

SOCIOLINGUISTICS, POPULAR CULTURE AND PERSONHOOD IN NGWA LAND

By

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Abstract

In every society, language and culture are two interwoven important aspects that constitute the makeup of mankind. The word *Ngwa*, refers to the dialect, the people and the geo-political area known as Ngwa land. The Ngwa people are found in Abia State in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Of the seventeen Local Government Areas in Abia State, seven belong to the Ngwa people. These Local Government Areas are: Isiala Ngwa North, Isiala Ngwa South, Obingwa, Osisioma, Aba North, Aba South and Ugwuagbo. Some of the objectives of this paper are: to illustrate that every cultural aspect of man has its own linguistic repertoire, to demonstrate that culture is the dignity of man, to show that culture determines the extent that a norm is observed and the constraints it places on a people. The theoretical framework on which this paper is discussed is ethnography of communication. This theory is concerned with the sociocultural rules that form the basis of every linguistic act. The method of data collection for this paper is participant observation, where the researcher is absorbed into the speech community for a period of time in order to perceive the salient features in the culture of a people. Some of the findings of this paper are: that language and culture are indispensable aspects of humanity, that personhood (humanity) is sustained by the constraints which culture places on man in his society, that every culture has its unique cultural behavior and linguistic repertoire and finally, that the acquisition of the appropriate cultural and linguistic behaviour of a person in a certain society is part of that person's social competence for existence as a person in his community.

Keywords: *competence, ethnography, personhood, popular culture, Ngwa, sociolinguistics.*

Introduction

The relationship between a people and their culture is highly inextricable. The culture of a people determines and places a check on their behavior. This paper attempts to reveal the relationship between a society, culture and the behavioural dispositions of persons in

Ngwa land. In doing this, it will be discovered that every culture has its unique linguistic that go with it.

Conceptual Review

Sociolinguistics according to (Trudgil, “ Sociolinguistics: An...” 32), “ is that part of linguistics which is concerned with language as a social and cultural phenomena”. This implies that language is a behavior in the society that is conditioned by the norms that are operational in that society. According to (Yul-Ifode, “An introduction to Language in...” 143), “Sociolinguistics is simply a branch of linguistics which deals with the social aspects of language, ... it embraces in principle, those aspects of the structure and use of language that relate to its social and cultural function”. In other words sociolinguistics is concerned with how users of a language shift their speech habits according to the degree of formality required, the subject of discussion, the genre, medium, geographical location, sex, age, occupation, social class and social situations.

Popular cultures are the widely known norms of a particular place. According to (Lyons, “Language and...” 302), “Culture may be described as a socially acquired knowledge that is the knowledge that someone has by virtue of his being a member of a particular society”. This means that culture is acquired by one’s membership of a society which directly checks his social behavior. From the internet source of (“Culture”), “culture refers to the arts, and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively in anthropology, encompassing the range of phenomena that are transmitted through social learning in human societies”. This would mean that art includes the food, architecture, clothing, festival, type of marriage, agriculture, taboos, religion, type of medication and so on, all of which is consciously acquired by a person over a period of time since such knowledge is not instinctively acquired. Another internet source (“Dictionary. Cambridge”), reports that; “culture is the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs of a particular group of people at a particular time”. From the above assertion, one can see that culture is a pattern of existence by a specific group of people which varies from place to place. From (“livescience”), “culture is the characteristic and knowledge of a particular group, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts”. One can see that culture involves the totality of all that makeup a person: from religion to music, dance, paintings, crafts, language, marriage, birth, death, name giving, taboos, and so on and this is the view that this paper adopts.

Personhood means humanity. According to an internet source (“Person”), “Personhood is the status of being a person”. This means that personhood refers to living beings; and living beings have a social order of existence. This social order of existence is maximally determined by cultural norms of his society. This equally goes to say that personhood is characterized by the consciousness of one’s environment which could be external or internal and the ability to respond positively to issue in his environment. From another

internet source: ("Moralperson"), a person has been referred to as: "... a being that has certain capacities or attributes such as: reason, morality, self-consciousness and being part of social relations such: as kinship, ownership of property, or legal responsibility". From the assertion above, one can see that a person does not live in isolation but is guided and identified by many social and cultural factors as a living being which is what this paper upholds.

Competence is a speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language. It is the sum total of all the rules that a person has internalized about his language. These rules include phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. Competence in the words of Bloomfield is referred to as *langue*. The distinction is often made between competence and performance/parole. While competence is the mental knowledge that a person has of a speech form, performance is the actual use of the mental rules in speech behaviour. cf. Matthews (2007, p. 66). Ndimele (2001, p. 14-15).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this paper is Ethnography of Communication. According to (Okeke, "Ethnography of..." 160). "The Sociolinguistic approach to language study known as Ethnography of Communication was developed by Dell Hymes. Ethnographic study therefore is not concerned with simply with the structure of language used in communication, but with its use paying extra attention to underlying socio-cultural rules that form the basis of the language in use". One of the sure ways of acquiring cultural and social knowledge in the society is through speech. Thus, speech or language is a medium of socialization, a process of transforming children into competent members of their society. In Ethnolinguistic study, Communicative Language Teaching holds that during language acquisition or learning, what is learnt is not just the linguistic forms, but beyond the linguistic forms are how to properly use them so as perform the kind of function that people in the society do, using language. (Okeke, 162). Ethnography of Communication, evaluates the place of language in culture and society. The premise on which Ethnography of Communication is established is that the understanding of an utterance is mainly actualized within the speech event where it is entrenched. It describes the forms and functions of verbal and non-verbal behaviours within cultural settings.

Methodology

The method of data collection used for this paper is participant observation, where the researcher is absorbed into the speech community for a period of time. During this time, the participant frees himself of all forms of bias emanating from his own cultural background while sensitively and objectively observing the community in order to perceive salient cultural differences. Having introduced the premise on which this paper will be discussed, some of the popular cultures that will be considered in this paper are presented below.

Popular Cultures in Ngwa Land

Naming

A name is a reference word by which something is identified. A name gives the characteristics of a thing that it stands for. Name giving or taking in Ngwa land could be found in contexts of: giving a name to a new born child, a newly married wife or title taking by a person in the community. The tradition of giving a name to a newly born child is a long held custom in Ngwa land. In Ngwa land, a child is given a name only after the umbilical cord has fallen off from the navel of the new born child and buried under a plantain tree or some places where the parents of the child agree to. Also, the child should have survived the pains of circumcision before a naming ceremony is fixed for him or her. It must be mentioned here, that both male and female children in Ngwa land are circumcised. Though, contemporary medical practice has seriously barred the circumcision of the girl child in the present Ngwa land. The day when a child is named is a celebrated day in the family and life of a child in Ngwa land. The parents of the child will invite close relations of both the paternal and maternal sides of the new baby that is to be named. The parents of the child will present kolanuts, garden eggs, cooked oil bean, and palm wine and as light refreshments. A tin of powder is presented too for the people to rub on their neck as a show of joy. When the invited guests have been seated, the father of the child will thank the audience for answering his call. Thereafter, he will declare to them that he is happy to receive a new child into his family. Under this note, he will announce to the audience with some money the name that he has given to the new born child. The mother of the child will also stand up to declare her name for her child, also with some money. If the paternal grandparents of the child are alive, they can then give their own names also with some money. Any other well-wishers may also give their own personal names to the child to show their own love for him or her. If the new born is a baby girl, on the day of her naming ceremony, a male person who desires to have her hand in marriage could decide to put some money in an earthen pot for her. This act designates that when girl grows up that he is the person to marry her. Though, this is only accepted by the consent of the parents of the girl child. It must be mentioned that the act of putting some money in an earthen pot for the girl-child in Ngwa land is now seldomly practised. The women will sing songs of the new born according to the custom of the Ngwa people. An example of a song during a naming ceremony in Ngwa land is:

1. *Biŋŋaŋm, biŋŋaŋm kaŋ m≡ma≡ laŋ o≡le≡e≡?*

B≡iŋŋaŋm, biŋŋaŋm kaŋ m≡ma≡ l'u≡teŋ

M≡biŋŋaŋcha≡ya≡ma≡a≡biŋŋaŋraŋ hwe≡

Biŋŋaŋm biŋŋaŋm kaŋ m≡ma≡ l'u≡teŋ.

(This song simply asks the question; where is love making most useful? and also answers it by saying it is most useful on the mat after which a child is gotten).

the arena for the celebration is kept clean, the seats for the audience will be well arranged and clean. The tables for the placement of drinks and cooked food are cleaned and decorated. The coronation of a king 'e↔ze↔' or the confirmation of a title on a person will require the pacification of the gods of the land by pouring drinks and throwing of kolanuts on the ground by the eldest man in the community. Thereafter, the title is conferred on the person amidst the guests and onlookers who have come to witness and share in the joy of the occasion. Drums are beaten and songs are sung for the joy of the day. Friends, kinsmen and well-wishers will then walk around with him or her as they sing songs of honour reflecting the title the person has taken. Persons present at the occasion can then appreciate the titled person with some money or gift items. Kolanuts, garden eggs, cooked oil bean, garri, pounded yam, soup, palmwine, rice and stew are then served to the guests as light refreshments. After eating, people can then leave to their homes. Examples of titled names in Ngwa are: *O↔chi↔ri↔zo↔zu↔zo↔* 'a philanthropist', *I↔ke↔m↔ba↔* 'the strength of the community' *N↔n↔e↔o↔zha↔* 'the mother of all' *A↔ku↔ne↔si↔o↔bi↔i↔ke↔* 'wealth strengthens the heart' *A↔ka↔na↔a↔mu↔nwa↔* 'the hand that deliver's children' and so on.

Marriage

According to (Odedele, M.O.A., and Egotanwa, M.C., "Basic facts..." 61), "Marriage is a term that is used to describe the relationship between a man and a woman who have become husband and wife. Usually, it is concluded in a ceremony that brings the family of the man and woman together". In other words, marriage is a legal relationship between a man and a woman who have agreed to live together for companionship and procreation. Marriage is a popular culture all over the world. In Ngwa land, the culture of marriage is highly revered. Before a woman leaves her paternal home to her marital home, there are certain customary rites which the prospective husband is expected to fulfill. In Ngwa land, a couple can meet each for marriage by social contacts or by the recommendation of an adult person of one person to another. In Ngwa land, there are different sequential stages involved in the contract of a marriage. When a man and a woman must have met and agreed to get married, the next stage is the introduction stage where the prospective suitor comes with some of his relations to introduce himself formally to his prospective in-laws. At this stage, if he is accepted, wine is given to the prospective father and mother-in-laws with some money accompanying it as stipulated by the community. To show that the prospective suitor is at home with his in-laws, meals are served to him and his companions on the day of introduction. This initial acceptance is temporary because inquiries will be made about the family background of the prospective suitor to find out if there is any ill-behavior such as: theft, incest, lying, debt, witchcraft, promiscuity, stubbornness, insubordination, bad cooks, anger, dirty, lazy, early risers, inconsistency, hardworking, impatience, envy, greed, or any illness associated with the family such as: tuberculosis, asthma, sickle cell, down syndrome, anemia, blindness, high or low blood pressure, insomnia, aphasia, madness, Parkinson, barrenness and so on. The parents of the suitor will also conduct a similar investigation

about the prospective wife of the man. This is to avoid the breed of irresponsible or unhealthy children in the Ngwa-Igbo society. Thereafter, a list of items of what the prospective suitor is to buy is presented to him. Some of the things on the list to be provided by the prospective husband for the father of the girl are: walking stick, wrist watch, a piece of plane george, a pair of shoes, a cap, snuff, cigarette, towel, chewing stick, singlet, a pair of shorts, a long sleeved shirt, a wallet, a bottle of schnapps, and so on. For the mother of the prospective wife some of these will be bought for her: a piece of hollandais wax, a piece of Nigerian wax, a big head tie, a hand bag, a pair of shoes, a wrist watch, lace materials for blouses, two big basins, a bag of rice, a bag of salt, a tin of groundnut oil, two tails of stock fish, dry fish, pepper, palm oil, two cartons of tin tomato, spices, two dozens of spoons, two dozens of fork spoons, two dozens of glass cups, breakable plates, six cooking pots and so on. For the kindred of the bride, the prospective in law will buy twenty tubers of yam, six kegs of palm wine, twenty loaves of bread, six crates of malt drink, six crates of soda soft drink, three big tins of chocolate beverage, two cartons of tinned milk, three packets of sugar, two bottles of honey, three packets of lipton tea, three bags of salt, two baskets of onions, five cartons of tin tomato, a carton of matches, a carton of candles sticks, and so on as the in-laws may want him to buy in fulfillment of his marriage rites.

At the final stage of the marriage, the bride and groom will invite their friends, paternal and maternal relations and all their well- wishers. In the present time, cards are printed but before now, there were no cards. The relevant information here is that the contract of marriage is not a hidden event, it must be made public and the family members of the parties involved must be aware of the contract. On the day of the completion of the marriage rites, a lot of cooking and eating is done and marriage songs are sung. The marriage dowry is also paid. There is also an exchange of goat by the family of the groom and bride. This exchange of goat by both families is a symbol of blood covenant indicating that the families are henceforth relations and must not do any evil to one another. The bride and groom will dance in the public with people coming to appreciate them with some money. In doing this, people are always warned not to spray money on the body of any of the couple because in a mixed multitude, one may not know the person that has an evil heart. After the dance of the couple, a bottle of wine is given to the father of the bride and another bottle to the mother of the bride with accompanying money to the wine given to the father of the bride more in amount than that given to the mother of the bride. The significant important members of both families like: the direct parents of the couple or their representatives, the village heads, the chiefs among them and other very close relations will thereafter drink some wine from the same bowl or cup. This also is another important act that shows love and oneness between the two families in the marriage contract. The bride at the end of the marriage rites is then accompanied to her husband's home by some of her very close relations or friends. This

is however not done until the youths are settled with some amount of money. The youths will sing songs for the couple such as:

2. *O↔↔ la↔↔wa↔↔la↔↔ e↔↔be↔↔ di↔↔ ya↔↔ nya↔↔ e↔↔e↔↔*
O↔↔ la↔↔wa↔↔la↔↔ e↔↔be↔↔ di↔↔ ya↔↔ nya↔↔ e↔↔e↔↔
E↔↔be↔↔ di↔↔ a↔↔bu↔↔zghi↔↔ o↔↔znwu↔↔

(The song above tells the audience that the bride is going to her husband's place but it is not for death).

3. *E↔↔le↔↔e↔↔ nwa↔↔a↔↔gbo↔↔zgho↔↔ e↔↔le↔↔e↔↔ di↔↔ ya↔↔ e↔↔e↔↔*
E↔↔le↔↔e↔↔ nwa↔↔a↔↔gbo↔↔zgho↔↔ e↔↔le↔↔e↔↔ di↔↔ ya↔↔ e↔↔e↔↔
Nwa↔↔a↔↔gbo↔↔zgho↔↔ a↔↔ka↔↔la↔↔ m↔↔ma↔↔ he↔↔e↔↔

(Song (3) makes a comparison between the bride and groom in beauty and ends up saying that the bride is more beautiful than the groom). These songs one must note are to add colour and excitement to the occasion.

The bride is not sent to her husband's house empty. The parents of the bride give her some basic properties to start her own home. Some of these will include: some cooking pots, cooking spoons, eating spoons, stove, gas cooker or a tripod stand, some food items like garri, akpu, (cassava flour meal), yam, pepper, oil, mortar and pestle, some plates, some cups and any other thing the parents of the bride deem necessary for their daughter. The friends or relations who accompany the bride to her husband's home on arriving at their in-laws' place, will help her to sweep the husband's compound. After this, they will have their bath, then they are served a delicious meal to which they are begged with money to eat. After the meal they will leave to their different homes, while the bride and groom enjoy their marital bliss.

There is another kind of marriage in Ngwa land which is marriage by inheritance or levirate. This type of marriage takes place when an elder brother dies and leaves a wife behind. Younger brother of the late man could step in to own the woman as a wife. If he formalizes it by paying a dowry to the parents of the woman any child born after this act becomes legally his child. The act of paying a dowry to woman's parents is called *n↔↔do↔↔zgha↔↔ri↔↔ i↔↔hu↔↔ o↔↔go↔↔* 'a change in law'. But if he does not pay any dowry on the woman any child born by the woman even though he is the true biological father, will belong to his late brother.

The next type of marriage in Ngwa land is done by a woman who is barren or does not want to have children by herself. This woman can marry a fellow woman who will have children in her name. But the rule is that the male person with whom she will mate will be from the kindred of the woman who pays the dowry and the children born under such a circumstance will be held by a covenant of ownership of same identity. Again if it is a woman whose husband dies without any child from her, she can also do this kind of marriage so that the husband could still have a name for himself. But then too, it must be the relations of the late husband only that the woman can mate with for child bearing. If she is married and the husband is alive it will be her husband that will do the mating. Here the children will call the older wife their mother while their own original mother will be referred to as aunty or big sister.

It would be worthy of note to mention that anybody whose marriage is not properly registered is not regarded in the community. For instance, children out of such marriage are sneered at. The couple of illegal marriage loses a lot of rites in the community because the status of marriage is unregistered. They are regarded as live-in mates. They cannot be included in the sharing of gift items of any sort. It thus, falls on them to get their marriage properly registered for it to be accorded recognition in the community by observing all the marriage rites as stipulated in the Ngwa community.

Burial

Death precedes the burial of a person. Death is simply the cessation of one's life. Death all over the world brings sorrow. The death of a person leads to the burial of such a person. There are many factors that could lead to the termination of life such as: illness, old age, accidents and diseases. This paper is however, not concerned with these factors. This section of this paper considers the rites that ought to be observed in Ngwa land before the interment of a person. In Ngwa land, the burial of a person before the use of mortuaries was done almost immediately after the person has been confirmed dead with little or not much embalmment because there was no need to keep a dead body more than two days. But irrespective of the haste or delay in the burial of any dead person, there are specified rites involved in every death. At this instance, it is appropriate to mention that 'burial ceremony' in Ngwa land is referred to as *oꝛꝛkwu* / *ŋꝛkwu*.

If it is the death of a young child or a single adult person, there is not much rites involved and may not require the wearing of black cloth for the mourning of the dead person. The important thing to be done under this kind of death before burial is that the person's paternal and maternal relations must be informed because without their consent the burial cannot hold. Moreover, in Ngwa land it is the maternal relations of a person that give the final consent for the burial of a person. Moreso, it is the maternal relations that have the sole right to dig the grave of a person in Ngwa land. Though, this is done after they have been given some wine, a goat, some yams, a delicious meal and some money. They are also to carry the corpse and lay it in the grave. If it is a person who committed

suicide the gods of the land will have to be appeased before the body of the person is touched. Moreover, the dead body of such a person will not be buried but would be thrown into the shrine. If it is a person who has committed an abominable act such as incest or wizardry, the gods will also be pacified before the body is buried. This is to safeguard the life of the living relations of the dead person who has committed an evil against the norms of the land.

For the burial of a person in regular standing in the community, the family of the deceased person will inform the immediate community of the deceased, the paternal, and maternal relations, friends, and well-wishers of the dead person who will then have to pay a condolence visit to the family of the dead person. If it is an adult who is married the living spouse ties a piece of wrapper round his or her waist and does not go out to do anything until after the burial of the dead spouse. If it is a woman whose husband has just died, only widows will cook what she will eat, take turns in sleeping with her, and teach her how to lie on the bed using only her back. The preliminary visits before the burial of the dead person are mainly to console the family and to share in their sorrow. In this visit, the visitors could show their sympathy to the family in kind by giving kolanuts, helping around in the house in cooking, washing, sweeping, fetching firewood, fetching water or running errands in preparation for the burial of the person in question. Money can also be given to help the family buy kolanuts or garden eggs for the numerous visitors that will come to commiserate with them or to buy food items as a support to the bereaved family. Words, songs, and prayers for the consolation of the family will also be made in the home of the bereaved person. During these visits, the family of the deceased gives an account of the events that led to the death of their person. The day of the burial will be determined by the maternal relations of the deceased person. Just like it has been mentioned above, it is the maternal relations of the dead person that digs and lays the corpse of their relation to rest, though only after certain rites have been fulfilled by the family of the dead person. Such rites will include the presentation of kolanuts, garden eggs, a cock, a goat, a sumptuous meal of garri and soup or rice and stew with big lumps of meat, a keg of wine, tapioca, coconut, local peas, 'aki↔di↔↗', and some money. If the deceased person is an adult married male person, a cow is bought and given to the male folks in the community. If it is an adult married woman, a cow is bought and taken to the woman's kinsmen. Accompanying the cow, will be a goat and a cock with some amount of money as required by the kinsmen of the dead woman. If it is a lady whose bride price was not paid before her demise, and was living with a man for whom she had children or not, her marriage will be conducted to an appropriate understanding before her burial rites are observed. On the day of the burial of an adult person in Ngwa land, the kinsmen of the dead person will be present to sing songs of death and sorrows of this life. An example of a song for the dead is:

O↔nwu↔ bu↗ o↔nye↔ o↔h)j↔,
O↔nwu↔ na↗ bu↗ o↔nye↔ o↔h)j↔

O≡vu/ru/ro≡gba≡la≡gha≡

(This song simply means that death is a thief and that when it catches a prey it runs away).

The kins men in the Ngwa-Igbo parlance are called *u↔mu↔/o↔kp↔* ‘close kinsmen’. These close kinsmen have their burial rites which must be given to them such as: twenty tubers of yams, four cocks, two goats, a bottle of palm oil, a bag of salt, two cups of pepper, ten bulbs of onion, local spices with which they will cook their yam, firewood, a basin of tapioca, coconut, dryfish, stockfish tail, two kegs of palmwine, a bag of rice, fresh and tin tomatoes and any other things they may require of their kinsmen. On the day of the burial people and close relations will gather in the compound of the deceased for the interment of the body. There is usually the cooking of food for the entertainments of guests. In the contemporary Ngwa land, a large number of the people are Christians and thus will usually invite a pastor for the funeral service and the interment of the corpse. But before now in accordance with the Ngwa tradition, the eldest person in the clan of the dead person will make an offering of kolanut, wine, hot drink and sprinkling of the blood of a cock and goat, to the ancestral spirits before the interment of the dead body. At the grave side, ash and sand are poured into the grave signifying the nothingness of man, the compositional constituents of man and his return to where he has come from. At the end of the burial, light meals for refreshment is shared out to everyone in attendance for making out their precious time to witness the burial of a loved one. If it is a woman whose husband is dead, her hair is scraped. The hair of any of a dead man’s children below the age of twenty are also scraped. For the mourning season, the bereaved persons will wear black or navy blue colour cloth. These colours of cloth signify sorrow, pain and loss. In Ngwa land, some people bury their dead in their house, while others bury outside. If a person dies of an accident, he or she is buried at the outermost part of the compound. This shows that his or her death was a very painful and a least expected one to the family and by the act of burying the body at the outer part of the compound, they are wishing that no such death should befall any member of the family again.

Market Day

In the Ngwa world, there are four market days namely: *n↔kwo↔/e↔ke↔/o↔ri↔/a↔fo↔* and *a↔fo↔*. Market days are special days in Ngwa land. Some communities operate a four days’s market week, while others operate an eight days’s market week. Thus, in Ngwa land, one will have: *n↔kwo↔/e↔ke↔/o↔ri↔/a↔fo↔* which are four market days while; *n↔kwo↔ u↔kwu↔, e↔ke↔ u↔kwu↔, o↔ri↔ u↔kwu↔* and *a↔fo↔ u↔kwu↔* sell in every eight days. In Ngwa land, every community has only one particular market day that it observes. On a typical market day, people take their goods to the market for sale. Examples of such goods are: yam, plantain, cocoyam, three leaves yam, palm oil, palm wine, palmnuts, palm kernel oil, fish, bush meat, vegetables, pepper, salt and so on. In Ngwa land, a

market day is a day when people are expected to wear their best attires. Moreso it is a day when people are not expected to do much farm work except to harvest farm produce that will be sold in the market. The reason for this is to enable people participate in the funfare of a market day. The Market Day in Ngwa land is not only a day for buying and selling, but also a day when people socialize. On a Market Day, prospective husbands go out to look out for matured adult female persons who may like to marry them if they so propose. The market day is also a day when people meet with their relations from near and far places. Cf. (Ezeibe "Culture and..." 19). The market day, is a day when special meals are served. On a market day, women who go to the market are expected to buy special things for their loved ones like: dresses, shoes, food items or local snacks like: tapioca, bean cakes, cassava cakes, and so on. In Ngwa land, people are not expected to fight or quarrel in the market, else the parties involved will be fined.

Palm fruit Cutting

Palm fruit cutting is a culture that is observed in Ngwa land. In the Ngwa land area, a lot of palm fruits are found which belong to no particular person. Though, in the present time, people do have personal palm plantations as a source of oil and income to the family. In Ngwa land, communal palmfruit cutting is observed, this is because the fruit is seen as a source of income to everybody in the community. If a community wants to embark on a communal project like: water or electricity, the palmfruits could be leased out for a specific time to raise fund for the project, after which the lease is revoked. On a day when the palmfruits are cut, it must not coincide with the market day of a community because the attention of the people will be divided. Before the day of palmfruit cutting, a man who does not know how to cut the palmfruit hires a palm fruit cutter. Before the day of cutting the palmfruits, the palmfruit cutter goes into the bush to survey the bush area where the palmfruits to be cut are located in order to mark out not less than seven trees with ripe ones. On the actual day of palmfruit cutting, the palmfruit cutters will gather at the village square for instructions from the village head. Before anybody goes to cut any palmfruits, the village head and elders will have appeased the gods of the land so that nobody falls from the palmfruit tree or get harmed by any wild beast that may be found on the palm tree. After this, the village gong or drum is beaten and all the palm fruit cutters run into the bush for the palmfruit cutting. Each palmfruit cutter is followed by a person who picks or carries the palmfruits immediately they are cut to avoid someone else carrying them away in error or in theft. At the end of the cutting exercise, the palmfruit cutter is treated to a very sumptuous meal of either garri or cassava flour meal and soup or any other meal as desired by him. If the palmfruit cutter cuts up to seven heads of palmfruits, he is qualified to be given a life cock for the exercise. Moreso, if he is a hired palmfruit cutter, he is paid the agreed amount. In Ngwa land, though females are not allowed to cut the palmfruit by climbing on it, they can however, cut the palm fruits that have not over grown. Some of the taboos that are observed in the cutting of palmfruits are that: it is not cut on a day when someone dies. It

does not matter if the person is young or old, male or female. Secondly, palmfruits are not cut on a rainy day in Ngwa land. This is because the body of the palmfruit trees will be slippery and may lead to accident. Thirdly, palmfruits are not cut on a day when someone is buried or there is an important meeting in the village square.

The palmfruits after being cut will be dehusked and allowed to stay a day or two for it to be soft for removal from the thorny cases where they are. Thereafter, the palmfruits will be collected and boiled in big pot for two or three hours. The cooked palmfruits will then be pounded in a big mortar with a big pestle. After it has been properly pounded, it will then be put in a wooden basin where the palmnuts will be separated from the fibrous materials encasing the palmnuts. The oil palm is then squeezed out by hand or the fibrous tissues can be put in an empty rice bag and the oil will be squeezed out by pressing it in between iron bars.

Post- natal Care

The post-natal tradition is a culture in Ngwa land where a woman who has just put to bed is given an extra ordinary care for the recuperation of strength in the mother who has just been delivered of a child. The Post-natal Care is a very prominent tradition in Ngwa land. In the Post-natal tradition, the mother of the woman who has just put to bed or a significant female adult relation who is close, goes to stay with the new mother for a minimum period of six weeks. The female adult close relation who stays with the new mother is to take extra care of the new child and mother by bathing them, washing their dirty clothes, cleaning the house, shopping and cooking for the family, carrying and cuddling the child at night when it cries so that the mother of the new born child can get enough rest. So, what the new mother does at this time is just to eat, sleep and suckle her baby. The soup that the new mother eats at this time, is a watery soup prepared with special local peppery spices that are medicinal and that help stimulate the appetite of the woman. Moreso, the soup is expected to be prepared with enough dryfish, and stockfish which serve as a rich source of protein in her meal. The nursing mother is also not allowed to get angry or be angered by anybody so that she will regain her strength and stamina in good time. The husband of the nursing mother is not expected to take much of the watery peppery soup that is meant for his nursing wife as this may cause him some stomach upset. At the expiration of the stay of the adult person who has come to take care of the nursing mother, her husband is expected to show appreciation to the woman who has come to take care of his wife by buying: a piece of hollandais wrapper, a head tie, two yards of lace material for blouse, a big tin of chocolate drink, a carton of liquid tinned milk, some money and any other thing that he may want to buy for her. For the father of his wife, he is to buy a bottle of hot drink and some money for allowing his wife to leave home in order to take care of them. In Ngwa land, the Post-natal care can also be done by the new mother going to live with her parents for a period of not more than three months where the mother of the new mother will have adequate time to take of her daughter and her own home. The important thing to note here is that whether the

nursing mother stays in her house or goes to the home of her parents, she is well cared so that she forgets the pains of pregnancy and child birth and to prepare the body for the next conception if they so wish. After three months of Post-natal care, the nursing mother is expected to resume her office in the home, doing the things she used to do as before.

Conclusion

Having a look at the various cultures discussed, one can see that for each culture, specific lexical repertoire was required. For instance, when the naming culture was discussed lexical items such as: umbilical cord, circumcision, powder, naming ceremony, title taking and so on were in use. For the burial tradition, one sees items as; mourning, condolence, corpse, coffin, black cloth and so on. For that of marriage, one sees words such as: bride, groom, in-laws, bride price and so on. For that of the market day, one sees words like: *n↔kwo↔ŋ, e↔ke↔ŋ, o↔ri↔ŋe↔ and a↔fo↔ŋ*, (which are names for the four market days, in Ngwa land) yam, cocoyam, plantain, meat, salt, pepper, and so on. For that of the palmfruit cutting, one sees words such as: palmfruit, climbing rope, palmfruit cutter, hirer, palmfruits, palm oil and so on. For the post-natal care culture, some of the lexical repertoire involved in its discussion are: nursing mother, new born baby, an adult care-giver, rest, sleep, suckle, hot bath, pepperish soup, and so on. The cultures observed have helped one to conclude that culture is an integrating and unifying force. It was observed that culture gives dignity to man. Moreso, it also constrains or checks the conduct of man because of the reactions in a society to an ill behavior. For instance: acts of stealing, suicide and incest are seriously frowned at in Ngwa land and that is why the bodies of such persons are thrown away to be eaten by birds and wild animals. The cultures discussed above have shown that the Ngwa man apart from labour desires to socialize and have some fun as in the discussion of the Market Day culture and honorary name taking. This also is a humane face. The discussions in the paper also showed that the name given to an individual was determined by the circumstance surrounding the birth of that person. The paper also showed that the body of a person who commits suicide or incest was not buried into the ground but was thrown into the shrine where birds and other wild animals will eat it up. It was also observed that the gods need to be pacified before the bodies of such persons are touched. The act of relations visiting to condole a bereaved person and sharing in the house chores of the person indicates that in Ngwa land, people live in a social-welfare system and cared for one another. The role of the maternal relations at the burial of an Ngwa man showed that the maternal kith and kin of the Ngwa man have a strong control over him and there is a close kith relationship from both the father and mother's side. It was also observed that in Ngwa land, there is no same sex marriage. This shows that the Ngwa man is not debased in character.

In essence, this paper has helped to illustrate that the culture of the Ngwa man is what makes up his personhood and it is the reference by which he can be identified. It has equally shown that competence also includes both the linguistic and cultural knowledge of the norms of one's community to help sustain the personhood of a person. This confirms the assertion of the framework on which this paper is discussed that, during language acquisition or learning, what is learnt is not just the linguistic forms, but beyond the linguistic to the cultural norms and principles guiding the behaviour of a person according to context so as to perform the kind of function that people in the society do. It thus, encourages more study in the culture of the Ngwa man in order to have a better account, understanding and documentation of the customs of the Ngwa man.

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