Journal of Modern European Languages and Literature (JMEL)

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

ETHNOGRAPHY OF COMMUNICATION: THE IGBO TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE PERSPECTIVE

By

Umeodinka Aloysius U.
Department of Igbo, African & Asian Studies
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
08039563380
aloyudo@yahoo.co.uk
&
Okoye Chinenye Ll.
Department of Linguistics
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
08160620484
nenye_o@yahoo.com

Abstract

Language is the eye with which human beings see and interpret the world around them. It is the means through which people express their social group and culture. In fact, language is the property of one's speech community which sets the standards of behaviour and the appropriateness of language use for different contexts and situations. An Igbo adage says that "Okwu abụghị ịtọ kobo". That is, speech is not sold at three for one kobo. Further still, it means that the act of speaking is not easy or cheap. That is why this paper looks into the ethnography of communication: the Igbo traditional marriage perspective. That is to say, it seeks to use the case of Igbo traditional marriage to investigate and analyse the speaking codes and norms specified for the Igbo people by their speech community as a means of judging situational appropriateness. This write up relies on Hymes (1962) proposal of an "Ethnography of Speaking" as it reflects in the case of Igbo traditional marriage to bring out the conformity or otherwise to the generally acceptable contexts of language use. The paper also seeks to establish to what degree the application of Hyme's paradigm is workable in the Igbo traditional marriage. At the end, the paper is able to establish not only that Hyme's proposal has some flaws in the area of events sequence or procedural order but also that the Igbo speaking norms with regard to traditional marriage is scarcely in danger, as it is preserved by each kindred's consistent effort to ensure that only relations versed in marriage matters represent or speak for them during such occasions.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a means of communication that transcends all aspects of human existence. There is no conceivable human activity where language is not used. Language is a social process which occurs within the context of human interaction. Language is the concretization of a body of knowledge, rules, feelings, ideas and thought through sound.

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

According to Wilson (1989:7), communication is "the process by which individuals share information, ideas and attitudes". The word "share" implies that the origin of the information (source) and participant (decoder) are both involved in the process, in order to ensure that they arrive at an understanding. Communication is important for the social, political, economic and cultural co-existence of people in any society. Even at that, culture, the people's way of life and value system, finds in language the vehicle for its spread and identification.

This spread of culture and identity through language is a skilled work which reveals any native speakers' communicative competence. Of course, any time – tested and proved native speaker of any language is supposed to know when to address somebody by his/her title, personal name or surname. It is the society or speech community that sets the standards of linguistic behaviour. Agbedo (2000:172), agrees with this in his statement that "…the social structure may influence or determine linguistic form/or behaviour.

Our concern here is to treat the Ethnography of communication from the angle of Igbo traditional marriage. But prior to that, we need to explain the meaning of Ethnography of communication.

Ethnography of communication or speaking looks at the analysis of language use as it has to do with its socio-cultural setting. In the words of Wardhaugh (2006:247), "An Ethnography of a communicative event is a description of all factors that are relevant in understanding how that particular communicative event achieves its objectives".

That is to say, our business in this paper is to examine the communicative event of traditional marriage in the Igbo community to see how the central target behind it is realized. Our investigative bent is to see how communication is patterned and organized within the unit of traditional marriage in the speech community of the Igbo people. This involves exploring into the social and cultural variables which influence communication (Finch:2000).

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

We want to unmask the Igbo language code to expose what people, participants or role players should say and to whom, and how to say it appropriately in any given speech event in the traditional marriage.

Our concern also resides with who may or may not speak in certain settings, when to speak or keep mute, whom one may speak to and how to speak to people of varying character and roles. We shall not skip the communicative occasions of non-verbal behaviour.

In all these, our theoretical framework will first be established to be our compass, after we have done the review of related literature. Then, our analysis will follow as teleguided by Hyme's (1962) SPEAKING paradigm. By the time we draw the curtain of this write-up, it will have become very clear as to how much our use of participant observation and experience has been most reliable, with the highest veracity capacity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Saussure (1959), it was, who sparked off the fire with which we are looking for the theoretical basis for this work on Ethnography of communication. It is to him that we owe the origin of "langue" and "parole".

To him, "langue" is the language system or the total sum up of all the language rules that exist in the memories of all the users of language. It is the accumulation of the word – images which nature has stored in the minds of all individuals. On the other hand, "parole" is the concretized or demonstrated act of speaking by any individual. It is the act of speaking as it is carried out in a changing society at a particular time and space (Crystal:1995).

Analogous to Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of 'langue" and "parole", Noam Chomsky (1965) came up with the linguistic theory that brought up competence and performance, respectively. By competence, he refers to speaker's knowledge of their language, whereas performance has to do with language as spoken or actualized in contexts or in some given situations. The situation could

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

be an event, a place, a speech community, in an occasion which could impose or place some demands on the speaker.

Placing a demand on a speaker has the implication of a test of his communicative competence. Yes, because speech is a skilled work (Hudson, 1981). If speech is a skilled work, then it is a skilled performance. And if it is a skilled performance, then it is analogues to such skills as driving. Some people are better drivers than others. In the same way, some people are better at using speech appropriately in social, cultural or other contexts than others. This, no doubt, underscores the importance of communicative competence.

Ndimele (1999) sees communicative competence to comprise not only language knowledge, but also the appropriateness of use in any given linguistic situation. This broadened view is very important especially when we consider the also widened use of language in any speech community. There is no doubt that a person is often well appreciated if he or she uses language well in any given community. It shows that the person understands the values, attitudinal expectations contexts, and the cultures of his people.

It is against this background that we hereby want to use events of Igbo traditional marriage to see if it could prove a one hundred percent compliance or workability with the formula or otherwise. It is also our research drive through this theory to know whether its application would help the Igbo speech community to negotiate, construct and convey social meaning, as well as accomplish socio-cultural order.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Hudson (1981:1) defines sociolinguiustics as "the study of language in relation to society". Ndukwe (1997:1) as quoted by Agbedo (2000:169) says that:

> *…Sociolinguistics is the branch of linguistics that endeavours to study the significant aspects of relationship between language and society. The goal of this study is a better understanding of the structure of language and how it functions in communication in society…*

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

From these definitions, it is clear that communication is a social activity, and if it is so, then speech, the "shorter or longer strings of linguistic items used on particular occasions or particular purpose" (Hudson, 1981:106), is also social. Speech is not only social, but is owned by the society and the speech community of any speaker. That is why when one speaks, such a person reflects the value systems, culture, thoughts, feelings and social styles of his/her speech community.

The speech community joins hands with the society or social group to place some constraints on the speaker. The extent any native speaker knows these constraints, obeys or flouts them will go a long way to show not his linguistic competence, but his communicative competence. Lending some backing to this view, Agbedo (2000:173) says that:

> *…the sociolinguists are as concerned with the linguistic competence of the speaker as the communicative competence i.e. his ability to discern the appropriateness of these acceptable sentences in practical day to day communication activity. In other words, it is not enough to master the rules operating in a language, the knowledge of the use of these rules in generating acceptable sentences in appropriate situations or context is also an essential prerequisite.*

It is in line with this need for communicative competence that this paper is set to survey the Ethnography of communication: the Igbo traditional marriage perspective. From Google Internet's Wikipedia, Ethnography of communication studies, according to Hindolf and Taylor (2002:45), "produce highly detailed analysis of communication codes and their moment-to-moment functions in various contexts. In these analyses, speech communities are constituted in local and continuous performances of cultural and moral matters".

Going through an article contribution in the Wikipedia titled An Ethnographic Analysis of Igbo Greetings, the matter of the significance of communicative competence will be seen very clearly thus:

> *…Igbo society can be characterized as a loquacious culture, one in which "talk" is not only expected, but always takes place, unless there are attenuating circumstances warranting its absence. Thus, it is rare, to find two Igbo people with any degree of acquaintance passing each other by without exchanging some form of greetings.*

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

> *Greetings which are solely phatic in function are exchanged even with total strangers. The prevalence of greeting makes its absence in situations where it is expected to occur, something that requires an explanation. As Okolo (1990:96) shows, not greeting, or even greeting in culturally inappropriate ways, can lead to a negative assessment of a person's character. Such a person is regarded as either "proud" or "not a good person". It can also be said of him/her that "na azụrụ ya azụ" (he/she is not properly socialized).*

It is not only in greeting in Igbo society that communicative competence or ethnography of communication becomes a central issue. It also obtains in the Igbo traditional marriage, burial ceremonies, naming ceremonies, buying and selling processes in the market, paying condolence visits, breaking of kola nuts, etc. According to Finch (2000:222):

> *All societies have their own rules, or conventions, about how language should be used in social interaction. There are rules about how to address someone – title, first name, or surname and rules about degrees of politeness and deference. Knowing these conventions is important in interpreting human behaviour and understanding correctly the significance of what is said to us.*

This view goes to support the need for a set of rules or guide to ensure compliance to socio-cultural speaking norms. Ethnography of communication in its diversity also takes into consideration the assortments of extra-linguistic variables such as contact, code, tenor and context, all of which have the capacity to control speech events and try to construct standards which will dominate or govern the interaction of human beings.

All we are laboring to stress here is that each community has its own variety of language code and ways of speaking which its members can choose from. This pool of varieties makes up the communicative repertoire of all members of that community. In a community, the means of communication could be different languages, different regional and social dialect of one or more of the languages, different registers, etc. (Saville – Troike: 1982).

Whatever and whichever it may be, the important thing is for the speaker to be able to select the code and the strategy of interaction to be used in any specific context. Having a good

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

understanding and mastery of the alternatives and being able to pick the most suitable option among them in any given situation will form part of the communicative competence of the speaker. And this is of paramount importance in ethnography of communication.

ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATIVE EVENTS

Being the critical area of this study, we hereby take off with the use of the case of Igbo traditional marriage, the Umuchu town version, with the communicative events streamlined to see how they fit or match as perfectly and correspondingly as possible into Hyme's "Ethnography of speaking" formular.

Setting/Situation

Setting has to do with the physical place and time and season of the event, arrangement of the place as it will suit the occasion/event. Different places will suit different occasions. The type of occasion will determine the place it will be staged; the setting may be formal or informal.

The act of looking for a wife (ịchọ nwanyị) does not need a fixed setting as it entails varied movement on part of the people making the enquires. The first process with a fixed setting is Knocking on the Door (ịkụ aka n'ụzọ) in Umuchu dialect which we are using for the case study. This process is called ịgbanye ihe. The setting is usually in the girl's father's house especially the sitting room during the evening, according to mutual agreement.

The first phase of the wine carrying is mmanya izu n'atọ, usually done at the girl's father's compound during the evening. It is usually done any day except Nkwọ day, the market day of the community.

After the wine carrying, the bride-to-be the follows the groom-to-be (the suitor) back to his house where she will have to stay for four market days (i.e. 12 days). This process, known as Ije Nleta is a familiarization visit. She will be escorted back to her father's house by her husband-to-be and his brothers.

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

The next setting is the traditional marriage proper (the wine carrying or ịgba nkwụ or mmanya ịkpọrọ nwanyị, which normally goes pari passu with the payment of the bride price, ime ego nwanyị. The payment of the bride is done earlier the same day before the traditional wedding or marriage. The setting is in one of the rooms in the bride father's house, the seat arrangement is for about eight persons, four people from each side.

For the wine carrying proper, a large space is usually cleared in the compound for the devent; seating arrangement is made for between 150 to 500people from both sides of the celebrants. There is a special seating arrangement made for the kindred from both the bride and bridegroom's side normally covered with tarpaulin to shield them from rain or sunshine.

Participants (P)

Participants has to do with the people who take part in the event under study. Looking or searching for a wife (Ịjụ ajụjụ nwaanyị) involves many people like adult close friends, parents, trusted cousins, uncles and aunts. The participants would be male or female, of Igbo origin.

The knocking on the door (ịkụ aka n'ụzọ) is a matter for not more than four adult uncles or brothers from the suitors place, who will meet and introduce the matter to about the same number of male adults from the bride-to-be's family. It is not out of place for one or two women to be participate from either side. A go-etween (nwandu ụzọ) is always involved. Ịgba mmanya ime ụlọ involves the adult members of the immediate kindred; about 15 persons from each side participates, both male and female. The next stage which is ije nlete or ije mara ala, the bride-to-be is accompanied by about 3 girls from her family or kindred. Ịgbankwụ and ime ego happen the same day.

The bride price involves about 4 experienced adults each from both sides, all males. For the wine carrying, participants would be both male and female, old and young, relations, friends, well wishers from far and near, from within and outside the community; all of them participate in this special event.

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

Participants in iji mmanya gosi onye bụ di ya (using palm wine to show who the husband is) involves the father or the uncle or the eldest brother as the case may be that will give wine to the bride-to-be and the bride groom. Musicians and different dancing groups participate, especially when the girl identifies her husband at times with close female relations as escorts, about two or three girls; sometimes she may go alone.

Ends (E)

The ENDS signifies the outcome and goal of the event. The goal of ịjụ ajụjụ nwanyị is to find a suitable girl as a wife for the bride. The bride groom's goal is to live up to his responsibility as a man, and for the girl it is for her to manifest her maturity and responsibility as a married woman that is no longer simple. For the parents, the goal is for their daughter to be settled in her husband's home to show that they are responsible parents having guided their children to do their culturally assigned duties as mature man and woman.

The goal for the knocking on the door (ịgbanye ihe or ịkụ aka n'ụzọ) is to seek for acceptance of the suitor as a qualified potential husband. For the bride-to-be's parents, it is the joy of knowing that their daughter is now qualified for marriage and she is now being sought after. As for mmanya izu atọ (first phase of wine carrying), the suitor and his few kindred members' goal is to prove their serious intention to marry the bride-to-be. The outcome is that the girl's parents will now also take them more seriously and they can now proudly say that their daughter is truly getting married.

Another side of the outcome is that for the first time, to the pride of her parents, their daughter would leave their parental home to go and know the new home that will be hers.

Such also is the end result for the suitor and his relations. The same pride for both sides is the case on the final wine carrying (ịgba nkwụ or ịgba mmanya ịkpọrọ nwaanyị) day. It excites the parents and relations that their daughter is about to leave for her new home. The pride of the husband and

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

his relations is that he or their son is now a fully responsible man that like other men now has a wife; a life partner.

Act Sequence (A)

Act sequence involves the actual form or content or the exact words used in the occasion, including how they are used appropriately. During the knocking-on-the-door (ịkụ aka n'ụzọ or ịgbanye ihe) some coded statements are usually made by the suitor's spokesman to the father of the girl and perhaps his brothers he has invited to come and witness the introduction.

In the prayer time, during the breaking of kola nut, girl's father or the eldest who breaks the kola nut could, among other things say "Ije unu bịara be anyị ga-abụ ije mmiri, ọbụghị ije nkụ". That is, your visit to our house should be likened to fetching water from the stream and not fetching firewood from the bush. Then, the suitor's spokes man could take his turn and introduce their mission with some figures of speech, such as: "O nwere ụdara anyị hụrụ chara na be gị, anyị bịara ịjụ ase ya" (there is a ripe apple we saw in your house which we have come to inquire or ask about). The spokes man may use another version: o nwere ewu anyị hụrụ gbamatara na be gị, anyị wee bịa ka anyị mara ma ọ bụ nke gị (there is a goat that we saw running into your compound which we have come to inquire or ask if it is your own). All these words allude to a beautiful girl they have seen and want to marry her.

Another occasion for the use of words is during the first phase of wine carrying (mmanya ime ụlọ) when another set of prayers is involved. Prayers are said in the same breaking of kola nut during the final wine carryng ceremony (mmanya ịkpọrọ nwaanyị or ịgba nkwụ). The prayer are said in turns and this is done by one eldest man each from either side, or as the case may be, the father of the bride. A sample of such prayers is this:

"Onye wetere ọjị were ndụ
(He who brings kola brings life)
Omenala ka anyị ga-eme,
Ọ bụghị omenelu

JMEL January 2016. All Rights Reserved.| http://www.jmel.com.ng |

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

(we shall do the custom of our land not that of those living above the land)
Ọfọ ndụ ka anyị na-agọ
(our prayer is prayer for life)
Ọ ga-adịrị nwoke mma, dịrị nwanyị mma
(It will be well for both males and females)
Ọfọ ndụ anyị na nke ndị ọgọ anyị
(our prayer is for our life and those of our in-laws; we pray for everybody's life)
Egbe bere ugo bere, ndụ mmiri, ndụ azụ
(Let the kite perch and the eagle also)
Ekpere anyị bụ ekpere ọmụmụ nwoke na ọmụmụ nwaanyị
Our prayer (for the couple is to give birth to both male & female children)
Ngụ onye ji eko ya akọkwana ya
(whatever anyone uses to earn his/her livelihood should not get spoilt)
Ike abụọ bụ nkụkọ nkụkọ, onye akụgbuna ibe ya
(The two buttocks should be hitting themselves but not harm each other)
Elu tara ọjị ma ala tara ọjị
(let the heavens and earth eat kola nut)
Ka anyị taa ọjị a n'ibe ka Chineke taa ya n'ogbe
(let us chew this kola nut in pieces while God chews it wholesomely)
Eke, orie, afọ na nkwọ tara ọjị
(Let the four Igbo market days each eat kola)
Ndị ọgọ anyị, ụkwụ unu jiri bịa ka unu ga-eji la
(our in-laws, you will go home as safely as you have come)
Ka di na nwunye taa ọjị a, tata ọmụmụ eke, na ọmụmụ orie, tata ihe akụ akụ, ihe enwe enwe
(Let's eat this kola and eat life there from and use the life to serve God)
At each stanza, people will be chorusing "ise", which is "amen"
Then each eldest male whose right it is to break the kola nut will break his own kola after prayers and say how many pieces the kola nut has naturally broken into.

Key (K)

Key means the tone, manner or the spirit in which the message is rendered. It also could mean what is used (whether idioms, parables, proverbs etc) to achieve the aim or purpose.

The message of ịjụ ajụjụ nwaanyị (making inquiry) is always lovingly delivered. That of ịgbanye ihe or ịkụ aka n'ụzọ (knocking on the door) is always in a light-hearted manner, mixed with a tone of seriousness. In order to achieve their aim in this knocking on the door, the suitor's spokesman describes the girl they want to marry in a metaphorical language, calling her "ụdara mma ha hụrụ na be ya" (the beautiful apple they saw in his compound). During the ije nlete or ije mara ala (the

JMEL January 2016. All Rights Reserved.| http://www.jmel.com.ng |

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

intervisitation) in which the bride visits the groom's place to stay for about 12 market days, the relations of the groom give her gifts, show her love, tell her nice stories, give her money, and call her different beautiful names like Adamma, (beautiful daughter), nwunye anyị (our wife), oriakụ Joseph (eater of Joseph's (husband's) wealth), etc. All these are good, complimentary names and will serve as the KEY to make her accept to be married by their brother. The same purpose is served with the beautiful, expensive new clothing that will be bought for her for the wine carrying occasion and the dance group that is hired to entertain people at the occasion. Proverbs, metaphors and other figures of speech are used where necessary.

Instrumentalities (I)

This refers to the choice of channel, whether oral, written or telegraphic. It also makes reference to the actual form of speech used. There is nothing written about Igbo traditional marriage except the list of items, including gallons of wine, which the suitor will be required to provide as prerequisites for the wine carrying ceremony to be allowed to hold. Every other thing is orally delivered. From the inquiry to knocking on the door, to mmanya ime ụlọ, intevisitation and final wine carrying (ịgba nkwụ), it is oral delivery throughout. Even the bride's co-kindred spinsters' dance on the wine carrying day is the climax of the oral delivery using Umuchu dialect. The dialect used is predominantly that of Umuchu speech community. In most cases, the local dialects used are a mixture of that of the suitor's and bride's speech communities, but the latter always dominates, especially during wine carrying.

Norms (N)

Norms have to do with the specific behaviour and properties that go with speaking especially as it may be viewed by somebody who does not share those behaviours and properties. It refers to the imperatives and norms in the language of the people being spoken to. It is the section of what is permitted or not permitted, what should be done and what should not.

In Igbo traditional marriage, women do not speak publicly, but their demands are included in the list of prerequisite items or provisions for the suitor to fulfill. In the olden days, there used to be

JMEL January 2016. All Rights Reserved.| http://www.jmel.com.ng |

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

no courtship before marriage in Igbo; instead, inquiries are made by trusted and highly regarded uncles, aunts or the father of the groom-to-be.

During the payment of the bride price, silence is the mode of communication. The negotiation and pricing are done with broom sticks. Between the suitors and their in-laws, subtraction and addition are done with the broomsticks until a point of equilibrium is reached between both parties.

In the stage of knocking on the door (ịkụ aka n'ụzọ or ịgbanye ihe), a coconut must be included in the things the suitor would buy and give the girl as first presents. The coconut is a symbol of colonization of the girl by the suitor so that any intending suitor should stay clear of her. That is why it is called ịgbanye ihe (tying something on the bride-to-be's hand); a kind of engagement. It shows that she is already owned by somebody.

It is a norm in Igbo land during the wine carrying ceremony that the main way the bride will publicly show who is her actual husband is by the exchange of drink in a cup which she would sip a little and then trace her husband to give him to drink.

In most cases in the Igbo speech community, traditional marriage occasions are never held anywhere in the morning time, except in the evening time. Morning time is generally regarded as time for work and industry and not time for merriment.

Genre (G)

Genre is concerned with the clearly isolated types of utterances associated with the communitive events. It includes riddles, prayers, proverbs, sermons, etc. The issue of proverbs has been treated in ACTS SEQUENCE. In addition to this, various pockets of jokes and conversations occur informally among different groups of people that have attended the occasion.

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

In similar fashion, greetings are exchanged by different individuals, because such a gathering always constitutes occasions for re-union of friends long separated by distance.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

So far, we have been using the eyes of sociolinguistics from the perspective of ethnography of communication, with the instrumentality of the case of Igbo traditional marriage to ascertain the universal applicability or workability of Hyme's "ethnography of speaking" proposal as a proof of the communicative competence manifestation of the Igbo speech community.

Our study, no doubt, has made it clear that the Igbo community has its own cultural values about speaking and it is on the basis of this that we judge or weigh situational appropriateness.

Also, that the knowledge or understanding of the local cultural patterns and norms is very important before one would do any analysis and interpretation of the appropriateness of speech acts within the Igbo speech community. These speech acts, the proof that speaking is a "skilled work", are embedded for example, in the communicative events of the Igbo traditional marriage. This has been shown by our matching and sensitivity to Hyme's ethnography of speaking proposal.

It is obvious that this paradigm has helped us to identify speech events as the basic units of analysis, and accounting for speaker-hearer knowledge not only of the Igbo language code, but also what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately I any given situation. That is, the communicative competence.

All these notwithstanding, we have discovered that Hyme's (1962) ethnography of speaking paradigm is beset with some flaws. It is a woeful failure in the area of events sequence, chronology or procedural order.

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

By this, we mean that doing the Igbo traditional marriage communicative event analysis with Hyme's formular distorts and disorganizes the story-like smooth and connected procedural flow of the events or activities. This Hyme's proposal's lack of chronological flow contradicts the views of Lindlof and Taylor (2002:44) that "Ethnography of communication conceptualizes communication as a continuous flow of information rather than as a segmented exchange of massages". That is to say, rigid compliance with the proposal renders the whole long – existing smooth flowing traditional marriage as a disjointed stretch of events. For example, one is no longer able to see very clearly how the inquiry for a wife is followed by knocking on the door of the bride's parents before first phase of wine carrying is succeeded by inter-visitation of the groom's place by the bride before the logical payment of the bride price leading to the final wine carrying after which the bride follows the husband home amidst the symbolic sobbing and weeping that signal the conclusion of the process of the traditional marriage.

Not only that, sticking to the proposal exposes its shortcoming of not allowing any provision for the explanation of some terms and the reasons why certain things are done or called what they are called in the Igbo traditional marriage. For instance, there is no room to explain that mmanya ime ụlọ means wine carrying for those inside the house. That is, wine carrying for only members of the nuclear family, in the sense of stronger affinity or blood relation than the general wine carrying which is for all and sundry.

The rigidity of the proposal leaves also no room to explain that "ịgbanye ihe" (tying something to the bride's hand) means giving a coconut to the girl during knocking on the door as a sign of colonization – a semblance of the modern time engagement ring.

The last discovered drawback of Hyme's "ethnography of speaking" proposal is that it is a mere acronym that stands for an attempted summary of generally observed communicative events of any speech community. Being not detailed, it means that the proposal either excludes or it trivializes some rather valued aspects of the events. This is not salutary, because every facet of the communicative events is very significant to the particular speech community.

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

All said and done, Hyme's proposal is commendable for providing us a yardstick to measure when speaking is right and when it has gone wrong because of the existence of better speakers and poorer speakers. If not for anything, it has shown how Igbo language use with traditional marriage not only reflects, but also to a significant extent accomplishes social order.

However, this does not obviate the fact that the "ethnography of speaking" paradigm of Dell Hymes leaves much to be desired especially as it cannot be used for cross linguistic generality.

Vol. 5 January 2016 ISSN: 978-978-48450-4-5 (Online & Print)

References

Agbedo, C. U. (2000). General *Linguistics*: *An Introductory Reader*. Nsukka: ACE Resources Konsult.

Agbedo, C. U. (2001). *Linguistic Variation and Change in Igbo: A Qualitative Approach*. Nsukka: ACE Resources Konsult.

Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Crystal, D. (1995). *The Cambridge Ecyclopedia of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ethnography of Communication. Retrieved from www.wikipedia.com the free encyclopedia, on 05/09/2010, by 2m.

Finch, G. (2000). *Linguistic Term and Concepts Hampshire*. Macmillian Distribution Limited.

Hudson, R. A. (1981). *Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hymes, D. (1972). "On Communication Competence". In J. B. Pride and J. Holmes (eds). Sociolinguistics: Select Readings. Harmonds Worth, Penguim.

Iroegbu, P. (2007). *Stages, Strategies and Symbolism of Traditional marriage in a Changing Igbo Society*: Retrieved from www.kwenu.com, on 06/09/2010 by 4pm.

Lindolf, T. R. and Taylor, B. C. (2nd ed.) (2002). *Qualitative Communication of Research Methods*. Sage: Thousand Oaks.

Onuigbo, G. N. (1993). *An Ethnographic Analysis of Igbo Greeting*. African Languages and Cultures, Vol. 6, No. 1 pp. 37-48.

Retrieved from www.kwenu.com on 12/09/2010.

Rubben, B. (1984). *Communication and Human Behaviour*. New York: Macmillan.

Saussure, F. de (1959). *Courses in General Linguistics*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Savile-Troike, M. (1982). *The Ethnography of Communication: An Introduction*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Wordhaugh, R. (2006). *An introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.