

**LANGUAGE USE IN RELIGION AND DIVINATION AMONG ESAN
TRADITIONAL WORSHIPPERS**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS
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APPROVAL PAGE

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to Almighty God for his protection, provision, grace and fulfillment. I appreciate him for his divine strength to finish this journey and project. And he alone be praised

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the concept of lexical relations in Ibibio, a Lower Cross language spoken in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It explores the semantic interconnections that exist among lexical items in the language, focusing on the relationships of synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, hyponymy, and meronymy. The study is anchored on the structuralist theoretical framework, which posits that meaning is relational and that words derive significance from their place within a linguistic system. Data were gathered through descriptive and analytic methods, drawing from native speakers' intuitions and examples found in natural Ibibio usage. The analysis reveals that lexical relations in Ibibio are context-dependent and culturally motivated rather than absolute, reflecting deep connections between linguistic structures and sociocultural realities. For instance, synonymous words in Ibibio are often differentiated by pragmatic and situational nuances, while antonyms may display complementary or gradable features. The study further shows that polysemy in Ibibio is influenced by metaphorical and metonymic extensions, and that hierarchical relations like hyponymy and meronymy play a crucial role in lexical categorization and meaning organization. Overall, the research contributes to the understanding of Ibibio semantics, highlighting the interdependence between language, thought, and culture. It also underscores the need for more descriptive studies of African languages to enrich the global body of linguistic knowledge

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of Study

Language is a fundamental aspect of human existence and interaction. It serves not only as a medium of communication but also as a powerful tool for expressing culture, identity, and belief systems. In African societies, religion and language are deeply interwoven, as language gives life to religious practices and provides structure to ritual performances, prayers, chants, and divination sessions. Among the Esan people of Edo State, Nigeria, traditional religion continues to occupy a significant place in their socio-cultural life, and its practices rely heavily on the effective use of language to communicate with both humans and spiritual beings.

It focuses on the linguistic forms, symbols, and communicative strategies employed during rituals, sacrifices, prayers, and consultations with diviners, emphasizing how such uses of language reflect the worldview and belief system of the Esan people. Language use in religion and divination among Esan traditional worshippers is a complex and multisided phenomenon that reflects the rich cultural heritage and spiritual practices of the Esan people. In Esan traditional worship, language is not merely a means of communication but a powerful tool for invoking the divine, honoring ancestors, and seeking guidance. The Esan people have a deep sense of spirituality, believing in a

supreme deity, Osenobua, and a complex pantheon of gods and goddesses, each with specific domains and responsibilities. Language plays a crucial role in religion and divination among Esan traditional worshippers, serving as a means of communication with the divine, ancestors, and spirit. Language use refers to how speakers employ linguistic resources like words, grammar, discourse in social contexts to communicate meaning, represent identity, and perform social functions within their communities. According to Dong (2015), he asserted that language use is tied to social identity and network structure, meaning that which words or forms a speaker uses reveals their social context and affiliations.

Religion is a system of beliefs, rituals, symbols and moral codes through which people understand the sacred or supernatural, structure their community life, relate to ultimate reality, and orient their existence. These religions may be found globally, with strong traditions in regions like West Africa, and their adherents may sometimes engaged in a struggle for equal recognition compared to major religions. Divination is the practice of seeking knowledge, insight or guidance (often about hidden matters, future events, causes of misfortune) by invoking spiritual/supernatural powers, using ritual, tools, symbols, or specialized persons (diviners). This suggest that when Esan worshippers use language in rituals, prayer, divination or worship settings, the forms they choose (tone, registers, sacred vocabulary) are part of social identity, tradition and function. So language use in religion and divination means more than what is said. It may also involve

how, when, to whom, and in what ritual context the language is used. These use of words are done by traditional worshippers.

Traditional worshippers practice indigenous religions, which often include worshipping a Supreme Being alongside various deities and ancestral spirits. Their practices vary geographically but frequently involve rituals, offerings, prayers, and festivals at sacred sites like rivers, shrines, or forests.

The study of language use in religion and divination among Esan traditional worshippers offers a rich and detailed understanding of the complex relationships between language, culture, and spirituality. Through the use of symbolic language, invocations, and divination practices, Esan traditional worshippers are able to communicate with the divine, honor ancestors, and seek guidance. The significance of language use in this context lies in its ability to facilitate spiritual communication, preserve cultural heritage, and reinforce social hierarchies. By examining the language use in Esan traditional worship and divination, we gain insight into the cultural and spiritual practices of the Esan people, highlighting the importance of preserving traditional knowledge and cultural heritage.

1.1 Esan Language and its Speakers

The Esan language, also known as Ishan, belongs to the Edoid group of languages under the Niger-Congo family. It is spoken predominantly in Esanland, located in the central senatorial district of Edo State, Nigeria. Esanland consists of several towns such as Ekpoma, Irrua, Uromi, Ewu, Ubiaja, and Igueben, among others. Esan is a tonal language, and meaning is often determined by pitch variation. The language is rich in proverbs, idioms, and metaphors, which play important roles in religious communication. The speakers are known for their deep respect for tradition, and their language reflects their worldview, values, and relationship with the spiritual world. In Esan religious and divinatory contexts, language is more than a means of communication, it is a sacred instrument through which the unseen world is accessed and divine will is expressed. Language is the strongest tool at human beings' command for the expression of thought, emotion, and belief. It is not only a means of communication but also a significant carrier of culture, identity, and tradition. Language serves sacred purposes within traditional African cultures beyond the normal function of communication, it is a bridge between the material and spiritual worlds. Among the Esan of Edo State, Nigeria, language is a central feature of religious and divinatory life, where words are believed to have spiritual potency and the ability to influence human as well as supernatural forces.

Religion in Africa is not a separate institution but an integral part of life. It controls people's worldview, moral life, and relations with nature and the world of spirits. Traditional religion is an integral part of the daily life and societal structure in Esan society. Language in some form or another is always employed in specialized ways in every religious act of worship, sacrifice, or divination. The worshippers invoke awe to their deities and ancestors, express communal values, and seek advice or intervention in human affairs through words, words uttered, sung, or chanted.

Language has a spiritual function in Esan traditional worship. When priests, elders, or diviners are conducting rituals, they use special types of language such as incantations, proverbs, chants, praise names (oriki), and ritual songs. Such types of language are set aside from regular usage; they are specially created to call forth spiritual presence and obtain respect. Every word carries symbolic meaning, typically calling forth the names, attributes, and activities of deities and ancestral spirits. The vocabulary, rhythm, and words used when presenting prayers or divination are subject to assessing the efficacy of the ritual and the willingness of the spiritual powers being consulted.

Divination, being a major part of indigenous Esan religion, is greatly reliant on language. The diviner (commonly known as Ohen or Obo) interprets messages from the spiritual world in an advanced act of speech acts, questioning, invoking, interpreting, and advising. The diviner's words are rich in figurative language concealing divine meaning.

In case of revealing a divine cause of pain, the diviner will adopt symbolic language or parables and not literal words, thereby upholding secrecy as well as sanctity of the divine. This shows that divination is not just a religious activity but an advance act of speech that speaks to the creativity and productivity of Esan oral tradition.

Esans, who are known for their rich culture, are in the central part of Edo State, bordering the towns of Ekpoma, Uromi, Irrua, Ewu, Ubiaja, and Igueben. Esan language is the one used by the Esans, and it belongs to the Edoid subgroup in the Niger-Congo language family. The language is expressive and tonal, allowing for subtle communication, especially within religious and ritual contexts. Language, in Esan culture, is regarded as a living force, a force to heal or curse, bless or hurt, depending on how it is used. The belief further supports the spiritual status of language and its function as mediator between mortals and supernatural beings.

However, in the last few decades, the effects of modernization, Christianity, and Islam have led to the erosion of active use of Esan traditional religious speech. The majority of young Esan people are no longer familiar with the ritual vocabulary, chants, or proverbs used in traditional rituals. The gradual erosion of religious and linguistic heritage threatens the perpetuation of Esan traditional practices and the cultural knowledge contained within.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Over the years, the growth of Western education and the spread of Christianity and Islam have led to a gradual decline in the use of Esan language within traditional religious contexts. Many young people no longer understand the linguistic forms used in rituals and divination, leading to a loss of cultural continuity.

Furthermore, most linguistic studies in Nigeria have focused on phonology, morphology, and syntax, while little attention has been given to the sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of language use in traditional religion and divination. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the language forms, functions, and meanings in Esan religious and divinatory contexts, with the aim of preserving this important aspect of cultural and linguistic heritage.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the present is to examine how language is used as a tool for expressing, preserving and transmitting cultural and religious belief among Esan traditional worshippers. The set objectives include to:

- i. Identify the linguistic forms and expressions used in Esan traditional religious and divinatory practices.
- ii. Examine the communicative functions of these linguistic forms in rituals, prayers, and divination sessions.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several ways:

1. It contributes to the field of applied linguistics and sociolinguistics by providing insight into how language operates within a cultural and religious framework.
2. The study documents and analyzes aspects of Esan traditional religion that are at risk of disappearing, thus helping to preserve indigenous knowledge.
3. It will serve as a useful reference for students and researchers interested in African linguistics, religion, and anthropology.

1.5 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach. Data will be collected through oral interviews. Informants will include diviners, worshippers who are knowledgeable about Esan traditional practices. The collected data will then be translated, and analyzed using linguistic and ethnographic methods, focusing on forms of address, expressions, chants, and ritual speech acts.

Data was collected through oral interviews of my informants, Mr. Godday Omoifoh and Omaragbon Cyril. Informants include diviners, worshippers, who are

knowledgeable about Esan traditional practices. The collected data will then be translated, and analyzed using linguistics and ethnographic methods, focusing on forms of address, expressions, chants and ritual speech acts .

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the review of related literature and the conceptual framework for the study. The review focuses on key concepts relevant to understanding language use in religious and divinatory practices among Esan traditional worshippers. It explores how language functions within social and religious contexts, as well as the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the Esan people. The chapter is divided into sections that discuss, the Esan language, language use, divination and its linguistic dimensions, and the role of traditional worshippers in maintaining religious communication. These concepts collectively form the theoretical and conceptual foundation upon which the study is built.

2.1 Conceptual Review

The conceptual review explains and clarifies the key ideas and terms that are central to this research. Understanding these concepts will help situate the study within the broader fields of linguistics, religion, and culture.

2.1.1 The Esan Language

The Esan language, formerly referred to as “Ishan,” is one of the Edoid languages spoken in the central part of Edo State, Nigeria. It belongs to the Niger-Congo language family, specifically the Edoid subgroup. Esan is spoken across several towns including Uromi, Ekpoma, Irrua, Ewu, Ubiaja, and Igueben, among others. Esan is a tonal language, meaning that pitch or tone determines word meaning. For example, a change in tone can change the meaning of a word entirely. This tonal feature plays an important role in religious speech, where tone patterns are used to convey reverence, emotion, or intensity.

The Esan language is rich in proverbs, idioms, and figurative expressions, which form the backbone of traditional communication. These linguistic features are especially prominent in religious and divinatory contexts, where they are used to express spiritual truths, moral lessons, and hidden meanings.

However, due to the growing influence of English and the spread of Christianity and Islam, the active use of Esan language in traditional religion is declining. Many young Esan people no longer understand the complex expressions used by traditional

priests and diviners. This makes studies like the present one vital for documenting and preserving the linguistic richness of Esan religious practices.

2.1.1 Language Use

Language use refers to how individuals or groups employ language in real-life situations to communicate ideas, perform actions, and express emotions. It is not just about grammar or vocabulary but about how meaning is created and interpreted within social and cultural contexts.

In religious communication, language use goes beyond the ordinary, it becomes a performative act. According to Austin (1962), when people use certain utterances, they are not only saying something but also doing something. For example, when an Esan priest utters an invocation such as “Osenobulua khian gbe uwen gha re” (“May God grant you life and peace”), he is performing an act of blessing.

Language use in Esan traditional religion involves the deliberate selection of ritual words, chants, and symbols that are believed to possess spiritual force. The effectiveness of prayers, sacrifices, and divinations often depends on the appropriateness and correctness of the language used. This highlights the sacred nature of speech in Esan culture, where words are seen as capable of bringing both blessings and curses.

2.1.2 Divination Worship

Merrill (2003) states that divination generally refers to the whole complex of means of gaining insight from the gods regardless of any particular technique. This has been said, but it is imperative that it is reiterated. Divination is a term used to describe any religious and spiritual phenomenon of gaining insight or secret knowledge. There are various forms and techniques employed as we move from people to people and from culture to culture; and at times a particular method of divination may gain so great popularity and acceptability that it becomes so much used by various people groups. Divination is a key aspect of Esan traditional religion. It is the process by which messages from the spiritual world are sought to explain or solve human problems. Diviners (known as Ohen or Obo) act as mediators between humans and the deities or ancestors. Language is central to the practice of divination. The diviner uses special linguistic forms such as chants, proverbs, and coded speech to interpret signs, reveal hidden truths, and prescribe remedies. The process of divination often involves a dialogue between the diviner and the client, where symbolic or indirect speech is used to maintain sacredness and respect for spiritual matters.

In Esan belief, the success of divination depends on the accuracy and purity of language. Mispronouncing words, using the wrong tone, or speaking carelessly can affect the outcome of the ritual. Hence, the diviner must possess mastery of language and deep

cultural knowledge. Divination, therefore, is both a religious and linguistic performance, a complex interaction where language functions as a tool of revelation, persuasion, and spiritual mediation.

2.1.3 Traditional Worshippers

According to Okon (2005), she posits that traditional worshippers are individuals or groups who practice indigenous religion as an integral part of their social and cultural identity, often combining reverence for deities with ancestor veneration. Traditional worshippers are individuals who practice indigenous religion and maintain communication with ancestral and spiritual forces through rituals, sacrifices, and prayers. In Esanland, traditional worshippers are highly respected members of the community because they serve as custodians of cultural and religious knowledge.

They include priests, priestesses, diviners, elders, and shrine attendants, each of whom performs specific religious roles. These individuals are trained in the use of sacred language, ritual formulas, and chants that are often passed down orally through generations. The mastery of these linguistic forms is essential, as it ensures the accuracy and effectiveness of rituals. Traditional worshippers believe that words have spiritual energy; therefore, utterances made during worship are carefully chosen and performed with seriousness. Silence, repetition, and rhythm are also meaningful elements of

religious communication. Through their linguistic performances, traditional worshippers preserve the Esan worldview, moral values, and relationship with the divine.

Despite modernization, many Esan communities still maintain aspects of traditional worship, especially during festivals, initiations, and family rituals. These practices continue to demonstrate the enduring power of language as a medium of faith, culture, and identity.

2.2 Previous Studies

Several scholars have examined the structure, function and significance of Esan language, its structure, function and significance of its divination and religion. According to Philip (2013) he said that a divination system is a standardized process deriving from a learned discipline based on an extensive body of knowledge. This knowledge may or may not be literally expressed during the interpretation of the oral message. The diviner may utilize a fixed corpus, such as the Yoruba Ifa Odu verses, or a more diffuse body of esoteric knowledge. Divining processes are diverse, but all follow a set of routines by which otherwise inaccessible information is obtained. Some type of device usually is employed, from a simple sliding object to the myriad symbolic items shaken in a diviners' baskets. Sometimes the diviner's body becomes the vehicle of communication through spirit possession. Some diviners operate self-explanatory mechanisms that reveal answers;

other systems require the diviner to interpret cryptic metaphoric messages. The final diagnosis and plan for action are rendered collectively by the diviner and the worshipper.

We usually assume “communication” in divination entails audible speech, although we do secondarily acknowledge a number of nonverbal modes of communication. It is critical to stress that African divination systems are multiple and variously utilize all forms of communication. While humans are greatly concerned about the “other,” spiritual world, it is normally a silent world and must be given voice somehow in order for communication to take place. In African divination systems, this cross-world communication often takes the form of “spirit possession” of the diviners whereby “silent” ancestors or spirit entities speak through the diviner. Equally, it is understood that the other world “speaks” through an inanimate divinatory table such as marked tablets, half-shells on a string, or objects in a diviner’s basket.

According to Nicholas (2012), the Esan people are an ethnic group of the southern Nigeria region who speak the Esan language. The Esan are traditionally agriculturalists, trado-medical practitioners, mercenary warriors and hunters. They cultivate palm trees, cherry (Otien), bell pepper (akoh) coconut, betel nut, kola nut, black pear, avocado pear, yams, cocoyam, cassava, maize, rice, beans, groundnut, bananas, oranges, plantains, sugar cane, tomato, potato, okra, pineapple, paw paw, and various vegetables. According to Dalby (1988) the modern Esan civilization is believed to have been organized during

the 15th century, when citizens, mostly nobles and princes, left the neighboring Benin Empire for the northeast; there they formed communities and kingdoms called eguares among the aboriginal peoples whom they met there. There are on the whole 35 established kingdoms in Esanland, including Amahor, Ebelle, Egoro, Ewohimi, Ekekhenlen, Ekpoma, Ekpon, Emu, Ewu, Ewatto, Ewossa, Ido, Ifeku, Igueben, Ilushi, Inyelen, Irrua, Ogwa, Ohordua, Okalo, Okhuesan, Onogholo, Opoji, Oria, Orowa, Uromi, Udo, Ugbegun, Ugboha, Ubiaja, Urhohi, Ugun, Ujigba, Ukhun, and Uzea.

According to Westly (1998) the Esan Kingdoms often warred among each other. Despite the wars, the Esans kept a homogenous culture which was chiefly influenced by the Benin Empire. However, these kingdoms were colonized, along with the Benin Empire, by the British Empire during September 1897, only gaining independence 63 years later in 1960 when Nigeria became independent from British Colonial rule. After independence, the Esan people have suffered from civil war, poverty, and lack of infrastructure.

According to Lane & CO (2013) the Esans primarily speak the Esan language, an Edoid language related to Edo, Urhobo, Owan language, Isoko, and Etsako. It is considered a regionally important language in Nigeria, and it is taught in primary schools in addition to being broadcast on radio and television. The Esan language is also recognized in the Census of the United Kingdom. It is estimated that the Esan people

who reside in Esanland number about one million to 1.5 million citizens in Nigeria. Sociologists and anthropologist have long observed that every human society hold worldviews that translate into their cosmology. Africans as a unique homogenous society share a lot in common. Esan creation myth is not considerably different from what is obtainable in other African ethnic groups. We will draw allusions from the Igbo of the South-Eastern part of Nigeria whose creation motif is not altogether too different from Esan Creation myth.

2.3 Concerns of Present Study

This research, therefore, seeks to examine the role of language as an important device in the practice of religion and divination among Esan traditional worshippers. The study will centre on the communicative patterns, linguistic expressions, and symbolic meanings embedded in religious and divinatory contexts. Accordingly, the research will try to explore how Esan traditional worshippers use language in prayers, incantations and ritual utterances to express spirituality, invoke gods, and communicate with the supernatural.

The present study also seeks to identify those linguistic features that would characterize Esan religious discourse, such as responses to incantations, prayers and culturally bound expressions. It will seek to explain the ways in which these linguistic

forms reinforce beliefs, maintain social order, and transmit cultural knowledge within the Esan community.

Another concern of the research is the preservation of the Esan indigenous linguistic and religious heritage in the face of modernization. The present study contributes to the documentation of Esan oral traditions by discussing language use in traditional religious and divinatory settings and, therefore, promotes the status of language in sustaining cultural and spiritual identity.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 Introduction

Every research work in linguistics and sociocultural studies needs a theoretical foundation that provides direction for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This chapter presents the theoretical framework upon which the study “Language Use in Religion and Divination among Esan Traditional Worshippers” is anchored. The chosen framework is Ethnography of Communication, a sociolinguistic theory developed by Hymes (1972).

This theory is relevant to the present study because language use in traditional religious and divination contexts among the Esan people is deeply embedded in culture. To understand the meanings, functions, and patterns of speech used by Esan diviners and worshippers, one must study how language operates within its cultural and situational context. Thus, the ethnography of communication offers the best lens for analyzing the communicative events, speech codes, and interactional norms that characterize Esan religious practices.

3.1 Ethnography of Communication

The Ethnography of Communication (EoC) is an approach that studies language as it is used in its natural social and cultural environment. Developed by Dell Hymes as a reaction to purely structural views of language, the EoC emphasizes that communication cannot be understood by examining grammar alone it must include social rules, cultural meanings, and communicative competence.

Hymes proposed that to fully understand a speech community, one must examine:

Who speaks (participants)

When and where they speak (setting and situation)

To whom they speak (audience)

What they talk about (topic)

Why they speak (purpose or function)

How they speak (form, style, or instrument)

To capture these elements, Hymes introduced the SPEAKING model, an acronym that outlines eight components of any communicative event:

S Setting and Scene: The time, place, and physical circumstances of communication.

P Participants: The speakers, hearers, audience, and their roles.

E Ends: The goals, purposes, and expected outcomes of communication.

A Act Sequence: The form and order of messages how the conversation unfolds.

K Key: The tone, manner, or spirit of speech (e.g., serious, joking, ritual).

I Instrumentalities: The channel (spoken, chanted, sung) and code (language or dialect).

N Norms: The social rules governing interaction and interpretation.

G Genre : The type of communicative event (prayer, proverb, chant, incantation, etc.).

This framework allows a researcher to analyze language use not as isolated sentences but as meaningful actions embedded in a cultural system.

In the context of religion and divination, speech is often performative, it does not just describe reality but enacts spiritual or social change. Therefore, studying Esan ritual language through the lens of ethnography of communication reveals how diviners use words, songs, chants, and gestures to connect with the spirit world, interpret messages, and influence human affairs.

3.2 Application of the Theory

Applying the Ethnography of Communication to this study involves analyzing how Esan traditional worshippers and diviners use language in specific religious and divinatory settings.

1. Setting and Scene (S):

The study examines the physical and social contexts of Esan shrines, divination rooms, and community ritual spaces where communication between humans and spiritual beings occurs.

2. Participants (P):

The participants include the diviner (Ohen or Azen), the client or inquirer, assistants, and sometimes the community elders or witnesses. Each participant plays a defined communicative role.

3. Ends (E):

The communicative purpose may be to seek solutions to misfortunes, interpret dreams, consult ancestors, heal illnesses, or determine causes of social or spiritual imbalance.

4. Act Sequence (A):

The act sequence involves stages such as greeting the spirits, invoking ancestral names, interpreting divination signs, chanting, or reciting incantations. Each stage follows a culturally prescribed pattern.

5. Key (K):

The key of communication is usually solemn, reverent, and sometimes dramatic, reflecting the seriousness of religious consultation.

6. Instrumentalities (I):

The main language of communication is the Esan language, though it may include ritual codes, archaic expressions, or non-verbal cues like drumming, dancing, and gestures.

7. Norms (N):

There are established norms for when to speak, how to address spiritual beings, how to respond to a diviner, and when silence is appropriate.

8. Genre (G):

The genres of communication include prayers, chants, proverbs, incantations, and ritual songs, each with its unique structure and communicative purpose. By applying the EoC model, this study will uncover how Esan religious language functions as a medium of both social communication and spiritual mediation. It helps explain why certain words are regarded as powerful, why some expressions are restricted to specialists, and how communicative competence is learned and maintained in Esan religious practice.

3.3 Justification of the Theory

The Ethnography of Communication is the most suitable theoretical framework for this study for several reasons:

1. Cultural Relevance:

Religion and divination in Esan society are culturally grounded practices. The EoC provides tools for analyzing how language reflects Esan worldviews, values, and belief systems.

2. Holistic Approach:

Unlike structural linguistics, which focuses only on grammar, EoC considers the broader sociocultural context participants, purpose, norms, and setting all of which are crucial in understanding ritual language.

3. Focus on Communicative Competence:

The theory emphasizes knowing not just how to speak, but when, where, and to whom to speak. This fits Esan religious communication where knowledge of proper ritual language and timing determines spiritual success.

4. Bridging Language and Culture:

Since traditional religion integrates words, symbols, and performance, the theory bridges linguistic analysis with anthropology, allowing a comprehensive interpretation of Esan religious discourse.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

In Esan tradition and religion three deities were strictly studied analysis the data collected include taboo expressions, incantations, prayers, praises, and edifications of gods. Usually, the custody of a male chief priest who's referred to as "ohen". Oboiva, Irekpe, Iyanro have different shrines in different locations in the same community. Irekpe is regarded as the head of the two other deities. And the gods forbid murder, and adultery. When ever prayers and ritual are going on , the (ohen) calls the name of the three gods (Oboiva, Iyanro, Irekpe) this is because they believe that the gods and siblings and (Irekpe) is the oldest among the three. When a man commits murder the gods (Oboiva, Iyanro, Irekpe) can forgive him but when a woman commits murder she can't be forgiven because traditionally it is believed that a woman is to protect, nurture, grow, keep. And if the woman commits murder that means she has lost her woman attributes and that will lead to her banishment.

4.1 Data Presentation

praise/chant of Oboiva, Irekpe, and Iyanro

Ojuju wey we get for Ishan land; Erakpe, Obiova, Iyanro. Before you go enter there, appease them, you go carry kola, carry alligator pepper, you go carry... hot, eagle-hot, enter there. You go carry white chalk, enter there. You go dey pray put. when you dey dance, when you dey dance: Obiova, Erakpe, eneh mon neh vae re na, neh khin mi uweh, nu weh khinmi ah eh. Eijio obode gba eh, obuwa, uweh favour eh, alabuweh reh, ai lakute norh suwah, weh help ah eh. Wuen anh! Wuen anh!! Weh rahu nah eh. Oha yisku oyoh, uweh gbalo gha leh. Eborgbe, mue beh olebherere, norh daghe ebor gben. Erakpe, obioba, Iyanro, I beg! Uvhimi aiyan bhuweh. Eo! Erakpe..., obioba..., wueh wuen anh, wuen anh, Omon osuweh norh. Ibhokhesan osi bha bhe norh, Ole norh, ibhokhesan osu weh norh, Omon osuweh norh le beh ba bu weh reh. Weh wuen anh. Eo! Weh wuen obhiaba, wuen anh obhio! wuen anh. Eigbugbe bhe bho norh si ma ni. E..... Oria igbugbe eh. Awa norh. Ulemi Oneh. Wuen anh, wuen anh wowoh! Wuen anh. So, Oni ma rebu wue reh. Uwue gbeloh ghor. Iskuh norh yoh, Onor daghe, ebor arelen enebbeh yeh. Erakpe, obioba, wuen anh. Eni colanut na, ni mah wa le juweh na, ebhie reh ni, ashiendo reh ni, hot ti reh mani, e.... Orueh reh mani, eo! Wuen anh, ukibuiki agbe ghonghon, ah miuki, aigbe ghonghon yanh. Wuen anh, uweh rebor enibhokhan, gbeloh ghor leh. Jio pass ebeh, Oneh examu norh gben nah. Oleh oda leh bu ereh, wuen anh. Jio pass orh. Wue jio pass orh. Bhe norh Ole bue reh. Omon norh su wue, norh. Or ah pass orh, oideh mie bor khian riejuwe. Wuen anh ibha khin mon. Wue khin mon. Bha wuen anh. Eo! Erakpe..., Obiova, Iyanro, orh uweh daghe bor diayeh, okhan - Omon orh su wue norh. Obhokhan khere

norh. Uwe reh bor orh. Wue reh borh. Wuen anh. Ebore alu rebhe, agba lo ghio orh. Ejiore aye, orh ayi skul norh, enio reh akhin, wuen anh, wue wuen anh, deba ah, oye leh buweh reh o!

Translation

The idol we have in Esan land; Erakpe, Obiova, Iyanro. Before you will enter there, appease them, you will go along with, kola, go along with, alligator pepper, you will carry along with...hot, eagle - hot, enter there. You will go along with, native chalk, and enter there. You will be praying on it. When you will be dancing, and be dancing. Obiova, Erakpe, this child that has come, they should save you and you will save them. Do not let the hand of the road conquer them. At home, favour them. They have come to you at your place. Help them. Please, please, raise them, give them strength. If they are schooling, guide them. In their writing, grant them wisdom to see what He writes. Erakpe, Obiova, Iyanro, please, you've heard? It's plead, we are pleading with you. Oh! Erakpe.... Obiova....., you please, please. He's your child. He's also your Esan's child. He is, he's your child. Your dear child has come to you. Please. Oh! Please, my father's child, please my relative, please, no murder in our place. Eeee,..... No commits murder. It's an abomination! He's on the run. Please! Pardon. Please. So, That is why, we run to you, to help, take care of Him. In his schooling, so that he could know how to be intelligent. Erakpe, Obiova, please. This colanut brought to you, there is colanut, alligator pepper is

there, hot is there, eee..... Native chalk is there. Oh! Please, it's month by month we see in this world, When there is new month, there is jubilation. Please, pardon the child. Take care of Him. Let him pass his paper, in the ongoing exam. Hence he ran to you Please. Let him pass it, let him pass it! Just as He has run to you. He's your child. When He passes it! He has something for you. Please, you guys should save him. You should save him, you guys please. Oh! Erakpe,... Obiova,... Iyanro, could you see, how it is? A child, He is your child, your little child He is, you pardon him. You pardon him! Please, Anything he does, take care of Him. Wherever he is, if even it's school, anywhere guide him. Please, you please! Be with him. He ran to you

4.1.2 Appeasement prayer for men (that commits murder intentionally and accidentally) Obiova, Irekpe, Iyanro.

Prayers wey them dey talk; ebha gbeo gbiova, iyan ro.

Oria lueh emiegbe, norh da gboria, odawor Ole khian dor blase orh, bah wor, nah lo bhor, oiyebhe norh, ebhe! Ebhe!! Idedebhe, ebhie, orueh, eh... Ashiendo, gbogbo eh, areluor. Aroluor, Uwei ghunmon. Uweirie... Omhen, omhen - "banga tree", atie omhen onoh omhen ni, urio noh mhen ni, reh ghun olegbe ah. Uwuole norh ah khin isor leh. Ikpedeva, oida la bhe nu wah ni. Ai luor foh, okue receive orh. Orh dah, or dah, or dah, gboria, gbe eh! If itoo much, oni dunmu ni, oida labhor. Eni dunmu ni, oida la bhor. Oida labhor ni Street ti ni, oida labhe bhe eh eh, emina! Oida debah ibhokhan, mudia, oida debah ibo ah

oleh, totia bhawah. Oa daghe wueh, oa daghagbon, ukha mi okha. Until adorlor, eba wor na re dolor. Aidolor foh, oi egbe adah fuo reh.

Translation

Prayers, that they says. Some enchantment! When someone does bad thing, by killing someone and decide to appease the gods, how do they go about it, a very Big native female goat, kola-nuts, native white chalk, alligator pepper, and eagle hot six carton of beeretc; are used. At the sacrifice, it's used to lay curse, and collect banga tree(free plam fronds it's called omen in esan), new front, to dust him, and ask him to go home. Two days, he should not enter the house. After, that, before His reception. If too many people were killed by him, he should not enter the community, he shouldn't enter the community, he shouldn't enter the street, he would not stand with the children stand, He will not join His mates to sit at home. when he sees humans, he will be fidgeting, and will run mad. Until the needful to appease, is done. That He would have peace and sanity.

4.1.3 Appeasement Prayer for Women (that commits adultery) Oboiva, Irekpe, Iyanro gods

For woman! For woman own, woman play am, if woman kill person, owuoh agboria, oi dah la bhe ni vil-la-ge ni. Awa. Oida la bhe ni vil-la-ge ni o! Three shrine ni ma mon bhi village, ojuju ni ma serve, Iyanro, Ibhakpe, Obioba, ei... da la, ei da sabor labhe ni vil-la-ge ni. Owuoh labhor, aidolor soh wuoh! Osokpia ah dolor. Ai dolor soh owuoh, osokpia

ah dolor. Enowuoh, oi va, bhe ni vil-la-ge ni reah. Ova bhe ni vil-la-ge ni, akhin ijiebbhe.(Akpobor) Ai da dolor soh owuoh, osokpia ah dolor. E..., owuoh norh mon Odor, ei da..., orh ah mon Odor bhawah, ei da dor aho bhijie bhebhe. Ei da.... Okpia bhebhe, ida kha khoe o! Eba le bhe vman ni, okpia obhebhe ah kho or, e... Emudo Oleh bhu khonmon, e... mun e... eshi e... Ighe,... ighekpe, that is, e... devil - beans, ai shi ole, oleh bhe'gbe. Ai muikhe kheo. Aro li the street, le ga. Oa luor ni yereh fo, oa luor ni yereh fo! Ai dor gbe ebhe, ai dor gbe ebhe! Oa igbe ebhe, ai dor dah eyon, oi di ihot. Oi di beer, oi di many, many things, for that village. Awa norh. "Owuoh nori Odor, owuoh norh rebhi sordor, oi da, ni ma tio, 'ofi oe bhewe'. Ofioe orh bhewe! Oni gbo kpia." Beus owuoh nori bhi sordor, ai... lue eneh mi na deh, ada lue eneh mi na fo, Ole gbo kpia. Abha da lui the abomination norh le lu ni; ebhe, udo na aka mufiole bhu khonmon, ai si ighekpe Ole bhe'gbe, ai ror agbi khie khian, ror gbi khie li dunmu rebhe, akue or... Akue orh lueba lubhor, e...ehbe, e... ei yin ema, ah.. gbe ene bhe ni, airo yin ema, lueh rebhe. Achi, ebho neh ribhi dunmu. Ei mun e... ema bi ebhe, bi eneke akhin, ojuju. Jia Iyanro. Eni ekhian yi gbo lu khor, our ancestors.

Translation

For woman, for woman own, if a woman play out and if a woman kill someone! She won't enter that village. Abomination! She won't enter that village o! Three shrine that we have in the village; the idol that we serve; Iyanro, Irakpe, Obioba, she will not be able to enter that village. A woman's own is not disregarded but that of the man. The woman will leave that village, to another place (the chanting of fingers)! A woman's own is not disregarded but that of man.

Translation

A woman with a husband, will not..., having, a husband at home, will not have sex, elsewhere. Another man would not have sex with her. The forbidden thing there, is; when another man have sex with her; a stone will be place on her head, devil - beans will be put upon her body, load will be placed on her, and walk her round the street. Thereafter, goat will be killed, and drinks will be bought. The buying of hot drink, beer, and many, many things, in that village. It's an abomination. A woman under a husband will not, that is what the Esan calls: "thrower of leg, in the bush". Thrown of leg in the bush. That, kills a man. Because, a woman in marriage, after doing this thing, can kill a man. When the needful is not been done, over her abomination committed, the goat, the stone, that could have been placed on her head, the devil - bean, will be put upon her body, and danced her round about the entire street, before the needful would be done. Goat, cooking of pounded yam, after killing of the goat, it would be used for the cooking of the pounded

yam and all that will be cooked. They will call people of the street, and carry pounded yam, kolanut and other items to the idol - idia-Iyanro, to appease our ancestors. And during the ritual the man that she committed adultery with must purchase the cloth she wore during the affair and after the cloth has been bought the cloth will be kept at the shrine. The cloth worn during the affair will be kept in the shrine. It has a symbolic meaning which means that the gods has taken away her shame.

Items used for Oboiva, Irekpe, Iyanro divination

1 Kola nut (quantity is not specific)

2 white or native chalk

3 A very big female goat (used during specific ritual example during appeasement ritual for murder and adultery).

4 Alligator pepper (quantity not specified)

5 Egale hot (emphasis on the egale brand)

6 Six carton of beer (needed and used for appeasement ritual specifically for murder case

7 Fresh palm fronds (needed during appeasement ritual for murder)

4.2.1 Analysis of Praise/chant for Oboiva

Ojuju wey we get for Ishan land; Erakpe, Obiova, Iyanro. Before you go enter there, appease them, you go carry kola, carry alligator pepper, you go carry... hot, eagle-hot, enter there. You go carry white chalk, enter there. You go dey pray put. when you dey dance, when you dey dance: Obioba, Erakpe, eneh mon neh vae re na, neh khin mi uweh, nu weh khinmi ah eh. Eijio obode gba eh, obuwa, uweh favour eh, alabuweh reh, ai lakute norh suwah, weh help ah eh. Wuen anh! Wuen anh!! Weh rahu nah eh. Oha yisku oyoh, uweh gbalo gha leh. Ebor gbe, mue beh olebherere, norh daghe ebor gben. Erakpe, Obioba, Iyanro, I beg! Uvhimi aiyah bhuweh. Eo! Erakpe..., Obioba..., wueh wuen anh, wuen anh, Omon osuweh norh. Ibhokhesan osi bha bhe norh, Ole norh, ibhokhesan osu weh norh, Omon osuweh norh le beh ba bu weh reh. Weh wuen anh. Eo! Weh wuen obhiaba, wuen anh obhio! wuen anh. Eigbugbe bhe bho norh si ma ni. E..... Oria igbugbe eh. Awa norh. Ulemi Oneh. Wuen anh, wuen anh wowoh! Wuen anh. So, Oni ma rebu wue reh. Uwue gbeloh ghor. Iskuh norh yoh, Onor daghe, ebor arelen enebbeh yeh. Erakpe, obioba, wuen anh. Eni colanut na, ni mah wa le juweh na, ebhie reh ni, ashiendo reh ni, hot ti reh mani, e.... Orueh reh mani, eo! Wuen anh, ukibuiki agbe ghonghon, ah miuki, aigbe ghonghon yanh. Wuen anh, uweh rebor enibhokhan, gbeloh ghor leh. Jio pass ebeh, Oneh examu norh gben nah. Oleh oda leh bu ereh, wuen anh. Jio pass orh. Wue jio pass orh. Bhe norh Ole bue reh. Omon norh su wue, norh. Or ah pass orh, oideh mie bor khian riejuwe. Wuen anh ibha khin mon. Wue khin mon. Bha wuen anh. Eo! Erakpe..., Obiova, Iyanro, orh uweh daghe bor diayeh, okhan - Omon orh su wue norh. Obhokhan khere

norh. Uwe reh bor orh. Wue reh borh. Wuen anh. Ebore alu rebhe, agba lo ghio orh. Ejiore aye, orh ayi skul norh, enio reh akhin, wuen anh, wue wuen anh, deba ah, oye leh buweh reh o!

Translation

The idol we have in Esan land; Erakpe, Obiova, Iyanro. Before you will enter there, appease them, you will go along with, kola, go along with, alligator pepper, you will carry along with...hot, eagle - hot, enter there. You will go along with, native chalk, and enter there. You will be praying on it. When you will be dancing, and be dancing. Obiova, Erakpe, this child that has come, they should save you and you will save them. Do not let the hand of the road conquer them. At home, favour them. They have come to you at your place. Help them. Please, please, raise them, give them strength. If they are schooling, guide them. In their writing, grant them wisdom to see what He writes. Erakpe, Obiova, Iyanro, please, you've heard? It's plead, we are pleading with you. Oh! Erakpe.... Obiova....., you please, please. He's your child. He's also your Esan's child. He is, he's your child. Your dear child has come to you. Please. Oh! Please, my father's child, please my relative, please, no murder in our place. Eeee,..... No commits murder. It's an abomination! He's on the run. Please! Pardon. Please. So, That is why, we run to you, to help, take care of Him. In his schooling, so that he could know how to be intelligent. Erakpe, Obiova, please. This colanut brought to you, there is colanut, alligator pepper is

there, hot is there, eee..... Native chalk is there. Oh! Please, it's month by month we see in this world, When there is new month, there is jubilation. Please, pardon the child. Take care of Him. Let him pass his paper, in the ongoing exam. Hence he ran to you Please. Let him pass it, let him pass it! Just as He has run to you. He's your child. When He passes it! He has something for you. Please, you guys should save him. You should save him, you guys please. Oh! Erakpe,... Obiova,... Iyanro, could you see, how it is? A child, He is your child, your little child He is, you pardon him. You pardon him! Please, Anything he does, take care of Him. Wherever he is, if even it's school, anywhere guide him. Please, you please! Be with him. He ran to you.

Application of Ethnography of Communication

S – Setting and Scene: The setting is a sacred location, a shrine dedicated to Erakpe, Obiova, and Iyanro. The atmosphere is spiritual, involving traditional items like kolanut, alligator pepper, hot drink, and white chalk. The scene is one of reverence and supplication.

P – Participants: The speaker is a priest or devotee (ohen). The addressees are the deities being invoked (Erakpe, Obiova, Iyanro). The audience may include other worshippers or assistants who respond with affirmations like Wuen anh! (an Esan exclamation similar to Amen or so be it).

E – Ends (Purpose and Outcome): The communicative goal is spiritual appeasement and petition for blessings health, success (pass exam), protection, and prosperity. The final outcome expected is divine favour and removal of obstacles.

A – Act Sequence: The sequence begins with offering items (kolanut, alligator pepper, egale hot, native chalk), where they ought to be proceeds with invocation and calling the name of the of gods, transitions into praise and supplication (Obiova, Erakpe, I beg!), and ends with reinforcement through repetition (Wuen anh!). This repetition enhances ritual force and rhythm.

K – Key (Tone and Manner): The tone is solemn, rhythmic, and honouring. It shifts between prayer and chant, indicating both respect and emotional intensity. The chant-like repetition Wuen anh signifies affirmation, similar to Amen in Christian worship.

I – Instrumentalities: The medium is spoken Esan, mixed with ritual formulas, repetitions, and praise names. The performance may also include drumming, dance, and gestures. Language here is performative, it is meant to do something spiritually, not just say something.

N – Norms of Interaction: Only certain individuals (priests, elders, initiated persons) can lead such speech acts. Interruptions or casual speech are forbidden. The community recognizes the sacredness of the act, everyone must observe ritual decorum.

G – Genre: The genre is ritual incantation and prayer, a traditional religious speech form combining elements of invocation, praise poetry, and supplication.

In summary

The settings is a scared location and a shrine dedicated to(Irekpe, Iyanro, Oboiva) divination items like kolanut, alligator pepper among others are used during the Praise/chant. And the participants involved are the priest (the one communing with the gods) and the addresses are (Oboiva, Iyanro, Irekpe.) and the worshippers. The sole purpose of the chant/praise is to appease the gods before petition will be made. Esan language is the language used in the communication during the ritual. When prayers are being made the affirmation is made and decorum must be observed.

4.2.2 Analysis of Appeasement Prayer for men Obiova, Irekpe, Iyanro.

Prayers wey them dey talk; ebha gbeo gbiova, iyan ro.

Oria lueh emiegbe, norh da gboria, odawor Ole khian dor blase orh, bah wor, nah lo bhor, oiyebe norh, ebhe! Ebhe!! Idedebhe, ebhie, orueh, eh... Ashiendo, gbogbo eh, areluor. Aroluor, Uwei ghunmon. Uweirie... Omhen, omhen - "banga tree", atie omhen onoh omhen ni, urio noh mhen ni, reh ghun olegbe ah. Uwuole norh ah khin isor leh. Ikpedeva, oida la bhe nu wah ni. Ai luor foh, okue receive orh. Orh dah, or dah, or dah, gboria, gbe eh! If itoo much, oni dunmu ni, oida labhor. Eni dunmu ni, oida la bhor. Oida labhor ni

Street ti ni, oida labhe bhe eh eh, emina! Oida debah ibhokhan, mudia, oida debah ibo ah oleh, totia bhuwah. Oa daghe wueh, oa daghagbon, ukha mi okha. Until adorlor, eba wor na re dolor. Aidolor foh, oi egbe adah fuo reh.

Translation

Prayers, that they says. Some enchantment! When someone does bad thing, by killing someone and decide to appease the gods, how do they go about it, a very Big native female goat, kola-nuts, native white chalk, alligator pepper, and eagle hot six carton of beeretc; are used. At the sacrifice, it's used to lay curse, and collect banga tree(free plam fronds it's called omen in esan), new front, to dust him, and ask him to go home. Two days, he should not enter the house. After, that, before His reception. If too many people were killed by him, he should not enter the community, he shouldn't enter the community, he shouldn't enter the street, he would not stand with the children stand, He will not join His mates to sit at home. when he sees humans, he will be fidgeting, and will run mad. Until the needful to appease, is done. That He would have peace and sanity.

Application of the Ethnography of Communication to the Esan Prayer

S – Setting and Scene

Setting:

This prayer takes place in a traditional Esan religious context, likely during ritual worship, libation, or invocation of ancestral or spiritual forces.

The physical setting is in the shrine, of (Obiouva, Iyanro, and Irekpe.)

Scene:

The atmosphere is sacred, solemn, and intense, marked by chants, repetition, and invocation. The setting reflects deep reverence and communication with divine beings.

P – Participants

Speaker: The chief priest (Ohen) responsible for invoking the gods.

Addressees: The deities or spirits being invoked (e.g., Iyanro, Obiouva, Irekpe), and the audience is (the worshipper that committed the abomination).

Other Participants: Worshippers that will to affirm the prayers of forgiveness that is being said.

E – Ends (Goals or Purposes)

Primary Purpose: To appease the gods and ensure their sin(abomination) is forgiven

Secondary Purposes:

To renew social and spiritual harmony between humans and the supernatural world.

To affirm faith and the continuity of Esan traditional belief systems.

A – Act Sequence

This refers to the order or structure of the communication.

1. Invocation of the deities: “Ebha gbeo gbiova, iyan ro.” (A call to the gods).
2. Praise and acknowledgment: “Oria lueh emiegbe, norh da gboria...” (Expressing reverence and respect).
3. Petitions or requests: “Ai luor foh, okue receive orh.” (Asking the deity to accept the offering).
4. Warnings and ritual instructions: “If it too much, oni dunmu ni, oida labhor.” (Instructions about proper offering).
5. Closing affirmations: “Aidolor foh, oi egbe adah fuo reh.” (Sealing the prayer and declaring completion).

K – Key (Tone or Manner)

The tone is ritualistic, commanding, and reverent.

It mixes solemnity with urgency, showing the speaker's deep respect and dependence on divine power.

I – Instrumentalities

Channel: Spoken and chanted oral performance.

Code: Esan language, possibly with specialized ritual vocabulary not used in everyday speech.

Style: Formulaic, poetic, and rhythmic, characteristic of sacred discourse.

N – Norms of Interaction and Interpretation

Interactional Norms: Only initiated individuals (priests, elders) are permitted to perform such prayers.

Interpretive Norms: Each phrase or chant has symbolic meaning understood within Esan cosmology.

For instance, “Oida labhor” may refer to purifying or balancing offerings.

Interruptions or casual talk are taboo during such a ritual.

G – Genre

Genre: Ritual prayer or incantation.

This genre belongs to the broader category of religious discourse within Esan oral tradition.

It combines elements of prayer, poetry, and invocation.

In summary

In a shrine of the gods (oboiva, Iyanro, irekpe) invocation of ancestral forces the atmosphere is solemn and intense as the (ohen) does the necessary ritual and the man who committed murder must be part of the ritual. The purpose of the prayer is to appease the gods, ask for their forgiveness to rest upon the man that committed the abominable act. The ritual of appeasement is more of oral performances said in esan language. Murder is an abominable act to the gods (oboiva, Iyanro, irekpe) and this prayer is done majorly for purification, cleansing and forgiveness. And decorum during the prayer is a must.

4.2.3 Analysis of appeasement prayer for Women for Oboiva, Irekpe, Iyanro gods

For woman! For woman own, woman play am, if woman kill person, owuoh agboria, oi dah la bhe ni vil-la-ge ni. Awa. Oida la bhe ni vil-la-ge ni o! Three shrine ni ma mon bhi

village, ojuju ni ma serve, Iyanro, ibhakpe, obioba, ei... da la, ei da sabor labhe ni vil-la-ge ni. Owuoh labhor, aidolor soh wuoh! Osokpia ah dolor. Ai dolor soh owuoh, osokpia ah dolor. Enowuoh, oi va, bhe ni vil-la-ge ni reah. Ova bhe ni vil-la-ge ni, akhin ijiebbhe.(Akpobor) Ai da dolor soh owuoh, osokpia ah dolor. E..., owuoh norh mon Odor, ei da..., orh ah mon Odor bhuwah, ei da dor aho bhijie bhebhe. Ei da.... Okpia bhebhe, ida kha khoe o! Eba le bhe vman ni, okpia obhebhe ah kho or, e... Emudo Oleh bhu khonmon, e... mun e... eshi e... Ighe,... ighekpe, that is, e... devil - beans, ai shi ole, oleh bhe'gbe. Ai muikhe kheo. Aro li the street, le ga. Oa luor ni yereh fo, oa luor ni yereh fo! Ai dor gbe ebhe, ai dor gbe ebhe! Oa igbe ebhe, ai dor dah eyon, oi di ihot. Oi di beer, oi di many, many things, for that village. Awa norh. "Owuoh nori Odor, owuoh norh rebhi sordor, oi da, ni ma tio, 'ofi oe bhewe'. Ofioe orh bhewe! Oni gbo kpia." Bcus owuoh nori bhi sordor, ai... lue eneh mi na deh, ada lue eneh mi na fo, Ole gbo kpia. Abha da lui the abomination norh le lu ni; ebhe, udo na aka mufiole bhu khonmon, ai si ighekpe Ole bhe'gbe, ai ror agbi khie khian, ror gbi khie li dunmu rebhe, akue or... Akue orh lueba lubhor, e...ehbe, e... ei yin ema, ah.. gbe ene bhe ni, airo yin ema, lueh rebhe. Achi, ebho neh ribhi dunmu. Ei mun e... ema bi ebhe, bi eneke akhin, ojuju. Jia Iyanro. Eni ekhian yi gbo lu khor, our ancestors.

Translation

For woman, for woman own, if a woman play out and if a woman kill someone! She won't enter that village. Abomination! She won't enter that village o! Three shrine that we have in the village; the idol that we serve; Iyanro, Irakpe, Obioba, she will not be able to enter that village. A woman's own is not disregarded but that of the man. The woman will leave that village, to another place (the chanting of fingers)! A woman's own is not disregarded but that of man. When a man commits murder the gods(Oboiva , Iyanro, Irekpe) can forgive him but when a woman commits murder she can't be forgiven because traditionally it is believed that a woman is to protect,nuture,grow, keep. And if he woman commits murder that means she has lost her woman attributes and that will lead to her banishment.

Translation

A woman with a husband, will not..., having, a husband at home, will not have sex, elsewhere. Another man would not have sex with her. The forbidden thing there, is; when another man have sex with her; a stone will be place on her head, devil - beans will be put upon her body, load will be placed on her, and walk her round the street. Thereafter, goat will be killed, and drinks will be bought. The buying of hot drink, beer, and many, many things, in that village. It's an abomination. A woman under a husband will not, that is what the Esan calls: "thrower of leg, in the bush". Thrown of leg in the bush. That, kills a man. Because, a woman in marriage, after doing this thing, can kill a man. When the

needful is not been done, over her abomination committed, the goat, the stone, that could have been placed on her head, the devil - bean, will be put upon her body, and danced her round about the entire street, before the needful would be done. Goat, cooking of pounded yam, after killing of the goat, it would be used for the cooking of the pounded yam and all that will be cooked. They will call people of the street, and carry pounded yam, kolanut and other items to the idol - idia-Iyanro, to appease our ancestors. And during the ritual the man that she committed adultery with must purchase the cloth she wore during the affair and after the cloth has been bought the cloth will be kept at the shrine. The cloth worn during the affair will be kept in the shrine It has a symbolic meaning which means that the gods has taken away her shame.

Items use during the appeasement of adultery (when adultery is committed by a woman)

12 big, gigantic tubers of yam

A very big female goat

Kola nut (quantity is not specified)

Native chalk

Egusi and every ingredients to cook egusi soup for the pounded yam

Eagle hot.

S – Setting and Scene

The setting here is the Esan traditional village. The scene described occurs during a ritual purification process following a woman's abominable act, particularly adultery

This is a religious and judicial setting, combining moral law, spiritual cleansing, and public performance. It usually takes place in the shrine and in the streets of the village and village square, where the community can witness the act of purification.

P – Participants

1. The woman who committed the abomination (offender)
2. The village elders or priests (ohen) who conduct the ritual
3. The villagers/community members who serve as witnesses
4. The gods or idols (Iyanro, irakpe, obioba) being appeased
5. The ancestors who are invoked for forgiveness

Each participant plays a role in maintaining social balance, religious order, and moral discipline.

E – Ends (Goals and Outcomes)

The primary goals of the communication are:

To confess and publicly acknowledge wrongdoing

To restore purity to the offender and the community

To appease the gods and ancestors through sacrifice and ritual speech

To reinforce moral and social norms, especially regarding marital fidelity

The final outcome is spiritual cleansing, community reconciliation, and the reaffirmation of traditional Esan values.

A – Act Sequence (Form and Order of the Speech)

The act sequence unfolds in a ritualized pattern:

1. Accusation and declaration of the abomination (spoken publicly)
2. Condemnation and pronouncement of taboos
3. Prescriptive ritual acts placing a stone on her head, devil-beans on her body, and walking her through the village
4. Sacrifice and offering killing of a goat, cooking of pounded yam
5. Appeasement prayers and chants directed to the idols (Iyanro, irakpe, obioba)

The sequence blends spoken words, chants, and symbolic actions, each carrying communicative meaning.

K – Key (Tone, Manner, or Spirit)

The tone is serious, sacred, and judgmental.

The speaker emphasize on the abominable act, and moral warnings to express the gravity of the offense:

This tone marks the judgmental, solemn and religious atmosphere of the event and shows that communication is not casual, but ritual and performative.

I – Instrumentalities (Forms and Channels of Communication)

Language: Esan language (translated to English here).

Channel: Oral speech, chanting, and ritual performance.

Non-verbal cues: Dancing, carrying stones, devil-beans, public procession, and sacrifice all serve as symbolic acts of communication.

The combination of verbal and non-verbal channels communicates repentance, shame, and cleansing.

N – Norms of Interaction and Interpretation

The norms reflect Esan moral codes:

A married woman must remain faithful to her husband.

Certain acts (like murder or adultery) are taboos (aru) and offend the gods.

Violations require public acknowledgment and purification.

Interpretation of these norms ensures social harmony and spiritual safety.

Everyone knows the expected response: repentance, sacrifice, and community reconciliation.

G – Genre

The genre is ritual speech and religious discourse.

It falls under traditional religious communication, combining elements of moral instruction, ritual narration, and sacred performance.

In summary

The setting is a religious and judicial setting, combining moral law, spiritual cleansing, and public performance. It usually starts from the street of the village, to the market square, and then to the shrine of cleaning and forgiveness. The participants involved are the

woman who committed adultery, The (ohen) , the gods (Oboiva, Iyanro, Irekpe) that are being appeased, villagers/community members who serve as witnesses. And norms demands that a married woman remain faithful to her husband.

Analysis of items used for Oboiva, Irekpe, Iyanro divination

1. Native kola nut and English kolanut (Three native kola nuts and English kola nuts the quantity not specified) **Ebhié**

It's a very important items during rituals it cannot be excluded.

No matter how finically buoyant the worshipper is there must be kola nuts in that ritual

That's the tradition and it's used in all rituals to be done. The native kola nuts(the pink color kolanut) must be three in number, while for the English kolanut the quantity not specified.

2. White or native chalk **Ére**

White or native chalk is all used, it's necessary and cannot be exempted from the items used during rituals. And it's used in all rituals.

3 A very big female goat (used during specific ritual example during appeasement ritual for murder and adultery). **Akhuegbe**

It's used during rituals for murder and adultery case and the goat must be a female goat, and must be very big.

When the appeasement ritual for a man that murder someone (accidentally or intentionally) is going on the big female goat's blood, is used to wash the sins of the man. The goat's blood symbolizes cleaning of the man. While in the cleaning/appeasement ritual for a woman that commits adultery, The very big female goat's blood is used to appease the gods and used to cook the egusi soup that will be cooked after her cleansing.

4. Alligator pepper (quantity not specified) **Ésiedo**

Alligator pepper is as important as the kola nuts . It's a very important item and it's used in all rituals .

5 Eagle hot (emphasis on the eagle brand)

Eagle hot is preferred by the gods not any other brand or kind of gin. It's very important and it's used in all rituals.

No matter how finically buoyant the worshipper is eagle hot is the only hot or gin they should buy.

6 Six carton of beer (needed and used for appeasement ritual specifically for murder case)

It's needed only when a ritual of appeasement need to be done. And it's must be six cartons (more will be demanded if needed)

7 Fresh palm fronds (needed during appeasement ritual for murder)

In esan palm fronds is called omhen and it is used as part of the cleaning ritual and it's used only for murder case.

In summary if theses items are not complete the the ritual can not be fully completed. They are all necessary items for divination.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

Oboiva, Irekpe, Iyanro are gods in Esan and Irekpe is the head of the Oboiva and Iyanro. Oboiva, Irekpe, Iyanro hate murder (be it intentional, or accidental) murder and adultery is regarded as an abomination . Kola-nuts and eagle hot are compulsory items that must be brought along side any other items that will be needed for the ritual. Oboiva, Irekpe, Iyanro have different shrines located at different locations in the same village but the same ohen that serves the three of them. When a woman commit murder she will be banished from the village there's no excuse or ritual that can be done for oboiva, irekpe, Iyanro to forgive her. There are children of the gods these are special children that are born into the indigenous people homes be it a Worshipper or not. The children of the gods can be male and female, they are special children because they don't fall sick, and

they rarely fall sick. The main purpose for the gods children is for them to grow up and become a priest (male ,ohen) or priestess (the priestess of utor. Utor is the goddess of the river and it must be a woman or female that will be her priestess). And the gods children will live like normal children, they will go to school, work and so on . But for no reason will they travel out of the country. And when Oboiva, Irekpe, Iyanro wants the gods children to come and serve as priest the gods will call the gods children by itself. It is believed that when the prayers is said that the gods will arise and immediately start answering their prayers.

And if such results doesn't happen after a prayer then they will continue praising the gods until the gods respond. And all items for divination must be available there's no excuse for that. When ever prayers and ritual are going on , the (ohen) calls the name of the three gods (Oboiva, Iyanro, Irekpe) this is because they believe that the gods and siblings and (irekpe) is the oldest among the three .

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the study, major findings, conclusion, and recommendations. It highlights how language functions within Esan traditional religion and divination, emphasizing the communicative patterns, cultural meanings, and linguistic features that sustain traditional worship practices. The chapter also provides recommendations for the preservation and promotion of indigenous language use in religious contexts.

5.1 Summary of the Study

This study examined Language Use in Religion and Divination among Esan Traditional Worshippers. The research aimed to explore how language functions as a medium of communication, ritual performance, and identity expression in Esan traditional religious practices. It analyzed the use of Esan language in prayers, chants,

incantations, and divination rituals, showing how linguistic forms carry sacred meanings and cultural values.

The study adopted the Ethnography of Communication theory as its theoretical framework, which helped to explain how language use varies according to context, participants, and cultural norms. Data were collected from oral performances, interviews of informant, and observations among selected traditional worshippers and diviners in Esanland. The data were analyzed to reveal patterns of communicative behaviour and the relationship between language, belief, and ritual practice.

5.2 Findings

The study revealed the following key findings:

1. Language as a Sacred Medium:

Esan traditional worshippers use language not only for communication but as a powerful spiritual tool. Certain words, chants, and incantations are believed to invoke the presence of deities or influence supernatural forces.

2. Contextual Variation:

Language use varies depending on the type of deity being worshipped, the ritual setting, and the status of the participants. For instance, priests (ohen) use more formal and formulaic language than ordinary worshippers.

3. Preservation of Cultural Identity:

The continued use of Esan language in religious practices contributes to the preservation of Esan cultural heritage and strengthens communal identity among adherents.

4. Influence of Modernization:

The study observed that younger generations are gradually shifting towards English and Pidgin English, Christianity and other religions, which threatens the continuity of indigenous religious language use.

5. Divination as a Communicative Event:

Divination involves a structured communication process between the diviner, the spirits, and the worshipper, where the diviner acts as a linguistic mediator interpreting spiritual messages into human language.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concludes that language plays a central role in Esan traditional religion and divination. It serves as a bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds, conveying

cultural wisdom, sacred meanings, and community values. The Esan language, through its ritual and religious use, embodies the people's worldview and ensures continuity of their traditional beliefs. However, modernization and linguistic shift pose serious challenges to its survival, necessitating deliberate efforts toward preservation.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Language Preservation Efforts:

The Esan language should be actively taught in schools and cultural centers to ensure its continuity, especially in religious and cultural domains.

2. Documentation of Oral Traditions:

Scholars, linguists, and cultural institutions should record and archive traditional prayers, chants, and divination language for future research and preservation.

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