

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF FUNERAL DIRGES IN IKA

BY

JOSHUA IFEANYI UWADINMA

ART2100853

DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS STUDIES

FACULTY OF ARTS,

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY,

NIGERIA

OCTOBER, 2025.

STYLISTICS ANALYSIS OF FUNERAL DIRGES IN IKA

BY

JOSHUA IFEANYI UWADINMA

ART2100853

**BEING A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
LINGUISTICS STUDIES, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
BENIN CITY, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ART (B.A) DEGREE IN LINGUISTICS
STUDIES**

OCTOBER, 2025.

APPROVAL

I, **JOSHUA IFEANYI UWADINMA**, a student of the Department of Linguistics Studies, University of Benin with Matriculation number **ART2100853** completed the requirements for the course work and research for the Bachelor of Arts Degree of the University of Benin. The work embodied in this project is original and has not been submitted in part or whole for any other degree or diploma programme of this or any other university or institution.

JOSHUA IFEANYI UWADINMA
(Author)

Date

DR. J. O. ONU
(Project Supervisor)

Date

Dr. (Mrs.) P. O. Solomon-Etefia
(Head of Department)

Date

External Examiner

Date

PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATION

I, **JOSHUA IFEANYI UWADINMA** with matriculation number **ART2100853** declare that this work titled “**STYLISTICS ANALYSIS OF FUNERAL DIRGES IN IKA**” has successfully passed the anti-plagiarism test (with a score of %), and so does not violate any copyright regulations.

Sign: _____

JOSHUA IFEANYI UWADINMA

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty for His unfailing grace and mercy shows me in the course of my academic journey in the University of Benin. This journey would not have been easy and successful without you Lord.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My immense gratitude goes to God Almighty for the gift of life, good health, wisdom, knowledge, understanding and perseverance needed to create this project.

I sincerely appreciate the fatherly support of my reliable supervisor of inestimable value, Dr. J. O. Onu, for creating time, making accurate corrections, his patience, guidance, great insight and professional advice at all stages of this project.

Also, I sincerely appreciate all the lecturers in the Department of Linguistics Studies, University of Benin among whom are, Mr. Ajala, Prof. M. S. Agbo, Dr. A. E. Ideh, just to mention a few who has been supportive in one way or the other towards the completion of my programme.

My sincere appreciation goes to my wonderful Parents, Mr. and Mrs. Uwadinma for their love, advice, financial and moral support. My sincere appreciation also goes to my lovely siblings, Christian, Calitus, and Irene, for their moral support and prayers in the course of my academic journey.

My sincere gratitude goes to my amiable friend, Joy Isioma Chibuike, my uncles; Anthony Ogor, and Ebitorm Paul Aghananti for their support in one way or the other.

My sincere appreciation also goes to my uncle Mr. Peter Igwubor, Pastor Henry Igwubor, Dr. Biose Austin, Late Corlinus Nwanonochia, Uzoma Ehikwe, Anthony Tochukwu Victory, and my friends Benjamin Ezeneme Ifeanyi, Michael Uzundu, and my Linguistics and Igbo family for their love, care and moral support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page	ii
Approval	iii
Plagiarism Certification	iv
Dedication	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	vii
Abstract	ix

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background to the Study	2
1.2 Statement of the Problem	4
1.3 Aim of the Study	5
1.4 Objective of the Study	5
1.5 Research Questions	5
1.6 Language and People of Ika	6
1.7 Scope of the Study	7
1.8 Significance of the Study	8
1.9 Methodology	8

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction	10
2.1 Conceptual Review of Literature	10
2.2 Previous Studies	17
2.3 Concern of the Present Study	20

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 Introduction	21
3.1 Ethnography of Communication Theory	22
3.2 Relevance of Ethnography of Communication to the Research	25

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction	28
4.1 Data and Analysis	29
4.2 Analysis of Stylistic Features Associated with Ika Dirge	40
4.3 Summary of the Analysis	47

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction	49
5.1 Summary	49
5.2 Findings	50
5.3 Conclusion	51
5.4 Recommendations for Further Research	52
References	53

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the stylistic features of selected funeral dirges in the Ika dialect, with the aim of identifying the linguistic and artistic devices that characterize them as a unique form of oral poetry. The work explores how language is used in Ika dirges to express grief, convey communal beliefs about death, and preserve cultural identity. The study adopts a qualitative research design, drawing data from field recordings, oral interviews, and transcriptions of authentic funeral performances among native Ika speakers. The analysis is based on stylistic and ethnographic frameworks, which allow for the interpretation of the dirges within their linguistic, cultural, and situational contexts. Findings from the analysis reveal that Ika funeral dirges are rich in figurative language such as metaphor, repetition, personification, imagery, and symbolism. These stylistic features heighten emotional expression and strengthen the communal bond during mourning. The dirges also reflect the Ika worldview that regards death not as an end, but as a transition to the ancestral world. Moreover, the performance of dirges marked by call-and-response patterns, tonal variation, and rhythmic delivery demonstrates the aesthetic and participatory nature of Ika oral tradition. The study concludes that Ika funeral dirges serve both artistic and social purposes: they console the bereaved, immortalize the dead, and transmit moral and cultural values across generations. The research therefore recommends the preservation, documentation, and inclusion of Ika oral literature in educational and cultural programs to safeguard the linguistic and cultural heritage of the people.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Funeral dirge is a sub genre of oral poetry, its occupies a prominent place in African societies. It is a mournful song or chant performed to express grief, honour the departed and console the living. Funeral dirges are more than mere lamentations, they are aesthetic, cultural and spiritual expression that gives insight into the people's worldview about death, life and continuity. These dirges are performed using carefully chosen words, repetition, metaphors, tonal variations and personification that intensify the mood of mourning while at the same time reinforcing communal solidarity. Among the Ika and Igbo world view, funeral dirge is seen as a belief and practice among them to wish the departed safe journey to the great world and also as a way of rekindling the people's belief about death and life.

Stylistic analysis on the other hand is the systematic study of the distinctive features of a text with the aim of explaining how such features creates meaning and achieves particular effects. It is concerned with the relationship between languages and artistic expression, showing how choice of words, sound patterns, imagery, personification, and rhetorical devices shapes communication.

When applied to oral literature, stylistics reveals the artistry of performance and cultural significance embedded in traditional form of expression.

1.1 Background to the Study

The Ika people of Delta State, Nigeria have a rich tradition of oral literature, which plays a vital role in communal values, beliefs, and emotions among the various oral forms are the funeral dirges. A sorrowful poetic expression performed during burial ceremonies to mourn the death, console the living and affirm the communities understanding about life, death and afterlife.

Funeral dirges are not only emotional lamentations but also expression embedded with stylistic features such as metaphors, repetition, personification, symbolism and rhythm. They serve both as cultural texts and spiritual performance. In Igbo world view, death is seen not as an end, but as a transition into the ancestral realm. Thus funeral dirges carry messages of ancestral farewell, praise, reflection and sometimes criticisms, especially when sang for elders, titled individual or communities heroes held in high esteem.

Obi (2020), examine the influence of modern religion and urban culture of dirge performance. He went further to explain how three major forces; Christianity, code-switching (mixing Igbo and English/Pidgin), and urbanization have changed Igbo funeral dirges (oral lamentations, elegies and attendant performance). Traditional invocations of ancestors, cosmological references, and ritualized formulas are often retained but are frequently interwoven with Christian hymns, Bible quotations, or Christian idioms. In some cases Christian hymns replace indigenous chants entirely for parts of the rite; in

others a hybrid performance alternates between dirge and hymn. This reflects religious syncretism rather than total replacement. Dirge performers increasingly mix Igbo with English or Nigerian Pidgin. Code-switching functions pragmatically (to address mixed-language audiences, urban kin, or media listeners) and symbolically (signaling modernity, education, or cosmopolitan identity). The mixing can change how metaphors and ritual speech acts work some culturally-dense Igbo tropes are downplayed or translated, altering depth of local reference. Urban funerals often aim for visibility (large halls, printed posters, professional MCs, recorded tributes) and so funeral dirges adapt: shorter performances, amplified sound systems, recorded tracks replacing live singing in some contexts, and the performance becoming part of a staged public event. Commercial pressures and time constraints in cities encourage truncated or adapted dirge forms.

Okafor (2018) focuses on the documentation, preservation, and translation of indigenous dirges traditional mourning songs performed in a specific Igbo community (likely in southeastern Nigeria). He asserts that there should be recording, analyzing, and translation of oral texts before they disappear due to modernization, urbanization, and the influence of Christianity and digital media. Okafor demonstrates how documenting and translating dirges serves both academic and cultural preservation goals.

Nwosu (2016) is a study that examines the thematic structure and cultural functions of dirges traditional mourning songs in Igbo society. The work explores how dirge texts embody loss, memory, moral instruction, and social values, emphasizing their

significance as vehicles for cultural expression, emotional healing, and moral education. The study situates dirges within the broader framework of oral literature forms that combine artistry with communal values and that serve both aesthetic and social purposes.

Despite the cultural richness, funeral dirges are gradually declining due to modernization, Christianity, and the erosion of oral traditions. Very few scholarly works have given stylistic attentions to dirges especially in dialectal variation like the Ika dialect, which adds a unique linguistic flavor. This study therefore seeks to fill the gaps by analyzing selected funeral dirges using tools to analyze and uncover languages as being used artistically to express grief, respect and cultural values.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

While there are studies on Igbo oral literature, few have undertaken a stylistic analysis of funeral dirges particularly those rendered in local dialect like Ika. Many dirges remain undocumented or unanalyzed from a linguistic and stylistic point of view.

This neglect undermines the literary values of dirges as verbal and form. Also the stylistic devices used in dirges are often overlooked, yet they are central to understanding how meanings, emotions and cultural memory are conveyed.

This study investigates the stylistic elements of selected Ika funeral dirges to highlight the cultural and literary significance.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The Aim of this study is to conduct a stylistics analysis of funeral dirges in Ika dirges.

1.4 Objective of the Study

1. Collect and document selected funeral dirges from the Ika communities as oral poetic texts.
2. Identify and analyze the stylistic devices (e.g. imagery, repetition, personification, metaphor, tonal variation) employed in the dirges.
3. Examine the communicative and cultural functions of these stylistic features in relation to Ika beliefs about death, mourning and afterlife.
4. To contribute to the preservation and appreciation of Ika oral tradition by highlighting the aesthetic and cultural values embedded in funeral dirges.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How can selected Ika funeral dirges be collected and documented into oral poetic texts?
2. What stylistic devices (such as imagery, repetition, personification, metaphor and tonal variations) are employed in Ika funeral dirges?

3. How do these stylistic features perform communicative and cultural functions in relation to Ika belief about death, mourning and afterlife?
4. How can the documentation and analysis of Ika funeral dirges contribute to the preservation and appreciation of Ika oral tradition?

1.6 Language and People of Ika

The history of Ika people involves series of migration and cultural blending with various clans tracing their origins to both the ancient Bini kingdom and parts of Igbo land particularly between the 17th and 14th century A.D. The Ika nation is a collection of diverse groups that form a distinct ethnic identity, evident in the unique Igboid language with Edo influences and cultural practices among the Ika people of present day Nigeria.

Ika shares borders with the Binis in the West, with Esans in the North, with Aniochas in the East and with Ukwanis in the South. Ika people is an agrarian minded people with rich natural resources and are found in two local government area of Ika South and Ika North east.

Origin and Migration

Bini Account of Migration

Many Ika clans claim to have migrated from the ancient Bini kingdom in present day capital of Edo State, with many claiming war, slavery and desire for fertile land as the reason for migration.

Orally, the first wave of migration was lead by a man name Eka into Agbor clan or kingdom and this claim can be justified by the cultural and political features evident in Agbor as being same as that of the present Benin City of today. The features can be seen in the names, clans, titles, kingship model and at times the same linguistics features of the same Benin City.

Nri Account of Migration

Most clans within the Ika region also lay claim to Nri as being a wandering priest who moved from one community to another preaching and advocating for the right justice system.

These claim can be said to be true as most Ika community speak Igbo, bear Igbo names and equally shares some mode of worship same as the core-Igbo state and also observe the traditional four (4) market days of the Igbo.

Present Day Location

The Ika people are primarily found in Delta State and neighbouring communities in Edo State. But the language is spoken predominantly in Agbor, Umunede, Akumazi, Igbodo, Abavo, Owa kingdom, Igbanke and Ekpon in Edo State.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This research focuses on the stylistic features and analysis of funeral dirges in Ika dialect of Igbo language. It is limited to selected dirges collected from traditional funeral ceremonies and elders informant in specific Ika speaking communities. The study emphasis on the linguistics literary and cultural aspects of the dirges rather than musical or performance elements.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the field of African oral literature, stylistic and Igbo cultural studies.

By analyzing, funeral dirges stylistically, it provides insight into how languages operates as a tool for mourning, remembrance and cultural transmission.

It also preserves endangered oral texts, especially in local dialect like Ika, which are underrepresented in academic discourse. Furthermore, it serves as a resource material for students, researcher and cultural enthusiasts in the intersection of language, art and tradition.

1.9 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design anchored in stylistics and ethnography of communication. A purposive sampling technique was used to select ten

(10) dirges, chosen for their cultural relevance and stylistic richness as it mirrors the life and how the people of Ika view death, life and afterlife.

The dirges will be transcribed in the Ika dialect, translated into English and subjected to stylistic analysis to examine their phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantics, and literary features. This approach enables both linguistics and cultural insight into the nature of funeral dirges in Ika.

Method of Data Collection

Primary source of data collection include field recordings of live funeral dirge performance in Ika dialect, oral interview, field works and participant observation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents us with review of related literature under the following sub-headings.

Conceptual framework

Previous studies

Concern of present studies

2.1 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework illustrates what is expected to be found through the research. It defines the relevant variables for the study and maps out how they rightly relates to each other.

The following concepts are reviewed in this study, dirges, death, stylistics, ethnography.

2.1.1 Dirge

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (1989), a dirge is defined as “a song sang at the mourning, grieving or lamentation of someone or over something. It was typically composed to be performed at a funeral. In lyric poetry, a dirge tends to be shorter and less meditative than an elegy.

A dirge can also be a mournful song, chant, or poem performed during funeral rites intended to express grief, honour the deceased and console the living. It often uses repetition, metaphor, imagery and solemn rhythm to convey sorrow and reinforce cultural beliefs about death.

2.1.2 Death

Many scholars have attempted investigating into death and come out with their views about the definition and otherwise, meaning of death. Kirwen (2008) views death as an inevitable event in the personal history of every living person. This postulates to the fact that every living soul must taste death.

In Africa and many parts of the world, some people believe that death is the end of every soul while others also believe that it's the beginning of a new life. The Ika people believe that, death is not an end to life but a transition which involves the transformation from the physical into the spiritual as the death continue to live as an ancestor.

The Ika people perceive death not as the ultimate end of existence but as a transition to another realm of life. According to them, human existence is a continuous circle.

2.1.3 Ethnography

Ethnography is an essential part of anthropology. It literally means “a portrait of a people”. Ethnography is a written description of a particular culture, the customs, beliefs and behaviour based on the information collected through field work.

The word ethnography comes from a Greek word which means *ethnos* meaning nation/cultural group and *graphe* meaning within or to record.

The researcher as participant observer has the advantage of being immersed in the culture over an extended period and therefore in a position to discover what was hidden, but it became clear that the subjectivity of the researcher also has to be taken into account. Berry (2011), ethnography is linked to the lived experience of the ethnographer. Rosen (1991) comments that there is no absolute truth of interpretation but rather the value of the account lies in whether it is a plausible expression for the data collected.

2.1.4 How Ika People View Death – Their Belief

The Ika people, like many other Igbo-sub groups, perceive death not as the ultimate end of existence but as a transition to another realm of life. According to them, an individual comes in to the world from the spiritual order, lives on earth, and upon

death, returns to the world of the ancestors. This beliefs is consistent with Mbiti's (1996) assertion that in African cosmology, death is "a gateway from the physical to the spiritual" rather than annihilation.

Onyekpeze (2002), an Ika author wrote in his book that the quality of a person's life and the circumstances of their death determine how they are remembered and honoured. A "good death" usually occurring at old age after a fulfilled life, with descendant left behind – is seen as honourable. Such individuals are accorded elaborate funeral ceremonies, featuring dirges, dances, and rituals. These are not merely expressions of griefs, they function as rites of passage, ushering the deceased into the ancestral world.

Okafor (1992) notes in his study of Igbo cosmology, the funeral is both a farewell and a celebration of the deceased new role as an ancestor.

2.1.5 Stylistics

Wales (2001) defined stylistics as a branch of linguistics that focuses on analyzing the language style of a text. Wales also points that stylistics goal is to show their interpretation of a text or in other word, it relates to the literary effects to linguistics causes where they are felt to be relevant. Verdink (2002) defined stylistics as the analysis of distinctive in language and the description of purpose and effect. Barry (2009) states that stylistics can show how the language features if a literary work contributes to the

overall meaning and effect. Richard (1997) also states that stylistics attempts to establish principles capable of explaining the particular choices made by individuals and social groups in the use of language.

Onu (2012) sees stylistics as the linguistics study of the style of literary texts that uses modern linguistics tools to account for meaning in a text. Stylistics is pertaining to style, especially to linguistics or literary style. Stylistics can simply be said to be the study of style. Esser (1993) style is a situational determined way of writing. In other words, style results from contexts. This is because language is part of human social behaviour which operates within a wide framework of human activity.

Stylistics therefore links criticism to linguistics. Linguistics stylistics look for style in terms of linguistics features of a text at different levels of linguistics description. There are levels of stylistic analysis and they are

- i. Phonology level
- ii. Syntax level
- iii. Lexical level
- iv. Semantics level
- v. Discourse level
- vi. Pragmatics level

- vii. Graphology level
- viii. Lexicon-syntactic level

2.1.6 Phonology

Phonology is the study of the sound system of a language and also describes formal rules of pronunciation. Phonology is the study of communicative details of speech sound in a particular language. Phonology deals with sound pattern in literature as sound patterning plays a pivotal role in literary discourse in general, and in poetry in particular. Sound patterns can be found in alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, assonance and consonance.

2.1.7 Alliteration

This is the occurrence of the same consonant letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words in an utterance. This is the repetition of initial consonant or consonants at the beginning of a word.

2.1.8 Rhythm

Miruka (1994) defines rhythm as the patterned rise and fall of sounds and word in a poem. Each poem has its rhythm which facilitates the appeal to the ear, dance ability and general reception. Rhythm can also be said to be the movement with uniform and pattern occurrence of a beat.

2.1.9 Lexicon Syntax

Lexicon syntax is a combination of two words lexis and syntax. Lexis means vocabulary which is used in language. Syntax is concerned with how words combined to form phrases, clauses, sentences and texts. Lexicon syntactic level or grammatical level focuses on the way words forms phrases and sentences. Lexicon-syntactic choices are found through devices such as collocates specific parts of speech, simile, repetition and metaphor personification also plays an essential role in the dirges presented in the study.

2.1.10 Repetition

Repetition is a literary device that involves internationally using a word or phrase for effect two or more times in a speech or written work. For repetition to be noticeable, the word or phrase should be repeated within close proximity of each other.

2.1.11 Simile

Cuddon (2013) defines simile as a figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another, in such a way as to clarify and enhance an image. It is an explicit comparison recognizable by the use of words “like or as”. It is equally common in prose and verse and is a figurative device of great antiquity.

2.1.12 Personification

Personification is a figure of speech by which human attributes are given to an animal, an abstract concept or an animate object. It is also a literary device in which

human qualities (such as feelings, actions or intentions) are attributed to animals, objects, abstract ideas or non-human things.

2.1.13 Semantics

Semantics is a branch of linguistics concerned with the study of meaning in a language. Meanings are judged through the analysis of context. Linguistics semantics has been defined as the study of how languages organize and express meanings. They are meaning embedded in these Ika dirges, which can only be seen by analyzing the dirges semantically.

2.2 Previous Studies

Onu (2012) in his work ethnopoetic study of oral dirges/case studies (Elugwu Ezike" says that man has always expressed his feelings, experience and dreams through the medium of poetry. Dirge as a form of oral poetry makes use of language to communicate experience. Funeral dirge or lamentation for the death is an important genre of folklore. It is as old as man's concern with death. He also viewed dirge as poem of lamentation which may be improvised by the mourners, according to traditional formula and theme.

Oral funeral poetry is the property of non-literate societies. Every African society is very rich in traditional poetry which is the common property of the whole community. The poet or the praise singer uses that to express the communal vision of life. Thus

African traditional poetry is culture tied and handled down orally from generation to generation.

Oral poetry represents our classical tradition that is, that body of texts which lies behind us as a complete and enduring literature through constantly being renewed and which must profoundly inform us the world views of our people.

Gunner (1996) in her work, oral literature funeral dirge in African culture that believes that the pressure exerted on oral literature by written genres seem(s) to threaten their continual existence, yet oral genres continue to have significant power in contemporary society and culture.

Also, Taylor (2001), observe that, the dead are never gone, they are in the thinking shadow, they are in the woods that groans, they are in the fire that is dying. . . they are in the forest, they are in the house, the dead are not dead; to the Ika-Igbo, it is believe that the dead only embark on a journey from the physical world to the spiritual world just as human beings travel from one place to another, from this, one can say that death actually, is a transition or journey from one living place to another.

Many societies are most often than not, confronted with matters arising from the demised of a relative or loved ones. People believe that the act of dying might have something to do with external factors which are mostly attributed to witchcrafts and

unforeseen circumstances and so when a person dies, people tried to uncover the possible cause of death.

Scholars like Mbiti (1975), Raffray (1927) and Gerham (1989) are agree that death is not a natural event, but is seen as caused by some external factors such as witchcraft, spirits or cause. This assertion is not by far different from the Ika perception of death. The Ika people optimistically believe that, certain deaths are beyond the power of God even though they believe that God has a hand in all that happens, they are other external factors that can lead to a person's death.

Nwosu (2023) in her work “creative dynamism and religions syncretism in Igbo oral funeral dirges believes that the oral funeral dirges in Igbo are being threatened and is facing many challenges posed by westernization and globalization. Added to this is the increased death if elders who constitutes a large number of the performers of native creative role.

Turan (1992) assets that oral traditions that are encoded in the speech forms become threatened when elders die or when livelihoods are disrupted. Such creative works of oral literature are increasingly endangered as globalization and rapid socio-economic changes exert even more complex pressure on smaller communities.

Ndukwe (2004), Ihechu (2006), and Nwachukwu (2004) are of the view that “there is hardly any aspect of the Igbo-Ika culture that education and Christianity has not

influenced in one way or the other. They are of the view that funeral rites in the olden day, and dirges were more colourful. To cap it all, they insists that “modernity has had it’s tool on the Igbo dirge and burial rites. Among these rituals is funeral rendition during burials.

2.3 Concerns of Present Study

The present study is concerned with the stylistic analysis of funeral dirges among the Ika people of Delta State. The research therefore focuses on identifying and analyzing the stylistic elements of Ika funeral dirges, such as imagery, symbolism personification, parallelism, repetition and tonal variation. It also explores how these stylistic features enhance the communicative, aesthetic, and cultural functions of the dirges.

The additionally, the study addresses the changing dynamics of funeral dirges in contemporary Ika society, especially with the influences of Christianity, urbanization, and globalization. Thus while rooted in tradition, the study is equally concerned with how stylistics features reflects processes of adaptations and cultural resilience.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 Introduction

This adopts ethnography of communication (EOC) as the theoretical framework. Ethnography was propounded by Hymes in 1962 and later modified in 1964 as the study of how communication practices are shaped by and help shape, the cultural and social life of a community. Therefore ethnography of communication talks about not just the language form, but how communication functions in its cultural settings. As Faleke (2020) explains in the study of Gojan, funeral dirges, ethnography of communication “allowed the researchers to live among the informants, noting observing and verifying funeral dirges. Here, we will use the ethnography of communication perspective to analyze Ika funeral dirges by identifying the communicative skills, stylistic events and cultural imparts of the dirges.

In practical terms, ethnography of communication tells us to look at the Ika funeral dirges as a series of speech event and its connection to culture. For example, Yaa et al (2019) find that undergenerational interviews and participant observations can reveal how coastal Kenyan communities observe dirges. We simply draw on such interviews and accounts to look at elements like dirges, funeral practices and the belief of afterlife.

These elements will be analyzed by using the ethnography of communication framework to understand the lead mourner, family members (participant), funeral ground, rite wake-keeping (settings and scene), to mourn, console, preserve memory (Ends), expected to show respect, follow ritual (norms) in the funeral context. This chapter is structured as follows.

Section 3.1 reviews the origins and concepts of ethnography of communication theory including Hymes's seminal ideals and speaking model.

Section 3.2, then applies these concepts to the Ika funeral dirges, and how ethnography of communication is relevant to the study by showing the communicative acts, codes and meaning in the funeral dirges.

3.1 Ethnography of Communication Theory

Ethnography of Communication was developed by Dell Hymes in the 1960s as a response to formal linguistics approaches. Hymes coined the term “ethnography of speaking” in his 1962 paper and later expanded it to “ethnography of communication” in 1964. His main goal was to be able to shift focus from abstract grammar to the real use of language in cultural context. In Hymes's view, language competence is not just knowing grammar, but knowing when, where and how to speak appropriately the idea of communicative competence. He argued that a linguistics aim should be to indicate which area of the culture one is most interested in examining.

Ethnography of Communication general research aim includes knowing which communication acts or codes are important to a community or society. What meanings are attached to different communicative events or groups, and how people learn and share these codes. For examples, an Ethnography of Communication analysis will identify how members of a community view life, death and afterlife. Below are few summaries of some key goals of the ethnography of communication thereby.

- (a) Identify which dirges are suitable for the deceased as pertaining to ages and belief
- (b) Define what meanings the community assigns to funeral dirges.
- (c) Explain how the community sees death and as end of life but as a journey to the great beyond.

This qualitative ethnographical meaning aims at showing a deeper view into how Ika funeral dirges act as a mimicking lenses to the life of Ika people. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) capture this philosophy by voting that Ethnography of Communication conceptualizes communication as a continuous flow of information rather than as a segmented exchange of messages.

Hymes made emphasis that to do Ethnography of Communication properly, the researcher must link form and function of communication. He said that the analysis should investigate directly the use of language in contexts, if situations so as to discern patterns proper to cultural activity and simultaneously treats the communicative habits

and equally to know the cultural norms exhibited by the community as concerning dirges, death, life, and their belief of afterlife.

An anthropologist Cameron (1992) explains that Ethnography of Communication analysts spend more time describing things that are external to the talk itself, who the speaker are, where they are, what belief and custom are important in their lives. At a funeral, one would note not just the dirges alone, but the lead singer and her mourners, and the location of the deceased of where the dirges are to be sang.

The speaking model identifies eight factors to consider in the ethnography of communication

S – Setting and scene

P – Participants

E – Ends (purpose, goals, outcomes)

A – Act sequence (form and events)

K – Keys (tone, manner and spirit)

I – Instrumentalist (channel, form of speech)

N – Norms (social rule guiding the interaction)

G – Genre (the type of speech event)

Researchers therefore use these categories to systematically describe every aspects of a speech community. For example, at a funeral, the setting (s) might be the home of the deceased, night wake-keeping, participant (p) might be the lead mourner, family members, chorus responders, Ends (E) might be to mourn, to console, reinforce communal values about death, Acts (A) might be lamentation, opening invocation, closing blessings, Key (K) tone of sorrow, wailing, sometimes anger. Instrumentalities (I), songs clapping of hands, beating of drums, Norms (N) to show respect, fulfill communal laws. Genre (G) funeral dirges, distinct from praise songs, war and chants.

It is important to note that Ethnography of Communication should not just be used as a checklist. Cameron (1992) continuous that Hyme's speaking model should be "used more as a guide than a template, because focusing on only descriptive categories can miss deeper meaning. The research should explain why specific events have their particular characteristic. In summary, Ethnography of Communication theory provides a framework for analyzing how a given speech community uses languages. A framework we can apply in analyzing funeral dirges in Ika.

3.2 Relevance of Ethnography of Communication to the Research

Using the Ethnography of Communication theory in Ika funeral dirges we can examine the communicative events and how it mirrors the belief of Ika about life, death and afterlife. In Ika, the age and manner of death reflects the dirges to be used or sang at the deceased home. The dirges acts as departing farewell or rituals to accompany the

deceased to the great beyond and equally to have a safe journey back home. It is believed in Ika that funeral dirges must be observed at the home of the deceased provided he is aged or matured in status. These dirges are not done, it will affect the children of the deceased and might equally affect the community.

From Ethnography of Communication perspective, funeral dirges as a communication carrying cultural meaning. Another example is the lead singer and her chorus ability to perform, lament and praise the deceased for a life well spent. Ethnography of Communication treats these dirges as a communicative acts that values the life of the deceased, the belief of the community about life, death and afterlife.

Using the SPEAKING framework, identification can be made under components of the Ika funeral dirges performers. The setting (S) is the deceased home, burial ground. The participant (P) includes family members, lead singer and chorus, the End (E) to express grief, honour the deceased and reaffirm the community belief about death. Act (A), the structure of the performance. Key (K) mood, tone of loss and mourning. Instrumentalities (I), chants, beating of drum and clapping of hands, Norms (N) follow communal belief and respect for the death. Genre (G), oral poetry, lamentation and sorrow for loss. By applying the speaking mode, this study is able to interpret Ika funeral dirges not just as texts but as social events that draw meaning from performance, participants and cultural norms. This makes the model particularly relevant because it

captures both the linguistic features of the dirges and their social functions in the community.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at highlighting various ways that dirges are performed among the Ika people as concerning death and funeral practices.

The performance of dirges among the Ika people actually begins during the night wake-keeping two days after the deceased is buried but it should equally be noted in this work that if the deceased is buried immediately after death that the funeral dirge are done four (4) days interval but relatives, friends, age-grade and well-wishers will gather at the deceased home. But a scenario where the deceased is taken to the mortuary, the funeral dirges are performed one (1) day after burial.

When the deceased is laid in state, the tempo of the mourning rises, and at such it heightens the performance of the dirge. Due to influence of Christianity and modernization, particularly in Urban areas within Ika, like Agbor, Umuede etc., it is now important that the deceased family invites church choir to sing and dance especially when the fellow is a Christian and one of them.

4.2 Data and Analysis

This section of the study will be looking at some selected dirges evident in Ika to be presented and analyzed. The performance aesthetic of Ika dirges are most often enhanced by chants and antiphonal forms, of equal importance is the structure of the dirges themselves, structure here is referring to the lengths of the dirges and the alternating stanzas created by the vocal interaction of the lead singer and her chorus. The language employed by the performers of the Ika dirges is useful elements in the discussion and appreciation of the stylistic features of the funeral dirges. It includes unique phonological and grammatical forms, repetition and an elaborate utilization of imagery, metaphors, simile personification and other figurative expression. The most features found in Ika dirge is repetition where the lead singer sings and a group of other women follows as her respondent. The Lead Singer will be known in this work by the abbreviation as LS while the Chorus will be represented as CH.

4.2.1 Dirge 1

LS: Nnem eje ne ekwukwo – My mother is not educated

CH: Eka ko ji dee – Yet she use her hand to write

LS: E woo nnem – Oh my mother

CH: Eka ne eme ogor ana – The hand that did good is gone

This dirge is talking about our mother's who nurtured us, trained us, feed us and did good for us. She is uneducated but with her hand she did wonders. This dirge talks about alliteration of /n/ in 'nnem, ne'. It equally highlights irony though uneducated she expressed wisdom through her hands. Death is seen as stoppage of good deed and benevolent hand "eka na eme ogor ana" by taking our kind mom away. The mourner emphasizes the mother's value not in formal literacy but in practical goodness, elevating communal values over western education.

4.2.2 Dirge 2

LS: Dibe, dibe, dibe – patience, patience, patience

CH: Ndidi ka mma – patience is good

LS: Onye obuna ya dibe oo – everyone should have patience

CH: Ani eze nwee mmeri – Heaven has conquered

There is repetition of "dibe" which creates rhythm and equally show emphasis and also drive the theme of endurance. The choice of "ndidi" (patience) reflects a moral teaching to endure in our time of difficulties. The performers equally talk about death which is an ultimate conquest by heaven. The dirge consoles mourners by urging restraint "ndidi" (patience) and situates death within divine will "Ani eze nwee mmen" (heaven have conquered) reinforcing communal acceptance of loss.

4.2.3 Dirge 3

LS: E ne acho – we are searching

CH: Dum chona – help me and search

LS: Aturu nnam oo – my father’s sheep

CH: Ofuoo na ozara – lost and scattered in the wilderness

This dirge invokes repetition of the vowel sounds in acho and chona (searching and search) which creates echo. It equally employs the use of metaphor for the deceased “aturu nnam” (my father’s sheep) portraying them as vulnerable and precious. The dirge is short and the meaning are easily understood as the theme of loss. The wilderness “ozara” symbolizes emptiness, and irretrievable loss. The dirge dramatizes communal loss “dum chona” (help me search) that any death affect the whole community. This is an imagery of search and loss in expressing the community view.

4.2.4 Dirge 4

LS: Nwonsi onwu – on the day of the death

CH: Nwonsi onwu – on the day of the death

LS: Ezigbo nwonsi onwu di egwu – the good day of the death is strange

CH: Omu nwa amari zi uwa – the bearer of the child no longer recognizes the child

The dirge uses repetition “nwonsi onwu” to create rhythm and equally show emphasis of the weight of death. Words like “omu nwa” (bearer of a child and “nwa” (child) stress intimacy and kinship, thus making the pain personal. The dirge uses simple, declarative, and repetitive clauses, mirroring the repetitive overwhelming nature of grief in the dirge death is described as “di egwu” (strange and mysterious), presenting it as an incomprehensible events that break bond between mother and child. This dirge talks about the unnatural separation of death “omu nwa amri zi nwa” (even a mother cannot recognizes her child once death comes).

4.2.5 Dirge 5

LS: Ikorobia dunim zogbu ani - youth, help me to march on the ground

CH: Ani eri ke ndioma, ani eri ke ndioma – the earth has swollen good people

LS: Ikorobia dunim zogbu ani – youth help me to march on the ground

CH: Ani ai ke ndioma, ani eri ke ndioma – the earth has swollen good people

The repetition of “Ani ai ke ndioma” (the earth has eaten good people creates rhythm and lamentation, “zogbu ani” (march on the ground) adds emphasis to the dirge. “Ikorobia” (youth) signifies young and strength while “ndioma” (good people) highlights tragic loss of valued members on the society. The dirge is equally built on imperatives (help me) “dunim” and declarative “Ani eri ke” (the earth has eaten) shows both plea and lament. It is a call and response dirge. There is a symbol of personification where the

earth “Ani” is personified as a devourer “Ani eri ke ndioma” marching on the ground is both literal and metaphoric, a ritual act of mourning and a cry of resistance. The dirge equally employs communal grief where the mourner calls on all to help him to stample on the ground. It shows sorrow, and loss of good people to the cold hand of death.

4.2.6 Dirge 6

LS: Nwa nneni je ne enuigwe ebezina - our sibling has gone to heaven, stop crying

CH: Nwa nneni je ne enuigwe ebezina - our sibling has gone to heaven, stop crying

LS: Onye ka ku ugwo – who will pay the debt?

CH: Onu muzo enuigwe ka ku ugwo – the gate of heaven will pay the debt, stop weeping

There is repetition of “ebezina” (stop crying) which creates rhythm and emphasis. The words like “enuigwe” (heaven) and “ugwo” (price) introduces spiritual and economic imagery, suggesting that death involves both divine transition and sacrifice. Death is as price “ugwo” that we are to pay. Heaven is personified as the one that settles the cost, reinforcing the inevitability of death. The dirge functions as both consolation and reflection. It reassures mourners to stop crying while also presenting death as divine, unavoidable debt settled at heaven’s gate.

4.2.7 Dirge 7

LS: O tu ba ntuji – he has entered a narrow road

CH: O mee gwem – he is silent

LS: O tu ba ntuji – he has entered a narrow road

CH: O mee gwem – he is silent

LS: Baba tu ba ntuji – our father has entered a narrow road

CH: Ugboko ano ewuru. Oku ari – the thick forest is smoking, yet there is no fire

Repetition of “o tu ba ntuji” he has entered a narrow road creates a chant – like rhythm that mimics the slow step of grief. The lines are repetitive and parallel, reinforcing the inevitability and unchangeable reality of death. The dirge equally has metaphor, “ntuji” (narrow) which signifies the lonely journey of the death. The use of ntuji and ugboko draws on natural imagery to describe the passage of death. “Oku ari” (smoke without fire) symbolizes mystery and hidden truth about the sting of death. This dirge calls the community to embrace the mystery of death, that even the mightiest man will walk there alone.

4.2.8 Dirge 8

LS: Ugegbe tiwara – the mirror has broken

CH: O tiwara – it's broken

L.S: Ezigbo ugegbe tiwara, o tiwara – the good mirror is broken, it broken

CH: O tiwara na uge – it has broken into pieces

The dirges open with the striking image of a mirror breaking. In Ika culture, a (mirror) “ugegbe” does more than reflecting a face. It reflects identity, beauty, and presence. The mirror breaking into pieces depicts the loss, grief and a healthy heart upon the deceased family. The repeated use of the word “tiwara” (broken) makes the dirge rhythmic and heavy. The mourner's does not just say the mirror is broken once, they insist on it again and again, underlying the finality of death. By calling mirror “ezigbo ugegbe” (a good mirror), the dirge highlights the value of the one that has died. It is not just any mirror that has fallen apart, but a precious one, a symbol of good and irreplaceable life. The line “o tiwara na uge” (it has broken into pieces) carries a painful truth. Just as a shattered mirror cannot be mended, the life that has been lost cannot return.

4.2.9 Dirge 9

LS: E gbuo wee diken wu ezie – they have killed a great man indeed.

CH: Ma mbana diken ama chi – but his lineage is not closed.

LS: E gbuo wee diken wu ezie – they have killed a great man indeed

CH: Ma mbana diken ama chi – but his lineage is not closed

This dirge mourns the loss of an important man, in Ika, diken (great man). The repetition of the line “e gbuo wee diken wuzie” drives home the reality of the tragedy – a powerful figure has fallen. The mourners’ voice here is not only heavy with sadness but also with recognition of the magnitude of the loss though the loss is painful but the chorus gives a ray of hope “ma mbana diken ama chi” though the great man is gone, his lineage, his family, and his legacy are not extinguished. This shows the Ika belief in continuity, where a man is not remembered not only for himself but also through his children, and family he leaves behind.

4.2.10 Dirge 10

LS: Aye ne choko nwa nneni – we are looking for our sibling

CH: Aye ne choko nwa nneni – we are looking for our sibling

LS: Oduga abiakwa nwa nee anorbia ya – His people have come, yet he is not found

CH: Aye aye ne choko nwa nneni, aye aye ne choko nwa nnem nubo nnbo – seriously we are searching for our sibling, like seriously we are searching for him desperately.

This dirge carries the strong emotion of loss and desperate searching. The repetition of “aye ne choko nwa nneni” (we are searching for our sibling) intensifies the sense of grief and communal effort to locate the death. Repetition in the dirge functions as emphasis, making the crying more haunting and memorable.

The line “oduga abiakwa nwa nne anorbia ya” (his people have come yet he’s not found) reflects helplessness and mystery surrounding death. Even though relatives and community members gather, the deceased can’t return figuratively, the dirge also personifies death as a thief who has hidden the sibling away, leaving the living in a restless search. The imagery of searching without finding reflects the finality of death and the emotional void it leaves behind.

4.2.11 Dirge 11

LS: Ose abam enya, ose abam enya – pepper has entered my eye, pepper has entered my eye

CH: Imana obuna ose, obu onwu na agbam ose na enya – it is not actual pepper, it is the sting of death.

LS: Ebe onwuru, nike, eni ka akwa ya n’ike n’ike – where he died in strength, we will mourn him in strength.

CH: Ebe onwuru na mkpo, eni ka akwa ya na mkpo ni mkpo – where he died in weakness, we will mourn him in weakness.

This dirge expresses deep emotional pain through the vivid imagery of “ose abam enya” (pepper has entered my eye). In Ika culture, pepper in the eye symbolizes intense sorrow and burning grief. The mourner compares the sting of death to the irritation caused by pepper, which everyone can relate to.

The next line, “imana obuna ose, o bu onwu na agbam ose ne enya” (it is not actually pepper but the sting of death), this is metaphor, here the singer uses contrast and metaphor to show that the pain of death surpasses any physical discomfort. It is a figurative way of saying that death burns deeper than any substance. The repetition of “ose abam enya” gives the dirge a rhythmic and a response tone typical of oral poetry. Repetition in dirges helps to emphasize grief, allowing the lead singer and her chorus to release emotion gradually.

In “Ebe onwuru n’ike, eni ka akwa ya n’ike n’ike” (where he died in strength, we will mourn him in strength) and “Ebe onwuni na mkpo, eni ka akwa ya na mkpo na mkpo), the mourners use parallelism to balance strength and weakness, showing different phase in the affairs of a man. This contrast reveals the resilience of the living, who continue to honour the dead through emotional expression.

4.2.12 Dirge 12

LS: E ne acho mama ni – we are searching for our mother

CH: mama ni nwere obioma – our mother that has a kind heart

LS: Ene mgbe ka ga fu ya? – when are we going to see her?

CH: Onwu eme ni aru – death has done us bad thing.

The dirge “E ne acho mama ni” (we are searching for our mother) captures the raw sense of loss and longing that follows the death of a beloved parent. The repetition of “E ne acho” (we are searching) reflects both the emotional restlessness and the denial that often accompany grief. The mourners cannot accept that their mother is gone, in their hearts, they continue to search for her presence. The phrase “mama ni nwere obioma” (our mother that has a kind heart) introduces a note of praise and affection, portraying the deceased as a gentle, loving woman. This description not only honours her memory but also deepens the emotional tone of the dirge by highlighting what has been lost – her kindness and warmth.

In “Ene mgbe ka ga fu ya” (when are we going to see her), a rhetorical question which expresses the hopelessness of the situation. The speaker knows there will be no reunion in this life, yet ask the question as a way to voice the ache of separation. The use

of rhetorical question is a common stylistic feature in dirges, as it gives form to sorrow and invites the audience to share in the mourning.

Finally, “onwu eme eni aru” (death has done us a bad thing) concludes the lament with personification. Death is treated as a living being of wrongdoing, turning the abstract concept into a moral agent. Through repetition, rhetorical questioning, praise and personification, the dirge gives voice to communal grief it is both a cry of pain and public tribute to the goodness of the deceased mother.

4.3 Analysis of Stylistic Features Associated with Ika Dirge

4.3.1 Repetition

Repetition is the deliberate use of words, phrases and clauses more than once in a piece of speech or writing. Repetition shows emphasis to the subject in question. In Ika funeral dirges, it performs multiple roles – it emphasis emotion, creates rhythm, aid memory in oral performance and builds communal participation. Repetition also reflects grief as mourners often repeat words or cries as they try to come to term of loss.

In Data 4, “nwonsi onwu, nwonsi onwu” (on the day of the death) – the echo of the “nwonsi onwu” strengthens the virtual intensity of the chant. It signal the shock and disbelief. The repetition also gives the dirges it’s incantatory tone. The repetition of the line dibe, dibe dibe in data 2 also gives emphasis to painful effect of loss.

Data 7 “o tu ba ntuji, o mee gwem, o tu ba ntuji o mee gwem” the repeated phrase “o tub a ntuji” (he has entered a narrow road) reflect the souls passage into the spirit world. This belief in Ika dirge creates solemn rhythm and reinforcing Ika belief about the passage of man into death.

In Data 5, “Ani eri ke ndioma, Ani eri ke ndioma” (the earth has eaten good people, the earth has eaten good people) the double mention of ‘Ani eri ke ndioma’ amplifies the pain of communal loss. By repeating the line, the mourners gives the impression that the earth is greedy in unjust, consuming the good people among them. The repeated line also give emphasis to the dirge. Also in data 11, “ose abam enya, ose abam enya” (pepper have entered my eye, pepper have entered my eye). Here repetition dramatizes physical and emotional pain. The sting of pepper symbolizes the burning sorrow of grief. Saying it twice amplifies the pain, making the emotion shared.

In Data 12, “E no acho mam ni” (we are searching for our mother), mama ni nwere obioma (our mother with a good heart). Repeating “E no acho mama ni” (we are looking for our mother) mirrors the emotional searching of the bereaved. The repetition becomes an act of denial – they keep calling as though they mom might, still answer.

Finally, across all the dirges, repetition functions as both a stylistic and emotional device. It helps the performer maintain rhythm, invite group participation, and convey grief. In Ika dirges, repetition transforms mourning into a shared ritual where each echo keep the memory of the dead alive.

4.3.2 Personification

Personification is a stylistic device that gives human qualities or emotions to non-human objects, abstract ideas, or natural forces. In Ika funeral dirges, this feature serves to express the community's emotional feeling to the deceased mourners gives life to inanimate things, allowing nature, death, and even the earth to share in their pain.

In Data 11, “*imana obuna ose, o bu onwu na agbam, ose ne enya*” (it is not pepper, it is death that puts pepper in my enya), death is personified as an active force capable of putting pepper in the eyes. This expression presents death not as a mere event, but as a living agents that inflicts emotional pain.

In dirge 5, “*Ani eri ke ndioma*” (the earth has eaten good people), the earth is personified as an eater that conveys the depth of communal grief the earth is giving the human quality of eating. It acts unjustly by “devouring” virtuous individual.

Also in Data 7, “*ugboko ano ewuru, oku ari*”, (the thick forest is smoking, yet there is no fire), here the forest is personified as capable of smoking, a human like reactions that mirrors the sorrow and confusion that mirrors the community after the loss of a significant or dear one through these examples, personification in Ika dirges becomes a tool of emotional and cultural expression. It allows mourners to translate animate virtues into inanimate things.

4.3.3 Metaphor and Symbolism

Both are stylistic features that enrich the emotional depth and artistic expression in Ika funeral dirges. It helps the singers communicate complex feelings and cultural values in a subtle and imaginative way. Metaphor expresses one thing in terms of another, creating a hidden comparison that reveals deeper meaning. Symbolism on the other hand, uses object, image or expression to represent broader ideas such as loss, purity or continuity. Together, they allow mourners to speak about death indirectly, with respect and artistry.

In Data 11, “ose abam ne enya” (pepper has entered my eye), functions as a metaphor for pain and sorrow. The mourners are not literally hurt by pepper, the image represent the emotional sting caused by death. Also in data 5, “Ani eri ke ndioma” (the earth has eaten good people) the earth is seen as a devourer that takes good people away. This dirge metaphorically stands for grave or death.

In Data 8, symbolism is also present in the dirges “ugegbe tiwara” (the mirror has broken). This mirror is symbol of life, identity and reflection. Its breaking signifies the end of existence or life. The repetition of “o tiwara” (it is broken) intensifies the finality of loss, symbolizing how death disrupts balance and continuity in family. Through these metaphor and symbolism, Ika dirges transform dirges into an act of communication.

4.3.4 Rhetorical Question

A rhetorical question is a question asked not to receive answer but to emphasize on an idea or emotion. In Ika dirges, rhetorical questions often express grief, confusion and helplessness.

In Data 6, “onye ka ku ugwo”, (who will pay the price), here the singer does not expect an answer, rather the question expresses a deep sense of loss and injustice. Also in data 12, “E ne acho mama ni”, Enemgbe ka ga fu ya” (we are searching for our mother, when shall we see her again) echoses despair rather than inquiry. This rhetorical questions need no answer rather it beautifies the dirge.

4.3.5 Parallelism

Parallelism is a stylistic device that involves the repetition of similar grammatical structures, or lines to create rhythm and emphasis in a piece of work or speech. In data 7, “o tu ba ntuji, o mee gwem, o tu ba ntuji, o mee gwem” (he has entered a narrow road, he is silent). This feature build a poetic numbness that follows death, the repetition of the phrase, captures the mourners’ helplessness.

Also in Data 11, “Ebe onwuru nike”, parallels “Ebe onwuni, na mkpo”. The repeated structure gives the dirges rhythm and poetic symmetry. The mourner creates a balanced emotional state of mankind – weakness and strength.

4.3.6 Alliteration

This is the repetition of initial consonant sounds in closely connected words. In data 11, Ebe onwuni ni'ke, eni ka akwa ya ni'ke ni'ke". The repetition of the /n/ and /k/ sounds creates a rhythmic balance, which the emotional weight of mourning. Also in data 2, dibe, dibe, dibe – the /d/ sound repetition gives it a chant like rhythm that reinforces the message of patience and endurance.

4.3.7 Imagery

This refers to the use of descriptive language that appeals to the senses – sight, sound, touch, taste and smell, to create vivid mental picture.

In Data 11, “ose abam ne enya” (pepper has entered my eye) it creates a strong visual or sensory image. The feeling of pepper burning the eyes vividly represents the sting of grief. Through imagery, Ika dirges moves beyond words; they become emotional pictures that communicate pain more deeply than words could.

4.3.8 Rhythm

This is a call-and-response structure, where the lead singer chants and her chorus will respond. It also sustains the emotional intensity of mourning. It equally unites performers and listeners in a shared tempo of grief. In Data 5, :ikorobia dumin zogbu ani” (youth help me to march on the ground) (chorus) “Ani eri ke ndioma” (the earth has eaten

good people), this alternating patterns add a musical cadence and ensures participation. Rhythm in Ika funeral dirges arises from repetition, tonal balance and the communal call and response structure.

4.3.9 Theme

Themes are the underlying ideas or central messages that run through a literary or oral text. In the analyzed dirges several themes emerges.

4.3.9.1 Themes of death and loss: The dirge revolves around the inevitability of death and the pain it bring. Line like “ose abam ne enya” (pepper has entered my eye), and “Ezigbo ugegbe tiwara” (the good mirror has broken) shows grief and emotional sting of losing a loved one.

4.3.9.2 Theme of love and remembrance: The mourner constantly recalls the good deed of the deceased – “mama ni nwere obioma” (our mother that have a good heart). This shows that death does not erase love or memory. Instead, dirges serve as verbal memory.

4.3.9.3 Theme of communal solidarity: Funeral dirges in Ika are communal expression. Phrases like “ikorobia dumin zogbu ani” (youth help me to march on the ground) show collective participation in mourning, showing unity and support during sorrow and grief.

4.4 Summary of the Analysis

The stylistic analysis of the Ika funeral dirges reveals that these oral performances are more than mere expression of grief. They are rich features that combine language, emotion and culture to convey deep social meanings. The dirges mirror the Ika people worldview about life, death and the afterlife.

Several stylistic features were identified in the dirges. Repetition emerged as one of the dominant features, used to lay emphasis, intensify emotion and reinforce key messages about pain, loss and grief.

Personification was also evident, as abstract concepts like death and the earth were given human attributes, showing the people's effort to interpret loss in human terms. Metaphors and symbolism were equally used to communicate grief indirectly while parallelism and imagery provided balance and vivid mere picture that made the dirges emotional.

Rhetorical questions equally serve as both lament and reflection, inviting listeners to share in the sorrow. Alliteration and rhythm added musical beauty to the performance, helping mourners maintain a steady tone and collective participation.

The themes that run through the dirges includes theme of death, love, remembrance, communal solidarity and acceptance of divine will. The themes

demonstrate the Ika people's understanding of death as both a painful separation and a natural continuation of life.

Overall, the analysis shows that the Ika funeral dirges are a fusion of emotion, artistry, and tradition. The stylistic richness preserves the community's cultural identity while providing healing outlet for grief. They reflect not only how Ika mourn but also how they find meaning and strength in shared sorrow.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the summary of the work, findings and conclusion. Based on the findings that have been drawn from the study, recommendations are also made.

5.1 Summary

This study investigated the stylistic features of funeral dirges among the Ika people of Delta State. The research set out to examine how language is used to express grief, emotions of loss and communal solidarity during funeral ceremonies. Attention was given to the linguistic forms, figure of speech, and poetic devices that shape the uniqueness of Ika dirges.

The work began by introducing the concept of dirges as an important aspect of oral literature that performs both emotional and social functions. It explained that the Ika people, like many African communities, use funeral songs not only to mourn the death but also to celebrate life and reaffirm communal beliefs about death and dirges. The study examines the stylistic features of selected funeral dirges in Ika dialect, with the aim of identifying the distinctive linguist and artistic elements that characterize them.

The study explores how stylistic devices such as metaphor, repetition, symbolism, personification, imagery and other features contribute to the thematic and emotional depth of Ika funeral dirges. The work was divided into five (5) chapters. Chapter one introduces the study, providing the background, statement of the problem, aims, objectives, research questions with methodology.

Chapter two talks about the conceptual framework, revived related work on oral literature, dirges and stylistic analysis. Chapter three talks about the theoretical framework such as ethnography of communication which Dell Hymes propounded. Chapter four analyzed the data, examining each dirge line by line to show how language conveys grief, respect and communal values.

This final chapter summarizes the findings, draws conclusion from the analysis, and provides recommendations for future preservation and scholarly engagement with Ika funeral dirges. The data used were drawn from oral performances gathered in Ika communities. Each dirge was presented in Ika dialects and carefully translated into English before being analyzed.

5.2 Findings

From the analysis of the dirges, several important findings were noticed. The findings of the study reveal that the Ika funeral dirges show a wide range of stylistic

creativity. The singers employ features like repetition, metaphor, rhythm and other features to make songs emotionally powerful and memorable.

The study also found that there is the use of repeated sounds, tonal variation and chanting gives the dirges their musical flow. These patterns not only beautify the songs but also help to express sorrow and unity among mourners.

The study also revealed that the diction used in the dirges is highly figurative and symbolic. Death is often described with gentle metaphors like journey, a sleep in a home coming. Such expressions reflect the Ika people's belief that death is a transition, not an end.

The study further revealed that the Ika dirges are filled with imagery, metaphors and personification. Death is described as a visitor, messenger or thief. Funeral dirges are not just songs of mourning, they are carriers of tradition and communal values. Through the performance of dirges, the Ika people expressed shared grief, affirm belief in ancestral spirits and strengthen their sense of belonging.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concludes that Ika funeral dirges are powerful artistic and cultural expressions. They reveal how deeply language can communicate emotions, belief, and identity. Through stylistic choice like repetition, metaphors, imagery and rhythm, the dirges performers transform their grief into meaningful performances.

In summary, Ika funeral dirges demonstrate the close relationship between language, emotions and culture. Their stylistic study helps us appreciate the beauty of oral poetry and the role it plays in maintaining the moral and spiritual values of the Ika people.

5.4 Recommendations

There is a need to record and preserve Ika funeral dirges in audio and written forms to prevent their disappearance.

Cultural organizations and schools should encourage younger generations to learn and perform dirges as part of cultural educations and festival.

Scholars and students of African oral literature should focus more on stylistic analysis to uncover the artistry and cultural depth of indigenous songs.

Both Igbo and Ika scholars should work more on minority languages with the view of bringing out more work on the indigenous languages.

REFERENCES

- Achebe, C. (1975). *Morning yet on Creation Day: Essays*. London: Heinemann.
- Akwanya, A. N. (2014). *Discourse Analysis and Dramatic Literature*. Enugu: New Generation Books.
- Anyadiegwu, J. (2010). *Stylistic Devices in African Oral Poetry*. Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press.
- Crystal, D. (2008). *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (6th ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Daramola, A., & Jeje, A. (1975). *Modern African Poetry and Drama*. Ibadan: Evans Brothers.
- Emenanjo, E. N. (1982). *Elements of Modern Igbo Grammar*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press.
- Finnegan, R. (1970). *Oral Literature in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Ihekweazu, E. (1996). *The Literary Culture of Nigeria*. Lagos: Longman.
- Jegbefume, S. O. (2018). The Study of Dirges in Ika. Delta State University, Abraka. Department of Linguistics Studies.
- Leech, G. N. (1969). *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*. London: Longman.
- Mbiti, J. S. (1976). *Religions and Philosophy*. Heinemann, London.
- Nnolin, C. E. (2005). Approaches to Literary Criticism. *African Cultural Institute*, vol. 1. (2), 61 – 82.
- Nwachukwu, P. A. (1983). *Towards an Igbo Literary Standard*. Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press.
- Nwoga, D. I. (1984). *The Poetry of Traditional Africa*. Nsukka: Nsukka University Press.

- Nwosu, O. S. (2016). A Thematic Analysis of Funeral Dirge Among the Akokwa People of Igbo Land. *Journal of African Oral Literature and Traditions* 5(2) 101 – 118,
- Obi, I. (2020). Contemporary Transformation of Igbo Funeral Dirges: Christianity, Code Switching and Urbanization, *Journey of Igbo Studies*, 3(1), 45 – 62)
- Okafor, F. (2018). Preserving Oral Literature: A study of Igbo Funeral Dirges in Amokwe Orji: *Folktales studies in Africa*, 12(3) 77 – 93.
- Odebunmi, A. (2008). *Meaning in English: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics*. Ogbomoso: Critical Sphere.
- Ogbulogo, C. (2005). *Concepts in Semantics and Pragmatics*. Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications.
- Oha, O. (1999). The Rhetoric of Mourning: Communicative and Stylistic Features of Igbo Funeral dirges. *Research in African Literatures*, 30(4), 89–98.
- Oha, O. (2002). *Discourse Analysis and African Oral Poetry*. Nsukka: AP Express Publishers.
- Olatunji, O. (1994). *Features of Yoruba Oral Poetry*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
- Onu, J. O (2015). *The Stylistic Study of African Oral Poetry*. Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press.
- Onyekpeze, F. A. (2015). *Life and People of Ika*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press.
- Osu, S. N. (2016). A Stylistic Study of Igbo Traditional Songs. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 21(3), 45–53.
- Oyeleye, L. (1995). *Studies in Stylistics*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press.
- Short, M. (1996). *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose*. London: Longman.
- Simpson, P. (2004). *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*. London: Routledge.
- Turner, G. W. (1973). *Stylistics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Ugochukwu, F. (2010). *Oral Traditions and the Arts of Mourning in Igbo Society*. Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press.
- Wales, K. (2011). *A Dictionary of Stylistics* (3rd ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education.

Yule, G. (2010). *The Study of Language* (4th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press