context, the proverb is used for praise-singing.

ADDRESSER: spokesman.

ADDRESSEE: a rich man.

ENDS: praise-singing to solicit for money.

KEY: light and cordial tone.

DATA 4

ACT SEQUENCE

URHOB0: Aye k'unedi, avwɔwhɛfɛ-ɛ.

ENGLISH: a woman are like a bunch of palm fruits, you do not wedge it on your ribs.

ANALYSIS: this proverb draws from the palm fruit collection which is a major aspect of Urhobo farming occupation. It dwells on the stubborn, loquacious, troublesome and quarrelsome nature of women. Thus, they are compared to a bunch of palm fruits. They cannot be tamed or curtailed.

TYPOLOGY: philosophical and didactic.

SETTING: TIME AND PLACE: in the evening, in an old man's house.

SCENE: the young man was involved in beating up his wife the previous day and the elderly man is mediating by telling him the nature of women.

PARTICIPANTS: ADDRESSER: an old man.

ADDRESSEE: a young man.

ENDS: to be cautious for the excesses of women cannot be curtailed, not even by beating them.

KEY: serious tone

DATA 5

ACT SEQUENCE

URHOB0: ɔrharha de ny'ikuro rho, j'omoto'vuɛɛ.

ENGLISH: If a stranger hears an old case/story, then it is a native/indigene that told them.

ANALYSIS: Every traditional Urhobo community has an old secret/story that is known only to the indigenes. It means that it is only someone who knows or has access to where something is hidden that can reveal it. The saying also reveals the fact that one's enemies are within his/her household.

TYPOLOGY: rhetorical.

SETTING: TIME AND PLACE: in the morning, at the king's palace.

SCENE: A judgment is going on about what somebody said and she is being asked how she got to know, who told her and she is denying all.

PARTICIPANTS: ADDRESSER: A member of the council of chiefs.

ADDRESSEE: the two parties involved in the judgment. (women).

ENDS: to drive home the point that the source of the "hearsay" or judgment is an insider

KEY: serious tone.

DATA 6

ACT SEQUENCE

URHOB0: uphoroɔhɔatɔreevuekikeghwruvueki.

ENGLISH: A feather picked in a market square will also get lost in a market square.

ANALYSIS: anything that is got freely goes freely. The Urhobos encourage hard work.

TYPOLOGY: didactic/rhetorical.

SETTING: TIME AND PLACE: in the afternoon, a friend's home.

SCENE: A friend complains to another about his late elder brother's children who are wasting the wealth they inherited from their father.

ADDRESSER: a man.

ADDRESSEE: his friend.

ENDS: warning, to reiterate the fact that if you do not make effort or work to achieve anything, you are bound to waste it.

KEY: reflective tone.

DATA 7

ACT SEQUENCE

URHOB0: ẹdẹshareshegoroyeoyeayero ye se oyibo.

ENGLISH: the day a wife's parent is buried by the husband is the day she will call the husband a white man.

ANALYSIS/MEANING: it is a comment on the ungrateful and unappreciative nature of women towards their husbands. Part of the Urhobo culture stipulates that the husband must do "in-law's greeting" when the parents of the wife die. This is a lavish ceremony by the husband which he often takes loans to accomplish. And it is generally assumed that no matter how bad a wife is, or no matter how useless a husband is, the wife must sing praises of him during the ceremony.

TYPOLOGY: epistemological.

SETTING: TIME AND PLACE: not specific.

SCENE: a general behaviour of women and their relation in terms of respect to their husband

ADDRESSER: a musician.

ADDRESSEE: his audience/listeners.

ENDS: to make women realize that they have been unfair to their husbands and should therefore have a change of attitude

KEY: abusive.

DATA 8

ACT SEQUENCE

URHOB0: obo ẹvweṛeseru, urhoke se ruo-o.

ENGLISH: the feat of the earthen cooking pot cannot be achieved by the mortar.

ANALYSIS: where your strength and accomplishment lie is different from where another's strength and accomplishment lie. It underscores the fact that everyone in the Urhobo society is useful because even the so-called lazy ones have their usefulness in the society and so, no one should be undermined.

TYPOLOGY: philosophical/analytic

SETTING: TIME AND PLACE: in his music.

SCENE: the two musicians were friends, now they are turned enemies. So they insult each other indirectly in their songs.

PARTICIPANTS-ADDRESSER: a musician.

ADDRESSEE: a fellow musician.

ENDS: to drive home the point that each has his/her strengths and accomplishment

KEY: boastful and challenging.

DATA 9

ACT SEQUENCE

URHOB0: ekpuromuṛerivugheṛommuṛeravwe-e.

ENGLISH: a bag that carries fish does not know the one that carries meat.

ANALYSIS: if you think you are an achiever you may not know he who has achieved more than you. Though the Urhobos are hunters and fishermen, they value animals more than fishes. This calls for caution and respect for others, for everyone has his own strength.

TYPOLOGY: didactic / rhetorical.

SETTING: TIME AND PLACE: in the afternoon, at the King's palace.

SCENE: used after observing the boastful and pompous attitude of one of the parties involved in a dispute.

ADDRESSER: a chief.

ADDRESSEE: the audience.

ENDS: to let the audience know that one should not be boastful of what one has or what one can do for no one knows the strength of others.

KEY: reflective.

DATA 10

ACT SEQUENCE

URHOB0: ɔrovwovw'erharenyɔrheivwirhi.

ENGLISH: he who blows the fire must perceive its smoke.

ANALYSIS: Smoke here in the Urhobo context has a positive connotation. It means that one must enjoy the fruit of his/her labour. After training a child or putting in your best in a certain venture, you are expected to enjoy the fruit of your labour. "Smoke" here may suggest something unpleasant in most cultures, but in Urhobo cosmology, smoke is suggestive of reward from one's labour.

TYPOLOGY: philosophical/analytic.

SETTING: TIME AND PLACE: in the afternoon, at home.

SCENE: the father receives a message from his son's friend about a certain misfortune that almost befell his son who has just finished youth service and yet to get a job.

PARTICIPANTS-ADDRESSER: father.

ADDRESSEE: a friend to his son.

ENDS: to emphasize the fact that one must enjoy the fruit of one's labour.

KEY: reflective.

DATA 11

ACT SEQUENCE

URHOB0: aye mębrareyovwine ere fefe.

ENGLISH: my wife is bad is better than an empty mat.

ANALYSIS: this Urhobo proverb is similar to the English proverbs, namely, that “half a loaf is better than no bread” and “a bird at hand is worth more than two in the bush”. The Urhobo proverb literarily means that having very little of something is better than not having anything at all. The Urhobos believe that no matter how bad a wife may be from the point of view of sexual performance or domestic duties, it is better to have one that performs badly than not to have at all.

TYPOLOGY: didactic and rhetorical.

SETTING: TIME AND PLACE: in the afternoon, at a club meeting.

SCENE: a member of the club who was elected a councillor has come to thank them for helping him during his election. While some feel that the drink and monetary donation he has made are not satisfactory, the spokesman accepts the gifts and thanks him by using the above proverb. This proverb expresses dissatisfaction and at the same time acceptance of the donations made.

PARTICIPANTS-ADDRESSER: a man in his late forties.

ADDRESSEE: to members of the same club.

ENDS: to appreciate the person who has come to make the donations.

KEY: joyful commendation.

DATA 12

ACT SEQUENCE

URHOB0: ufireęęorohwoomuo'hwovwęohęre.

ENGLISH: the trap of one's in-laws always catches one by the neck.

ANALYSIS: this proverb illustrates the Urhobo world view of a man's continual indebtedness to his in-laws. No matter your wealth and social status in the Urhobo society, you are constantly indebted to your wife's family.

TYPOLOGY: epistemological.

SETTING: TIME AND PLACE: in the evening, in a family head's house.

SCENE: a member of the family tries to reiterate a point in a family meeting why one should be grateful for what the entire family has done for him.

PARTICIPANTS-ADDRESSER: members of the family.

ADDRESSEE: other members of the family.

ENDS: to rebuke a member of the family and reiterate the fact that he should be grateful to the family

KEY: serious.

DATA 13

ACT SEQUENCE

URHOB0: ọrọgwọn'okẹreyọ, oy'uwevwı.

ENGLISH: one who wants to receive gifts must always run errands.

ANALYSIS: laziness and idleness are not encouraged in the Urhobo society. One must not always wait to be given gifts. One has to work for one's self and be independent otherwise one will not have rest as one will continue to run errands in serving others.

TYPOLOGY: didactic and rhetorical.

SETTING: TIME AND PLACE: not specific.

SCENE: the proverb is used in the context of modern society where some people would not want to work to fend for themselves but wait or depend on what they would be given. It discourages laziness and idleness

PARTICIPANTS-ADDRESSER: musician.

ADDRESSEE: his audience.

ENDS: it serves as a warning.

KEY: serious tone.

DATA 14

ACT SEQUENCE

URHOB0: ughwakarẹ wo ruruotekeipotur'oghwo-o.

ENGLISH: a thank-you-salt can never be enough for a pot of soup.

ANALYSIS: one must be able to provide for one's self, for anything borrowed can never be satisfactory in any circumstance. Hard work is encouraged. This proverb is similar in meaning and context to data 13 above.

TYPOLOGY: didactic.

SETTING: TIME AND PLACE: in the afternoon, in the elder brother's house.

SCENE: An elder brother visits home and he is advising his younger brother who lives in the village and who is over-dependent on him.

PARTICIPANTS-ADDRESSER: a man.

ADDRESSEE: his younger brother.

ENDS: to encourage him to work hard and be able to fend for himself for no matter what, gifts from people can never be enough to satisfy a man and his family.

KEY: serious and candid tone.

DATA 15

ACT SEQUENCE

URHOB0: ishavwogron'orovworo-o.

ENGLISH: an okra plant cannot be taller than its owner.

ANALYSIS: it means that no matter what, an individual cannot be greater than his entire community or family. At a lesser level, a child, however rich or wealthy, must respect and obey his parents/elders. The proverb could also mean that no matter one's social status or strength one's immediate family must be able to call one to order.

TYPOLOGY: didactic

SETTING: TIME AND PLACE: in the evening, at the family head's home.

SCENE: a member of the family who feels that he is above the entire family is being brought to book as he is made to pay fines to the family.

PARTICIPANTS-ADDRESSER: a family spokesman.

ADDRESSEE: the erring member of the family.

ENDS: to reiterate the fact that in whatever position one finds himself, one must be loyal and have respect for one's elders/family.

KEY: serious.

6. Conclusion

This study has shown the sociolinguistic link and functions of Urhobo proverbs in the context of English as a second language in Nigeria. Since proverbs are aspects of language and culture, this study has the inextricable link between Urhobo proverbs, an aspect of Urhobo language and culture in the context of English as a second language in Nigeria. Applying-Hyme's SPEAKING model has enabled us to analyse our data socio-linguistically and arrived at the meanings of Urhobo proverbs and their communicative implications. Setting and scene take care of the physical and temporal aspects of the context of use of the proverbs. That the proverbs are used in appropriate sociolinguistic contexts partly means that there is no pragmatic failure. Participants allow us to know those who use proverbs. Thus, the study reveals that children do not make use of proverb in speech, or at least when talking to elders; and women sparingly make use of proverbs. "End" enables us to understand the intentions and effects of the art sequence while "key" explains the tone which is serious in a greater percentage of the data. On typology, we can conclude from the analysis that Urhobo proverbs are more didactic and rhetorical than analytical and epistemological. The Urhobos use proverbs more to advise, warn, caution, reprimand and for persuasive purposes. This underscores the wisdom imbued in most oral forms of Urhobo cultural tradition in particular and African cultural traditions in general. However, it should be noted that proverbs are numerous and diverse; a single proverb can generate multiple functions, but the context of situation determines the function of a particular proverb (Anyanwu, 210).

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