

**LANGUAGE USE IN AGE GRADE SYSTEM  
USING URHEHUE COMMUNITY AS A CASE STUDY**

**Eloghosa Faith JEGEDE (Miss)  
ART1801526**

**DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS STUDIES  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN  
BENIN CITY, NIGERIA**

**AUGUST 2023**

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**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
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LINGUISTICS STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

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## CERTIFICATION

I, Eloghosa Faith Jegede an undergraduate student in the Department of Linguistic Studies of the University of Benin, with the matriculation number ART1801526 have completed the requirements for course work and research for Bachelors of Art Degree Linguistics.

The work embodied in this project is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other degree or diploma programme of this or any other University or Institution.

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Eloghosa Faith Jegede  
The Author  
Date

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DR. WILLIAM AIGEDO  
**Project Supervisor**

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DR. M.S AGBO  
**Head of Department**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to God Almighty for his ever sufficient grace toward me and for the gift of life.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I express my deepest gratitude to God Almighty for His boundless love in my life. I would like to acknowledge Mr. and Mrs. Peter Edo Okaeben for their unwavering support. In particular, Mrs. Laura Edo Okaeben, your presence in my life has been a divine blessing.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Language is a complex, multifaceted communication system that enables humans to express thoughts, ideas, emotions, and information. It is a fundamental aspect of human culture and society, facilitating interaction, knowledge sharing, and meaning conveyance. This study examines the use of language across different age groups. Language plays a pivotal role in the age-grade system as it serves as a means of communication and identity among its members. This includes aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, speech patterns, and discourse. The theoretical framework utilized in this study is the speech act theory (1962) which characterizes the distinct communication styles into different speech act. A crucial element of language use within this system is understanding the specialized terminologies or jargons unique to each age group. Qualitative data analysis was employed, highlighting the significant role language plays among various age demographics. In this research, ten participants were interviewed, ranging in age from 40 to 80 years old. The preferred language for the age-grading system in Urhehue is Edo,

the indigenous language of the Orhionmwon community. This system is a traditional social structure where individuals are categorized into different age groups based on their year of birth. These age groups serve as social units and play a crucial role in many facets of community life.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

This project gives an insight of language use by age grade systems in Urhehue community. The functions of different age grades in Urhehue community, the language used by different age grade, how members are initiated into different age grades, and the figurative expressions used by different age grades.

Age grade system is a social organization system that is based on age groups. It is a way of grouping individuals into categories based on their age, and it is used in many different cultures around the world. The age grade system has been studied and defined by various scholars in different ways.

According to Pritchard (1940) "Nuer" the age grade system is a "system of social organization based on the age of the members, which determines their status, rights, and duties." This means that

individuals are grouped into different age grades, and each grade has its own set of responsibilities and privileges. Ogbu (1978) "Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective," age grade system refers to a social organization where individuals are grouped into categories based on their age and progress through different stages of life together

Mead (1928) "Coming of Age in Samoa" describes age grade system as a social organization where individuals are grouped according to their age and gender, and are expected to fulfill certain roles and responsibilities within their community.

Nadel (1942) "A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria" defines age grade system as a social organization where individuals are grouped based on their age and gender, and progress through various stages of life together while fulfilling specific roles and responsibilities. Language use and age grade system refers to how language is used by different age grades, the system is based on the idea that language is used according to different age grades, this

project intends to address the age grade system in Urhehue. One of the age grades practiced in Urhehue is Emwinrobavbo. This age grade consists of individuals between the age of 12 to 18 years and the language used by the Emwinrobavbo cannot be used by the Iroghae.

### **1.1 Statement of Problem**

Language use varies according to different linguistic fields such as the Medical field, legal field, educational field, etc. The language used by these various fields is constantly used and studied in our day-to-day communication because of its significance in our social life but little or no research has been done on the language used by different age grades in our various communities. This work tends to simplify the peculiarities of language used by different age grades

### **1.2 Research Questions**

1. What are the languages used by different age grades?
2. What is the significance of language use in ritual ceremonies?
3. What are the figurative expressions used by different age grades?

### **1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aims and objectives of this study is to highlight and fully explain the following:

1. Language used by different age grade.
2. The significance of language use in ritual ceremonies.
3. Figurative expressions used by different age grades.

### **1.4 Methodology**

During the research, the primary research method was used. Information was gathered through self-conducted research including surveys, interviews, observation, and statistical analysis to better understand the people, society, and culture. In this research, I applied the participant observation method where I interviewed some members of the Urhehue community, members between the ages of 40 to 80years.

## **1.5 Orhionmwon community**

Orhionmwon Local Government Area of Edo State is considered one of the biggest Local Government Area among those in Benin City. It comprises towns and communities such as Idumodin, Ottah, Okuor, Edummungba, Egbhuru, Egbokor, Ute - Oheze, Ugo, Urhonigbe, Igbanke, Iru egbede, Evbobanosa, Oza, Ogan, Uson, Oloten, Obagie NOheze, Idumiru, Idumwebo, Numagbae, Ugokoniro, Ukpatu, Igbekhue, iguehanza, Obozogbe-niro and Obi. The local government came about as an aftermath in the creation of the defunct Language use and age grade. One of the key elements of the cultural heritage of the Orhionwon community is their traditional religion and spiritual beliefs. The community practices a form of traditional African religion, which involves the worship of various deities and ancestral spirits. These beliefs are deeply ingrained in the daily lives of the people and play a significant role in their cultural practices.

Another important aspect of the cultural heritage of the Orhionwon community is their traditional music and dance. Music and dance are

integral parts of their social gatherings, ceremonies, and festivals. The community has a rich musical tradition, with various types of instruments such as drums, flutes, and gongs being used to create rhythmic melodies. Traditional dances are performed during special occasions to celebrate harvests, weddings, and other significant events.

Oral tradition and storytelling also hold great importance in preserving the cultural heritage of the Orhionwon community. Elders pass down knowledge, history, and moral lessons through oral narratives. These stories often revolve around mythical figures, historical events, and moral teachings. They serve as a means of educating younger generations about their roots and instilling cultural values.

Visual arts and crafts are another significant aspect of the cultural heritage of the Orhionwon community. Skilled artisans create intricate wood carvings, pottery, beadwork, and textiles that reflect their cultural identity. These artistic expressions often depict scenes from folklore, religious beliefs, or everyday life.

Festivals play a vital role in showcasing and celebrating the cultural heritage of the Orhionwon community. One notable festival is the Igue Festival, which is held annually to honor the ancestral spirits and seek their blessings for the community. During this festival, the Oba (traditional ruler) performs various rituals and ceremonies, accompanied by music, dance, and colorful traditional attire.

Traditional cuisine is also an essential part of the cultural heritage of the Orhionwon community. The community has a diverse range of traditional dishes that are prepared using local ingredients. Some popular dishes include pounded yam with egusi soup, banga soup, and ukodo (a yam-based porridge).

**Subsistence Hunting:** Hunting traditionally served as a method for communities to secure food. Local hunters would explore nearby forests and grasslands to hunt animals such as antelopes, wild boars, monkeys, and birds. The meat from these animals supplemented the community's diet.

## **Urhehue Village**

Urhehue boasts a robust hunting tradition and is often referred to as the Hunter's village

**Traditional Hunting Techniques:** Generations passed down traditional hunting techniques. These methods typically involved the use of bows and arrows, traps, and snares. Hunters have profound knowledge of local flora and fauna, which aids them in tracking animals and predicting their movements. Hunting often holds cultural significance, being associated with myths, legends, and rituals. Certain animals may be spiritually significant or associated with specific deities. Rituals and ceremonies related to hunting might be performed to ensure success and safety during hunts. Hunting requires a variety of skills beyond simply tracking and killing animals. Knowledge of the terrain, animal behavior, and survival techniques are essential for hunters. Additionally, they needed to be proficient in preparing meat and hides for consumption and utilization.

**Social and Economic Aspects:** Hunting activities often were communal events, with groups of hunters working together to track and capture animals. Successful hunts could reinforce social ties within the community. Moreover,

animal hides and other materials acquired from hunting might have been used for trade or crafting handicrafts. Modern Changes: Due to urbanization and lifestyle changes, hunting practices in some regions have experienced a decline. Communities may increasingly depend on commercial sources for meat, potentially leading to less involvement from younger generations in traditional hunting activities.

## **1.6 Significance of Study**

The age grade system is a social structure that categorizes individuals into groups based on their age. This system is prevalent in many traditional societies, particularly in Africa, where it plays a significant role in shaping social relationships and interactions. The age grade system is often used to organize communal activities such as farming, hunting, and warfare. It also serves as a means of social control, as individuals are expected to conform to the norms and values of their respective age grades.

The age grade system impacts language use. In many traditional societies, language use is closely tied to age grade membership. Each

age grade has its own unique language style and vocabulary which is used to communicate with other members of the same age grade.

This project emphasizes the significance of the language used by different age grades, which has been neglected in our studies due to its lack of use in our day to day activities and how they are used by different age grades

Aside the vocabulary of medical field, educational field etc, which is used by different individuals, emphasis would be laid on the vocabulary used by different age grades.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the course of my study, I discovered that there has been very little to no research on the related topic of "language use in age grade system" Although several academics have conducted numerous studies on the age grade system, it is crucial to understand that we cannot discuss the age grade system without discussing how language is used by the various age grades, as language use both defines and distinguishes each age grade from the others.

This chapter examines pertinent material that has been written by academics who have done in-depth research in this area of study. This chapter is divided into four parts. The first represents a review of related literature reviews; the second is empirical studies; the third focuses on the present study; and the fourth centers a on theoretical framework.

## **2.1 Conceptual Review of Literature**

Mbiti (1969). *African Religions and Philosophy*. Mbiti describes the age grade system as a form of social organization found in many African societies. He explains that age sets or grades are formed at

specific intervals, usually every seven or eight years, and individuals progress through these grades as they grow older. Each grade has its own set of responsibilities, duties, and privileges within the community.

Fortes & Pritchard (1940) *African Political Systems*. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard discuss the age grade system as an integral part of the political structure in African societies. They argue that age grades serve as a means of social control and cohesion, as well as a mechanism for the transmission of cultural values and traditions from one generation to another.

Nadel (1954) *The Foundations of Social Anthropology*. Nadel provides an in-depth analysis of the age grade system in his book. He defines it as a system where individuals' progress through different stages or grades based on their age. Nadel emphasizes that these grades are not only based on chronological age but also on initiation rituals and other cultural practices.

Turner (1957) *Schism and Continuity in an African Society*. Turner explores the age grade system among the Ndembu people of Zambia.

He argues that age grades play a crucial role in maintaining social order and resolving conflicts within the community. Turner also highlights the significance of initiation ceremonies and rituals in marking the transition from one age grade to another.

Coleman (1958). *Nigerian Political Parties*: Coleman examines the age grade system in Nigeria and its influence on political organization. He explains that age grades serve as a basis for political mobilization and collective action, as individuals within the same grade often form alliances and support specific political parties or candidates.

Adeleke. (2019). *Age, Generation, and Time: The Dynamics of Social Change in Africa*," discusses the age grade system as a mechanism for socialization and cultural transmission. He argues that age grades serve as important units for organizing social activities, maintaining traditions, and passing down cultural knowledge from one generation to another

Toyin Falola (2018). *African History: A Very Short Introduction*. describes the age grade system as a form of social stratification based on age cohorts. He explains that individuals within the same age grade

are expected to share common experiences, responsibilities, and privileges, which contribute to their identity formation and integration into society

Ifi (2017).in *Reinventing Africa Matriarchy, Religion, and Culture*. provides an alternative perspective on the age grade system by focusing on its gendered aspects. She argues that age grades often reinforce patriarchal power structures by excluding women from certain roles and decision-making processes within the community

Ebere (2016). *Age Grade Associations among the Igbo of Nigeria. A Historical Perspective,*" explores the historical origins and functions of age grade associations among the Igbo people of Nigeria. He highlights how these associations have served as platforms for social, economic, and political mobilization throughout history

Akin (2015). *Urbanization in Nigeria: Patterns, Problems, and Prospects*. Discusses the role of age grade associations in urban contexts. He emphasizes how these associations provide a sense of belonging, social support, and collective action for migrants who face challenges in adapting to urban life.

Egharevba (2018). "The Bini Age Grade System: A Historical Perspective. Egharevba provides a comprehensive historical perspective on the Bini age grade system. He traces its origins and development over time, highlighting its importance in maintaining social order and cohesion within the community. Egharevba emphasizes the role of age grades in governance, decision-making processes, and conflict resolution.

## **2.2 Empirical review**

One influential scholar in this field is Shirley Brice Heath, whose work has significantly contributed to our understanding of language use in educational settings. In her book "Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms" published in (1983) Heath explores the language practices of children from different socioeconomic backgrounds in two communities. She argues that language use is influenced by social factors such as class and community, and that these factors shape children's linguistic development within the age grade system.

Another notable scholar is James Paul Gee, who has extensively studied language use in educational contexts. In his book "Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses" (1990) Gee examines how language is used to construct social identities and power relations within schools. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the sociocultural context in which language is used and highlights the role of discourse practices in shaping students' experiences within the age grade system.

In more recent years, scholars have focused on exploring the impact of technology on language use within the age grade system. Mary Chayko, in her article "Portable Communities: The Social Dynamics of Online and Mobile Connectedness" published in (2008) discusses how digital communication tools have transformed language practices among young people. She argues that online platforms provide new opportunities for social interaction and language development within the age grade system.

Social linguists have investigated language variation and its implications within the age grade system. Penelope Eckert, in her

article "Variation and the Indexical Field" (2008) explores how language variation is used by adolescents to construct social identities and establish group affiliations within schools. She argues that language variation plays a crucial role in shaping students' experiences and interactions within the age grade system.

### **2.3 The present study**

Many African communities, notably the Urhehue community in Orhionmwon, use the age grade system as a form of social organization. It is a system where people are organized according to their ages and go through various stages of life together. Maintaining social cohesiveness, preserving cultural identity, and passing down knowledge and values from one generation to the next all depend heavily on language use within the framework of the age-grade system.

We will examine many factors such communication patterns, linguistic traits, and the significance of language in cultural preservation in order to give an empirical review of language use in the age grade system.

**Communication Styles:** In Urhehue age-grade system, Language is the main form of communication. Each age grade has its own linguistic variety used by its members to communicate with others in that age grade. The vocabulary, pronunciation patterns, and grammatical structures used in this dialect are frequently particular to the age group.

There are particular communication styles that correspond to the system's hierarchical structure within each age grade. The language used by older members, who frequently assume leadership roles and have greater authority, is indicative of this. When speaking to younger members, they may utilize honorifics and more formal speech patterns. Conversely, junior members may speak to their elders in a more subservient manner.

**Language Features:** There are a number of linguistic characteristics that set Urhehue's age grade language apart from other forms of speech. Specialized vocabulary pertaining to customs, rituals, and cultural norms is one of these traits. To allude to particular tasks or

obligations, for instance, certain terms or phrases may only be used inside the age grade system.

The linguistic elements utilized in the age grade system help preserve cultural history and provide each age grade a unique linguistic identity. Language use within the framework of the age-grade system is essential for maintaining cultural traditions, values, and knowledge. Older members transmit oral histories, traditional tales, and cultural customs to new generations through language. This knowledge-transfer process promotes cultural continuity and protects significant facets of Urhehue heritage.

Language use within the framework of the age-grade system also reinforces societal norms and values. Depending on the age group, some idioms or proverbs may be utilized to impart moral lessons or codes of behaviour. Age grade members reinforce their common cultural identity and increase their sense of community by using these linguistic cues.

## **2.4 Theoretical framework**

After consideration on different theories the one that is best suitable for the analysis of the present study is J.L Austin's Sociolinguistic theory Of Act known as speech Act theory. Data collected would be analyzed using the speech act theory

Austin's (1962) "How to Do Things with Words," is a groundbreaking work that laid the foundation for speech act theory and significantly influenced the field of linguistics and philosophy of language. The book introduced the concept that speech is not merely about conveying information, but also about performing actions through language. Austin proposed that utterances have both locutionary (literal meaning) and illocutionary (intended function) aspects. Here's a comprehensive overview of some key concepts from Austin's speech act theory: Locutionary, Illocutionary, and Perlocutionary Act.

### **Locutionary Act**

Basic act of producing sounds and words with grammatical and semantic content.

## **Illocutionary Act**

Intended function or purpose behind an utterance, such as making a statement, asking a question, giving a command, etc.

## **Perlocutionary Act**

The effect an utterance has on the listener, including their emotions, beliefs, or actions.

Austin focused on illocutionary acts, which are classified into several categories. They are:

- **Assertives:** Statements that convey information.
- **Directives:** Utterances that influence the behavior of the listener (commands, requests, advice).
- **Commissives:** Utterances that commit the speaker to a certain course of action (promises, vows).
- **Expressives:** Utterances that express the speaker's feelings, emotions, attitudes (apologies, congratulations).
- **Declarations:** Utterances that bring about a change in the external world just by being spoken (pronouncing someone married).

- Performative Utterances: Austin introduced the concept of "performative utterances," where the very act of speaking accomplishes an action. For example, saying "I promise" is not describing a promise; it is making a promise.
- Felicity Conditions: Austin emphasized the importance of "felicity conditions," the necessary conditions for an illocutionary act to be successful. These conditions include things like appropriate context, sincerity, and conventional procedures.
- Indirect Speech Acts: Austin discussed instances where the intended illocutionary act differs from the literal meaning of the utterance. For example, "Could you pass the salt?" might function as a polite request rather than a question about the person's ability.
- Performatives and Constatives: Austin contrasted "constative utterances" (utterances that describe or report) with "performative utterances" (utterances that perform an action).

He highlighted the importance of understanding when an utterance should be taken as one or the other.

- Critique of Traditional Philosophy of Language: Austin's work challenged the traditional focus on the correspondence between language and reality. He highlighted that understanding the meaning of an utterance requires considering its context and illocutionary force.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DATA PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

#### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a data presentation of the various age groups in Urhehue community, songs by Different groups, their functional roles, communication style, language differences and ceremonies

#### 3.1 Age Grade System in Urhehue Community

**Eghareobaebbo Age Group:** This refers to individuals aged between 12 and 20 years. Their primary responsibility is to maintain cleanliness in community spaces such as marketplaces. They also ensure that the community is well-maintained during ceremonies, particularly the Ekaba festival. This age group is led by an Edion, who oversees the members and ensures they fulfill their respective duties. The functional language used in Eghareobaevbo is reflective of their role in the community, which primarily involves sweeping and maintaining the community environment. The Eghareobaevbo age grade does not necessitate any ceremonial or initiation procedures.

Children within this particular age range are invited to join the Eghareobaevbo.

A common song that can be found in Egharebaebo is:

1

Yọ a ghe rhan

yọ a ghe irri

yọ ghe ke ne ebo nagben ebe

urherhe oo Ewere

seventeen eighteen

nineteen bọbọ

seventeen eighteen

nineteen bọbọ

**Meaning:**

The song is a warning to all trouble makers. At the time the law caught up with them, they are on their own.

**Iroghae Age Group:** This group is formed by graduated members from Eghareobaevbo, with the age range for this group being 20 to 30 years, among these members, four individuals are appointed as leaders.

The Okairoghae serves as the head of the age group. Two persons are appointed as Ogbalegbe, who are responsible for disseminating messages. For instance, any message that the Okairoghae receives from the Odionwere is delivered to the Ogbalegbe, who then relay the message to the members of Iroghae. Additionally, they have the Ekpayae, whose duty is to summon members of this age group with the sound of his trumpet. Once he blows his trumpet, all members of Iroghae assemble.

The trumpet holds significant value as it is used to gather the members of Iroghae. The duties of the Iroghae include performing the masquerade dance during festivals such as Ekaba and Igue. The masquerade dance during the Igue festival serves a dual purpose - it is both a prayer and a form of entertainment for the Oba of Benin. On the other hand, during the Ekaba festival, the masquerade dance is performed as an act of gratitude towards their deity, Olukun. In addition to this, the Iroghae are also entrusted with overseeing building projects within their community.

Before the introduction of site contractors like engineers and architects, our local communities were constructed by capable men from the Iroghae age grade group. Observing the buildings from the olden days, we can appreciate the solidity of our historical structures.

All these were carried out by the Iroghae.

Members who fail to attend meetings within the Iroghae age group will face consequences. A representative will be sent to their residence, and any live chickens found there will be confiscated. The member will then be required to reimburse the cost of the chickens.

This acts as a penalty for not adhering to the Ekpayae's trumpet call and neglecting meeting attendance.

A common song that can be found in Iroghae is:

2

Urhehue ne oghomwẹ

evboma a ghogho ne aime

rhọọ yi o e, urehuhue ne oghomwẹ evbomwa a ghogho

ne ame rhọọ yi o e

## **Meaning**

My people, we are happy when responsible and respected people are springing up from our community and Local Government

**Ighele age group:** The outgoing Iroghae graduates to the Ighele age group, but a special ceremony is required before they are officially pronounced as Ighele. This involves a unique dance ceremony where each member of the outgoing Iroghae slaughters a full antelope and dries it. Each dried antelope is then presented to certain individuals, such as Edion, Ediongele, and some respected elders in the community. On the final day of this ceremonial dance, twenty-one dried antelopes will be wrapped in a native mat and carried by two individuals.

Members of the outgoing Iroghae will dance alongside these individuals to the Odionwere's house. The Odionwere will then pray for them, pronounce them as Ighele, and instruct them to "go and celebrate your head (ne ye Wu ewu)," which translates to "go and thank the gods for preserving your life throughout your time in Iroghae age grade.

Out of the twenty-one dried antelopes, a special portion is allocated to the newly initiated Ighele. Within this Ighele age group, leaders are selected, including the Okaeghele, who is the head of the Ighele age grade. The Okaeghele works directly with the Odionwere and disseminates any information that the Odionwere wishes to communicate. This information is then passed on by the Okaeghele to his age group members.

Urhogieva, also known as the market supervisor, ensures that the community remains safe and protected from harm. Ekpayae has a unique role; he blows his trumpet to summon members of the Ighele age grade. The Iroghae and Ighele both have an Ekpayae, but the difference lies in the sounds they produce. The way the Ekpayae in Iroghae blows his trumpet differs from how the Ighele's Ekpayae does it. Members of these distinct groups can differentiate these trumpets through their sounds.

The duties of the Ighele include ensuring community safety, providing security, and protecting the community from harm. They also participate in the masquerade dance during the Ekaba festival.

Although it's not their specific role, they are permitted to dance alongside the Iroghae.

A common song that can be found in Ighele

Ona Akharra ne a ye ọmọ ne ọmwa eşi zomi, zomi,zomi

### **Meaning**

This is why we always give our child or children in marriage to responsible person or persons

**Edion age group:** These individuals must be of advanced age, typically around 60 years. Among these Edion, four individuals are chosen to serve as the Edionnene, who act as special advisors to the Odionwere.

The primary function of the Edion is to resolve issues within their community. For instance, if the community's farms are not yielding a bountiful harvest or if a particular disease is affecting community members, it falls to the Edion to address these problems. In such cases, the Odionwere would send the Edion to consult their deity (Olukun) in search of solutions. The primary responsibilities of Edion include

consulting and problem-solving. Additionally, they serve as an advisory committee to the Odionwere

A common song that can be found in Edion is:

4

Ezomọ ne utimwe, tu ye vbie ma do gheẹ vbe oboro gbe Adesuwa

Ezomọ ne utimwe, tu ye vbie o

ma do gheẹ vbe oboro gbe Adesuwa

### **Meaning**

Respected ezomo are you still sleeping? Come and see that Oboro has killed adesuwa

#### **3.1.1 Communicative styles**

The communicative styles of Eghareobaevbo, Iroghae, and Ighele share similarities, primarily utilizing an informal style of communication. They often make humorous statements among each other. For instance, "wa kayo ooh" is an informal way of greeting only applicable to individuals within these age grades.

An elder (Edion) cannot be approached with this informal greeting. Other expressions include "osazee no uzuo," "wa hia koyo o," "omo no yo."

Non-verbal communication styles, such as nodding the head, making expressive faces, and various handshakes like the high-five, are also utilized. These are some of the communication patterns of Eghareobaevbo, Iroghae, and Igele.

Elders typically exhibit a more formal and traditional communication style compared to younger generations. They frequently use respectful and polite language, adhering strongly to cultural norms and values. This often includes using honorifics and greetings suitable for various social contexts.

Moreover, elders tend to speak at a slower pace and may take longer pauses between sentences or thoughts. This is partially due to the natural deceleration of speech that comes with age, but it also mirrors a cultural value placed on thoughtfulness and deliberation in communication. They use elaborate and descriptive language to express their thoughts and experiences. Frequently, they incorporate

proverbs, idioms, and traditional sayings to enhance depth and significance in their conversations. These linguistic tools are utilized not only for clarity but also as a means to connect with their cultural heritage and impart wisdom to younger generations.

Examples of proverbs and figurative expressions used by Edion (Elders)

1. Iku gha bun gbe vbe uwonmwon ,arhu aro ghi beghe re.

When there is too much dirt in a pot of soup, the blind will see it.

2. Ovbokhan ku miamian owa-

A child does not play outside so much as to forget home.

3. Ode ma gia la aghi la weriegbe

When a road cannot be taken you turn back.

4. Vbe na gbe aghen aghen ye

It is the way you make (beat) a mat that it turns out.

5. Ese nu ru ne omwan ere akhue we khian rhi ehe re

The good you did for someone today you will be rewarded tomorrow.

### 3.1.2 Language difference among age grades

**Eghareobaevbo:** The unique aspect of their language is the method used to summon its members. Members in Eghareobaevbo are summoned by the community town crier's chant, which informs them of their duties.

Example

The town crier announces this:

Eghareobaevbo, before the Ekaba festival commence, you all are expected to sweep the community.

- Ukó yóna wewe Eghareobaevbo, ókese ugie'kaba, aho neę uwahia kpolo idunmwun
- Olorhu khare weę ekhamwe ọba ẹvbo gha ladian ne a ke mię weę Ekaba suenren, gi a mię ghe uwa hia kpolo ẹvbo ne.

**Iroghae and Ighele:** These groups are known for their significant roles during festive activities such as the Ebaka festival. During this festival, Iroghae and Ighele perform a masquerade dance where various chants and praises are offered to their deity, Olukun.

These praises include:

- "Uzzi," meaning conqueror,
- "Uzzi mana," signifying a great conqueror,
- "Akharimuan," which translates to he whose pronouncement permits no argument,
- "Okhuorho-kharha," denoting unstoppable in battle. The individual equipped with formidable war apparatus
- Eze vb eki, the Lord of the rivers and market places.

**The Edion:** This group utilizes consultation language as it's their responsibility to communicate with the Chief Priest on behalf of the community. Examples of consultation language used by the Edion include

1. Odionwere ẹrẹ ogie ima gha de ne ima do mien rue ogieobo nima do guato otoa ewin ne o sunu vbe evbo oghe ima  
 We were sent by the odionwere he said you should ask the gods what is happening in our community
2. Mado kponmen obo ese ne a zore ni orhue emwin hia de hen hen ne Era ma do kpomwen

We have come to thank the God for everything he has done for our community and also for accepting our sacrifice

### **3.1.3 Ceremonies**

Ekaba is an annual idolatry ceremony performed by the Orhionmwon people. This ceremony takes place every January and lasts for seven days. During this event, a native cow is sacrificed to their gods, Olukun, as a token of appreciation for protection, peace, and bountiful harvests. They also pray to this deity for continued blessings and prosperity.

The ceremony features various forms of entertainment such as masquerade dances performed by Iroghae and Ighele, singing and dancing by women and young girls. Additionally, Iroghae are responsible for pounding yam while the women cook delicious Egusi soup.

This festival symbolizes gratitude towards their deity (Olukun), promoting cultural heritage and fostering unity among community members.

Different praises to olukun and their meanings

- Uzzi - conqueror
- Uzzi mana - great conqueror
- Akharimuan - He whose pronouncement permit of no argument
- Okhuorho-kharha - unstoppable in battle. He who is possessed of fearsome accoutrement of war
- Eze vb eki - the Lord of the rivers and of the market
- Enikaro uwese kakabo - this is an appreciation to (olukun ) saying thank you very much

### **3.2 Data Analysis**

The data collected, presented in this study are further analyzed in this session of the chapter. It's noteworthy to admit here that J.L.Austin's theory of SPEECH ACT was adopted for the main purpose of these data analysis, the various variables (locutionary, illocutionary & perlocutionary act) as well as the other sub-variables: Assertive, persuasive, directive, Commissive, Declarative (Utterance)

Which are subsumed under the core variables above contained in the Speech Act Theory are employed to best account for the data under analysis.

Utterances/words or jargons by different age grades association are either classified under directive, commissure, declarative speech act, thus some are used as form of assertion.

In a nutshell, the relevant variables peculiar to each data are employed to analyze each of the selected data of this study as seen below:

### **3.2.1 Analysis of Songs**

A common song that can be found in Egharebaebo

Yọ a ghe rhan yọ a ghe irriyọ ghe ke ne ebo nagben ebeurherhe oo  
Ewere seventeen eightennineteen bọbọseventeen eightennineteen  
bọbọ

MEANING: The song is a warning to all trouble makers. At the time the law caught up with them, they are on their own. The song belongs

to the directive category, providing advice to children about exercising caution and avoiding certain actions or situations.

A common song that can be found in Iroghae

Urhehue ne oghomwẹevboma a ghogho ne aimẹrhọọ yi o e, urehuhue  
ne oghomwẹ evbomwa a ghoghone ame rhọọ yi o e

MEANING: My people, we are happy when responsible and respected people are springing up from our community and local government.

This song, categorized as expressive, contains lyrics that highlight a politician's qualities, actions, and achievements.

A common song that can be found in Ighele

Ona Akharra ne a ye omọ ne omwa esi zomi, zomi, zomi

MEANING: This is why we always give our child or children in marriage to responsible person or persons. This song is classified under the illocutionary act, specifically falling into the category of

directive acts. It features lines that express praises during wedding celebrations.

A common song that can be found in Edion

Ezomọ ne utimwe, tu ye vbie ma do ghee vbe oboro gbe Adesuwa  
Ezomọ ne utimwe, tu ye vbie oma do ghee vbe oboro gbe Adesuwa.

MEANING: Respected Ezomo are you still sleeping? Come and see that Oboro has killed Adesuwa

The song belongs to the assertive category, narrating an ancient story from the Benin Kingdom.

### **3.2.2 Analyzing the Collected Proverbs:**

1. "Iku gha bun gbe vbe uwonmwon ,arhu aro ghi beghe re". When there is too much dirt in a pot of soup, the blind will see it.

Locutionary Act: The proverb "When dirt is too much in a pot of soup, the blind will see it" is a metaphorical expression that creates a vivid image.

**Illocutionary Act:** This proverb primarily asserts and expresses the notion that when a problem becomes excessively severe, it becomes apparent to everyone, even those who typically overlook such issues. This statement underscores the idea that even the most unaware individuals will identify significant issues when they become overly apparent.

**Perlocutionary Act:** this proverb encourages people to tackle problems before they escalate to an undeniable level. It also acts as a reminder that neglecting issues will only make them more conspicuous over time.

2. Ovbokhan ku miamian owa-A child does not play outside so much as to forget home.

**Locutionary Act:** the proverb is "A child does not play outside so much as to forget home." It's a metaphor that draws a comparison between a child's love of their house and their outdoor playtime.

**Illocutionary Act:** This proverb has an assertive and directive illocutionary force. It communicates the idea that a child's attachment

to their house never wavers, regardless of how absorbed they are in their outdoor play. It highlights how important and enduring one's upbringing and roots are.

Perlocutionary Act: this adage serve as a reminder to people, even while they are occupied with other activities, never forgetting the value of your home and family.

3. Ode ma gia la aghi la weriegbe When a road cannot be taken you turn back.

Locutionary Act: "When a road cannot be taken, you turn back." It is a simple statement that lays out a reasonable flow of events.

Illocutionary Act: This proverb's main acts of locution are directive and assertive. It communicates the idea that it makes sense to turn around and look into other options when a chosen path or option is not workable or beneficial. It highlights pragmatism and flexibility.

Perlocutionary Act: It encourages people to be adaptable and willing to modify their plans when they encounter obstacles. It might also

serve as a reminder that seeking the best road to your objective rather than blindly following one may be just as persistent as sticking to a certain path.

4. Vbe na gbe aghen aghen yeIt is the way you make (beat)a mat that it turns out.

Locutionary Act: The proverb, "It is the way you make your mat it would turn out," uses a metaphor about crafting a mat to communicate its message.

Illocutionary Act: This proverb's illocutionary force is both assertive and expressive. It suggests that the quality of the end product is dictated by the method, diligence, and attention to detail applied during the task. This highlights the importance of personal effort and craftsmanship.

The Perlocutionary act of this proverb inspires individuals to tackle their tasks with diligence and commitment, recognizing that the effort they put in directly affects the result. It could also encourage self-reflection on how one's approach to work or tasks influences their

outcomes. The wisdom of the proverb lies in its focus on personal responsibility and the idea that the result of any endeavor mirrors the care and skill utilized during its execution. It promotes a proactive and conscientious approach to tasks, emphasizing that the effort we put in significantly impacts the final outcome.

5. Ese nu ru ne omwan ere akhue we khian rhi ehe re The good you did for someone today you will be rewarded tomorrow.

Locutionary Act: The proverb "The good you do for someone will be rewarded tomorrow" establishes a cause-and-effect relationship between actions and outcomes.

Illocutionary Act: This proverb carries an assertive and commissive illocutionary force, suggesting that kind and helpful actions towards others will yield rewards or positive consequences in the future. This proverb underscores the concept of consequences for one's actions.

The Perlocutionary Act: this inspires people to perform acts of kindness without anticipating immediate rewards, but with the belief

that these actions could yield positive results in the future. It may also foster optimism and goodwill.

### **3.2.3 Analyzing expressions used by Eghareobaevbo**

Osazee no uzuo: Osaro is a fool

The phrase "Osaro is a fool" is classified as an illocutionary act in speech act theory, particularly under expressives. This expression is used to humorously or playfully describe Osaro. The speaker uses this phrase to convey their jesting or teasing attitude towards Osaro in a light-hearted manner."

"wa hia koyo o: Well done

The phrase "Well done" is classified as an illocutionary act, particularly as an expressive within the speech act theory. It's used to communicate approval, admiration, or praise for someone's achievement. When you say "Well done," you're expressing your emotions and positive assessment of their accomplishment.

Sending errands in Eghareobaevbo

Eghareobaevbo, before the Ekaba festival commence, you all are expected to sweep the community

Ukó yóna wewe Eghareobaevbo, ókese ugie'kaba, aho neę uwahia kpolo idunmwunOlorhu khare weę ekhamwe ọba evbo gha ladian ne a ke mię weę Ekaba suęren, gi a mię ghe uwa hia kpolo evbo ne.

The phrase "sending errands" generally belongs to the category of illocutionary acts, specifically falling under directives in speech act theory. When you assign a group of individuals tasks, you are issuing a directive or command for them to execute a specific task or errand for you. This is classified as a directive because you are instructing a group of individuals to carry out a specific action.

### **3.2.4 Analyzing expressions used by Edion**

1. Odionwere ęre ogie ima gha de ne ima do mien rue ogieobo nima do guato otoa ewin ne o sunu vbe evbo oghe ima

We were sent by the odionwere he said you should ask the gods what is happening in our community. The phrase "We have come to seek

the help of the Gods to understand what's happening in our community" is classified as an illocutionary act, specifically falling under the category of assertives within speech act theory. In this context, the speaker is declaring their intention or purpose. The statement affirms their reason for coming, which is to solicit divine intervention for a clearer understanding of their community's situation. This utterance communicates information about their intent and the objective they aim to accomplish.

2. Mado kponmen obo Ese ne a zore ni orhue Emwin hia de hen hen ne Era ma do kpomwen

We have come to thank the God for everything he has done for our community and also for accepting our sacrifice the phrase "We have come to thank the gods" is categorized as an illocutionary act, specifically falling under the expressive category within speech act theory. In this context, the speaker is demonstrating gratitude and appreciation. The statement communicates the speaker's emotions and intentions, signifying their purpose of expressing thanks to the Gods.

It's considered an expressive act as it mirrors the speaker's sentiments and conveys their reason for being present.

### **3.2.5 Analyzing praise expressions used by Iroghae and Ighele during their masquerade dance in Ekaba festival**

Uzzi," meaning conqueror,

Uzzi mana," signifying a great conqueror,

"Akharimuan," which translates to he whose pronouncement permits no argument,

"Okhuorho-kharha" Denoting unstoppable in battle. The individual equipped with formidable war apparatus

Eze vb eki, The lord of the rivers and market places.

This Praise expression belongs to the category of illocutionary acts, specifically falling under expressives within speech act theory. When a group of individuals' offers "praises to deity," they are articulating their reverence, admiration, and respect for a divine being. This act involves expressing emotions, attitudes, and sentiments towards the

divine entity. It is considered an expressive act as it primarily focuses on conveying the speaker's feelings and intentions related to demonstrating praise and devotion.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **4.0 SUMMARY**

In the previous chapters, I examined the language used by different age groups in the Urhehue community. I analyzed how language highlights the distinct communicative styles of each age group. The communicative style in the Urhehue community is influenced by age grades, which are social divisions based on individuals' age and life stage. Each age grade has its own unique language use patterns and expectations.

In the younger age grades, such as children and adolescents, language use tends to be more informal and playful. They often engage in lively conversations filled with slang, colloquialisms, and creative expressions. This style of communication allows them to establish their identity within the community and build connections with their peers.

As individuals progress into older age grades, particularly young adults and middle-aged individuals, the communicative style becomes more formal and respectful. They tend to use a more standard form of language, adhering to grammatical rules and societal norms. This shift in communication style reflects the increased responsibilities and expectations placed on individuals as they transition into adulthood.

In the elder age grades, which include senior members of the community, language use is characterized by wisdom, authority, and cultural preservation. Elders often serve as custodians of traditional knowledge and values, using language to pass down stories, rituals, and ancestral wisdom to younger generations. Their communication style is marked by a rich vocabulary, proverbs, metaphors, and a deep understanding of cultural nuances.

#### **4.1 Findings**

From the data analysis, it was observed that the Eghareobaevbo age grade frequently uses playful language in their interactions. The Iroghae, known for their masquerade dances, often use appraising

language. The Ighele, due to their community duties, primarily use instructional language. Meanwhile, the Edion employ consultative language as they seek advice on handling various community situations. They also frequently use figurative expressions such as proverbs.

Although the jagon used by these age grades are not well known and developed due to the low participants of individuals and persons in the community. Some persons see it as barbaric and local due to this the jagons used among these age grades is low

## **4.2 Conclusion**

In conclusion, it has been demonstrated that language variations occurs in different age groups, ranging from their communicative styles, the language used in carrying out their functional duties, and even the songs unique to them. To enhance the language used among these age groups, linguists should focus on improving the vocabulary structure. Additionally, community members should be encouraged to

participate in age-related duties as increased participation could lead to the introduction of more jargons.

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