Communicating Gender Differences through the Paralinguistic Mode of Drama as Evidenced in Selected Igbo Plays

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Abstract
Drama is a literary genre whose nature lends itself to linguistic (literary) and paralinguistic (non-literary) modes of communication. Therefore, for an effective and affective communication of desired meaning to take place in drama, the two modes have to technically interact. The use of the two modes calls for an analysis of each of them. Often times, analysts or critics concern themselves only with the linguistic mode to the detriment of the paralinguistic mode. It is against the need for an effective and affective theatre communication that this paper attempts studying the paralinguistic elements or devices that account for communicating gender differences using these four Igbo plays, namely, Udo Ka Mma (UKM), Nwata Rie Awọ (NRA), Nke M Ji Ka (NMJK) and Obidiya (OB). The study adopts a communicative act analysis approach to analyzing movements and actions, dramatic props and dreams as dramatic devices for realizing effective meaning in dramatic performances. However, the study holds that, it is the roles of female characters in a play that determine movements and actions that would be couched in its title. Again, the dramatic intentional fabrics used around characters tend to mark the female characters, while unmarking the male ones, thereby limiting the female characters to the domestic domain while the male characters are not limited but rather operate in the public domain. In essence, just as the linguistic mode of communication renders women invisible, so also does the paralinguistic mode.

Key words: Gender identity and gender role, Gender communication, and Dramatic performance.

1.0 Introduction
Gender identity or role in relation to dramatic genre cannot be adequately analysed or comprehended unless subjected to the confines of paralinguistic communication. A linguistic or literary analysis alone of drama, offers us a limited window into the meaning of life and its living, hence the need for extra linguistic or non-literary information. Gender identity is one’s deep-seated sense of maleness or femaleness. It is also a reflection of an individual’s labelling by others as a boy or a girl, a man or a woman, a male or a female. Gender role on the other hand, refers to the extent people view themselves or by others as being masculine or feminine and playing the activities associated with either of them. Masculinity or femininity is socially defined, and varies from culture to culture. It is the gender in which a child is reared. It is this assigned gender that determines gender role as well as gender identity (Griffith and Scott, 1985). Gender identity or role is programmed by a complex series of biological and psychological processes: chromosomal, gonad, hormonal, morphological and assigned genders (Money and Ehrhardt, 1972). Moore (1994) advances a question-answer proposal of “who a woman is?” and by extension, “who a man is?” According to that proposal, it is one who has female or male biological characteristics, and whose behaviour is culturally determined by gendered expectations relating to the socially constructed distinctions.

1.1 Theoretical and Empirical Studies
Communication as the sharing of meanings of a discourse by participants is concerned with the sending and receiving of messages through a medium. It is essential to all social life and cultural systems, so much so that it is often taken in anthropological theory to be the paradigm of all cultures and all social organizations (Seymour-Smith, 1986). According to Seymour, it exists in two major modes: the symbolic (linguistic), which involves words either in a spoken or a written language, and the substantive mode (paralinguistic), which entails concreteness of materials. In this study, we are concerned with the substantive mode, which is the expression and moderating of gender thoughts, feelings, emotions through movements, actions and other paralinguistic features capable of communicating gender differences. The communication system and its modes of interaction are influenced by power. Leith (1983:147) notes that, “language has a vital part to play in the exercise of social power...the connotations that become criteria originate with the socially powerful” and which include the linguistic and the paralinguistic. It is this combination of verbal and nonverbal approach to powerful flow of communication that make Amase and Kaan (2013) in their study of oral satiric communication of Tiv oral poetry observe that verbal and nonverbal communication combine to give an effective and comprehensive communication, when they note Nwoga (1981) as saying that satire is the verbal equivalent of actions like tying a stolen object around the neck of the thief and parading him through the village. In other words, both aspects of communication as they relate to drama performance are Siamese twins, which cannot effectively move without each other.
Communicating gender differences is a complex issue. Various explanations have been advanced for its complex nature. Lakoff’s (1975) dominance theory that men have upper hand in the use of language, and Maltz and Borker’s (1982) two culture theory that men and women make use of different languages offer some useful explanations. However, can their explanations, word choice, and the use of symbols or silences fully account for all the intricacies involved in communicating gender differences? Are male and female differences marked in only one way or in varying ways? In an attempt to answer the above questions, Tannen (1993) advances three proposals on how the process of socialization can lead to a difference in both inter-gender and intra-gender communications. According to the first, conversational style: men tend to see conversations as negotiations, which they have to achieve and maintain an upper hand, and protect themselves from others’ attempt to bring them down or push them around. On the other hand, the women socialize by seeing the world as a community and focus on their connections as negotiations for closeness in which individuals try seeking and giving confirmation, support and to reach consensus (Tannen, 1993).

A second communication difference proposal lies in the use of rapport talk. The women use it to discuss similarities and match experiences while men use it to discuss knowledge and display skills (Tannen, 1993). In rapport talk, women seem to prefer discussing about their personal lives and feelings, while men prefer to discuss activities and events. The third is a mixed-sex conversation where men lecture and women listen and give support. Tannen notes that a mixed-sex conversation places the woman in a double-bind situation, because if she speaks in a way expected of a woman, then she is seen as an inadequate leader, but if she speaks in a way expected of a leader, she is seen as an inadequate woman. Tannen (1994) and, Heaton and Blake (1999) agree that men use the ‘instrumental style’ while the women use the ‘expressive style’. The instrumental style focuses on identifying goals and finding solutions while the expressive style refers to the expression of emotion and it has a perspective that is sensitive to how others feel.

Goldschmidt and Weller’s (2000) analysis reveals that emotional content of speech is significantly higher for women than for men, and this corroborates those of Tannen (1994), and Heaton and Blake (1999). Nnaemeka’s (1996) study exposes how Achebe objectifies women as going and coming with mounds of foo-foo, pots of water, market baskets, fetching of cola nuts, being scolded and beaten before they disappear behind the huts of the compounds while his male characters, from Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart to Ikem in Anthills of the Savannah are endowed with big egos. Qusseyonou (1996) notes the use of oral art forms like myths, proverbs, folktales, which writers borrow into written art forms to bring to fore unmarkedness in depicting male characters and markednes for the female ones in African mode of communicating gender differences. For example, ‘The Quarrel between Earth and Sky’, ‘Why the Snake-Lizard Killed His Mother’ and ‘The Mosquito and Ear’ are oral art forms used by Achebe in Things Fall Apart to communicate differences between the male and the female characters.

McManus (1999: 110-113) outlines four basic locations from which nonverbal communication patterns originate and they include voice, face, body and environment. In voice, the cultural perceptions or expectations are that women will have higher pitch, less resonance, more varied intonations, and a generally softer voice; in mixed group they will talk less and let themselves be interrupted, while the opposites are for men. Women employ more facial signals of submission. They smile, cry, look hurt, and maintain eye contact for a longer time more frequently than men. Their bodily expressions yield space more easily than men for they maintain an enclosed appearance, with arms folded or legs crossed or both close to the body, hands closed, and head tilted. Women also will put on more brightly coloured and decorative dresses including accessories such as jewellery more than men, and they will use touch to indicate closeness and affection, such as hugs. Last is environment, where women claim limited personal space and use colour and objects to convey mood, while men use colour and objects to show power. All what McManus (1999) notes in the study under reference relate to our present study of paralinguistic communication using the dramatic genre, and it is re-echoed by Nwabueze (2005) as seen in 1.2.

Finally here, the study of Kur and Edegoh (2010) notes that Nigerian home movies influence the young people’s attitude in terms of cultural values according to their gender markings. Chijioke’s (2006) observes in Okwu Igbo Nke Atọ (1985), Olu Igbo Nke Atọ (1985) and Ogugu Igbo 3 the sexist communication strategies employed by Igbo primer writers marking gender. Chijioke’s study reveals that language activities revolve around girls playing passive and servile roles (sweeping the compound, washing plates, assisting their mothers in cooking etc), while boys engage in active and more tasking roles (cutting grasses for the goats or taking them out for grazing, accompanying their fathers to tap palm wine or harvest palm fruits, hunt games etc). All these revolve around gender groupings in terms of identity and role. In the same manner roles are assigned to different genders in real life situations, so also are roles assigned to them in dramatic performance hence the relevance of the next subsection.

1.2 Drama as a Performance

Drama as a performance is an integrative discipline that challenges the hierarchy of psycho-motor,
affective and cognitive skills, because in the enactment of a scene, all three are in use (Hilton, 1987). It is the
only literary genre endowed with imitation, impersonation, and a deliberate interest in costume, modulation of
voice, gesticulation and movement in rhythm with the idiosyncrasies of the characters being imitated (Nwabueze,
2005). The approach adopted here, attempts answering the question: what paralinguistic elements are used to
communicate gender differences in terms of identity or role in the plays of study? To this extent, the study looks
at theatricality as movement and action, as well as a stagecraft with a view to identifying how these
communicate gender differences, using some selected Igbo plays. Numerous Igbo plays exist, from which we
would have drawn illustrations but for space and time constraint, we limit ourselves to only four plays, namely;
*Udo Ka Mma* “Peace is sine qua non”, *Nwata Rie Awọ (Ọ Jụ Anụ)* “When a child eats the toad (He detests the
meat)”, *Nke M Ji Ka* “A bird at hand worth more than millions in the bush” and *Obidiya* “Her husband’s heart”.

1.3 Synopses of Study Plays

*Udo Ka Mma (UKM)* is a play, which can be classified as a ‘tragicomedy’ or as ‘vaulting ambition’
using the traditionalist and thematic classificatory modes respectively. Tragedy because of class struggle, which
leads to the loss of lives and property as Eze Obiekwe (king) and Maduaka (peasant) draw their respective
communities, Ụmuọbịa and Ndịkpa into sudden war characterized by high economic blockade. Vaulting
ambition because of Obiekwe’s insistence on dispossessing Maduaka his ancestral land of inheritance noted for its
strategic location and fertility. In spite of the fact that the king’s brother and other confidants of his reiterate the
fact that the king’s grandfather mortgaged the land in question twice to Maduaka’s grandfather, the king stuck to
his gun. In Igbo tradition, mortgaging a piece of land twice amounts to outright sale. All advice and plea that sue
for peace fell on deaf ears. Consequently, a bloody war breaks out and Maduaka’s community defeats that of
King Obiekwe. Thus, the king’s selfishness overrides his sense of custodianship of the people’s tradition as well
as his socio-political role model. However, the conflict is resolved when Dike, Obiekwe’s son marries Egondụ,
the daughter of Maduaka, his father’s arch enemy.

*Nwata Rie Awọ (Ọ Jụ Anụ) – NRA* is a tragic play involving Awọrọ, Obiọma and Ođichefu as main
characters. Awọrọ, the only son of Obidike and Nwangbogo is stubborn and plays truancy, runs around with
women, especially widows, hence his parents lament every now and then. Awọrọ’s wrestling skills can only be
compared to those of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*. As Awọrọ defeats Akatoosi (a renowned wrestler),
Obiọma out of infatuation, falls in love with him. She jilts many suitors, including the one that was to pay her
dowry the very day she elopes with Awọrọ. Latter, the marriage is haphazardly consummated as Awọrọ’s
parents force him to seek the consent of Obiọma’s parents. In order to remove Obiọma from his life, Awọrọ
feigns food poisoning by his wife and as Abangwu tradition demands; Obiọma including their only daughter,
Ođichefu is sent packing to her natal home. Latter, she and her daughter are abducted by Awọrọ and sold into
slavery to the highest bidder. Fifteen years after, Awọrọ marries Ođichefu not knowing that she is his daughter.
Because incest has been committed, the gods of the land inflict sickness and trauma from grotesque appearances
to his new found love. As Awọrọ inquires from the dibịa, he finds out the cause of his new wife’s incessant ill-
health and its only remedy was to bring his first wife back. It is this first wife that will locate the whereabouts of
her new family and then the problem will be solved. This is done and on arrival his first wife (Obiọma) discovers
that her co-wife is their daughter. Immediately, Awọrọ runs into the room and commits suicide.

*Nke M Ji Ka (NMJK)* is a story set in the colonial era to mark the white man’s erosion of the religion,
psyche and government of the Igbo man. Ugochi the heroine of the narrative, in self rediscovery protests against
obnoxious traditions of Ụmuọbịa kingdom, which held her and her likes back. The traditions range from
marginalization of women as a result of lack of male child to the deposition of twins in the evil forest. At the
inception of the play, Lọọlọ Ugochi is seen lamenting because she begets only girls for her king who desires by
all means, not only a crown prince to the throne but also lineage continuity at all cost. After consulting the
herbalists, diviners and dibịas, and sacrifices of atonement and cleansing made, her situation gets worst. All she
and their four daughters get now is shouting, beating and all sorts of harassment, not only from the king but also
from the king’s elder sister and second wife. Eze Onyekwere takes a second wife whose purpose of marriage is
to beget a male child and nothing short of that for the king. One day Eze Onyekwere’s sister, Oghọoma dreams
where his brother took two chicks that ran into his compound outside, saying they were not his. Latter, a man
came with two bulls saying that they belong to Eze Onyekwere and while he was telling the man that they were
not his, the man insisted, and suddenly the two bulls turned into two young men. In trying her fate elsewhere,
Lọọlọ Ugochi joins the white man’s church, baptizes and changes her name to Lydia, which was misinterpreted
as o lu di ye “The ‘marrier’ of her husband” and all these violate the tradition of Ụmuọbịa kingdom. Onyekwere
bans her from his compound and she runs to Pastor Daniel who sent her back to her husband arguing that
the church cannot house a pregnant woman. But the pastor does that with security aid from the District
Commissioner who cautions that he would deal ruthlessly with Eze Onyekwere, should he harass his wife any
further. Meanwhile, Ugochi gives birth to twins (Pita and Pol), another abomination in the kingdom; the twins
are deposited in the evil forest. The church rescues them and the king orders the youth to burn down the church

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building and kill any member found there. King Onyekwere is jailed for five years with hard labour and while in prison, he is converted to Christianity. On gaining freedom, he baptizes and changes his name to Brother Samuel. In the church, he reunitis not only with his family but also with his sons, Pita and Pol. The people of Umueleme demand he comes back immediately to occupy his throne or all the rights and privileges therein would be forfeited. Onyekwere in peace and contentment replies, “What I have at hand is greater than that you have to offer me” and this where the title of the play draws from.

*Obidiya (OB)* is one of the greatest tragedies as well as revenge ever recorded in modern Igbo dramatic culture because of the inherent danger in land feud. In this play, triad or ‘O’ characters, Obidiya, Onuma and Oriaku are identifiable. Obidiya is Onuma’s wife and the bread winner of the family. While Obidiya goes out, in order to fend for the family, Onuma stays at home to receive gift items her wife buys from her business trips. The couple seems to be so intimate that; they hardly can do without each other. In spite of their childlessness, the couple lives in peace and harmony until Oriaku becomes so passionate about dispossessing Onuma his land of inheritance. The land in dispute is located and at a strategic position and this makes Oriaku, who is also a money ritualist, swear to dispossess Onuma his land. The land case is tried by their community, Umuegbu and Onuma wins. Oriaku dissatisfied with the ruling of the community’s judiciary, appeals to the orthodox court and loses again. As Onuma and his wife contemplate on how to show gratitude to all that rallied around them during the trial moment, especially the magistrate, death came knocking. Series of portend came foregrounding Oriaku’s resort to jungle justice, which leads to the death of Onuma. These include the appearances of a python, a black and big millipede as well as a viper crawling into Onuma’s house in the day time. Other portend include the perching of vultures on the roof of people’s houses as well as soldier ants ravaging their pots of soup, causing innocent children to starve to death. All these bad omen show that the land has been desecrated and the gods’ wrath also imminent. In order to satisfy his vaulting ambition, Oriaku hires assassins who killed Onuma while his wife was away on one of her usual distant market business trips. Obidiya seeks for revenge and completely wipes Oriaku and his family. However, Obidiya’s effort is complemented by that of the gods in wiping away Oriaku and his family both home and abroad. The play ends when the heroine commits suicide in order to join her late husband, which according to her, is where their love will continue uninterrupted.

### 2.0 Movement and Action

The actors in a play are rarely mundane. They impersonate, imitate and embody the qualities of real persons they are representing. In acting, characters make movements in space and time, which involve changing positions or locations on stage. It could also be a gradual or dramatic change in attitude, opinion, policy or anything one does or plans to do. Related to movement is action. An action is doing something for a purpose; hence impersonation and imitation are embodiment of action. It is also a movement or act that one can perform on a particular occasion for a particular purpose in a given space and time. We can also refer to the important, exciting or significant things happening in space and time as action. It could be overt or covert. Action is preparatory, sincere and essential to the movement of plot, which brings it about particularly, in the realization of dramatic objectives; and for this reason, movement and action become difficult to be separated into two different entities (Tennyson, 1967). Gesticulation is a type of movement that one makes with the hands or arms, even facial expressions often while talking because one is describing something that is difficult to express in words. Movement and action are in rhythm with the idiosyncrasies of the characters being imitated or impersonated. In dramatic actions, actors use their bodies and minds in rhythmic patterns to produce actions or movements, which aggregate real physical and psychological lives of different men and women. The objective of this work is to demonstrate how different movements of actors, which are paralinguistic in nature, communicate gender differences.

### 2.1 Physical

Chukuezi’s *Udo Ka Mma (Peace is Supreme)* exposes a major incident where King Obiekwe and Maduka are engrossed in a land feud. The conflict draws attention to the early intervention role of women in a land feud in order to avert war and its attendant consequences, hence Obidiya inquires:

Obiekwe nna anyi nke a ihu di gi otu a? (O wee welite olu ya n’iwe) O bu maka ala Uhu Umuezeukwu. Maduka na ndi otu ya! (O gwazoro ọtọ duo isi sị!) Eziokwu, aga m eme ha otu n’obodo a(8)

(Obiekwe, our master, why do you look so downcast? (He raises the tone of his voice in anger) It is about that land at Uhu Umuezeukwu. Maduka and his people! (He stands and swears) Truly, I will ruthlessly deal with them in this town)

In a family setting, when the head of the household is upset, every other family member is affected, particularly his wife, and this prompts Obidiya’s inquiry. In Igbo tradition, wives are expected to assist minimize stress on their husbands. The inherent danger in a land feud as exposed in the play is between King Obiekwe (the heart cannot rest until it gets what it wants) and Maduka (he who has people is greater than he who has wealth) as the former develops a strong desire for the latter’s ancestral land of inheritance. Insensitivity, no matter at
what level accounts for poor state of a group or nation’s citizenry in having leaders who remain adamant in the
wake of declining security and performance... indices (Ezekwesili 2013). However, land has been a major
source of conflict in Igbo land and elsewhere, especially where its demand is greater than its availability. The
movement highlights not only the extent families and properties in these communities were destroyed, but also
what land feud did to the socio-economic development and political relationships built over the years between
the two communities, in a twinkle of an eye. It becomes catastrophic as King Obiekwe refuses to heed any
advice that sues for peace, on the excuse that he cannot bring himself low for his kinsmen to show him the
boundary of his ancestral land. The queen, Obidiya like the present day “first ladies” tries to influence her king’s
stance in the matter but all to no avail (8). She advises the king to consult with the elders of the land for proper
adjudication. Like Calpurnia in Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar, Obidiya is silenced, thus:
(N’iwe) Taa nwaanyi mechie ọzọ ga...Obidiya, i leli la m (O wee gwa zo oto bawara Obidiya mba). I kwuọ ụdị
ekwu a ọzọ gi alaa be mma gi... (9).
(In a rage) Shut up your mouth woman, you have disrespected me (Stands up and scolds Obidiya). If you try this
again, I will send you packing to your father’s household...

Obiekwe always stands up in a rage to swear, to threaten or to scold. His idiosyncrasies here are
intended not only to dwarf the person and idea of Obidiya, but also to demonstrate his superiority over her as he
threatens to show her the way to her kinsmen. In Igbo society divorce is easier said than done, its processes are
stringent and complex, especially where the woman begets a male child because her son has all the rights and
privileges to bring her back if and when he owns his boundary of his ancestral land. The queen, Obidiya like the present day “first ladies” tries to influence her king’s stance in the matter but all to no avail (8). She advises the king to consult with the elders of the land for proper
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In a rage Shut up your mouth woman, you have disrespected me (Stands up and scolds Obidiya). If you try this
again, I will send you packing to your father’s household...
different genders sometimes leave the substance in life to pursue the shadow and this trigger off gender miscommunication. Aworo and Obioma have in their various contexts abandoned the normal for the abnormal. For instance Awooro, a famous wrestler like Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* abandons his wife, Obioma in preference to sleeping around with his numerous widow concubines every other day, a kind of eating the toad and detesting the meat (50). Aworo abducts and sells his wife and daughter into slavery. At the end, he commits incest with his daughter, Ochinchefu, and as he discovers it, he commits suicide — also a kind of eating the toad and detesting the meat. On the other hand, Obioma rejects many suitors, which is a dramatic plot to let Awooro into her life. Obioma’s girl friend, Ekena and her father Okwukogu highlights the movement thus:

Ogba nwo di agaghị [luţa eke ọgbạ... i ju] Ọbi, chọọ Chike gbanalu Ọtị, ha pu Eke. Ugbu a Anene eluwala gi ilu (33). Kama na ihe a ga-amata bụ mkpi mbugowe adigị agba. Agbagoro agbagoro wee rigocha ehu, o rukwe na nri na ya, gbagbagbogaghi iji ya (38).

(One who rejects suitors, ends up marrying a python. You reject Obi, drive away Chike, run away from Oti, abandon Eke, and now you detest Anene. But you must realise that you cannot force a he-goat to experience erection. If a crooked way is followed to climb up, the same is followed to climb down.)

In *Udo Ka Mma*, *Nwata Rie Awo* and *Nke M Ji Ka*, there are incidences of war or mayhem as movement and action. The point here is that the absence of the man or the woman in a home creates a vacuum, which the widow or the widower remembers at certain critical points in her or his life. In extreme cases, widows are subjected to dehumanizing tortures or oath swearing by their spouse families either to indict or vindicate them from their husbands’ death. In essence, widowhood is a major gender communicative movement in the life of an individual, which more often than not, leads to remarrying or assuming extra gender roles.

### 2.2 Symbolic or Psychological

We have been discussing movement that involves moving from one spatial entity in time to another. There is another type referred to as symbolic or psychological movement or exile. It involves the liberation from deep negative emotional feelings or depression to a freed life characterized by self fulfilment. In *Nke M Ji Ka*, King Onyekwere in consonance with the tradition of Umuleme kingdom, deposits the male twins Ugochi, his queen delivers in the evil forest, after many years of looking for a male child (65). The church rescues the twins—Pita and Pol and this rekindle the king’s anger to a boiling point. He orders the youths to burn down the church and kill anybody seen there. He is sentenced to five years imprisonment, during which he is converted into Christianity. Thus, the king and the queen escape from obnoxious tradition to a Christian and modern way of life, which assures them lineage continuity (94). King Onyekwere is liberated from his former life experiences to new ones. He no longer traumatizes his wife and daughters for lack of male children but hugs them; he no longer intimidates and scares them but loves and cherishes them. He expresses this new life experiences thus, *Chineke ere ụnwere, e – etu a ka ihunanya na ebere gi si adị? Biko gbaghara ekweghi ekwe m* (95) “God, who created the world, is this how your love and kindness are? Please, forgive my unbelief.” In other words, King Onyekwere escapes from lack of a male child to abundance of male children, from lineage extinction to lineage continuity and from war in the family to peace.

### 2.3 Dramatic Objects/Symbols

Stage craft and its management in addition to making use of “language of action, language of sound”, makes use of “language of physical objects” referred to as props (Brook, 1990:55). That is, objects that communicate or suggest meaning. Brook categorizes these objects into the dramatic non-intentional and dramatic intentional. Dramatic non-intentional objects or symbols refer to those objects, which do not further the plot of the play in any way, or help in creating mood. Their absence does not hamper the free movement of the play. Dramatic intentional objects on their part have significant value that draws attention to meaning on stage. They usually have negative effect on the spine of the play if removed. In other words, they further the plot of the play. However, an object can only be classified as dramatic non-intentional or dramatic intentional within a given context, for what is intentional in one situation could be non-intentional in another situation. The following stage direction from *Obidiya* involving the character Obidiya, illustrates:

*Ọnụma nọ n’ọlọ ya abo isi,chechu azu n’ezi. Ndị ogbu isi abata kọọ ya okpiri n’olu, were akwa kechiche ya ọnụ. Biko ga-emenyụ oku ugbu a, tie egwu ụrụ iju, anya mmiri, egwu e iji ebu ozu, nke ga-emere ndị mmadụ chee echiche. Obidiya ga-abata burukwa abo n’isi na ihe ni ile ọtụta n’ahịa. O ga-edebe ha n’ala gagharia, legharia anya* (23).

(*Ọnụma backs outside, combing his hair. The assassins enter, knock and hit him with a club, stuffing his mouth with cloth, and carry his corpse away. Light fades out and dirge music plays arousing people’s thought. Obidiya enters, carrying a long basket of wares she buys from the market. She puts them down, moves and looks around.)

O lee ebe nwo niri na ayọ? O ga-asị na ya amaghị na m alọtala? Ọnụma! Ọnụma! Ọnụma e e! Ọnụma e e! Ọnụma e e! O garal ebe n’abali a? Nwanne m Ọnụma e e! (O munnye ihe oku, lee ebe nile, hu obara n’ala, na iperipe akwa ya toghoro n’ala tinyere okpi. Ujo eju ya ahu. O legharia anya, tie mkpụ) Ha egbuole ya. Ndị iro egbuole ya. E gbuolu nwa mkpi, izuzu ala. Ihe a bu obara mmadụ, nke a bu akwa jioji ya o gba oge m na-agá*

N'obi eze, eze na nwunye ya nke aha ofù na-akpa nkata. Ọkụ ga-egosi ụtụtụ (34)

(In the sitting room, the king chats with his second wife. Morning time.)

The above is language of physical symbol signifying antagonism and petty jealousy, which are common characteristics of co-wives in polygamous homes. Chukuezi (1979) buttresses this view when he informs us through the character, Akujobi that Chimma, his sixth wife quarrels with her co-wives every other day (7).

In discussing dramatic objects, we note that they refer to props, costumes, make-ups, and even scenic descriptions. Nke M Ji Ka provides us with a context that holds all the aspects of dramatic objects at a glance. Thus, we have:

N’ime ajo ọhịa a nUBE anqoqọ di iche iche. Ọmu okorobi abụ someone ọmu n’ọmu. Otu n’ime ha ọ bụ ọmu ejima ọ bụ ọgụ ụzọ. Nwa okorobi ọ bụ ọmu ejima aha esowe ya, Ugochi esonye. E tere ya nụnụ ọ bụ, iye ya nkiri ọkwa. Nwa okorobi nke ọzo so Ugochi n’azụ ji nwa uriom ọkọ ọ na-manere n’ọmu. Ha niile abata. Okụ ga-egosi etiti abali)

(In the evil forest, sounds of different animals are heard. Two young men hold tender palm fronds between their lips. The priest carrying a medicine pot leads the way, followed by the one carrying the broken earthen containing the twins. Ugochi follows; her face is smeared with charcoal solution, her body wrapped in tattered cloth. The young man following Ugochi holds a chick tied with a tender palm frond. All enter the stage. The lighting will show midnight time.)

The dramatic props here are the tender palm fronds and the chick, while the costume and make-up are respectively, the tattered cloth and charcoal solution smeared on Ugochi’s face. The scene description of the evil forest, sounds of different types of animal and lighting showing midnight time are also dramatic intentional. The tender palm frond symbolizes danger while the chick suggests the idea of a scapegoat, which carries one’s sins away, hence the priest beats Ugochi with the chick and tender palm fronds and pronounces her cleansed. The ‘charcoal solution’ is symbolic of guilt or sin; hence the priest washes Ugochi’s face and pronounces her guiltless or sinless. In terms of costume, the ‘tattered wrapper’ or cloth signifies penitence, the sober mood of a sinner. In terms of scenic effect, ‘the evil forest’ and ‘the sounds made by different animals’ coupled with ‘the
lighting’, suggest the darkness of evil as well as that of midnight. All these create a weird situation that accompanies the cleansing activity. Such an activity is carried out in the dead of the night when it is believed that the gods come around to take sacrifices. Apart from the animal sound, which is dramatic non-intentional, others are dramatic intentional objects. If the sound is removed, it does not affect the plot of the play because it could be represented with plastic sound effect. On the other hand, the dramatic intentional objects, say ‘the twins in the broken earthen pot’, if removed, will disrupt the fabric of the play, in the sense that there will be no rescue mission, burning down of the church premises or the conversion of King Onyekwere.

2.4 Dreams

In *Nke M Ji Ka* (11), we see Ọgọọma, the only daughter to the family dreaming about the future of the family (11). She travels to her natal home one early morning to share her dreams with her brother, King Onyekwere. The dramatic intention of the dream is to let King Onyekwere have a preview of what is about to happen in his household and take precaution. The characters, actions and objects of the dream are intentional stage craft that corroborate life realities. The dream’s summary explains the following equation, thus,

1) Two chicks run into the compound as rain beats them. Male twins as taboo in Ụmụeleme tradition are born into the king’s family.

2) The chicks are put in a broken earthen pot and thrown away. The axe of tradition falls on the twins and they are deposited in the evil forest.

3) An unknown man brings two bulls and insists they are the king’s, the bulls turn into young men. The church rescues Pita and Pọl who grow into young men that will continue the family’s lineage.

Interestingly enough, the dream of Ọgọọma in this context is a positive portent because it portends the provision of initial lack- male child. It also portends lineage continuity and its assurance to the family of Onyekwere. The two dreams in *Nwata Rie Awo* by Obiọma (50) and Ọdịnchefu (60) illustrate negative portent because it gives an insight to the punishment for misdemeanour. However, the *Nwata Rie Awo* examples portray a situation where the dreamers happen to be the direct victims of portent. The first dreamer here is Obiọma (50), while the second is Ọdịnchefu, and relating the dreams to latter events in the play, we find out that they correspond to what later happened to them. The dream suggests the following:

1) Going to search for mushrooms on the top of a hill with other women. Awoọrọ is the mushroom; the other women are Abangwu widows he prefers to his wife.

2) The seven headed spirit and the one eye one touching Obiọma as others escape. Obiọma is alleged of poisoning, and abducted with her daughter.

3) She eventually gets to the hill top and slips off into the valley where a cluster of spirits beat her to death. She pays for being choosy as Awoọrọ commits incest (with their daughter) and suicide.

Ọdịnchefu’s dream corroborates the cries of the symbolic *Ajọ nnụnụ* “Evil bird” (42-44), which all together inform us about the female fractures Obiọma and Ọdịnchefu experience in the hands of Awoọrọ. The dream motive is a poetic justice, which has already taken its toll on Obiọma (Ọdịnchefu’s mother) as her dream suggests. Ọdịnchefu’s dream is a follow-up to that of Obiọma, for the death motif in her incessant dreams is the message of incest and suicide Awoọrọ commits. The poetic justice is inescapable; hence Ọdịnchefu is tossed about from one spirit to another in her dream.

3.0 Findings and Conclusion

It is the roles of the female characters in plots that determine the movements and actions couched or expressed in the titles of plays. Okwerekediya (50) and Obidiya (76) in *Udo Ka Mma* are of the view that the marriage between Dike and Egondu will bring peace between the warring communities. In *Nwata Rie Awo*, Obiọma (33), Amangwu women (50) and Ọdịnchefu (64) are behind the movement of ‘eating toad and rejecting meat’. Ugochi in *Nke M Ji Ka* begets male twins that are deposited in evil forest and rescued by the church, and who eventually continued the lineage of Onyekwere, hence the title of the play. The male characters contended against female principle in the plays of study. Obiekwe in *Udo Ka Mma*, Ugochi in *Nke M Ji Ka*, Awoọrọ in *Nwata Rie Awo* and others are indicted by one form of female principle or the other. In all the plays, the use of instrumental style of communication by male characters and the use of expressive style by female characters relate the way in which dramatic objects and movements express respective genders of actors or characters. A look at the analysis done above will lend credence to this claim. In *Nke M Ji Ka*, consider the cleansing materials used on Ugochi, because Onyekwere desires a son. Also consider how Awoọrọ in *Nwata Rie Awo* feigns food...
poisoning and abducts Obioma and their daughter, because of his infidelity. All the dreams recorded in the plays are by female characters only, no male character dreamt. See examples in the section of dreams above.

In conclusion, women tend to have more intercourse with nature in seeing realities of life more than men. Just as verbal mode of communication tends to render women invisible, so does the non-verbal mode. In fact, dramatic intentional props or fabrics used around female characters relate women only to the domestic sphere, and men to the public sphere. In all the illustrations above, dramatic intentional and non-intentional objects appear as necessary elements in African dramatic culture. Although movement and action or stagecraft is necessary for an effective theatre, they nevertheless can fulfil all that need to be studied in non-verbal communication in theatre. This study attempts only non-literary (paralinguistic) mode of communicating gender differences, but not the literary (linguistic) mode, which sees drama as literature.

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