



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF  
NIGERIA**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL  
SCIENCES.**

**COURSE CODE:-MAC 115**

**COURSE TITLE:-  
AFRICAN COMMUNICATION SYSTEM I**



**MAC 115**  
**AFRICAN COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS I**

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<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Course Aims.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Course Objectives.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Course Requirements .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Course Materials.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Study Units.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Textbooks and References.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Assessment File.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Tutor-Marked Assignment.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Final Examination and Grading.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Course Marking Scheme .....	4
Presentation Schedule .....	4
Course Overview .....	5
How to Get the Most from this Course .....	6
Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials .....	7
Summary.....	8
<b>Introduction</b>	

## MAC115: AFRICAN COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS I

Welcome! This course, MAC115: African Communication Systems I, is a 2-credit unit course designed to expose undergraduate students to African oral traditional communication structure, form and content. It also examines past and present modern mass media systems as influenced by African political culture. It looks at the major elements of African communication systems with emphasis on specific peculiarities in agents, forms and media verbal, non-verbal, formal and informal forms as well as media mode and channels are examined. Essentially, African communication systems I is exploratory and students are expected to identify and discuss the structure, form and contents of the traditional communication systems in their areas of origin. This material was developed within the Nigerian context, drawing mainly from the Ukwuani speaking people of Ndokwa West Local Government Area of Delta State.

### Course Aims

Generally, the aim of this course is to expose students to African communication systems. Hence, the purpose of this text is to acquaint students with the various traditional modes of communication in Africa. So, an insight into the vital aspects of African cultures is the main focus here as the modes are embedded in the people's culture which

emphasises the people's identity. The ultimate aim is to expand students' knowledge of African communication systems. Specifically, the main aims are to:

2. help students understand the major elements of African communication
- (b) expose students to the specific peculiarities in agents, concepts, forms and channels/media
- (c) help students identify forms as well as media mode and channels of African communication.

## **Course Objectives**

To achieve the above aims, MAC 115 has overall objectives. Furthermore, each unit also has specific objectives. The unit objectives are at the beginning of each unit. It is advised that you read them before you start working through each unit. To assess your progress during studies, you may refer to the unit objectives. Below are the wider objectives of the entire course and by meeting the objectives, you have met the aims of the course. On successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

1. Explain communication and African communication system
2. Justify the need to study African communication systems
3. Compare African communication systems and mass communication
4. Classify the traditional channels of communication in African
5. Discuss verbal and non-verbal communication
6. Compare verbal and non-verbal communication
7. Discuss visual channels
8. Discuss iconographic channels
9. Discuss instrumental channels
10. Discuss demonstrative channels

## **Course Requirements**

To successfully complete this course, you are required to read all the study units and other reference/related materials. You are also required to do all the practical exercises. To do this you need a pen, note-book, assignment file and other materials that are listed in this guide. The exercises are to gauge your level of understanding of the various units in each of the model. So, at the end of each unit, you are required to submit written assignments for the purpose of assessment. At the end of the course, you will write a final examination.

## **Course Materials**

The major materials you need for this course are :

- i. Course Guide
- ii. Study modules broken down into units
- iii. Assignment file
- iv. Relevant text books including the ones listed under each unit
- v. As a beginner, you need to interact with your parents and kinsmen and over a period of time, extract information on the various classes of traditional communication in your local community

## Study Units

There are 18 units in this course. They are listed below:

### **Module 1 Introduction**

- |        |                                                                                                                         |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Unit 1 | The Concept of Communication, African Communications Systems and the Reasons for Studying African Communication Systems |
| Unit 2 | African Communication Systems and Mass Communication Compared                                                           |

### **Module 2 Traditional Channels of Communication**

- |        |                                                                       |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Unit 1 | Classification of the Traditional Channels of Communication in Africa |
| Unit 2 | Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication                                   |
| Unit 3 | Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication Compared                          |

### **Module 3 Overview of Visual Channels of Communication**

- |         |                                                                                                         |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Unit 1: | Overview of Visual Channels of Communication and Pigmentation and Colours as a group of Visual Channels |
| Unit 2: | Appearance: Physical Look and Costume\Facial Marks and Tattoos/Records                                  |

### **Module 4 Iconographic Channels**

- |        |                                                                               |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Unit 1 | Iconographic Channels of Communication: Objectified, Floral, Plants and Crops |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### **Module 5 Instrumental Channels**

- |        |                                           |
|--------|-------------------------------------------|
| Unit 1 | The Concept of Instrumental Communication |
| Unit 2 | Idiophones                                |
| Unit 3 | Membraneophones                           |
| Unit 4 | Membraneophones in Western Nigeria        |
| Unit 5 | Aerophones                                |

**Module 6     Demonstrative Channels**

Unit 1	The Concept of Demonstrative Communication
Unit 2	Music
Unit 3	Dance and Song
Unit 4	Poetry, Chants and Incantations
Unit 5	Signals, Signs and Symbolography

**Textbooks and References**

Certain books have been recommended in the course. You may wish to purchase them for further reading.

**Assessment File**

An assessment file and a marking scheme will be made available to you.

In the assessment file, you will find details of the works you must submit to your tutor for marking. There are two aspects of the assessment of this course; the tutor marked and the written examination. The marks you obtain in these two areas will make up your final marks. The assignment must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadline stated in the presentation schedule and the Assignment file.

The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total score.

**Tutor-Marked Assignment**

You will have to submit a specified number of the (TMAs). Every unit in this course has a tutor marked assignment. You will be assessed on four of them but the best three performances from the (TMAs) will be used for your 30% grading. When you have completed each assignment, send it together with a Tutor Marked Assignment form, to your tutor.

Make sure each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline for submissions. If for any reason, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor for a discussion on the possibility of an extension. Extensions will not be granted after the due date unless under exceptional circumstances.

**Final Examination and Grading**

The final examination will be a test of three hours. All areas of the course will be examined. Find time to read the units all over before your examination. The final examination will attract 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions, which reflect the kinds of self assessment exercises and tutor marked assignment you have

previously encountered. And all aspects of the course will be assessed.

You should use the time between completing the last unit, and taking the examination to revise the entire course.

### Course Marking Scheme

The following table lays out how the actual course mark allocation is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignments (Best Three Assignments out of four marked)	30%
Final Examination	70%
Total	100%

### Presentation Schedule

The dates for submission of all assignments will be communicated to you. You will also be told the date of completing the study units and dates for examinations.

### Course Overview

Unit	Title of work	Weeks Activity	Number of Assignment
Course Guide			
<b>Module 1</b>			
1	The concept of communication	Week 1	Assignment 1
2	African Communication Systems and Mass communication Compared	Week 2	Assignment 1
<b>Module 2</b>			
1	Classification of the Traditional Channels of Communication in Africa	Week 3	Assignment 1
2	Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication	Week 4	Assignment 1
3	Verbal and Non Verbal Communication Compared	Week 5	Assignment 1
<b>Module 3</b>			
1	Overview of Visual Channels of Communication and Pigmentation and Colours as a group of Visual Channels	Week 6	Assignment 1
2	Appearance: Physical Look and Costume\Facial Marks and Tattoos\Records	Week 7	Assignment 1
<b>Module 4</b>			



1	Iconographic Channels of Communication: Objectified, Floral, Plants and Crops	Week 8	Assignment 1
	<b>Module 5</b>		
1	The Concept of Instrumental Communication	Week 9	Assignment 1
2	Idiophones	Week 10	Assignment 1
3	Membraneophones	Week 11	Assignment 1
4	Membraneophones in Western Nigeria	Week 12	Assignment 1
5	Aerophones	Week 13	Assignment 1
	<b>Module 6</b>		
1	The Concept of Demonstrative Communication	Week 14	Assignment 1
2	Music	Week 15	Assignment 1
3	Dance and Song	Week 16	Assignment 1
4	Poetry, Chants and Incantations	Week 17	Assignment 1
5	Signals, Signs and Symbolography	Week 18	Assignment 1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18Weeks</b>	<b>18</b>

### How to Get the Most from this Course

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecture. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to the lecturer. In the same way a lecturer might give you some reading to do, the study units tell you where to read, and which are your text materials or set books. You are provided exercises to do at appropriate points, just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise. Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit, and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next to this is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. These learning objectives are meant to guide your study. The moment a unit is finished, you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make this a habit, then you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course. The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from a Reading section. The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any trouble, telephone your tutor.

Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need

assistance, do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly, it is your first assignment.
  1. Organize a Study Schedule. Design a 'Course Overview' to guide you through the Course. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the Assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write in your own dates and schedule of work for each unit.
  3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything to stay faithful to it. The major reason why students fail is that they get behind with their course work if you get into difficulties with your schedule, please, let your tutor know before it is too late to help.
  4. Turn to Unit I, and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
- Assemble the study materials. You will need your set books and the unit you are studying at any point in time. As you work through the unit, you will know what sources to consult for further information.
  - Keep in touch with your study centre. Up-to-date course information will be continuously available there.
  - Well before the relevant due dates (about 4 weeks before due dates), keep in mind that you will learn a lot by doing the assignment carefully. They have been designed to help you meet the objectives of the course and, therefore, will help you pass the examination. Submit all assignments not later than the due date.
  - Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study materials or consult your tutor.
  - When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.
  - When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked

assignment form and also the written comments on the ordinary assignments.

- After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in the Course Guide).

## **Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials**

Information relating to the tutorials will be provided at the appropriate time. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must take your tutor-marked assignments to the study centre well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor if you need help. Contact your tutor if:

- a) you do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings
- b) you have difficulty with the exercises
- c) you have a question or problem with an assignment or with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face-to-face contact with your tutor and ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussion actively.

## **Summary**

The course guide gives you an overview of what to expect in the course of this study. The course teaches you the basic uses of **African Communication Systems** and how they can be applied. It also acquaints you with the relationship between African Communication Systems and the modern means of communication.

We wish you success with the course and hope that you will find it both interesting and useful.

## **Assessment File**

An assessment file will be made available to you. In this file, you will find details of work you **MUST** do and submit to your tutor for marking. The marks obtained in this course will be part of your final marks. A marking scheme has been provided.

### **Study Method**

You will study the units independently. However, arrangements have been made for you to meet your tutor for tutorials on a regular basis in the study centre. Also, you can organise interactive sessions (study group) with your course mates.

### **Submission of Assignments**

The dates for the submission of various assignments will be communicated to you. Similarly, you will also be notified on the date for completing the study units and dates for examinations.

### **Summary**

This course guide gives you an overview of MAC115: African Communication Systems I. Best of luck!

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<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>Module 1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Unit 1 The Concept of Communication, African Communications Systems and the Reasons for Studying African Communication Systems.....	1
Unit 2 African Communication Systems and Mass Communication Compared.....	11
<b>Module 2 Traditional Channels of Communication.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Unit 1 Classification of the Traditional Channels of Communication in Africa.....	19
Unit 2 Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication.....	28
Unit 3 Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication Compared.....	36
<b>Module 3 Overview of Visual Channels of Communication..</b>	<b>41</b>
Unit 1 Overview of Visual Channels of Communication, Pigmentation and Colours as a Group of Visual Channels.....	41
Unit 2 Appearance: Physical Look and Costume\Facial Marks and Tattoos\Records.....	48
<b>Module 4 Iconographic Channels.....</b>	<b>55</b>
Unit 1 Iconographic Channels of Communication: Objectified, Floral, Plants and Crops.....	55
<b>Module 5 Instrumental Channels.....</b>	<b>64</b>
Unit 1 The Concept of Instrumental Communication.....	64
Unit 2 Idiophones.....	68
Unit 3 Membraneophones.....	76
Unit 4 Membraneophones in Western Nigeria.....	81
Unit 5 Aerophones.....	92
<b>Module 6 Demonstrative Channels.....</b>	<b>98</b>
Unit 1 The Concept of Demonstrative Communication.....	98
Unit 2 Music.....	102
Unit 3 Dance and Song .....	110
Unit 4 Poetry, Chants and Incantations .....	119
Unit 5 Signals, Signs and Symbolography .....	122





## **MODULE 1 INTRODUCTION**

Unit 1	The Concepts of Communication, African Communications Systems and the Reasons for Studying African Communication Systems
Unit 2	African Communication Systems and Mass Communication Compared

### **UNIT 1 THE CONCEPTS OF COMMUNICATION, AFRICAN COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS AND THE REASONS FOR STUDYING AFRICAN COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 What is Communication?
  - 3.2 What Are the Functions of Communication?
  - 3.3 What is African Communication Systems?
  - 3.4 Uniqueness of African Communication Systems
  - 3.5 What is Culture?
  - 3.6 The Neglect of African Communication Systems
  - 3.7 Why Study African Communication Systems?
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

African communication system is a course under communication. Therefore, it is important to start this course by examining the concepts of communication and African communication systems. It also examines the reasons for studying African Communication systems.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- define and explain what communication means
- identify the functions of communication
- explain the functions of communication
- define African communication systems
- explain the interplay between culture and African communication

systems

- outline the reasons for studying African communication systems
- discuss the gains of African communication systems.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 What is Communication?**

Communication is a process by which a sender passes information to the decoder or receiver. It involves contacting, relaying and transferring of ideas, news, secrets, messages, orders and information from people, groups and communities to others. Communication in general terms can be described as the act of sending and receiving messages from a source through a medium. MacBride *et al* (1981) define communication not just as the exchange of news and messages but as an individual and collective activity embracing all transmissions and sharing of ideas, facts and data. So, communication may be looked at as a system or process. However, this definition does not highlight the feedback component and thus has not fully described the process of communication. According to Okunna (1999:6): Communication is a complex process. Because the communication process is an exchange or sharing of information or a message, it requires certain basic component. These include the source from whom the message originates; the medium through which the message is conveyed; the audience who receives the message; and the feedback which is the reaction of the receiver to the message.

#### **3.2 What Are the Functions of Communication?**

Welcome to this sub-section which is a continuation of our discussion of communication, but from a different angle. Now that we know what 'communication' means, it is important to also know the functions. That is, what exactly does communication do in any society? This sub-section focuses on the functions of communication.

Every society has evolved ways of transmitting information from one person to another and Africa is not an exception. Again, in Africa, the traditional communication systems apart from transmitting information which includes the news function and other announcements, entertains, persuades, and also is used for social exchanges (Doob, 1966). MacBride *et al* (1981) identified some specific functions of communication as:

- d) information
- e) socialisation
- f) motivation
- g) education

- h) cultural promotion and
- i) entertainment

**Information:** the collection, storage, processing and dissemination of news, data, pictures etc required for everyday life.

**Socialisation:** the provision of a common fund of knowledge which enables people to operate as effective members of the society in which they live.

**Motivation:** the fostering of individual or community activities, geared to the pursuit of agreed goals.

**Education:** the transmission of knowledge so as to foster intellectual development, character formation and acquisition of skills.

**Cultural promotion:** the dissemination of cultural and artistic products for the purpose of preserving the heritage of the past.

**Entertainment:** the diffusion through signs, symbols, sounds and images for personal and collective recreation and enjoyment.

### 3.3 What is African Communication Systems?

Olulade (1998) stated that traditional communication as used in Africa is an admixture of social conventions and practice that have become sharpened and blended into veritable communication modes and systems which have almost become standard practices for society. It is a complex system of communication, which pervades all aspects of rural African life. According to Denga (1988) cited in Mede (1998), it has varied characteristics which include dynamism and the fact of its being a multi-media and multi-channel system. It is perhaps the most important way by which the ruralites communicate among themselves and with others. So, despite the advent of the modern day media in Africa, the use of traditional cues and materials is still very much common and adaptable, acceptable and recognisable by the people.

### 3.4 Uniqueness of African Communication Systems

Below are some of the uniqueness of African communication systems.

- It is understood by members of a community
- It readily appeals and connects with the people's language, culture, belief, myth, legend and customs which enhances effectiveness of communication (relates to values, norms, ethos and culture of Africans)
- Uses symbols, values and indigenous institutions, which enhance

messages' effectiveness

- Projects African historical past (traditions)
- Derived from the culture, beliefs, and the way of life of Africans
- Rooted among the local people and respected by the people, especially the ruralites
- Embedded in the culture of the people, which is the driving force
- Relies on indigenous technology, employs values and symbols that the people identify with

From a general point of view, African Communication systems is seen as a traditional or indigenous mode of communication and it is indigenous. Indigenous communication is steeped in traditional culture. So, what is culture?

### **3.5 What is Culture?**

Culture is necessary for a healthy society. It is usually established from enlightenment, acquired through education, observation and exposure to an environment. Culture is the belief, custom, tradition, practices and social behaviour of a particular nation and its people. In anthropology, culture is further defined as the patterns of behaviour and thinking that people living in a social group learn, create and share. Culture distinguishes one human group from another. People's culture includes their rules of behaviour, language, rituals, arts, style of dress, religion and economic systems. So, culture is the totality of the way of life of a people through which they associate and relate with their environment. Tradition can be said to be the norms and values of each individual group under a particular ethnic group or tribe. Culture is dynamic i.e. changes with time while tradition is a bit stagnant. For example, strictly traditional marriage has changed over time to include the church and court marriage (James and Soola, 1990). Culture and tradition are interwoven, but culture is highly influenced by the environment and vice versa. Culture is strongly linked with time - changes with time. So, for our purpose, African communication systems can be described as that form of communication that has its root in the African environment. It is original in the African locality and to the natives. It has been referred to variously as traditional and indigenous communication by various authors. Wilson (1987) in his own definition, stated that traditional communication is "a continuous process of information dissemination, entertainment and education used in societies which have not been seriously dislocated by Western culture or any other external influence". Wilson also stressed that the ownership of the traditional communication media lies with the society.

### **3.6 The Neglect of African Communication Systems**

African communication systems are an integral part of the socio-cultural heritage of Africans. However, according to Ibagere (1994:81-82), ... Civilisation, which has brought about modernisation, has compelled the African to cannibalise some of [the traditional modes of communication]. The direction of modernisation which has tilted strongly in favour of Westernisation has dislocated almost all the modes in the urban areas and supplanted them with the modern mass media. Thus, the socio-economic terrain has made it impossible to relate to these cannibalised modes, especially in the urban areas. For example, it is now virtually impossible to use smoke as a means of attracting attention in African cities, because it could be interpreted differently... because the context in which urban dwellers relate to themselves ...is quite different from that of the rural society which is still relevant to the people's experiences as mode of communication. These traditional modes of communication have, therefore, continued to exist by the grace of the slow pace of development, especially in communication which has impeded the spread of the modern mass media (in term of hardware and software) to the rural areas, where these modes are the only means of sustaining the information needs of the people.

Africa is a vast continent that is made up of diverse peoples. These peoples existed for centuries before their contacts with the colonial masters. Each had its own unique language and cultural patterns. Within each cultural setting, however, there existed well established systems for sharing information, opinion formation and cultural values. Buttressing this position, Rogers cited in Opubor (1975) stated that "a far flung network of communication existed in 'less developed' countries before the introduction of the print or electronic media." Although a rich network of communication channels existed in indigenous Africa before the introduction of modern media of communication, studies into these local channels of communication is quite recent as African scholars in the past and even up till now have concentrated much of their research efforts mainly on the western media of communication such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines. It is therefore no wonder that the quantity and variety of research literature on traditional channels of communication in Africa are very scanty.

This text therefore brings into focus the various aspects of African indigenous communication systems aimed at inculcating in the minds of people that the various peoples of Africa had ways of sharing information that were as effective as modern day media of communication. It is hoped that this text would add to the general efforts of African and Afrocentric scholars at salvaging our culture; lead to a greater understanding of African systems of communication as reflected in the diverse cultures of the various peoples of Africa; and would be of

benefit to communication policy makers and development communication experts in that it would further enhance their knowledge about the communication needs of those living in rural areas and how to effectively reach them.

### 3.7 Why Study African Communication Systems?

African peoples in spite of their great linguistic and ethnic diversity have been communicating among themselves in a variety of ways for a long time. The sheer range of a variety of human and inter-personal communication on that immense continent offers challenge to contemporary communication scholars (Hatchen, 1971:15)

A look into the reality of the existence of indigenous communication systems in Nigeria shows that before the advent of modern means of communication, there were traditional means in Nigeria by which information is made to reach its recipient. There were also means of propagating the collective knowledge of the recognised custodians of the people's oral traditions. Some of these are still being used.

From the above, it is obvious that a variety of traditional communication channels existed in Africa, particularly in Nigeria before the introduction of the modern mass media systems.

So, it should be noted that a communication system which does not take into account the traditional, social and cultural dynamics of society will only succeed in alienating the highly placed from the majority of the people in the rural areas (Wilson, 1982). This statement summarises the effect of negligence in the study of our indigenous sources of communication, opinion formation, processes of decision and actions. What is responsible?

According to Ibagere (1994), Western education is the bane of these, as it has made people to continue regarding African communication systems with contempt. The question at this juncture is: should this be allowed to continue? Again, Ibagere (1994:96) stated that:

The modern mass media, however, cannot serve, fully, the communication needs of Africa, unless they are combined with the traditional modes of communication. Therefore, rather than supplanting these traditional modes, efforts should be geared towards harnessing and developing them to serve our information needs in general.

Therefore, there is the need to increase studies on our traditional communication systems not just to add to knowledge but also to find

alternative systems of information dissemination; fully understand the dynamics and systems of delivering information and receiving feedback among the various ethnic groups in indigenous Africa who live mostly in the rural areas, and who are currently outside the effective reach of the westernised mass media (Opubor, 1975).

Furthermore, Ugboajah (1972) cited in Wilson and Unoh (1991:28) stated, “The most important thing about African’s traditional communication is that the audience has learnt to attach great significance to it. Traditional media has (sic) force and credibility. They put stability into African’s indigenous institutions.”

So, from all that has been discussed so far, one can argue like Opubor (1975) that African traditional channels of communication represent the most potent mechanism for communication among the various peoples of Africa. Furthermore, notwithstanding the flaws that may be inherent in the traditional channels of communication in Africa, the fact remains as Hatchen (1971:15) pointed out, “the sheer range and variety of traditional communication offer a challenge to contemporary [African] communication scholars”. This underscores the need to stimulate scholarship in this area of communication studies.

Hence, we should study it to educate ourselves on the culture and heritage of Africa. Put succinctly, we should study African communication systems for knowledge and because of its relevance and acceptance in Africa. Looking at knowledge, studying African communication systems will help us to understand our cultures, idiosyncracies and peculiarities. Again, it relates to African culture, values and beliefs which engenders acceptance. On relevance, it is still relevant for communicating with some people in Africa.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Although communication has several definitions, but generally it involves the sending and receiving of various messages. It was also stated that communication performs some other specific functions.

It argued that African communication systems perform all these functions, while specifically promoting African culture. However, despite the central place of African communication in the perpetuation of African cultures, this aspect of communication studies has been neglected by communication scholars.

Again, it is important to note that African communication systems is a complex system and the most important way by which the ruralites

communicate among themselves and with others. It is tied to the culture of its people.

This unit further reviewed our attitudes towards the study of African traditional media, because our lackadaisical attitude to these media in the face of pressures from the western media, which threaten to completely dominate them, does not augur well for our social existence. It concludes that despite the central place of African communication in the preservation of African culture, it has been highly neglected by communication scholars as an area of research. So, do we allow the indigenous communication system to be suppressed by exogenous communication system? If we do, it would lead to the erosion of indigenous cultures. Thus, it should be highlighted that the erosion of indigenous communication system by western education and media endangers the survival of indigenous knowledge. To avoid this, there is the need for the study of indigenous communication systems.

This unit does not suggest that modern media of communication should be discarded for African communication systems, but rather that the rich potentials of African communication media should be studied and used along side modern media of communication for a more effective communication across the various peoples of Africa despite their psychographic and demographic differences.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

This unit examined what ‘communication’ means. It was explained that communication refers to the exchange of information and ideas. It was emphasized that there are sundry definitions of communication. Again, in this unit, we also examined the functions of communication. It was explained that communication performs sundry functions. Some of the functions as discussed in this unit include: (a) information (b) socialisation (c) education (d) motivation (e) cultural promotion (f) entertainment. It also defined African communication systems.

We also examined the concept of African communication systems highlighting linkages with culture.

In addition to the above, we also looked at the neglect of African communication systems, highlighted the gains and presented reasons for studying African communication systems.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**



1. What is communication?
2. List the functions of communication.
3. What is the interplay between African communication systems and culture?
4. List the reasons for studying African Communication Systems.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. List five functions of communication.
2. Discuss the five functions of communication listed.
3. What is African communication systems?
4. Discuss two reasons for studying African communication systems.

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## **UNIT 2      AFRICAN COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS AND MASS COMMUNICATION COMPARED**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Characteristics of African Communication Systems
    - 3.1.1 Value
    - 3.1.2 Reach
    - 3.1.3 Channel Credibility
    - 3.1.4 Channels of Change
    - 3.1.5 Useful for the Collections and Dissemination of Development Information
  - 3.2 Problems of Indigenous Communication
  - 3.3 What Are the Alternatives to African Communication Systems?
  - 3.4 A Comparison of Indigenous and Exogenous Communication
    - 3.4.1 Differences
    - 3.4.2 Similarities
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Having examined the reasons for studying African Communication systems, it is crucial to look at the characteristics, similarities and differences between indigenous and exogenous communication. This unit focuses on the characteristics of African communication systems; and the inter-relationship between indigenous and exogenous communication.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- outline the characteristics of African communication systems
- discuss problems of indigenous communication
- discuss the alternatives to African communication systems
- outline the differences between indigenous and exogenous communication
- outline the similarities between indigenous and exogenous communication.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Characteristics of African Communication Systems**

Below are some of the characteristics of African communication systems:

##### **3.1.1 Value**

Values in communication deal with effectiveness of communication. Effectiveness means that messages are received by intended audience, interpreted as conceived by the sender; message is remembered over a reasonably extended period of time, and message is used appropriately.

African communication systems have value, and it is an important aspect of our culture. It is the agency by which culture is preserved, handed down, responds to new situations and adapts. The influx and explosion of exogenous media, endangers the survival of and may even lead to the erosion of traditional African communication, which might threaten cultural transmission and the survival of indigenous technical knowledge (ITK).

##### **3.1.2 Reach**

African media are ubiquitous because they reach many rural people who are not reached by even the most widespread exogenous channels. So, it should always be realised in designing communication strategy and in choosing channels of communication that television, newspapers and magazines are largely confined to the urban areas in the developing countries. African communication systems are useful in conveying messages to people out of the reach of exogenous channels.

##### **3.1.3 Channel Credibility**

Messages transmitted through the exogenous (i.e. externally controlled) mass media are more often than not, greeted with hostility or scepticism. Since traditional channels are familiar to the target and controlled locally, they are quite credible.

##### **3.1.4 Channels of Change**

Researches into the diffusion of innovations have shown the importance of informal and inter-personal contacts in persuading people to adopt, or reject innovations (Opubor, 1975). Opubor argued that mass media are strong in creating awareness but weak in persuading people to adopt change. So, such contacts are more commonly made through the

traditional channels. Hence, traditional channels of communication are important conduits of change. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate indigenous and exogenous communication systems to enhance outcomes in development. Although some development intervention programmes depend on information diffusion processes to take innovations and development messages to their target audiences, many have made explicit use of traditional channels to reach their intended beneficiaries of innovations.

### **3.1.5 Useful for the Collections and Dissemination of Development Information**

Development programmes can utilise traditional communication channels for the collection and dissemination of development information. Data on the local situation and response to outside initiatives can be gathered by attending village or social groups meetings and interviewing local people. At some time, participants in a communication system act as a recipient-disseminator. So, recipient-disseminators who are linked to outside societies are important conduits for lateral exchange of both indigenous and exogenous innovations. This means that there is an interface between knowledge and communication types (Chambers, 1997).

3.1.6 Promotes Participatory Development and Sustainability of Programmes: Contemporary development experts such as (Chambers, 1997; Cornwall and Welbourn, 2000) argue that exogenous communication transfers knowledge, while indigenous communication promotes indigenous based development. To diffuse innovation, exogenous media need to co-opt traditional media, because traditional media enhance cultural continuity and hence sustainable change. They further argued that traditional channels of communication give the local people the opportunity to participate in development programmes. The local people should be involved in the choice of channel, messages development, design and dissemination; and they should communicate with themselves, decision makers and development experts in reaching a decision on their development programmes. This they believe would enhance the retention and control of the indigenous programmes, which will enhance sustainability. These might account for why Chambers (1997) and Cornwall and Welbourn (2000) argued that those outside the indigenous areas are not in a position to package development programmes for the indigenous areas without first hand information and experience about the indigenous people.

These support the school of thought that is promoting a bottom-up approach to development. Indigenous communication offers opportunity for participation and fosters a sense of belonging required for

sustainable development. Ignoring traditional communication could result in inappropriate development. So, development programmes can use indigenous communication, which encourages people oriented development and hence effectiveness and efficiency in outcome.

### 3.2 Problems of Indigenous Communication

Indigenous communication has some shortcomings. It has a problem of defining and explaining issues and illustration in modern language (lack appropriate terminologies). Again indigenous communication is an extension and externalisation of the individual knowledge system. So, the relevance of indigenous communication depends on the setting/area of occupation. There are the core and peripheral people who make up the indigenous people. Essentially, indigenous communication systems thrives most where they employ such indigenous forms of communication as the town announcer. Despite these shortcomings, indigenous communication would continue to be relevant for as long as there are traditional societies or settings.

### 3.3 What Are the Alternatives to African Communication Systems?

What are the alternatives to indigenous African communication systems? They are the exogenous, which are foreign to Africans. Exogenous media have limited range in Africa. They are urban centric, manipulative, lack immediate feedback and are affected by audience literacy level. They are also more likely to be affected by noise, which causes distortion and affects the range of communication. These further justify the need to study African communication systems.

### 3.4 A Comparison of Indigenous and Exogenous Communication

#### 3.4.1 Differences

Indigenous Communication	Exogenous Communication
<b>Organisation:</b> Indigenous communication systems are developed locally; controlled by the local people; use local technology; and especially those that are not under institutional communication, are not bureaucratically organised	<b>Organisation:</b> Exogenous channels are the mass media (radio, television, newspapers, magazines and others) and such bureaucratically organised networks. So, exogenous systems are institutionally organised communication
<b>Structure:</b> "African [communication] system is essentially owned by the society whose leadership only acts as	<b>Structure:</b> "The structure of the media is determined by the ownership (which is [ostensibly] not

the chief gate keeper. The channel or medium, then, is open to use by anybody to reach anybody. It has always operated under a clear-cut dynamic policy which serves the interest and need of the rural people” (Ibagere, 1994:83).	the society) which eventually determines the method of operation” and may influence messages (Ibagere, 1994:83).
<b>Reach and Influence:</b> Can reach few people but with a great deal of influence within the network.	<b>Reach and Influence:</b> Can reach more people with little influence.

### 3.4.2 Similarities

There is sometimes no sharp dividing line between indigenous and exogenous communication. They overlap in all the four elements of the SMCR model of communication: source, messages, channel, and receiver.

<b>Interpersonal:</b> Uses interpersonal communication.	<b>Interpersonal:</b> Also, uses interpersonal communication, as in extension activities and telephones.
<b>Sources:</b> Have sources – derives from the local people. E.g. indigenous experts (opinion leaders in their specialities); indigenous professionals (healers, sorcerers, shamans, scribes, traditional birth attendants, blacksmiths, and irrigation systems among others); innovators (seen as deviants in the communities, they experiment and try new things and ideas); intermediaries (do not originate but merely report information e.g. town announcers [Doob, 1966]); and recipient-disseminators (are informal intermediaries in the information chain and may receive an information and react to it [for instance by testing a new crop variety or animal specie] before passing it on. Indigenous source is individualistic.	<b>Sources:</b> Also have sources - originated by outside institutions such as newspaper/magazine houses; and television/radio houses. The similarity is that a television programme may show a local source who has benefited or adopted an innovation. Furthermore, folk media have been widely used to communicate development messages. Exogenous source is mediated.
<b>Message and Channel:</b> Messages conveyed by the two systems are sometimes similar. For instance,	<b>Message and Channel:</b> News and entertainment messages are also conveyed through the exogenous

news and entertainment. The only difference is that the indigenous media uses local channels (Wang and Dissanayake, 1984:22).	media. The only difference is that the exogenous media uses modern channels (Wang and Dissanayake, 1984:22).
<b>Receiver:</b> Have receivers i.e. audience/ destination; though reach small number of people. Although, most educated elites rely on exogenous media for information, they still rely on indigenous communication for a lot of information (Wang and Dissanayake, 1984:22).	<b>Receiver:</b> Have receivers i.e. audience/destination; though reach mass audience (larger audience than the indigenous. Radios are common in the rural and even remote villages (Wang and Dissanayake, 1984:22).
<b>Feedback:</b> The obedience through the transformation into deeds and actions or not of the announced messages informs the village authority of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of their messages. People respond favourably when they turn up en mass in support of the disseminated information. But they show apathy and indifference to the unfavourable and undesirable information.	<b>Feedback:</b> The exogenous media also has a feedback mechanism. It is mainly through letters to the editor for the print media and call-in/text messages to live programmes on the broadcast media.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The characteristics of African communication systems should be weighed alongside the exogenous media such as television, radio and newspapers. Most exogenous communication media have with time lost credibility to some extent. Any communication system with questionable credibility is not valuable. The source of the values in indigenous communication can easily be traced in its being mainly interpersonal and this is why through it, culture has been preserved overtime.

This unit also examined the differences and similarities between African communication systems and mass communication. It was stated amongst others that indigenous communication systems allows participation which is the source of its credibility. The indigenous system allows for immediate feedback making for total communication. Immediate feedback is important because it is an evaluative component of the communication system; and communication is cyclic because of its transactional nature requiring constant feedback.



## 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have examined the characteristics of African communication systems. It was explained that the characteristics of indigenous communication are values, credibility, simplicity, clarity, consistency, continuity and competency on the side of the source and receiver which enhance completeness.

We also compared African communication systems and mass communication. The differences and similarities were highlighted.

### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Discuss problems of indigenous communication.
2. List the differences and similarities between African communication systems and mass communication.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss five characteristics of African communication systems.
2. List four similarities between African communication systems and mass communication.
3. Discuss two of the similarities between African communication systems and mass communication.

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## **MODULE 2       TRADITIONAL       CHANNELS       OF COMMUNICATION IN AFRICA**

Unit 1	Classification of the Traditional Channels of Communication in Africa
Unit 2	Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication
Unit 3	Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication Compared

### **UNIT1       CLASSIFICATION OF THE TRADITIONAL CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION IN AFRICA**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Traditional communication sometimes takes various forms. These various forms are the focus of this unit.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- classify traditional communication
- list the channels under each class of traditional communication
- outline the different types of communication in Africa
- outline the channels under the various types of communication in Africa.

#### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

##### **3.1 Definitions**

For the purpose of a fair guide, it is necessary to explain meanings of the two words – traditional and channel as used in this text. Traditional as used in this text refers to cultural institutions, ceremonies, events, and

arts of African ancestors observed, practised and perpetuated by successors from generation to generations; while Channels are link up ways and means by which ideas, messages information, orders, instructions, secrets and movements are carried out, contacted and contracted.

So, traditional channels of communication are numerous as some of them tend to serve specific or secret purposes and others serve the interests of all in general. Though some appear to be obsolete, their uses still linger on today in rural societies. They are commonly used to advise, inform, warn, encourage, and incite people on what, how, when and where to act. They are of different types. Akpan (1977) mentioned bells, canon shots, drums, arti-factual communication, folksongs and proverbs, which made him conclude that traditional media are more visual than audio. Again, Modum (1980) mentioned music and rituals as media of communication in indigenous Nigeria. Another scholar, Ugboajah (1979) also noted that traditional societies of Nigeria communicate more of informal than formal mechanism. He cited songs, dances, symbols, cult scripts, iconography, linguistic and market place dialogue as channels. Another similar but more encompassing view is that the informal channels are rooted in the people's governments, social structures, titles and secret societies, marriage structures, cultures and in their laws and customs. Ugboajah (1979:43) asserted, "the most significant thing about Africa's traditional communication is that the audience has learnt to attach great significance to it. Local media are also said to have force and credibility and that puts stability into the African indigenous institutions". An attempt has been made below to classify them.

### **3.2 Classification of Traditional Channels of Communication**

What are these modes of communication in Africa? How are they classified? How do they work? What are their functions?

In Africa just like in other parts of the world, communication may occur without any conscious or deliberate attempt by an information sender. Communication occurs in different forms – verbal or non-verbal; oral or written; formal or informal; and intentional or unintentional. They are all interactive and do not exist in isolation of one another. For instance, observers might infer much from others' actions, dress, physical appearance and body language.

Again, the bulk of childhood learning consists of imitation. Animals, plants and inanimate objects such as stars and clouds convey much information to those able to interpret them. So, the receiver must decode the incoming information against the backdrop of his/her culture and

match it with existing knowledge. Hence, culture and existing knowledge have impact on encoding, decoding and matching processes, which could produce noise in the communication channel and results in no two people with a very few exceptions having exactly the same knowledge about anything. This explains why there are problems in neatly defining and classifying African communication systems. Essentially, gradations, overlaps and exceptions abound. According to Ibagere (1994:81), “There has often been some confusion regarding what actually constitutes African traditional media (or, rather, African traditional modes of communication.” It should also be noted that changes in technology and organisation make it difficult to draw a firm line separating indigenous from non-indigenous or exogenous communication ... system which existed [in Africa] before the arrival of mass media and formally organised bureaucratic system (Wang 1982:3) cited in (Wang and Dissanayake, 1984).

Furthermore, a Nigerian communication scholar, Nwuneli (1983) asserted that the traditional channels of communication in the rural areas of Nigeria (and other parts of Africa) are well organised and purpose oriented. In addition to these, differentiation could be made between the process of information dissemination and the channels through which information are disseminated in the rural communities of Nigeria. In order to justify this assertion of the possibility of differentiating between the process of information dissemination and the traditional channels through which information are disseminated, he presented a model for traditional media of communication in which he made distinctions between the hardware and the software of communication in the traditional communication process.

<b>Source</b>	<b>Channels</b>	<b>Destination</b>	<b>Feedback</b>
Emirs Chiefs Obas Elders Other Authorities	Speeches Town Crier Horseman Bells Drums Gong Etc.	Audience	Feedback

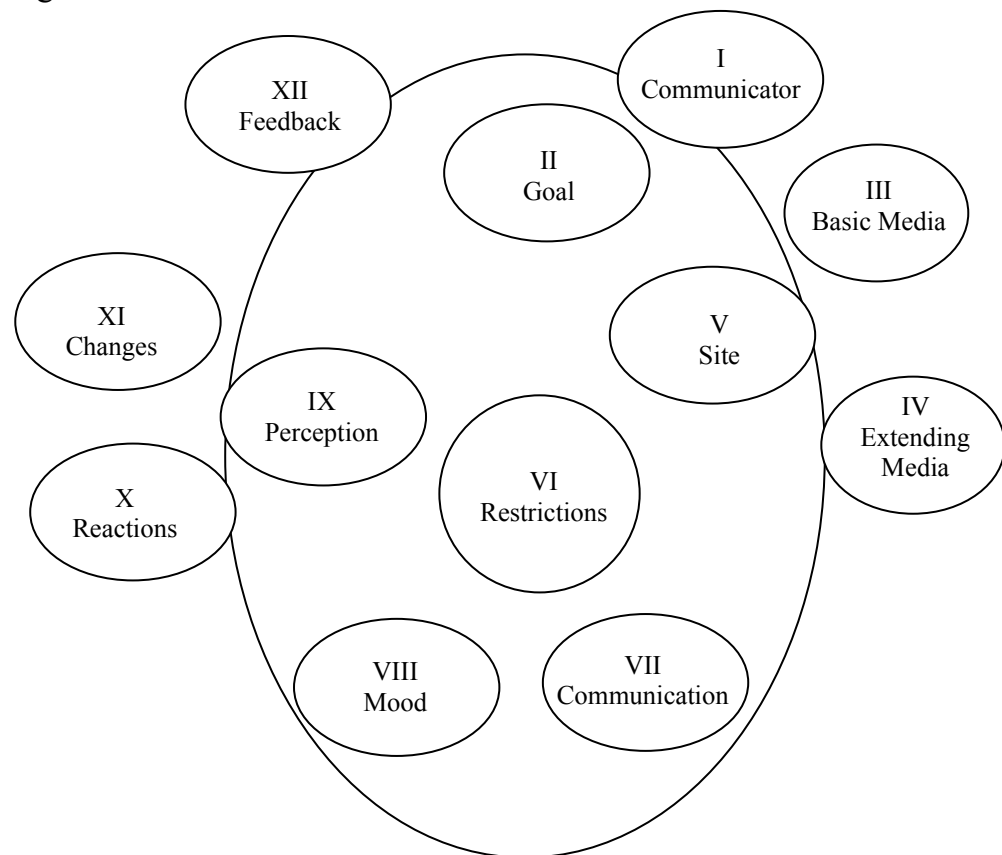
So, since “traditional communication processes and elements vary from one society to another” (Akpabio, 2003:9), a neat classification of the indigenous modes and channels of communication in Africa is a tall order; and marginalisation of modes and channels is not deliberate, but a function of the person classifying them. Although, it is a tall order, various authors have made various attempts.

Doob (1966:vii-xiv) based on the process of communication explained that:

... people are exposed to a communication whose communicator (i) seeks to achieve a goal or a set of goals (ii) through a medium or media (iii, iv) at a particular site (v) in spite of certain restrictions (vi) by means of a message (vii) that reaches them in a specified mood (viii). Subsequently what follows are perception (ix) reactions (x), changes (xi) and Feed back (xii)

Hence, he isolated twelve variables: communicator; goal; basic media; extending media; site; restrictions; communication (content/messages); mood; perception; reactions; changes; and feedback. Essentially, Doob (1966) described a cyclical process represented in figure 1.

Figure: 1



Source: Adapted from Doob, Leonard W. (1966) *Communication in Africa: A Search for Boundaries*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press p. xiv

A Nigerian scholar Omu (1978:1) stated that:

The agencies of public communication may be conveniently classified into two groups – the oral communication or informal transference media and the organised communication or formal transference media. The media in the first operated through informal contacts between individuals and persons and essentially did not go beyond the circulation or dissemination of rumours and unofficial information...the second category ... was concerned with the more systematised dissemination of information not between persons but between the government and the people ...the tools employed were recognised officials and recognisable sounds, signs and symbols

Buttressing the classification of Omu (1978), Wilson and Unoh (1991) stated that in looking at the roles oral forms of communication play in the indigenous communication network, it is easy to infer that among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, communication was more informal than the formal mechanism.

In his study, another Nigerian scholar Oreh (1980) divided local media into several categories – interpersonal, face-to-face type of communication; a broader level inter-group communication and communication at the mass level. He said verbal or non-verbal communication would be used in each of the communication levels depending on the type, which ensures message fidelity. So, some of the types are verbal or oral and the channel is speech which is the use of human mouths including all sounds made with the human mouth that involves the use of spoken word; and non-verbal that uses body language as channels.

Similarly, another Nigerian scholar, examining the different methods in which communication is most notably carried out in the African traditional social system, noted that communication modes are determined by the biological senses of man, and employed in view of the face-to-face relationship, they are, therefore classified into three main groups, the verbal mode, the non-verbal mode, and esoteric mode (Ibagere, 1994:83)

Verbal mode according to Ibagere (1994) includes spoken language; songs; and poetry, chants and incantations. The non-verbal mode, includes body language; symbolography; dance; music including its hardwares (idiophone, membranophone, chordophone, aerophone, and xylophone). Finally, the esoteric mode incorporates all other modes. They include dreams; divination and telepathy.

Another Nigerian scholar, Wilson (1998) based on his observation in two Nigerian States – Akwa-Ibom and Cross River came up with classes which he opined, that others scholars can contest, but stressed that they provide insights and approximation on the subject. He did not agree with Doob (1966), Oreh (1980), or Ibagere (1994), but attempted grouping into classes the various modes of communication observed in the aforementioned States. He identified six classes – Instrumental, Demonstrative, Iconographic; Extra-Mundane; Visual, and Institutional. Below in Table 1, is a graphic representation adapted from Wilson (1998:27), but slightly modified with the heading – classes, hardware and channels/instruments adapted from Ibagere (1994) classification.

Table 1

<b><i>Classes</i></b>	<b><i>Hardware</i></b>	<b><i>Channels/Instruments</i></b>
A. Instrumental	Idiophones	Wooden drum, Woodblock ritual rattle, Bell, Metal gong, <i>Akankang</i> , <i>Ekere</i> , Xylophone, Hand Shakers, Pot drum
	Membraneophones	Skin drum
	Aerophones	Whistle, Deer horn, Ivory tusk, Reed pipe
	Symbolography	Decorated bamboo rino, <i>Nsibidi</i> , Tattoo, Chalk marks
B. Demonstrative	Music	Songs, Choral and Entertainment Music
	Signal	Cannon shots, gun shots, Whistle call, Camp fire
C. Iconographic	Objectified	Charcoal, White dove, Kolanut, Cow tail, White clay, Egg, Feather, Calabash, Beads, Limb bones, Drinking gourds, Flag
	Floral	Young unopened palm frond, <i>Okon</i> tree, <i>Nsei</i> , <i>Nyama</i> , <i>Mimosa</i> , Palm stems
D. Extra-Mundane	Incantatory	Ritual, Libation, Vision
	Graphic	Obituary, In memoriam notices
E. Visual	Colour	White cloth, Red cloth, Black cloth
	Appearance	Dressing, Hairstyle
F. Institutional	Social	Marriage, Chieftaincy
	Spiritual	Shrine, Masquerade

**Source:** Wilson, D. (1998) “A Taxonomy of Traditional Media in Africa” in Ansu-Kyeremeh Kwasi.

Note: The first row (classes, hardware and channels/instruments) is this writer’s idea.



Furthermore, a Ghanaian scholar, Ansu-Kyeremeh (1998: 185-187) in looking at intra-village patterns of communication said that it involves venue-oriented communication; events as communication modes; games as communication; and performance-oriented communication.

A Nigerian scholar, Akpabio (2003), synthesising the classification of Doob (1966), Wilson (1998) and Ansu-Kyeremeh (1998) came up with ten classes.

1. Instrumental communication
2. Demonstrative communication
3. Iconographic communication
4. Extra-mundane communication
5. Visual communication
6. Institutional communication
7. Venue-oriented communication, structure and features
8. Myths and legends
9. Names as communication
10. Folktales and proverbs

He credited Wilson (1998) with the first six categories; accommodates the thinking of Doob (1966) and Ansu-Kyeremeh (1998) in the seventh category; and added the last three.

This author wrapping up the classification of these scholars - Doob (1966); Oreh (1980); Ibagere (1994); Wilson (1998); Ansu-Kyeremeh (1998); and Akpabio (2003) in this area of communication, would adopt Akpabio (2003) classification with slight modifications to folktales and proverbs as a category and include two more classes - verbal and non-verbal based on Ibagere (1994) but retaining only those channels in the verbal and non-verbal class that Akpabio (2003) did not include in other modes under his classification i.e. spoken and body language. Also Ibagere (1994) esoteric modes would be discussed under Akpabio (2003) Extra-mundane mode. This author also adds natural phenomena based on her observation as a class of African communication modes. So her classification is as follows:

2. Verbal (spoken language) and non-verbal (body language) communication
3. Visual channels
4. Iconographic channels
5. Instrumental channels
6. Demonstrative channels
7. Extramundane channels
8. Institutional channels
9. Venue-oriented channels
10. Myths and legends

11. Names as communication
12. Folktales, proverbs, and parables
13. Natural phenomena

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

From the above discussion, it is obvious that no classification is right or wrong. As far as there are many scholars of African communication, their cultures, observations, and experiences would impact on their classification; and so there would be sundry classifications of African communication modes. However, this does not discount the fact that the classification attempt made by this author would enhance our understanding of the traditional modes of communication in Africa.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

This module set out to classify the modes of African communication forms, with the aim of grouping them for ease of excursion. From the discussion so far, the various traditional sources and channels of communication and opinion formation have been modestly identified.

#### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

1. List the classes of traditional communication proposed by this author.
2. List four hard wares of instrumental communication.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Discuss five characteristics of African communication systems.
2. List four similarities between African communication systems and mass communication.
3. Discuss two of the similarities between African communication systems and mass communication

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## **UNIT 2      VERBAL                      AND                      NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Verbal Communication
  - 3.2 Channels of Verbal Communication
    - 3.2.1 Spoken Language
    - 3.2.2 Characteristics of Language
  - 3.3 Sign Language Communication
  - 3.4 Non-Verbal Communication
  - 3.5 Channels of Non-Verbal Communication
    - 3.5.1 Body Language or Gestural Communication
    - 3.5.2 Communicating with Parts of the Face and Other Parts of Human Body
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this unit, verbal and non-verbal modes of communication are examined.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- define verbal communication
- outline the channels of verbal communication
- define non-verbal communication
- outline the channels of non-verbal communication.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Verbal Communication**

Verbal communication refers to direct contacts and actions or words of mouth. People communicate through discussions and songs as needs arise. By this mode, people meet face to face to discuss, decide and act. It is practised in almost all affairs of life from age to age. Since, most of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria were basically non-literate, oral

forms of communication played a significant role in their indigenous communication network. It offers them opportunities for finding peaceful solutions to problems of life. It encourages and promotes socialization, peace and harmony among individuals, groups and societies.

In many places, the most important channel for the circulation of news (information) is the word of mouth i.e. verbal communication. Oreh (1980) divided verbal communication, into three main groups. The first, which is spoken communication – consists of simple statements, proverbs and riddles and narrative. The second group narratives – folktales (folktale characters or folktales which contain both animals, human and superhuman characters); and the third, mythology, and legends.

Further looking at the verbal mode, Wilson and Unoh (1991:23) stated, “[verbal] communication is an activity that is common to all cultures except in those cultures (if any) without a language.” It uses the human mouth, including all the sounds made with the mouth as they relate to spoken word. Ibagere (1994) listed the following forms as verbal modes – spoken language; song; poetry, chant and incantations. Song, poetry, chant and incantations are discussed under demonstratives. So, spoken language is discussed below.

## **3.2 Channels of Verbal Communication**

### **3.2.1 Spoken Language**

Language is a set of arbitrary symbols, matched with meaning and used by a group of people for communication. So, spoken language is commonly referred to as word of mouth and used for everyday conversation. It is easy to relate to most common and most used of all traditional modes of communication. According to Ibagere (1994:84):

Since it is the most common mode, it is easy to understand and is the first, after body language, to be learnt by a stranger. It is usually employed alone but it could be combined with any other mode, depending on the circumstance [and need]. For example, one could accompany one’s speech with music to make the speech more effective, depending on the occasion. However, such combination should be significantly functional in enhancing the creation of the right impact on those who receive the information being passed by the communicator.

Furthermore, language communicates one’s area of origin. The tone, intonation and sound production amongst others could reveal the speakers’ linguistic group or mother tongue. For instance, some Nigerian speakers of English as second language, through speech

communication, reveal their linguistic group i.e. place of origin. A *Hausa* speaker of English language uses /f/ and /p/ phonemes in free variation.

### 3.2.2 Characteristics of Language

- Depends on sound for its meaning and the correspondence between sound and meaning is determined by culture (society itself).
- Language is a structured system of symbols i.e. produced based on linguistic rules. It is articulate, systematic and ordered.
- It is creative i.e. there is no limit to which you cannot use human language (you can use it to write plays, tell stories). The limits of human language are unlimited
- Exhibits displacement. Displacement here means the ability to talk about an event that is far away in space and time i.e. you can use language to tell what has already happened. It gives us the ability to communicate about “the not here and the not now” (Rothwell, 2000: 91).
- Human language has two aspects – the biological and social aspects. This means that man can speak many languages according to his environment and ability to speak.

### 3.3 Sign Language Communication

Most channels discussed in the various literature on African communication system reviewed tend to be partial and fail to recognise some classes of people – the physically challenged. Some are blind, deaf, dumb and lame. At this point, one should consider sign languages (that can be likened to Morse code in Western culture) which is used to communicate with them, for they are part and parcel of the society and are involved in events around them. When and where some other channels exclude them, sign language and natural phenomena are kinder to them. See the module on natural phenomena for details on natural phenomena.

Morse code is an alphabet or code in which letters are represented by a combination of long and short light or sounds and signals. So, Morse code modes may include other signs, marks, long and short light or sounds and signals.

According to Rothwell (2000:119) “Sign language is not non-verbal because it possess all the characteristics of language”, although used for communication with the physically challenged. It is an aspect of Morse code. Sign language is a traditional channel of communication that is still in use in the modern times. It is shrouded with elements of open secrecies. It is used for normal, deaf, dumb and even the blind people. It

is made up of gestures and signs intended for a particular persons and groups or purposes to the exclusion of others. Others may see, hear and touch them, yet they would not understand what is said or shown. They are secret ways of sending and receiving information, messages and guides on what to do, how to, where to and when to do things.

### **3.4 Non-Verbal Communication**

Communication is more than speaking. “Action speaks louder than words”. According to Rothwell (2000:119) “Non-verbal communication is sharing meaning with others nonlinguistically.” So, it refers to the mode of communication done with the human body and does not involve the use of words.

It involves all such modes of communication, which make use of any device other than the spoken word, song, chant, incantation and other related modes, that make use of the mouth. This does not suggest that different modes cannot be combined for the purpose of a more lucid dissemination of information. So, it should be noted that any of the verbal modes could be combined with the non-verbal mode (Ibagere, 1994).

Ibagere (1994) further classified the non-verbal mode into the following groups: body language, symbolography, dance, music and the hardware of music (idiophone, membranophone, chordophone, aerophone and xylophone). Symbolography would be discussed under visuals; dance and music and music hardwares under instrumental.

So, the main types of non-verbal communication used during transactions include physical appearance, hair; facial expression; and gestural communication. However, some of them (physical appearance, and hair) are discussed under visual communication while the rest are discussed below as communicating with parts of the human body. Essentially, non-verbal communication is multi-channelled, but this unit only discussed body language.

### **3.5 Channels of Non-Verbal Communication**

#### **3.5.1 Body Language or Gestural Communication**

Body language is not peculiar to Africa, but is commonly used in Africa for communication. Body language refers to all signs and gestures made with any part of the human body for the purpose of communication (Ibagere, 1994). Amali (1990:12) asserted, “these gestures and signs contain and emanate messages with meanings”. Essentially, body language involves actions, such as facial contortions, walking and other

movements which are used to communicate messages. The particular movements of a person or a people and particular facial expressions and other gestures are used to communicate different messages depending on the circumstance (Ibagere 1994:87).

### **3.5.2 Communicating with Parts of the Face and Other Parts of Human Body**

Parts of the human body such as the face, fingers, eyes, head, nose, and lips constitute media of communication. Below are the various forms.

**Facial Communication:** The eyes and face are the most immediate cues used to form first impressions

On facial expression, Rothwell (2000:132) stated that “the face is your personal billboard”, ...it never gets totally hidden”. First the face signals specifies emotional states: a smile signals happiness and a frown signals sadness. The universal emotions identified by all cultures from specific expressions are fear, anger, surprise, contempt, disgust, happiness and sadness.

Furthermore, according to Rothwell (2000:131) “eye contact is an important aspect of non-verbal communication. For instance, stress can be measured by how often someone blinks. Thus one non-verbal cue may suggest relaxed demeanour while another non-verbal cue contradicts the observation. This conclusion may be shaky. Eye contact regulates controversial turn taking, communicates involvement and interest, manifests warmth, and establishes connection with others. It can also command attention, or look cold and intimidating.” It should be noted however, that the appropriateness of eye contact differs from culture to culture.

Eye contact invites attention and interpersonal communication is quite dependent on eye contact. For instance, blinking or winking or shutting the eyes in a particular way has much and varied messages to pass across to the other person or group.

**Touch Communication:** Touching skin is an enormously powerful and important communication code. American playwright Tennessee Williams testified to the power of touch when he wrote, “Devils can be driven out of the heart by the touch of a hand on a hand, or a mouth on a mouth”. Touch is essential to the expression of love, warmth, intimacy, and concern for others. Misuse of touch can repel, frighten, or anger others. Touch communicates power. Sexual harassment is often an issue of inappropriate, unwanted touch communication, while handshake is most often wanted touch communication and a sign of friendship



(Rothwell, 2000:131).

**Voice Communication:** Voice is second only to face in communicating emotions. Voice communicates information about age, sex, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and regional background. Vocal cues (paralanguage) are divided into three. They are vocal characteristics (laughing, yelling, moaning, crying, whining, belching); vocal qualifiers (Volume, tone, pitch, resonance, rhythm, rate); and vocal segregates (uh-hum, uh, mm-hmm, oooh, shh). This also obtains in Africa. According to Ogwezzy (1999) groaning, coughing or croaking the voice is generally a warning against a person or his utterances and or actions; and sometimes a sign of slight.

On voice speech, a whispering soft voice may indicate speech anxiety when it occurs in front of a large audience, a flat, monotone voice can induce sleep in listeners, while speaking at hyperspeed may communicate nervousness and excitement. Listeners prefer a speaking rate that approximates their own speech pattern. However, there are cultural differences regarding vocal communication. The Arabs speak very loudly because it connotes strength and sincerity; Israelis, view high volume as a sign of strong beliefs on an issue; Germans, assume a commanding tone that projects authority and self confidence; and Thailand, Japan & Philippines, tend to speak very soft, almost in a whisper. This connotes good manners and education. Laughing signals joy in Japan, but laughing often camouflages displeasure, anger, embarrassment and sorrow. (Rothwell, 2000:131). Ogwezzy (1999) agrees with Rothwell (2000). He stated that in Africa, ladies are expected to speak in soft tones, while men are to speak in a commanding tone like the Germans to project authority and self confidence. Again, when people are angry, they speak in very high tone, and when someone is in danger, the voice could also disseminate such information.

**Gestural Communication:** Sometimes when communicating with others, we often wriggle, fidget, finger-tap, hand-wave, toe tap, and arm flail body in motion. These are gestures and they come naturally to us. According to Rothwell (2000:134) "Many gestures are unconscious manifestations of inner feelings" and that there are three main categories of gestures (manipulators, illustrators and emblems).

Manipulators are gestures made with one part of the body, usually the hands, rubbing, picking, squeezing, cleaning, or grooming another part of the body. They have no specific meaning, although people observing such manipulators may perceive nervousness, discomfort, or deceit from such gestures. Manipulator is also said to occur when a person is relaxed and feeling energized and when no deceit is occurring. Nonetheless,

researches have shown that people mistakenly judge deceitfulness when a person exhibits many manipulators (Rothwell, 2000). So, do not jump into conclusions concerning what manipulators mean.

In Africa, producing some odd sounds from the nose or block it shyly is to slight an issue or a person or his speech while gathering the lips and protruding them out or abnormally spreading them out is contempt (Ogwezzy, 1999).

Illustrators are gestures that help explain what a person says to another person. They have no independent meaning of their own. Telling a person to go to the left, then pointing in the appropriate direction, is an example of an illustrator. Describing how to “zig-zag”, while drawing the movement in the air, is another example. Many of the unconscious gestures we make that emphasise what we are saying are illustrators (Rothwell, 2000). Again, people use fingers to send messages, information and instructions in many ways. E.g. placing the finger vertically across the two lips means or tells the other persons not to talk or to maintain silence (Ogwezzy, 1999).

Emblems are gestures that have precise meanings separate from verbal communication. Nodding your head up and down signals “yes” in Africa as well as in the United States. Moving your head side to side signals “no” (Rothwell, 2000). Also, Ogwezzy (1999) posits that “to nod, wave or shake the head in a particular way tells a story and also directs the recipient on what to do.”

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

This unit presented the verbal and non-verbal modes of communication and concluded that in many African communities, both modes are important channels of communication. It noted however, that the verbal mode it is the most important channel for circulating information.

It further noted that since non-verbal communication is not peculiar to Africa, the competent communicator needs to be mindful of the vast potential for misunderstanding in gestural code. Very few non-verbal communication signs have precise meanings in all contexts. Most are far more ambiguous and require sophisticated interpretation tied specifically to the context in which they occur. Folding your arms across your chest may mean that you are closing yourself off others in a defensive gesture, or it may simply be a comfortable way for you to rest your arms. Be cautious when interpreting the meaning of non-verbal codes. When you interpret the meaning of non-verbal codes, match them with other non-verbal codes, context and look for consistency of meaning.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

This unit examined verbal and non-verbal modes of communication. It discussed spoken and sign language as channels of verbal communication, highlighting the characteristics of language. It also highlighted the channels of the non-verbal.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

1. Define verbal communication
2. Define non-verbal communication

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Outline the channels of verbal communication
2. Discuss five characteristics of language
3. Discuss the two main channels of non-verbal communication

### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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### **UNIT 3 VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL**

## **COMMUNICATION COMPARED**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 The Differences between Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication
  - 3.2 The Interconnectedness between Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Having examined verbal and non-verbal communication, it is also necessary to examine the differences and interconnectedness. This unit focuses on the differences and interconnectedness between verbal and non-verbal communication.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- outline the differences between verbal and non-verbal communication
- discuss the differences between verbal and non-verbal communication
- outline the interconnectedness between verbal and non-verbal communication
- examine the interconnectedness between verbal and non-verbal communication.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The Differences between Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication**

According to Rothwell (2000) there are distinctions between verbal and non-verbal communication. Below are the differences.

<b>Differences</b>	
<b>Verbal Communication</b>	<b>Non-Verbal Communication</b>
<p>Possesses the characteristics of language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It has structure</li> <li>• Exhibits displacement</li> <li>• Productive</li> <li>• Self Reflexive</li> </ul>	<p>Does not possess the characteristics of language. It is not structured for meaning</p> <p>Does not possess explicit set of grammar or syntax.</p> <p>Does not exhibit displacement because it communicates only about here and now.</p> <p>Can only show minimal productivity. For instance new gestures for insults, affection, solidarity with others, and the like are created from time to time, but such non-verbal productivity is rare and insignificant. It is not self-reflexive as someone cannot use facial expression to communicate about facial expression, rather language is used to explain non-verbal behaviour.</p>
<p><b>Number of Channels:</b> Single-channelled for instance, one can express enthusiasm using the following expressions: “Wow! Hold me back, I am ready to burst with excitement”; “I can’t wait to start my university education”. These are different statements but the same channel.</p>	<p><b>Number of Channels:</b> Multi-channelled, which adds impact and believability. For instance expression of enthusiasm can be done by jumping up and down; flailing gestures, wide eyes, smiles, expressive tone of voice, rapid utterances, hugs, screams, etc.</p>
<p><b>Credibility:</b> It is easy to lie with word.</p>	<p><b>Credibility:</b> It is difficult to lie convincingly in a dozen non-verbal channels. If the non verbal channels reveal inconsistent messages, credibility is questioned. If you say “I am telling the truth,” but your non-verbal shows the contrary, your audience may tend to believe the non-verbal because it is spontaneous, physiologically based, and has to be consistent in more than one channel. It seems more believable and genuine.</p>
<p><b>Conflict in Message:</b> Adults rely on non-verbal messages when verbal and non-verbal are in conflict. This is not typical of children.</p>	<p><b>Conflict in Message:</b> Children begin life and communication depending solely on non-verbal communication. However, once language develops, children rely primarily on verbal communication.</p>
<p><b>Semantics:</b> Adults may not take verbal comments literally. For instance sarcasm, which is</p>	<p><b>Semantics:</b> Children take verbal comments literally.</p>

indicated by tone of voice and facial expression, belies the verbal message and adults can decipher it.	
<b>Ambiguity:</b> Language can be ambiguous.	<b>Ambiguity:</b> Non-verbal communication is at least as ambiguous as language. For instance a person's, physical appearance, especially long/plaited hair for men, symbolises nonconformity, rebelliousness. Hair length has no meaning apart from those who observe it. However, some non-verbal cues have universally shared meaning. Smiles and laughter signal pleasure, happiness and enjoyment all over the world. A fist is a sign of anger and aggression virtually everywhere.
<b>Discrete Versus Continuous:</b> Verbal communication has discrete beginnings and endings. A speaker starts a sentence when (s)he starts talking and ends when (s)he stops talking.	<b>Discrete Versus Continuous:</b> Non-verbal communication however, has no discrete beginning and ending. For instance when someone is looking at you, you may try not to display any facial expression. It is possible. A blank stare is a facial expression that communicates a message. Others may perceive your blank stare to mean that you are introspective and thinking deeply or that you do not want to be bothered by anyone or that you are inattentive, sullen, or disdainful.
<b>Intentional Vs. Unintentional Communication:</b> Verbal communication is frequently intentional.	<b>Intentional Versus Unintentional Communication:</b> Non-verbal communication is frequently unintentional. We blush, blink our eyes, and shuffle our feet without necessarily intending to do so. So, we are sharing meaning with others without necessarily wanting to share.

### 3.2 The Interconnectedness between Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

According to Rothwell (2000) there are distinctions, between verbal and non-verbal communication. Below is the interconnectedness.

**Repetition:** Repetition reduces ambiguity and enhances the accuracy of message perception. Also consistency of verbal and non-verbal codes increases the clarity and credibility of messages. For instance when a speaker says "yes" and nods in approval; when we profess our love for a person, and then hug the person; and curse at another driver, then shake our fist for emphasis. All these non-verbal cues repeat the verbal message.

**Accentuation:** Accenting enhances the power and seriousness of verbal messages. When we use the vocal emphasis, it adds emphasis when desired. For instance, “Don’t you *ever* shout at me again” accents the unqualified nature of the verbal message. Again, pounding your fist on a table as you express your anger non-verbally repeats the message but also accents the depth of your emotion.

**Substitution:** A yawn can substitute for the verbal “I am tired” or “I am bored”; “a wave”, “goodbye”; an “uh-hum”, “I understand; and shaking your head in disapproval, “no”.

**Regulation:** Conversation is regulated by non-verbal cues. Students can signal intention to speak by raising up their hands, and a teacher can regulate by recognising a student’s desire to speak by pointing to the person, meaning it is “your turn to speak”.

**Contradiction:** Sometimes we contradict verbal messages with non-verbal cues i.e. there are inconsistencies between verbal and non-verbal cues. Essentially the words say one thing, but gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, posture, tone of voice, and physical proximity leak contradictory information. For example, “Sure, I love you”, when said with eyes cast sideways and flat vocal tone does not exactly inspire believability.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

This unit examined the differences and interconnectedness between verbal and non-verbal communication. It was stated amongst others that verbal and non-verbal communication differs in various ways; and are interconnected in the following ways: repetition, accentuation, substitution, regulation and contradiction.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we compared verbal and non-verbal communication. The differences and interconnectedness were highlighted.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

1. List five differences between verbal and non-verbal communication.
2. List the similarities between verbal and non-verbal communication.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Discuss two of the differences between verbal and non-verbal communication.
2. Discuss four forms of interconnectedness between verbal and non-verbal communication.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Rothwell, J.D. (2000). *In the Company of Others: An Introduction to Communication*. New York: McGraw Hill.



## **MODULE 3      VISUAL CHANNELS**

- Unit 1      Overview of Visual Channels of Communication and  
Pigmentation/Colours as a Group of Visual Channels
- Unit 2      Appearance: Physical Look and Costume\Facial Marks and  
Tattoos\Records

### **UNIT 1      OVERVIEW OF VISUAL CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION AND PIGMENTATION/COLOURS AS A GROUP OF VISUAL CHANNELS**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0      Introduction
- 2.0      Objectives
- 3.0      Main Content
  - 3.1      Visual Communication and their Communication Functions
  - 3.2      Types of Visual Communication and Examples
    - 3.2.1      Definition of Pigmentation and Colours
    - 3.2.2      Challenges of Pigmentation and Colours as a Mode of Visual Communication
    - 3.2.3      Examples of Pigmentation, Colours and their Communication Functions
- 4.0      Conclusion
- 5.0      Summary
- 6.0      Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0      References/Further Readings

#### **1.0      INTRODUCTION**

This unit focuses on visual channels of communication of communication in Africa. The various types will be outlined and examples presented. Using some examples, it also presented pigmentation and colours - a group of visual communication and highlighted their communication functions.

#### **2.0      OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit of study, students should be able to:

- outline the various types of visual communication
- discuss the communication functions of visual communication
- discuss pigmentation and colours as a group of visual

communication

- discuss some examples of pigmentation and colours drawing from their cultures and communities
- discuss the communication functions of the various example of pigmentation and colours.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Visual Communication and their Communication Functions**

Visuals communicate in traditional African society. It is derived mainly from the sense of sight and knowledge of the peoples of Africa. The mere sight of someone's tribal marks, hairdo, tattoos, and incisions communicates. Visual communication is used for different purposes and communicates different messages. Each has its own peculiar meaning. Some warn people or signify sundry things. Black for instance communicates mourning; red, signifies danger, fire, war; green, conveys life; black, gloom, white, purity, simplicity, innocence, purity and gaiety; yellow, lightness; brown, blightness; and parched environment, communicates famine.

Even in the contemporary business world, organisations use visuals, mainly logo for their brand identity. The logo is created to enhance brand identity and normally defined with a particular colour. Whenever, there is a change it is communicated to all its stakeholders. For instance, on an air freshener Guaranty Trust Bank (GTBank) distributed as free gifts at the University of Lagos, apart from having the logo of the Bank on the air freshener, there was a copy on the pack which reads: Our new logo was created to enhance our brand identity and public perception. It is vibrant, bold and evolved from our old logo. The new logo encapsulates who we are as a bank, symbolizing equality, solidness, simplicity and flexibility. The orange [colour] is uplifting and stimulates the mind into alertness. It is youthful, dynamic, vibrant and refreshingly optimistic.

Guaranty Trust Bank is innovative, always first! Our new look [orange colour look] is a bold extension of our selves and values. It is a visual means of recognising us and what we stand for. It is as driven, aspirational, dedicated and as principled as we are.

Yes, this Guaranty Trust Bank you know, just fresher...Wouldn't you rather bank with us?

#### **3.2 Types of Visual Communication and Examples**

Some examples of visual communication channels include dress code, colours, tribal marks, hairdo, tattoos, incisions and other marks on the skin and they all communicate. According to Akpabio (2003), visual communication can be grouped into two – colours and appearance. This author would rather adopt pigmentation and colour as a group instead of colour. Furthermore, this author would add a third group – records.

a) Colour – examples

- White
- Red
- Green
- Black

b) Appearance – examples

- Physical Appearance
- Clothes
- Accessories.

c) Records - examples

- Written
- Carved
- Painted
- Excavation
- Memorised
- Marked sticks

### **3.2.1 Definition of Pigmentation and Colours**

Pigmentation here means the use of designs or pastes to deliver messages, information, and warnings, stir up joy, sorrow etc in and among people. They are usually styled with colours. Prominent among the colours are white, red, green and black. When applied for any purpose, there is the sure tendency that the people understand what the colouring is saying. The colours are produced from local materials.

Colours communicate either singly or with other forms of communication. They largely break linguistic barriers i.e. it is universal, though with one or two exceptions. Colours make messages more apparent and specific. They have wide applicability. The information colours convey is immediate. So, it is important to state that colours

communicate in all human societies and the message it communicates could be pragmatic, society specific and also generic. The denotation and connotation of each colour depends on specific communities and people. This might account for Akpabio (2003:43) argument that “colour has been coloured by prejudice. From the Eurocentric viewpoint “white” has been associated with purity, holiness and other positive elements [hence it is used for worship and making wedding gowns]. “Black” on the other hand has been associated with evil and the devil. A look at illustrations in the *Bible* about the temptation of Christ, cast the devil (a supernatural being having no colour!) as black.

### **3.2.2 Challenges of Pigmentation and Colours as a Mode of Visual Communication**

A major challenge to the use of this form of visual communication is that in many societies, only few colours are reckoned with. Colours other than white, black and red are classified as dark and light colours. There are no lexical items in the local languages to identify them. The discussion of colours below draws from Emu clan among the Ukwuani speaking people of Ndokwa West Local Government Area, Delta State – Nigeria.

### **3.2.3 Examples of Pigmentation, Colours and Their Communication Functions**

#### **White**

White colour speaks and informs the people and public of victories, achievements, purity of heart, peace and goodwill. It also in special cases, speak of bad-announcements of the death of very old people (Ogwezzy, 1999).

#### **Native Chalk**

Is white in colour, produced from white clay soil and treated to form sticks or balls of chalks. It is also ground into powder form. By native chalk, people telephone, send cable and postal messages to the spirit world as believed. It is further believed that native chalk powder blown into the air would attract blessings to the people from God, ancestors and the spirit world (Ogwezzy, 1999).

When a man makes a spectacular achievement or performs acts of heroism, he is daubed with white powder from his wrist upwards. White chalk daubed on a man tells the world around him that he has made remarkable achievements and must have performed acts of heroism, valiancy or attaining and being initiated into a high social class e.g. chieftaincy class. When women make achievements, white powder of

native chalk is poured over their chest, shoulders, round their necks and even heads. Such happen when women are declared free of witchery after taking concoctions of shrines and deities as believed by fetish worshippers (Ogwezzy, 1999).

### **White Clothes**

The other symbol of white is white cloth. With white pieces of cloth, it is believed that people telephone, send cable and postal messages to the spirit world (Ogwezzy, 1999).

A long white piece of cloth hoisted at a gate or along the street tells that a very old rich noble is dead. Such death does not call for real mourning, rather children and relations of the deceased feel glad that the person died or walked safely home to God. At such deaths, people do not shed tears (Ogwezzy, 1999).

### **Red (*Ufie*)**

Red is represented by a pulpy substance produced from cam-wood. A piece of red wood is vigorously rubbed over another. The substance it produces is called *ufie* meaning red. It has double connotations – good and bad (Ogwezzy, 1999).

The good message is given to the public when a young lady is circumcised or when a woman delivers a baby. During both occasions the red substance is rubbed over the body of the young lady from the neck to her toes except areas covered with cloth around her waist for a circumcised lady; and around her feet for a nursing mother. It shows and tells the public of a period of joy for the family apart from announcing the events occasioning the application of the substance (Ogwezzy, 1999). Cam – wood is commonly used by women who were circumcised or gave birth to new babies as cosmetics and a mark of regeneration of life

Again, it speaks and warns people of danger when it is rubbed on certain objects. It scares and frightens away women and evil doers particularly fetish worshippers (Ogwezzy, 1999). Also, among the *Yorubas* it signifies danger, which accounts for why *Sango* (god of war) priest wear red.

### **Green (*Orgu Jorji*)**

It is represented by green leaves or products of green leaves (*Enu*). It serves duals purposes of good and bad. During festivals, youths carry bunches of green leaves to dance round the town and along the main

streets to show joy of the year (Ogwezzy, 1999).

When a married woman commits adultery, the town's women carry bunches of green leaves and dump them at her gate or by her door to register their hatred and disappointment at her ignominious action. To further declare her unfit for womanhood, ashes are cast on the green leaves to tell that her action, morally, is a disgrace and her value is worthless like the ashes fit to be cast away into dust-bin of life (Ogwezzy, 1999).

### **Black (Depicted by Charcoal in Ukwani)**

Black like any other colour tells and indicates sorrow and evil. When people die, children and relations wear black dresses to tell the world the state of their hearts and that they are mourning the death of their beloved and dear ones (Ogwezzy, 1999).

It is also used to identify bad deeds or actions like thefts. When a person steals anything, powdered charcoal is rubbed on his or her face to tell the world that he or she is an evil and a dangerous citizen. It is to make the person ashamed and possibly correct him/herself (Ogwezzy, 1999).

The good part of it is that when a youth is chosen as the chief or main artists at a festival (e.g. *Ukwata* of the Ukwani speaking people of Ndokwa West Local Government Area of Delta State), a shade of black is used to decorate his body for public show. When anyone is being prepared for the show, the person is designed and printed all over his, body and calves with black liquid (*ulie*) produced from seeds of a climber-like shrub also called *ulie*. The seeds are ground into soft mash mixed with very little water. The liquid from it is then used to design the person concerned. Patterns produced on the person would depend on the artist's level, aesthetic value and creativity. The designs on the person are expected to agree with the complexions and shape of the body build of the dancer (Ogwezzy, 1999).

The same applies to a young lady circumcised during annual festivals. Just like the artists, the designs on the person are expected to agree with the complexions and shape of the body build of the lady and her pages for outing on special public shows (Ogwezzy, 1999).

The indigo prints identify them to the public and the roles they play at the particular time of feasts or ceremony (Ogwezzy, 1999).

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Visual communication as a classification of traditional communication generally hinges on the sense of sight and knowledge of the peoples of Africa.

Colours of various shades communicate messages. What they communicate could be pragmatic, society specific and also generic. In Africa, meanings are attached to colours in various communities and so they are used to communicate.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

This unit focused on visual communication, which based on our classification, are of three types – pigmentation, colours, appearance and records. Specifically, it examined pigmentation and colours as a type of visual communication, presented some examples and highlighted their communication functions.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

1. Visual communication is hinged on which of the senses?
2. List some colours known in your community

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. List two types of visual communication discussed in this unit.
2. List two examples under each type of visual communication listed.
3. Identify five colours in your ethnic group.
4. State the meaning and significance attached to each of the five colours identified.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Akpabio, E (2003). *African Communication Systems: An Introductory Text*. Lagos: BPrint Publications.

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## **UNIT 2 APPEARANCE: PHYSICAL LOOK AND**

## **COSTUME\FACIAL MARKS AND TATTOOS\RECORDS**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Appearance
  - 3.2 Facial Marks and Tattoos
  - 3.3 Facial Marks and Tattoos, and their Communication Function
  - 3.4 Records, Their Characteristics and Where They Are Found
    - 3.4.1 Some Examples of Records
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This unit focuses on some examples of appearance (physical look, costume, facial marks and tattoos; and records) as visual channels of communication. It examines the concept of appearance, presents some examples and highlights their communication functions. Furthermore, it examines records as a category of visual channels of communication.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit of study, students should be able to:

- discuss appearance as a group of visual communication
- discuss physical appearance and costume drawing from their cultures and communities
- discuss tribal marks and tattoos as examples of appearance, a group of visual communication
- discuss tribal marks and tattoos drawing from their cultures and communities
- define records
- list some examples of records as a mode of visual channel of communication drawing from their cultures
- list where records are found in their cultures.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**



### 3.1 Appearance

Appearance communicates. It might communicate “about ethnic origin and to some extent disposition and attitude to life” (Akpabio, 2003:39). Appearance is discussed from five angles – physical, dress pattern (clothing and accessories), tattoos and tribal marks and records in this unit. These are discussed below.

#### Some Examples and their Communication Functions

**Physical Appearance** – Physical appearance is a major channel of visual communication in Africa. In Nigeria, people who are tall, light skinned and have a pointed nose commonly identified as Fulanis; while the short and stocky are mostly south easterners and people from Calabar (a city in Cross Rivers State of Nigeria) and so on. Again, short people are said to be aggressive and try to assert themselves, while tall people are more amiable, accommodating and tolerant (Akpabio, 2003).

Looking at Africa, people from Congo especially the pigmies are easy to identify mainly by their physical look, while Ghanaian are mostly very dark in complexion.

**Costume (Clothing)** – Clothes communicate class, social grouping, associations, age, profession and other demographic variables. In Africa, it is easy to identify a person from the kind of cloth the person is putting on. Again in Nigeria, velvet material (Akwa-Oche) is associated with the south-south and south-east geographical zones; plain George wrapper with the people from Rivers and Bayelsa States; George Wrapper, especially *Intorica* and *Supermint* (mainly used for occasions) brands are common among Delta State people; *Ankara* (Hollandais Dutch wax) with people from the Delta and Edo States, South Eastern and Northern Nigeria. However, the single yards variant of Hollandis *Ankara* is more common with Delta State women, while the double yards are more common with the other parts mentioned. Lace materials of various brands, quality and colours are more commonly used in Western Nigeria.

Furthermore, the way it is sewn (designed) and tied communicates. The *Itsekiri* people of Delta State tie the big wrapper underneath and the small one on top. *Ibo* women make a blouse and two wrappers and among the *Ibos*, a married woman ties her wrapper full length, while the unmarried a little above the knee. Hausa women sew a top and skirt/top and wrapper plus a head tie; Edo woman *buba* and wrapper; and a Delta State woman two wrappers and a matching top commonly made of a different fabric. *Buba* and *Sokoto/Buba* and wrapper (made of *aso-oke*, *brocade*, *lace*, *ankara* or other fabrics) for *Yoruba* men and women

respectively; and *Babaringa and Kaftan*; and *dansiki* are also associated with the *Hausa/Fulanis*.

***Babanriga (Hausa):*** *Chakwara* (by Kaduna State people); and *Agbada (Yoruba)* – an over flowing gown is worn by both Hausa Fulani and Yoruba men. It is worn over *Kafatan* and *trouser*, and *Buba* and *Sokoto* by *Hausa Fulani* and *Yoruba* men respectively. As a result of acculturation, men from other Nigerian cultures wear it. However, the way it is used and the physique of the man wearing the clothes will communicate the person's area of origin.

***Adire and Kampala*** are commonly made and worn by the *Egbas* (a *Yoruba* sub-ethnic group). Commonly women make *Boubou* (a free long flowing gown) with it. However, as a result of acculturation, it is now worn by other ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.

The *Yorubas* are also known to wear lace materials more than other ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. Traditionally, they are sewn in form of *Buba* and *wrapper* for the women; and *Buba* and *Sokoto* for men.

Again, a man who ties wrapper, with a top, cap, and walking stick is normally from Delta State (Urhobo, Isoko and Itsekiri ) of Nigeria. Chiefs from the Ukwuani Speaking area of Delta State, Nigeria also dress in the same way.

Ghanaians are very dark and their main cultural cloth is *kente* a woven material. *Kente* is worn mainly by Ghanaians. Hence any dark skinned person wearing *Kente* could easily be identified as a Ghanaian.

**Costume (Accessories):** Accessories are channels of communication in Africa as various accessories such as neck/wrist/ and waist beads tell about places of origin, show royal status/title in the society, ethnic nationality and occasion amongst others. They are worn to complement clothing and enhance beauty and dignity.

The type of dress worn by an old man or woman, whether adorned with beads or not, shows that he or she is a chief or not. Beads and in some cases, caps distinguish a chief while the man with the crown must be the king (Ogwezzy, 1999). In Nigeria for instance, beads (a collection of clay moulded and refined to bring out the desired colours [mostly brownish and Tawny red]) commonly worn by chiefs, royal families and also during burials, christening, chieftaincy installations amongst others. In Yoruba land, first daughters and first sons of the dead wear beads on the neck and wrists during burials. Also, during festivals and marriage ceremonies, women from Yoruba land, Edo and Delta States wear mainly red coloured beads on their necks, wrists and legs; use them as earrings; and also use them to decorate their hairs. Similarly, in northern Nigeria, cowries, shells from the sea, and other leather made accessories

are used like beads.

Northern women are known to wear a lot of gold necklace, ear rings, wrist watches and bangles. Asaba (Delta State capital) young girls are made to wear white beads on their waist to signify their virginity. Head ties popularly known as *gele* is meant for occasion and when going to church. Southern Nigerian women commonly tie *gele* made of various materials (*Aso-oke* [mainly by *Yoruba* women], Damask, and other brands from Switzerland and other countries) for various occasions. The *Abeti-aja* (dog ear-shaped cap) is a Yoruba accessory and any man wearing it, is more often than not a Yoruba man. It is worn mostly by warriors in Yoruba land and made of woollen cloth. The Hausas (*Kaura* sub-ethnic nationality) wear it as well. Generally the Yoruba man wears his cap and bends it to the left, which is referred to as *gbenusoun*, but the Hausa man wears his cap and shapes it into a circular form (most Hausa caps are already fashioned to be circular), while the Ijaw man wears Bowler hat. Hausa women who are predominantly Muslims generally wear veil, while the Yoruba Muslim women and other Nigerian Muslims women also wear veils. It should be noted that some Nigeria women who are not Muslims also wear it for fashion or to identify with the Muslim women. Queens in Yoruba land plait their hair *Suku* and decorate with beads. Also, Fulani women wear plenty of earrings on their ears and noses; while Fulani cattle rearers wear raffia hats, carry water bottles and staffs.

Crown made of metal and beads are symbol of kingship and worn by the royal families in various Nigerian ethnic groups.

### 3.2 Facial Marks and Tattoos

Although it seems Wilson (1998) classification presented facial marks and tattoos as channels of communication under symbology, this author believes they should be treated as channels of communication under visual communication because of the thematic linkages.

### 3.3 Facial Marks and Tattoos, and their Communication Function

**Facial Marks** - The use of facial mark as a channel of communication is an age long practice and common among Africans. Such marks are usually on the face and are used as a means of identification, particularly during the periods of inter tribal wars and slave trade. The marks are sometimes associated with aesthetics, a concept that varies from tribe to tribe.

According to Doob (1966:83), facial marks and scars communicate personal satisfaction, achievements, status, or ranks and bravery. It is

also meant for personal gratification. To some people it actually gratifies, but some people who were given facial marks, especially on the face when they were young, grow beards to cover them up for various reasons such as to hide their identity or because they do not like the marks.

In Nigeria, facial marks commonly reveal people's ethnic groups i.e. we can tell from where a person comes from by looking at the facial marks. The *Isokos and Urhobos* have short horizontal marks on the cheek; *Ibos*, short vertical on the sides of the forehead; *Igalas*, three horizontal marks on each side of the mouth, and one vertical on each cheek; *Yorubas* various depending on the sub-ethnic group. *Oyos* a group within the *Yoruba* group, horizontal "tiger" marks normally four to five depending on the sub-ethnic group.

**Tattoos** - Tattoos are designs printed on people's faces, hands, body and at calves. They are printed for certain reasons and easy identifications. Some are tribal, for fancy or aesthetic interests and to identify easily and silently aristocrats and other castes including slaves (Ogwezzy, 1999 and Akpabio, 2003).

Ogwezzy (1999) stated that the practice is becoming distasteful for the obnoxious messages or information it gives of some sets of people. The habit is fast dying away except the aspects that relate to the ethnicism and aesthetic interests. Sooner or later, it will become a thing of the past for the pains it gives people morally, socially and physically. This writer does not discount this but currently, tattoos are in vogue and young boys and girls both in the developed and developing countries are having tattoos on their bodies.

### **3.4 Records, Their Characteristics and Where They Are Found**

Records are assemblage of public information, which are highly informative, reminding and effective (Ogwezzy, 1999). Records do not have to be only written on paper. Some examples of records from outside Africa are the South Asian treaties on Animal management written on palm leaves; ancient scripts on *bail an* leaves preserved in Thai Buddhist temples, and similar leaves containing records of land ownership and tax obligations in Bali. Examples of records are very common among the Binis i.e people from Edo State, Nigeria

Records formal or informal are found in museums, village centres, palaces and homes are other visual forms of indigenous communication. Perhaps a study of indigenous librarianship would reveal many examples of such in Africa.

#### **3.4.1 Some Examples of Records**

Local examples of records are found in local works of art such as paintings, sculpture, excavations, and art pieces. Some examples are:

- Written works
- Carved
- Painted
- Sculptor
- Excavations

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Appearance as a channel of visual communication was extensively discussed drawing from clothing and accessories. Clothing and accessories are channels of communication in Africa as they reveal a person's place of origin and conveys other messages. As discussed above, there are different modes of dressing in Africa and Nigeria particularly. *Babaringa*, *kaftan* and cap signify that a person is a Hausa Fulani; *Buba*, *Sokoto* and cap, Yoruba; shirt across or on top of the knee, trouser and a red cap, Ibo (the red cap is synonymous with the chiefs); and George Wrapper, bead and necklaces, common with south-south women in Nigeria amongst others.

It concludes that physical appearances of people communicate something about them. They may tell us about their areas of origin and temperament. Although the aspects of areas of origin and temperament are contestable because Nigerian people wear clothes across culture and it might not always be true that short people are assertive and temperamental, but facial marks generally reveal a lot about people.

Again, facial marks and tattoos were discussed as channels of communication in Africa. Facial marks and tattoos are means of identification as they reveal a person's place of origin. They are also for aesthetics purpose.

This unit also concludes that records in whatever form carved, painted, moulded, memorised and dug up communicate.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

This unit focused on physical appearance and costume. It drew from various Nigeria cultures and highlighted the messages they communicate. It also discussed facial marks and tattoos, a group of visual communication. It presented and discussed some examples and highlighted their communication functions.

This unit also discussed records as a type of visual communication. It explored the concept of records, listed some examples, places where

they can be found and highlighted their characteristics.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

1. What is costume?
2. Draw a facial mark and explain what it stands for.
3. List three places where records are found

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Drawing from your community, discuss clothing as an example of visual communication.
2. Discuss facial marks and tattoos drawing from you culture.
3. Define records.
4. List five examples of records.

### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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## **MODULE 4      ICONOGRAPHIC CHANNELS**

Unit 1	Iconographic Channels of Communication: Objectified, Floral, Plants and Crops
Unit 2	Idiophones
Unit 3	Membraneophones
Unit 4	Membraneophones in Western Nigeria
Unit 5	Aerophones

## **UNIT 1    ICONOGRAPHIC CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION: OBJECTIFIED, FLORAL, PLANTS AND CROPS**

### **CONTENTS**

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Iconographic Communication
3.1.1	Types of Iconographic Communication and Examples
3.1.2	Iconographic Communication Devices and Their Communication Functions
3.2	What is objectified in Communication?
3.2.1	Examples of Objectified and Their Communication Functions
3.3	Florals, Plants and Crops
3.3.1	Floral, Plants and Crops: Some Examples and their Communication Functions
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Readings

### **1.0    INTRODUCTION**

This unit focuses on iconographic channels of communication, a mode of communication in Africa. The various types will be outlined and examples presented.

It explores objectified as a type of iconographic communication. It examines the concepts, present some examples and highlights their communication functions.

Furthermore, it examines floral, plants and crops as iconographic communication devices. It also highlights their communication functions.

### **2.0    OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit of study, students should be able to:

- define iconographic communication
- outline the various types of iconographic communication
- discuss the communication functions of iconographic communication
- discuss objectified as a group of iconographic communication
- discuss some examples of objectified drawing from their cultures and communities
- discuss the communication functions of the various example of objectified
- discuss florals, plants and crops as a group of iconographic communication
- discuss some examples of florals, plants and crops drawing from their cultures and communities
- discuss the communication functions of the various examples of florals, plants and crops

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Iconographic Communication**

Icons are symbols. For instance, your photograph is your icon. According to Doob (1966:60), “In a symbolic relation, the medium is able to suggest reality because, not through any necessary or inherent connection but through custom and habituation, the symbol arouses response very similar to those evoked by reality itself”. In some parts of Nigeria, when people who are living abroad want to do their traditional marriages and can not come to Nigeria either for reasons of cost, or questionable travel documents or their documents are expired and they might be refused entry when returning to the foreign country, their families normally, place the enlarged and perhaps framed photographs of the bride and the bride groom in a strategic place at the venue of the ceremony to represent the couple. This has become established in many parts of Nigeria and it is understood by many Nigerians.

Akpabio (2003:26) noted that “icons are generally regarded as standing for or representing something”; do not uniformly communicate the same message; and they are culture specific as what they communicate is based on a society’s history, experience and circumstance, elements, symbols and icons . This might account for why a number of icons have been in use to communicate and people decoded their meanings as result of long association with their use.

##### **3.1.1 Types of Iconographic Communication and Examples**

Wilson (1998) and Akpabio (2003) classified iconographic



communication devices mainly into two groups – objectified and floral. This author is of the view that floral is too narrow and that sub-classification should be expanded to include plants and crops.

a) Objectified – examples

- Charcoal (treated as black colour under visual communication)
- White dove
- Kola-nut
- Cowtail
- White clay (treated under native chalk. See visual communication)
- Egg
- Feather
- Cam-wood (treated as red colour under visual communication)
- Calabash
- Beads (treated as accessories under visual communication)
- Limb bones
- Drinking gourds
- Flag

However, this author is of the view that charcoal, which depicts black colour; white clay, white colour and cam-wood, red colour be under colours; while beads be discussed under physical (clothes and accessories). So, for our discussion, the position of this author was adopted.

b) Floral – examples

- Young unopened palm frond
- *Okono* tree, *Nsei*, *Nyama*, *Mimosa* (These are found in Akwa-Ibom and Cross Rivers States of Nigeria)
- Plantain stems.

### **3.1.2 Iconographic Communication Devices and Their Communication Functions**

Every group of people in Africa has iconographic communication devices that are peculiar to their setting that perform different communication functions. Such devices may be totally different from those used by other people or they have special meanings as used by people in other cultures. So, iconographic communication devices are items that transmit messages to the target audience. Essentially, iconographic communication devices are part of items used for communication in traditional African society.

Although iconographic communication has been defined, it is essential to emphasise their communication functions. All iconographic communication devices employed in traditional channels of communication have various functions. According to Ibagere (1994:88) “Marks on trees or grasses and leaves tied in certain ways are also used to send messages. [Also] for instance, among the Isokos of Delta State of Nigeria, cutting plantain stems and planting them upside down signifies the declaration of war by one community on another.” Also Akpabio (2003:26-27) stated that:

To show that a visitor is welcomed, drinking water is presented first specifically for people in the northern part of Nigeria. Among the Igbos, it is the presentation of kolanut that represents this sentiment. White egg, white he-goat, white clothes depending on the culture represent ritual objects or connection with the occult. Feathers are used in coronation as well as to indicate titled chiefs. Cowries and kolanuts are used in divination to determine the will of deities. Alligator pepper indicates long lasting relationship as in marriage.

It is hoped that after studying this unit, you would have become familiar with some iconographic communication devices used in Africa and their communication functions.

### **3.2 What is objectified in Communication?**

Objectified is where part of an object is used to convey messages. E.g. Kola-nut, cam wood, used by women who are circumcised or gave birth to a new baby as cosmetics and a mark of regeneration of life; the pigeon, as an object of peace; the owl and vulture, objects of bad omen. Others are cowries, feathers, and flag among others, which also have meanings in people’s minds. The devices in this group are endless. So, drawing mainly from the Ukwuani Speaking people of Ndokwa West Local Government Area of Delta State, some examples of objectified are discussed below to enhance our understanding of this group of iconographic communication devices.

#### **3.2.1 Examples of Objectified and their Communication Functions**

**Feathers (*Ebuba*):** The use of feathers for various purposes are common more with people of South-Eastern Nigeria and Niger Delta Areas with some spill over in Edo state, Nigeria. According to Akpabio (2003:27) feathers are used in coronation as well as to indicate titled chief. He however, did not state the part of Nigeria where feathers signify coronation or title. Feathers though may be small and light, they carry great impression about people who put them on. However, only

few feathers merit special regards while others join in mass adornments of masquerades, shrines and decorations. The few that are in a class of their own are eagle, parrot tail and cock's tail crown feathers.

**Eagle Feather (*Ebuba-Ugo*):** Eagle feathers are the feathers mainly from the two wings of eagles. They are usually white. However, some small black ends linger on most of them. They are very bold and proud on people's heads. They are also very eloquent about the personality of the people who plug them on their heads or hats as crowns (Ogwezzy, 1999).

Ordinarily they attract dignity of their own and on the people who adorn their hats or caps with them. The feathers on men eloquently declare and inform the public that the persons putting them on have made some remarkable achievements either as heroes at wars or intrepid hunters and have performed acts of bravery. They easily help to identify aristocrats from serfs (Ogwezzy, 1999).

**Parrot Feather (*Efele-Uche*):** This is the content of the red bunch of feathers at the tail of the parrot – the only bird that has that peculiar plumage. Apart from putting it on as decoration or as beautification, the feather on a person tells that the person has aesthetic value or love for beauty and sometimes modesty. It tells that the user is careful, neat, morally and socially honourable gay and popular. For others who do not belong to the above groups, the feather subtly declares them fetish worshippers (Ogwezzy, 1999).

**Cock's Tail Crown Feathers (*Npipi*):** grow on the tails of mature domestic birds e.g. cocks and pea-cock. The crown feathers pinned on cowry cones are carried by pages of a circumcised lady on outing days during festivals. Furthermore, youths of both sexes pin on crown feathers on their heads when in dancing shows particularly during festivals and occasional entertainments. Of course, herbalists adorn their shrines and idols with feather and crown feathers lavishly (Ogwezzy, 1999).

The crown feather subtly informs ladies under men, or youths who are social lovers of beauty and excellence.

**Peacock Feather:** Represents the institution of kingship (Akpabio: 2003).

**Birds:** Pigeon and dove signify peace; the owl and vulture, are objects of bad omen.

**Kola-nuts and Cowries:** The triangle of kola-nut shows that it is

produced mainly in Western Nigeria, Consumed more in Northern Nigeria and respected more in eastern Nigeria. Kola-nut in Ibo land signifies welcome to a visitor. This might account for why the Ibos say: “He who brings kola-nut, brings life”. Also cowries and kola-nuts are used in divination to determine the will of deities (Akpabio: 2003:26-27).

**Flag:** A red, white and red, white, red and black flag at some points in some Nigeria communities signify a shrine and or the presence of a traditional priest.

**Rainbow:** Signifies that no one should visit the stream (Akpabio: 2003)

**Shooting Star:** Heralds the death of an important individual (Akpabio: 2003).

**Broom:** Could communicate quarrel and settlement (Akpabio: 2003).

**Alligator Pepper:** Signifies long lasting relationships as used in traditional marriage in Nigeria (Akpabio: 2003).

**White egg, White he-goat, and White cloth:** In most Nigerian cultures these objects represent rituals or connection with occult (Akpabio: 2003).

**Drinking Water:** In northern Nigeria, presentation of drinking water to a visitor signifies that the visitor is welcomed (Akpabio: 2003).

**Staffs (Cow Tail, Metallic Staff, Hand Fan and Horse Tail):** These communicate chieftaincy ranks and titles. Those who carry metallic staffs are war lords or the village warriors. Those who hold the large hand fan are another set of warriors and the chief couriers while the horse-tail bearers are the elders. The mere sight of any of these examples communicates their status and rank (Ogwezzy, 1999).

### 3.3 Florals, Plants and Crops

Floral, plants and crop as used in this study is referring to decoration with flower, cultivating plants and the display of trees, shrubs and grasses for the purpose of disseminating information. Drawing from the Ukwuani Speaking people of Ndokwa West Local Government Area of Delta State, some examples of floral, plants and crops are discussed below to enhance our understanding of this group of iconographic communication devices.

#### 3.3.1 Floral, Plants and Crops: Some Examples and their Communication Functions

**Shrubs:** Other signs are when branches of fresh shrubs are dropped across a path or road which tells people to avoid it and follow the open one for security reasons and safe arrival at intended destination. A shrub cut mid-way and strung down with a rope by the entrance to a road or path tells that there is danger ahead and should be avoided to escape being trapped or miss the way (Ogwezzy, 1999).

**Grasses:** It is also interesting to know that when standing grasses are gathered and knotted on top shows arrival at the desired destination and a sign of spot of conquest or a feat. It is more commonly used by hunters or fishermen to tell people scouting for them, that they are within the area (Ogwezzy, 1999).

**Sucker Plants:** If a grown plantain or banana plant is cut off high at the top growing end and planted with the sucker base or end turned upwards, it is a clear declaration of war on the people who own the land and against the people who planted it. By this, it is said that the cut off end or tail of the plantain is dug into the ground with the roots and sucker upward. The planter is the aggressor. It has no remedy, except a very quick and powerful intervention is employed (Ogwezzy, 1999).

**Carved Bark of Trees:** There are other symbols or marks, carved at the bark of trees.

**Destruction of Growing Food Crops:** Cutting of yam vines and destruction of growing food crops in farms are traditional channels of communication. The action is carried out by the aggrieved party to speak out that they are on revenge against a grievous offence against them (Ogwezzy, 1999).

Offences which attract this type of action are always very serious, such as manslaughter by a fellow citizen or relation. The offending party never takes retaliatory actions, which is the only way they can demonstrate remorse for the ignominy committed by their person or relation.

However after the destructions, negotiations come in to find lasting solutions. On agreement, indemnities are paid mainly in kind. For manslaughter, the aggrieved person or party is compensated with gift of a girl. It is intended or believed that the girl would bear children and increase the family of the one murdered thereby replace the dead. That would reduce the pang of pain and bring solace and relief to both parties to restore peace and harmony. At last it would be peace and harmony between the parties concerned or affected (Ogwezzy, 1999).

**Planting Crops Vertically along Ridges:** Planting of crops like maize and/or cassava vertically along ridges in a farm denote a boundary between two contiguous/adjacent farms which may either belong to two

people.

**Palm Frond:** A hunter who carries a gun with a palm frond label clearly tells the villagers that he has shot a great animal. Similarly, a motor vehicle tagged with palm frond explains to the public that a corpse is in the vehicle.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Iconographic communication as a classification of traditional communication essentially is about the use of icons to suggest reality and they are culture specific.

The unit concludes that in Africa, meanings are attached to parts of objects and that the devices in the group are endless.

It also concludes that in Africa, information is disseminated through decoration with flower, cultivating plants and the display of trees, shrubs and grasses.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

This unit has focused on iconographic communication, which based on our classification are of two types – objectified and floral, plants and crops. Their communication functions were brought to the fore. It also explored the various devices under these two groups.

It examined objectified, a group of iconographic communication, presented some examples and highlighted their communication functions.

It explored florals, plants and crops - a group of iconographic communication. It presented some examples and highlighted their communication functions as well.

#### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

1. List the types of iconographic communication devices discussed in this unit.
2. What is objectified?
3. List five examples of floral plants and crops used for communication in Africa.

#### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Drawing examples from your culture, list two types of

- iconographic communication.
2. Drawing examples from your culture, list five devices at least under each of the two types of iconographic communication.
  3. Drawing examples from your culture, discuss two types of feather as channels of communication, highlighting their communication functions.
  4. Drawing examples from your culture, discuss two examples of floral, plants and crops used for communication in Africa.

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## MODULE 5 INSTRUMENTAL CHANNELS

### Unit 1 The Concept of Instrumental Communication

Unit 2	Idiophones
Unit 3	Membraneophones
Unit 4	Membraneophones in Western Nigeria
Unit 5	Aerophones

## **UNIT 1 THE CONCEPT OF INSTRUMENTAL COMMUNICATION**

### **CONTENTS**

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	What Is Instrumental Communication?
3.2	Types of Instrumental Communication Devices and Examples
3.3	The Communication Functions and Characteristics of Instrumental Communication Devices
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This unit focuses on instrumental communication. Just as instruments are used for communication modern societies, they have been in use in Africa since the primordial time. So, a study of African communication systems, should take a look at instrumental communication devices.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit of study, students should be able to:

- outline the various groups of instrumental communication devices
- list the types of instrumental communication devices drawing examples from what obtains in their cultures and communities
- discuss the communication functions of various instrumental communication devices listed.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 What Is Instrumental Communication?**



Instrumental devices are part of items used for communication in traditional African society. Ibagere (1994) refers to it as the hardware of music. Every group of people in Africa has instrumental devices that are peculiar to their setting and perform different communication functions. Such instruments may be totally different from those used by other people or they have special meanings as used by people in other cultures. It is hoped that after studying this unit, you would have become familiar with some instrumental devices used for communication in Africa.

### 3.2 Types of Instrumental Communication Devices and Examples

Scholes (1938) writing on instrumentals stated that instruments could be generally divided into instruments of definite pitch and instruments of indefinite pitch. Instrument of definite pitch include kettle drum, bells, celesta, xylophone, gong etcetera, while instrument of indefinite pitch include side drum or snare drum, tenor drum, bass drum, tambourine, cymbals, rattle, anvil, etcetera.

However, scholars of African communication systems divided instruments into more than two groups. According to Akpabio (2003), there are mainly three groups of instrumental communication devices. What Wilson (1998) added to make it four (symbolography) to Akpabio (2003) is grouped under iconographic communication:

#### a) Idiophones - examples

- Wooden drum
- Woodblock (Such as *Ekele*, *Oponda* and *Uneh* found in Delta State of Nigeria).
- Ritual rattles
- Bell
- Metal gong (such as *akankang* and *ekere* found in Akwa-Ibom and Cross River States of Nigeria)
- Xylophone
- Hand shakers
- Pot drum

#### b) Membranephones – example

- Skin drum

#### c) Aerophones – examples

- Whistle
- Deer horn

- Ivory tusk
- Reed pipe etc.

### **3.3 The Communication Functions and Characteristics of Instrumental Communication Devices**

Although much has been said about instrumental system of communication, yet it would be essential to emphasise their other roles. All instruments and appliances employed in traditional channels of communication are always brief and tautological in their information dissemination, orders and warnings e.g. no, no; yes, yes; stop, stop; not now, not now; come together, come together; etc (Akpabio, 2003).

It is also used during burial ceremonies and cleansing rites. These are treated in details in the next four chapters.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

This unit concludes that instrumental communication has been in use since the primordial period in Africa.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

The concept of instrumental communication was examined, types, outlined; communication functions, highlighted; and characteristics discussed.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

List the types of instrumental communication discussed in this unit.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Outline two types of instrumental communication.
2. Drawing from what obtains in your culture, list ten examples of instrumental communication devices.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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## **UNIT 2     IDIOPHONES**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Wooden Drums
    - 3.1.1 The Communication Functions of Wooden Drums
  - 3.2 Bells
    - 3.2.1 The Communication Functions of Bells
  - 3.3 Gongs
    - 3.3.1 The Communication Functions of Gongs
  - 3.4 The Woodblock (Entertainment Instrumentals)
    - 3.4.1 The Communication Functions of Woodblock
  - 3.5 Xylophones
    - 3.5.1 The Communication Functions of Xylophones
  - 3.6 Pot Drum
    - 3.6.1 The Communication Functions of Pot Drums
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This unit focuses on idiophones, a group of instrumental media.

Idiophones have the quality of producing sound by themselves (self sounding wares). The objects could be struck, pricked, pulled or pressed with the foot. E.g. gongs of all sizes and shapes.

According to Ibagere (1994:91) idiophone is a “...group of self sounding instruments which produce sound when they are struck, scratched, or shaken. The sound they produce is of a different kind from those of other instruments. In this group are all the different sizes and shapes of gongs, woodblock, wooden drum, bell rattle, earthen ware drum, and other related instruments.”

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit of study, students should be able to:

- list the types of idiophones drawing from their cultures
- discuss the types of idiophones listed
- discuss the communication functions of the various idiophones.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Wooden Drums

Drum is the oldest musical instrument. Bunhart (1995) described it as a member of the percussion family which consists of instruments that are played by striking them with the hand, sticks, or other objects. Such other objects may include a pair of enters or brushes.

Describing the wooden drum Akpabio (2003:14) stated that:

...the wooden drum is made from tree-trunk. To enable it produce mellifluous sounds, the bark is removed and an opening is made at the top. This way when struck with a stick it produces sounds. The drums come in various sizes and shapes and it has various designations.

The *Annangs* of Akwa-Ibom State refer to the wooden drum with the brass sound as *Aworum*; the smaller one with the tenor/treble sound as *Akporo* (Akpabio 2003). Furthermore, Akpabio (2003) citing Akpabot (1975:15) stated that among the *Ibibios*, there are three main types of wooden drums – *Obodom Ubong* (royal drum), *Obodom Mbire* (common drum used by masquerade group), *Obodum Usuan Etop* or *Obodom Ikot* (drum for message dissemination). He however, did not specify the functions of the royal drum.

Nwuneli (1983) in his study of traditional channels of communication in Nigeria found that the *Tivs* in the North Central geo-political Zone of the country use drums of various sizes and shapes to communicate different kinds of messages to its people. The *Indyner* drum is the largest single drum carved entirely out of wood that is used for the transmission of messages associated with stately affairs, wars, disasters, death of important personalities in the community and other related issues among the *TIVs*. However, Mede (1998) said that the drum is known as *Gbande* and that drums are generally used to arouse emotions since it is musical instrument. It is used for dance rehearsal and outings, burial ceremonies as well as social and political gathering. He further stated that the talking drum called *Ajo* is a type of *Gbande* used to call the attention of people either for an announcement or a meeting.

In the same study Nwuneli (1983) also found that the *Igbos* of South Eastern geo-political Zone of the country have a similar drum called *Ikolo* (*Ikoro*) a variety of “talking drum” which performs identical functions as the *Indyner* found among the *Tivs*. Again, among the *Igbos*, *Ekwe* carved out of a cylindrical block of wood, is a diminutive variant of the much bigger *Ikolo* which is set up permanently in market places, village squares or in shrines. The *Ikolo* functions similarly to the

traditional state drums like the *Yoruba*, *Gbedu*; *Itsekiri* (an ethnic group in South-South geo-political Zone of Nigeria), *Orji*; *Edo* (an ethnic group in South-South geo-political Zone of Nigeria), *okha*; *Urhobo* (an ethnic group in South-South geo-political Zone of Nigeria), *Ogri*; and *Hausa* (a linguistic group in Northern Nigeria) *Tambari*; were used to summon special meetings, proclaim arrival and departure of important visitors to the palace, arrival of traditional rulers to public functions, announce serious acts of sacrilege and disasters, alert the community against invasion and in war advertise the presence of war chiefs.

### 3.1.1 The Communication Functions of Wooden Drums

Drums generally function to summon villagers to village square meetings and other meetings of village importance; summon the villagers for communal labour; remind the people of planned work; communal celebrations; public launching; farm harvest; and for entertainment. When people do not understand the specific messages of the drums, they seek clarification. In his study of Erian village, Akpan (1977) found that canon shots and drums are used either separately or combined to announce the death of non-members of the church in the village. Wilson (1998:30) drawing from Akwa-Ibom and Cross Rivers States of Nigeria succinctly stated that wooden drums perform four function – installation of kings and royal celebrations; announcement of the passing away of kings; alerting citizens of grave danger; and ushering in various masquerade groups such as *Ukwa*, *Ekombi*, *Ekong*, *Ekpo Nyoho* and *Ekpe*

## 3.2 Bells

In his study of Erian village, Akpan (1977) found that elephant tusk, bells, canon shots and drums are common African channels of communication. According to Akpabio (2003) the bell is referred to in *Yoruba* as *Agogo*; *Igbo*, *Ngbirigba*; *Ibibio*, *Nkanika*; and *Hausa*, *Kararraw*. He stated that the bell has wooden handle from which a conical shape metal is suspended. “It produces sound when the ball-shaped metal suspended on the inside of the cone-shaped structure hits the side of the structure in the process of jiggling” (Akpabio, 2003:16). ”.

### 3.2.1 The Communication Functions of Bells

A bell “is mostly used to get attention, opening as well as to announce, closing and break-time” (Akpabio, 2003:16). Bells are used as communication instruments mostly by modern institutions especially the Christian churches and schools. They are used to summon the congregation to service. During the service too, bells are manipulated to provide melodious tunes to songs. Apart from this, bells are used to

silence the congregation, and to signify the end of a particular prayer bit, thereby informing the congregation of the time to open their eyes.

Apart from these, the church also uses the bell to announce the death of their prominent members. When the bell is used for this purpose, it is usually manipulated in a very peculiar manner, which differs markedly from those of other times for which bells are used. For example, instead of being struck continuously for only about three minutes, it is usually struck once in an interval of one to two minutes; when it is struck this way, it is meant to announce the death of a person who is a member of the church.

Also, bells are commonly used by schools to summon pupils to the schools. In addition, it is used to inform pupils and their teachers when to change teaching of subjects. The bell is also used to announce recess, lunch time, breaks and the closing of schools. When the bell is rung continuously, it is meant at such occasions to signify emergencies which require the pupils to assemble for special briefings from the school authorities.

In his study of Erian village, Akpan (1977) found that bells are used primarily by religious organisations to summon members to prayers and services. Besides, the church bell is also used to communicate the death of any member of the congregation.

Bells also announce the sacrificial rites being performed before the new yam are eaten in some communities. It equally indicates that the New Yam Festival is in progress.

From the above, it is evident that bells have communication functions in Africa. The various functions already discussed and the people to whom its messages are targeted respond to it. However, its effectiveness could be explained in terms of the low literacy level of the people that attend churches in the rural communities, while the relatively high cost of wrist watches and table clocks could be explained as being responsible for the effectiveness of the bell in schools. For the illiterates, however, even those who can afford wrist watches underutilise them, as they usually seek the help of others who are literate to regulate the wrist watches and read the time of day for them from their wrist watches.

### 3.3 Gongs

The metal gong is made from metal and is V-shaped. It is known in *Efik* as *Akangkang*; *Ibibio*, *Akpongkpong* and *Ibo*, *Ogene* (Wilson, 1998:33). Some are carried by the younger persons and beaten by the older people. They are beaten to convey different messages. Gongs are appliances of

instrumental sound in traditional channels of communication. Some are made of woods and others of metals, but mainly of metals. Gongs have an opening called mouth each. They are of different sizes dependent on need and use. There are king size or giant size which is about four feet high and others between ten and eighteen inches long. Their mouths or openings depend also on size.

### **3.3.1 The Communication Functions of Gongs**

The king size is really for the kings and aristocratic orders. They are seen at high places, and palaces. This type of gong serves as “phone call” for kings and men of importance. If a king is asleep and has an important and urgent visitor/message respectively, the king size gong is used to wake him in the first instance, whether asleep or awake. That is repeated at intervals to get the king prepared for appearance and to invite his aids if necessary.

Besides royal use of that type, it is also used at sophisticated dancing groups and at shrines adored with awful reverence. At shrines, when it is struck, sudden silence falls on the people and one can hear the fall of a pin. At social gatherings, gongs are struck to call for silence if the gathering is rowdy.

The wooden and Indian bamboo types are mainly for social activities, particularly at festivals. During festivals, boys, girls and ladies in particular dance and sing along streets striking various gongs rhythmically along side with songs. They are also instruments for social entertainments. They help ginger people to dance by sharp and fast recording sound. Furthermore, Mede (1998) stated that the wooden gong known as *Ilyu* in Tiv is an instrument used in transmitting important messages (such as death of kings, chiefs or announcement of local meetings) across to neighbouring villages. It is also used in time of emergency or war, to alert neighbours. Its sounds generally depict the happenings of importance, horror and/or alarm.

### **3.4 The Woodblock (Entertainment Instrumentals)**

The woodblock which Ibagere (1994:91) refers to as chordophone “is any instrument which produces sound through the exertion of pressure on string...and it is released intermittently”. It includes all types of string instruments such as guitars, harp, lyre and other related instruments.

Describing the woodblock, Wilson (1998:13) stated that the woodblock is made from wood; hollowed inside but flat on its sides and it serves entertainment function. This description fits the *Ekele* or *Akpata*,



*Oponda and une* used among the Ukwuani speaking people of Ndokwa West Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria.

***Ekele or Akpata*** is an instrumental appliances built or mounted on half of gourd keg of the size of a medium football. A small flat piece of plank is firmly fixed to the gourd. On the plank, seven small flat umbrella veins/spokes are firmly strung to it. The fourth spoke, the central one, is always the longest with others shorter on both sides to the last which is the shortest. At both ends of the spokes, two tiny pieces of iron or wood are plugged across under them and struck close to the stringed centre to make them produce the vibration sound required. The two adjusters therefore help to raise or lower the volume of sound from it. Besides, on top of the flat plank, a round hole of about two inches is smoothly chizzled out. It helps also to control and raise sounds to the volume required.

***Oponda*** is built on a small box of about one and half feet long and one foot wide. The structure on top over the hole like *Ekele* is the same. Both are operated like a piano.

*Uneh* is a harp. It is made of a flexible hard shrub cut to size, not longer than four feet. The head of the stick is torn to admit a string of cane which is wound round the tail several times. For a complete set, two strikers – *Eka Nkwa* are carved also of hard sticks.

### 3.4.1 The Communication Functions of Woodblock

*Ekele or Akpata, Oponda and une* (varieties of woodblock) are all traditional channels of communication used in entertainment during social occasions, festivals and funerals to comfort the bereaved. They speak the languages that suit occasions. They raise and/or lower people's spirits for specific occasions (Ogwezzy, 1999). According to Wilson (1998:32), just like the metal gong, woodblock play prominent roles during installation of kings and at funerals; used to speak to ancestors and used by members of the *Ekpo* society in Akwa-Ibom and Cross Rivers States of Nigeria. It is also used for information dissemination as well as entertainment.

## 3.5 Xylophones

Local xylophones are made of wooden bars with varying lengths and a stand (Akpabio, 2003). In this case, wood, metal or any other hard material is used in place of membranes and the bottom of the hollow is usually covered. They are mostly made of many hollows (they could be as many as twenty), each having a different sound, depending on the size of the hollow. Most of the instruments are made of cow horns (Ibagere 1994). Ibagere (1994:92) further stated that:

Because of the hardness of the materials used, that is the wood, or metal which is struck or beaten, it becomes difficult (if not outrightly impossible) to use the hand. [So] well carved sticks (some of which the beating area is covered with synthetic material) are used to beat or strike the wood or metal to produce the sound.

For the message produced through the sounds of the xylophone to be understood, one has to be familiar with and literate in code of the music from the xylophone being used to convey the message, otherwise, one could misinterpret the message and either fail to be substantially affected by it, or, at best, be wrongly affected.

### **3.5.1 The Communication Functions of Xylophones**

It is mainly used for entertainment during occasions. It accompanies other musical instruments and song for melody, soothing and rhythm.

## **3.6 Pot Drum**

Doob (1966:10) posited that the pot drum is “a drum which looks like a water pot and is made of baked clay. Explaining the shape and workings, Akpabio (2003:16-17) stated that the pot drum “has the shape of a pot and the beater is normally made from foam”.

### **3.6.1 The Communication Functions of Pot Drums**

It is used to accompany chants and help set the rhythm for dancing. Just as one could use a highly symbolic kind of music to satisfy one's entertainment proclivities when one understands the melody from the drums. Sounds from the pot drum could be combined with dance. According to Doob (1966:10), the pot drum, is played regularly by young girls who are passing through the preliminary stages of marriage, and is used to accompany chants; it may also set the rhythm for dancing”. It is used most commonly in churches in the eastern part of Nigeria.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

This unit examined the wooden drums, bell, gong, woodblock, xylophone and pot drums, delving into their uses. It concludes that the use of and demand for idiophones are determined by the message that needs to be conveyed.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

This unit discussed idiophones. It outlined and discussed six types of idiophones commonly used for communication in Africa. It also highlighted the communication functions of the various idiophones discussed.

## SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

List the types of idiophones discussed in this unit.

### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. List four idiophones used in your community
2. Discuss the communication functions of two idiophones used in your community.

### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## **UNIT 3      MEMBRANEOPHONES**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 What are Membranophones?
    - 3.2.1 The Communication Functions of Skin Drums
  - 3.2 Types of Membranophones
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This unit focuses on membraneophone, a group of instrumental communication devices.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit of study, students should be able to:

- list the types of membraneophones drawing from their cultures
- discuss some types of membraneophones
- discuss the communication functions of the various membraneophones devices commonly used in African communication.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 What are Membranophones?**

According to Wilson (1987), membranophones are media on which sound is produced through the vibration of membranes. They include all varieties of skin or leather drum. These drums are beaten or struck with well carved sticks. Such drums include the ‘Iya lu’ in the dundun set or drums among the Yoruba, the “Ikoro” by the Igbo and the drum of the Ikine Society among the Kalabari (Akinfeleye, 1986). It is also called ‘Ajo’ among the Tiv people of Nigeria. (Mede,1998). Again, Ibagere (1994:91) stated that membraneophone:

...relates to any instrument on which sound is produced through the vibration of membranes which have been stretched over a hollow cavity. This group includes all the varieties of skin drum. One of the most

popular types (so recognised because of its ability to produce a variety of sounds) is the Yoruba talking drum. The usual way of using them to communicate is to beat or strike them with hand or with well-carved sticks.

As Omu (1978:4) puts it when some drums are expertly sounded, they are capable of conveying specific meaning i.e. they “talk”. The “talking drum” is one of the most fascinating agencies of communication in Africa. The *Yorubas* of South Western geo-political Zone of Nigeria have an impressive array of talking drums sets and probably possess the richest heritage of drums the prominent of which is *dundun* – said to be able to imitate all the tones and gibes in *Yoruba* speech, hence can be used to communicate insults, praises, admonition and even proverbs which are understood by the initiated (Omu, 1978:4).

Naming the skin drums Akpabio (2003:17-18) stated that:

...skin drum goes by various names in different parts of Nigeria and the size of the drums are factored into the names they are given. Known as *Ibit* among the *Ibibios*, differentiation is made between the big and small drums with the addition of the prefix[es] *eka[-]* and *etok[-]* for the former and latter respectively. The situation is different in the Hausa language as each size of drum goes by a different name: *emi*-big; *Kalangu*-medium; and *Kanzagi*-small. Among the *Yorubas* who have a rich variety of skin drums one encounters names such as *Gangan*, *Bata*, *Sakara*, *Omele*, *Dundun*, *Iya Ilu*, etc

### 3.2 Types of Membranophones

**Skin Drums (Rub-A-Dub):** Skin drums are found throughout African. Skin drums which Ogwezzy (1999) described as the rub-a-dub of modern days are of various sizes and are used for sundry purposes. According to Akpabio (2003:17) “Though they serve as musical instruments accompanying song and dance performances, they are also known to be capable of “talking”.

Some are two-in-one for joint uses. Others are single for specific uses and occasions. They are made of round parts of trunks of soft-wooded plants of varied girths. Sizes depend on the needs and uses. They range between one foot to six feet tall, six inches and one foot or more in diameter at the top cover. They are hollowed through the middle. Externally, they are carved tapering more to the bottom and a little to the top which is always larger (Ogwezzy, 1999). They are tightly wrapped at the top and bottom for highly sensitive sounds. This description fits the *obene*, *Okili* and *okuma* used among the Ukwuani speaking people of Ndokwa West Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria.

*Obene*, *Okili* and *okuma* are surveyed below.

***Obene*** are tightly wrapped at the top and bottom for highly sensitive sounding ones used by shrine worshippers and oracles.

***Okili*** is a small talking drum. It is wrapped on top only for music and other needs. A set is made up of two of them and for it to produce the melody, it combines with some aerophones (a gourd trumpet, *Opi*; *Ekpili* or *Eze-Anu*, elephant tusk (piccolo); and *ofili*, buffalo horn). These are discussed in the next unit on aerophones.

The largest most revered and awful is *okuma*. It is about six feet tall and over a foot in diameter at the top. The cover cap is of strange and special skins or leathers which now could be those of tigers, leopards or lions, gorilla, jaguar etc. *Okuma* is always kept in an exclusive shrine site where only tested men of valour enter. It is put out rarely to the public on a special annual festival ceremony - *Ikenge* for veteran warlords and intrepid hunters who killed animals such as lions, leopards, tigers, and carried out other acts of valour or heroism.

Almost all have three triangular hole designs at the bottom end to enable them stand if needed. The leathers used to cap the drums (*Obene* and *Okili*) except that of rams are mainly of wild animals such as deer, antelope and large snakes. The leathers are tightly strung to the open ends with a net-work of strings of raffia fibres round the open ends of the hollowed ring of wood. The leather work is further fastened by plugging three carved flat pieces of wooden plugs. The wooden plugs are firmly tucked by the sides between the fibre rings and the wooden frame. To constitute a complete set for a leather-capped drum, there must be strikers –*Eka Nkwa*. It is made of soft or light pieces of wood or soft part of raffia palm branch. It could also be made of cane strung to design to suit needs and uses. The rub-a-dub from the drums depends on the size, length, diameter and of course, the leathers too. To, increase the sound from the drum in the modern day, the user places it close to a microphone.

### 3.2.1 The Communication Functions of Skin Drums

Among the ukwuani speaking people of Ndokwa West Local Government Area of Delta State, the talking drums are used to stimulate and incite people into actions. Of course, they are also used to mellow down people's tempers or soothe them, or cheer them up. They produce vibrations that raise spirits of people at tense moments. They are mainly used during festivals, wrestling contests, some burial ceremonies, hunting expeditions, installation of chiefs, etc (Ogwezzy, 1999).

During festivals, talking drums are put into rampant uses by all age

grades and groups to call their grades and groups into moods, actions and to assemble them. During other ceremonies, they are used to encourage chief artists – dancers and wrestlers to be keen, strong and dexterous (Ogwezzy, 1999).

Talking drums direct chiefs on steps and skills to adopt during public exhibitions to avoid errors and win public acclamations during their initiations in foot-work dances. So, one other special use of the talking drums is the noble dance during installation of chiefs. During the dance, the rub-a-dub drums tell, direct and influence actors' steps and behaviours at every dance. It incites, excites and stirs them into gale action, when they have to demonstrate various aspects of past adventures and gallantry. When messages and instructions from the instruments die down or slowly fade away; actors slump as if they have just ended a marathon race (Ogwezzy, 1999).

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Skin-drums are important in the socio-cultural context of Africans. They promote development and entertainment in Africa and are still relevant in the modern African settings.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

Drums produce vibrations, e.g. skin or leather drums. They are beaten to convey, incite and entertain the audience as well as stimulate and motivate the people to keep them going. The objects are beaten with carefully structured and designed instruments such as carved sticks.

#### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Name the various membranophones found in your culture.

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Name two types of drums found in your culture.
2. Describe the two drums named.
3. Discuss the communication functions of one of the drums described.

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## **UNIT 4     MEMBRANEOPHONES     IN     WESTERN NIGERIA**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0    Introduction
- 2.0    Objectives
- 3.0    Main Content
  - 3.1    Membranophones Commonly Used in Western Nigeria
    - 3.1.1 The Communication Functions of Skin Drums in Western Nigeria
- 4.0    Conclusion
- 5.0    Summary
- 6.0    Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0    References/Further Readings

### **1.0    INTRODUCTION**

This unit focuses on membraneophones in Western Nigeria, an ethnic group known for its use of drums in communication.

### **2.0    OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit of study, students should be able to:

- list the types of membraneophones in Western Nigeria
- discuss some types of membraneophones found in Western Nigeria
- discuss the communication functions of the various membraneophones commonly used in Western Nigeria.

### **3.0    MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1    Membranophones Commonly Used in Western Nigeria**

Having surveyed some drums among the Ukwuani speaking people of Ndokwa West Local Government Area of Delta State, it is important to draw insights from *Yoruba* traditional drums, zeroing in on *dundun* - the family name for the most common *Yoruba* traditional drums. *Yoruba* traditional drums are also called the talking drums especially, the leading drum called 'Iya Ilu'. Members of the *dundun* family are: Iya Ilu Kerikeri, Gangan Isaaju. Kannango and Gudugudu.

In their submission on Yoruba traditional drums, Daramola and Jeje (1975) opined that there are different drums for different occasions. There are some special drums that fit traditional festival which may not fit other social engagements. Some drums are peculiar to chieftaincy ceremonies which cannot be beaten during wedding ceremonies,

etcetera.

There are about ten major types of drum group commonly used for communication and entertainment among the Yorubas. They include: Bata, Ipese, Agere, Gbedu, Igbin, Sekere and Aro, Apinti, Bembe, Koso and Dundun. (Daramola and Jeje, 1975).

*Bata* is beaten mainly during the Ifa festival. It is also beaten during the burial and outing ceremonies of a dead leader amidst the Ifa worshippers.

*Agere* is usually beaten during hunters' festival called 'Odun awon Ode'. It is the main drum of 'Ogun', the god of iron.

*Gbedu* is another unique drum among the Yorubas. It is the drum to which kings and chiefs in Yorubaland dance. It is beaten during burials, special anniversaries or festivals organised by kings or during the burial of kings.

*Igbin* is the drum of 'Obatala, or 'Orisa-Nla' the arch-divinity. Obatala worshippers dance to the drum which produces melodious and captivating sounds.

*Apinti* is one of the drums beaten at social engagements in Yorubaland.

*Bembe* reassembles the 'dundun' drums but shorter than dundun, but larger in girth than 'dundun'. The old time Yoruba warriors used to beat 'bembe' when going to war. It is called side drum or snare drum in the Western World. (Scholes, 1938).

*Koso* like *Gbedu* is the drum of an 'Oba'. It was specifically said that koso was meant for the Alaafin of Oyo in the Oyo Empire (Ladele *et al*, 1986).

The last major drum is the *dundun*, which is broadly focused upon in this unit

***Dundun:*** *Dundun* drums were chosen among the various types of Yoruba traditional drums because of their uniqueness as the most outstanding popular and generally used among Yoruba drums. This is in tandem with the writing of Wilson (1987) that the Yoruba talking drum 'dundun' is perhaps the most exposed and intricate of the Yoruba drums.

The *dundun* is a double membranes hour-glass shaped tension drum. It is held under the left arm by a strap passed over the shoulder, the tension throngs are attached to both ends of the drum heads, squeezed and

pulled by the left hand to vary the pitch while the drum head is struck with a carved stick with the right hand (Akinfeleye, 1987). This carved stick is called “Kongo ilu”. This carved ‘Dundun’ drum is carved from the omo tree. This is because “Omo” is light (very portable), strong and not easily broken. (Ladele *et al*, 1986).

Most of the ‘Dundun’ drummers are professionals. They belong to the caucus of ‘Ayan’ or Onilu family. ‘Ayan’ is said to be the god of Yoruba drummers. It is a hereditary profession. Among the Yorubas, it is compulsory for the first born of any ‘onilu’ to learn drum beats and take it up as a profession. They usually hear names like Ayanniyi (Ayan is honourable), Ayanwale (Ayan has come in), Ayangbemi (Ayan favours me) Ayandiran (Ayan is hereditary) etcetera. The ‘Onilu’ that is the drummers are either the source or the encoder while the drum that is ‘dundun’ is the channel through which the drum beats, the message, gets to the intended audience or receiver. Although, these types of ‘dundun’ have been discussed earlier, it is pertinent to mention here that Iya-Ilu is the leading dundun drum while gudugudu is the least dundun drum.

Before a learner of ‘dundun’ is allowed to beat ‘Iyallu’ he will start from ‘gudugudu’ or omele’. After mastering gudugudu, he is allowed to handle ‘Kannango’ then to ‘Kerikeri’, ‘Isaaju’ and then to ‘gangan’ before he is finally allowed to beat Iya-Ilu. Such apprentice dundun drummer must expertly beat Iyallu for three to five years under his master before he is given freedom to start his own group and teach others the art of dundun drums.

### **3.1.1 The Communication Functions of Skin Drums in Western Nigeria**

Generally, drums in every socio-cultural context are meant to entertain though in the African context especially Nigeria and specifically among the Yorubas, drums not only entertain, they communicate, (i.e. they talk), and stimulate. Drums have taken on important oramedia function ‘signatures’, by ‘pitch’, or simply by ‘talking in tongues’ in the African Context. This might account for Amali (1990) position that all drums ‘talk’ some more eloquent than others in Nigeria.

On *Dundun*, it is used to communicate messages among the *Yorubas* during different occasions. A survey of various traditional festivals, social engagements, ceremonies like burial, christening, marriage, graduation revealed the indispensable roles of ‘dundun’ drums in the success of the ceremonies. Nowadays, there is hardly any *Yoruba* festival or ceremony where you will not find the ‘dundun’ family.

In fact, churches, mosques, Yoruba indigenous musicians and the

heterogeneous media of radio and television now use the ‘dundun’ drums for entertainment and other communication functions such as giving instructions. Essentially, it is used to communicate messages to its receivers, stimulate them as well as entertain them. This depends on the purpose of the occasion.

As mentioned earlier under Yoruba traditional drums, ‘dundun’ drums are predominantly beaten during various traditional festivals among the Yorubas. For example during Osun festivals usually in Oshogbo, Oke-badan festival among the Ibadan of Oyo State etcetera. The Eid-el-kabir, Eid-el-Maulud and Eid-el-fitri festivals of the Islamic religion are always celebrated with ‘dundun’ drum by the Western Nigerian Muslim.

Likewise, the Christians do celebrate Christmas, Boxing Day, and Easter, Harvest festivals, Revivals, and crusades with songs and dance accompanied with musical instrument like dundun, band sets and other modern musical instruments.

Dundun can also be used to communicate messages during festivals. For example, during egungun festival, Iya Ilu’ could be used to warn a masquerade going beyond his boundary in magic display. For example, the Ayan may say:

Ogunjimi, Ogunjimi,  
Se pelepele  
Bo ba buru tan  
Iwo nikan ni o ku

That is ogunjimi (the name of the egungun), take it easy because if things turned sour, you will be the only one to face the music. Such egungun would quickly soft-pedal or end up in shame.

Dundun drums also herald in Christmas festival through ‘dundun’ message like:

Keresimesi, odun de, odun olowo,  
Keresimesi odun de, odun olomo  
This is, Christmas has come, the festival of the rich and the fruitful.

Another example is:

Ase nse tun se/2ce  
Bi a ba seyi tan  
A o se mi si  
Ase nse tun se

That is, it shall be a continuous celebration, one celebration will

continue to lead to another, it shall be a continuous celebration. During church service, the ‘gangan’ member of ‘dundun’ could be used to pass messages on trust in Jesus Christ. For example:

Mo reni gboju le  
 Mo ti reni fehinti,  
 Onigbagbo fehinti Jesu  
 O duro gboin-gboin.

This is,  
 I have seen whom to trust,  
 I have seen whom to rely on.  
 Christians rely on Jesus and stand firm.

Dundun is also beaten to entertain guests at various ceremonies like wedding, naming, funerals, house warming and graduation ceremonies. Modern Yoruba engagement ceremonies are made lively through the dundun drums. Dundun is used to lead the groom’s family to the house of the bride during wedding engagement ceremony.

Dundun is also used to communicate messages during ceremonies. For example, during burial ceremonies, the ‘Onilu’ may communicate messages like:

Oku olowo odun meta ni,  
 oku otosi osu mefa,  
 oku olomo, ase nse tunse

That is, the burial of the rich, takes only three years, that of the poor is merely six months. But the burial of the dead who had children is continuous (for life).

Another sound may be:

Ile lo lo tarara /2ce  
 Baba rele o  
 Ile lo lo tarara /2ce

That is,  
 he has gone home straight /2ce  
 Baba has gone home, he has gone home straight /2ce

Dundun can also be beaten to stimulate community members during a community self sponsored projects. For example, a community working on the building of the community Town Hall could be stimulated by the drum beats of dundun to complement the efforts of the people involved in the work.

Dundun drums are extensively used for various purposes in the royal

palace of Yoruba Kings. According to Akinfeleye (1986), “The Iya Ilu was extensively used in the King’s Palace to remind him of royal appointments, warn him of impending danger and notify him of the approach of visitors to the palace. The Iya Ilu was also used to send messages from the Oba to the town or village and for communicating military intelligence during wars.

Dundun drums are also specially used to honour kings in Yorubaland. For example, a set of ‘Onilu’ is usually among the kings entourage on official journey within or outside his domain. Among the Yorubas, dundun is usually used to wake the king every morning. The death of an oba is also announced with the dundun drums and his burial ceremony is always dominated by the dundun set of drums.

Dundun drums are also used to communicate military intelligence during wars. The major function of dundun during war is to stimulate or encourage the warriors to continue fighting until victory is achieved. Whenever the Onilu noticed that the warriors are getting tired, he communicates encouraging messages with his Iya-Ilu messages like:

oolee se bi baba re ni?  
 Ogundepo  
 Oo le se bi baba re ni ?  
 Bi eru ba bi baba reni ?  
 Eru o b’omo balogun  
 Itakun to ba ni ki erin  
 Ma de aalo  
 Oun erin ni jo n’lo

That is, can’t you fight like your father. Ogundepo can’t you fight like your father?

If you are afraid let us know,  
 But the son of a chief warrior should not be afraid.  
 The obstacle that says it will prevent the elephant from getting onto higher ground, will have to get up together with the elephant.

According to Adeoye (1980), the dundun drums were also used in the olden days to inform a neighbouring town about the approach of war. This role reveals the unique function of dundun drums in the area of passing messages over long distances.

*Dundun* drums are also currently used to encourage or hasten excellent performance at functions or games. For example, dundun is used by modern Western Nigeria Football supporters Clubs to hasten its football club to action. It is to encourage them to endure till victory is won.

Many Football Supporters' Clubs in Western Nigeria use 'dundun' to stimulate their footballers to victory.

Modern Yoruba indigenous musicians also extensively use the 'gangan' member of the dundun drum set in their records. For example, most juju, apala, sakara and gospel musicians use 'gangan' in their releases.

The politicians also used the 'dundun' to boost their credibility and to convince people to vote for them, dundun drummers are usually part of the entourage of the politicians during political campaigns.

Dundun is also used to pass some specific messages through music. For instance the piece below presents a futile attempt working at someone's downfall. The drum message:

A o de bi ti a fe de /2ce  
E baa t'enu b'epe  
Ke e teenu b'ase  
A o de bi ti a fe de /2ce

That is,

We will surely get to where God promised for us.  
Your curses and charms cannot hinder our destiny.  
We will surely get to our destination.

Dundun is also used in modern day communication i.e. exogenous media. Exogenous media as used in this context stand for the radio and television media of communication. Dundun is currently used in exogenous media jingles and signature tunes in Yoruba land to communicate the time of the day. For example the sound:-

dundundundundundun  
dundundundundundun

That is, we are transmitting from Ibadan here. (N'badan nibi lati nfohun).

Dundun is also used by the exogenous media to announce the commencement of newscasting. For example, Radio. O-Y-O version of:

Tati were ni tekuta ile,  
Alu parada ni ti 'gi aja  
Abiyam. Kii gbekun  
Omo re ko ma tati were,  
Nile akede oyo, orin mbe,  
Nile akede oyo -i-r-o-hin.....

Dundun drums are also used as signal tunes to announce the commencement of some traditional programmes on television and radio. The dundun drums are also used to call people from far distances. For example:

Folarin, Folarin  
Se daadaa lo wa?

That is,  
Junwon, Junwon, are you alright?

‘Dundun’ is also used to sing praises of important personalities during festivals or ceremonies. This is done either to welcome them or to sing praises while on seat. For example

Junwon, omo Adeyemi,  
Kaabo, se dada lo de,  
A ti nretii re, kaabo,  
Se daadaa lo de

That is,  
Junwon, the son of Adeyemi,  
welcome, hope you arrived safely,  
we have been expecting you.

Or

Junwon, omo Adeyemi,  
Baba ni baba nje/ 2ce  
E ba takiti, ke fori sole,  
Baba ni baba nje

That is,  
Junwon, the son of Adeyemi  
will always be father,  
no matter your resistance  
a father will always be a father.

A survey of ‘dundun’ drum showed that they are more effective in the area of entertainment than communication. This is because almost everybody can dance to the drum beats of ‘dundun’ but few do understand the communicative function.

The interpretation of dundun message is usually based on experience and exposure to the rudiments of the beats. Some do not understand the message at all while some misinterpret it.

For example, the sound of the drum jingle used by radio Nigeria to



announce the time of the day is capable of being interpreted as:

Olubadan ba ku tani yio joye) “If Olubadan dies who succeeds

(Ko sonigbese nibi e lo sile keji) there is no debtor here, go to the next housewhereas, the real interpretation as stated earlier is:

(N’Ibadan nibi lati nfohun) We are transmitting from Ibadan here.

Also, there is the danger that an adversary would understand the drum signal of his foe and thus use it against them. Akinfeleye (1986) cited the example of the Ibadan/Ijaye War of 1860-1865. He said Ogunmola as an Ibadan Chief happened to have mastered the war drum signals of kurunmi so that he was able to successfully imitate them and consequently march on kurunmi war camp with disastrous effects on the Ijaye troops.

Moreover, in cultural settings, a novice may fall victim if he does not understand the messages communicated by the drum during war. For example, the sound:

dundundundundundun  
dundundundundundun

Means (ogun debode e sara yin jo ogun debode) “meaning “there is war at the frontier gather yourselves.”

In the case, the message intended would be the mobilization of men. The same sound can be interpreted as:

Igi nwolule e ma sale  
Igi nwolule

Meaning, “a tree is falling run away a tree is falling.” The falling of the tree might be a figurative expression of danger that could not be repulsed by physical force.

A warrior who misinterprets the message for the second interpretation, may out of panic, fall into the enemies’ hands.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The importance of membraneophones in Western Nigeria is no doubt clear. They disseminate messages and provide entertainment in Western Nigeria; and are still relevant in the modern African settings. But the use

of membranephones in Western Nigeria may soon die out if people are not encouraged to preserve it by training and promotion. For instance those who are interested in learning the dundun beats but do not belong to the 'Onilu' family should be encouraged to learn the art. More researches should also be done on membranephones in Western Nigeria to encourage interest in them.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

This unit discussed membranephones used in Western Nigeria. It looked at the features, uses and communication functions. It suggested how to enhance sustainability in the use of drums for information dissemination and entertainment in Western Nigeria.

## SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Name the various membranophones found in Western Nigeria.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Name two types of drums found in Western Nigeria.
2. Describe the two drums named.
3. Discuss the communication functions of one of the drums described.

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## **UNIT 5      AEROPHONES**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0    Introduction
- 2.0    Objectives
- 3.0    Main Content
  - 3.1    Whistles, Pipes and Flutes
    - 3.1.1   The Communication Functions of Whistles, Pipes and Flutes
- 4.0    Conclusion
- 5.0    Summary
- 6.0    Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0    References/Further Readings

### **1.0    INTRODUCTION**

This unit focuses on aerophones a group of instrumental communication. According to Ibagere (1994:91-91) aerophones:

...are musical instruments which produce sound as a result of the vibration of a column of air which is forced through a kind of pipe. It is the mouth that is usually used to force this air through the instrument. The aerophones include instruments such as the flute family, reed pipes, horns, trumpet and other such kinds.

### **2.0    OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit of study, students should be able to:

- list the types of aerophones drawing from their cultures
- discuss some types of aerophones found in their cultures
- discuss the communication functions of aerophones in African.

### **3.0    MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1    Whistles, Pipes and Flutes**

Whistling by forcing breath through closed lips communicate in Africa. Similarly, Akpabio (2003) stated that the use of instruments like deer horn, ivory tusk, gourd or reed pipes serve as devices and for the most parts as musical instruments in African communication. Similarly, drawing from the Ukwuani speaking people of Ndokwa West Local Government Area of Delta State, some examples are discussed below.

*Odu*, according to Ogwezzy (1999), *Odu* is the biggest of all. It is of wild animal large horn, e.g. Antelope.

***Odu Ossai*** is the herbalist flute. It is produced mainly from tips or fractions of elephant tusks. It could also be fashioned out of soft wooded trunks of plants. It is called *Odu Ossai* because it is used for shrine services.

***Opi*** is a slim gourd trumpet. According to Ogwezzy (1999), it is the widest traditional channel of communication since it could be heard at a distance of over four miles. It is the people's voice and news media.

***Ekpili or Eze-Anu*** is a trumpet made of elephant tusk. It is like hawk among the family of birds. So, it is among other instrumental sound producing appliances. It is their king honoured above all (Ogwezzy, 1999). It is usually beautifully designed by artists who carve them. They have two openings. The larger ones release sound into the air. The small ones are carved from elephant canines and just scarcely enough to admit the tips of the two lips, which are very firmly printed in the whole to force out sound and required messages. Only experts in it produce audible and intelligent messages from them, because they are difficult to operate. They are very precious possessions, which only monarchs and their children own. Those who possess them automatically are princes and so exempted from community labour or taxes of all kinds. Owners only carry them and occasionally blare them into the air to show that the community is at work.

***Ofili*** is operated by only skilled pipers who comfortably blow in air that force out required sounds and messages. Its messages are received well by actors to whom the message is directed.

The piper exerts greater force than others to produce the required sounds and messages. It sends the head reeling with burning desire to act in defiance of even death. It acts, serves in absence and defiance of *Ekpili or Eze-Anu*. It is a master of itself and can appear in any show that demands force and valliancy. It raises very high sensations in people.

***Ulete*** are flutes produced from good branches of Indian bamboos. The tail of a node of the branch is neatly cut off. The other end is also neatly cut off very close to the corked point. It usually has seven holes all on top and on straight line. However, the first hole is separated from the other six which are located closer to the open end. The piper's hole is located far from others to enable him blow or pipe comfortable into it for his desired music for social entertainments.

### 3.1.1 The Communication Functions of Whistles, Pipes and Flutes

**Odu** is the instrument used in summoning the Council of Elders' meeting - the council of the community. Early in the morning at about five-thirty (5:30am) on *Eke* days (native Sunday, of nine days interval); it is blown to invite everybody to the Council of Elders, chiefs and all. It could be blown also on emergency cases on ordinary days when something requiring the attention and action of the people such as sharing of meat got from hunting expedition or sharing fish from community lakes and when there is any emergency.

**Odu Ossai** produces only a kind of sharp sound to show the presence of a herbalist or a physician. When a physician visits "sacred places" such as cemeteries, grave yards, lakes, streams, rivers, evil forests etc, they blow it once on a sharp note to inform or warn spirits of the approach of people. Its use is believed to invoke spirits, warn them of the presence of lay people and invite them to the services of herbalists. It is one of herbalist's tools. It has a place among collections of ancestral shrines of rich families.

**Opi:** The uses of *Opi* are numerous but mainly for social purposes. It is used to summon people to community labour, hunting and festival camps and camp sites; and inform farmers that it is time for them to leave for home for security reasons; encourage, discourage, stop, warn and moderate a speaker in an audience. It calls the hunters together in emergency. It also coordinates the hunters and points the way to a lost hunter in the bush. At nights, this same medium sounds to ward off thieves. The whistle also summons hunters to meetings. It informs them of the time to go for game-hunting and when to return home.

It offers secret guide or advice to a speaker and people who understand its language. It also offers checks and balances on a speaker's time by secretly advising him on brevity.

It is also used during festivals to raise festival songs for the chief artists. The trumpeter uses it to direct and stimulate the artists and the whole dance. At times of emergencies, it is used to raise alarm and warn the people of possible danger. It is also of great value when searching for a missing person. The trumpeter uses it to call the person's name, alert him/her of people searching for him/her, and of the direction of the people. It is used to tell the person to indicate that he/she is alive and how to reach him/her.

Furthermore, *Opi* is very important to a chief on his initiation day both as an escort, information carrier or errand man in inviting people to the

ceremony. During the ceremony, it directs and tells the new initiate on how to take steps, and other actions during installation ceremonies (Ogwezzy, 1999).

One exclusive use of *Ekpili or Eze-Anu* is to raise alarm. To hear an alarm from *Ekpili or Eze-Anu* is to see yourself in a war front or search for a missing person. Therefore, to hear the blaring of an *Ekpili or Eze-Anu* is a warning to charge yourself with whatever would make you a valliant man. The only mild sound of *Ekpili or Eze-Anu* is heard when a king or a noble or chief is led- through the town and on ceremonial occasions. The owner never blows it except a dire need arises. Wilson (1998) specifically stated that the ivory tusk in *Ibibio land* is used to:

- settle quarrels;
- inform citizens of the death of kings, serious calamities; and grave occurrence;
- place injunctions on disputed land and property;
- offer final word on issues; and
- inform members of secrets societies members about important festivals.

In other parts of Nigeria, it is used among the:

- *Igbos* to greet kings while passing through their domain;
- *Yorubas* to communicate the greatness of a hunter for killing an elephant;
- *Igbos* to welcome new members by the *Nze* society; and
- *Annangs* of Akwa-Ibom State to welcome a new wife.

***Ofili*** is a piccolo. This is a sound producing appliance. It is less than a foot long and of a narrow hole. It is produced from wild animal horns such as buffalos and deers. Most of them are rugged, or twisted. The tips are usually sharp and pointed. Externally, it is rough but smooth internally. It has two openings. The main or larger hole is on the larger end where the horn was attached to the skull of its original owner- buffalo or deer. The second hole is cut to admit lips near the pointed end (Ogwezzy, 1999).

Apart from *Ofili* produced from horns of animals, there are others from Indian bamboo and wood. This type is very small but powerful. It is less than six inches long. The hole may hardly admit a candle stick. It has only an opening which is carved both sides like a “V”.

Also, among the Hausas, trumpets (*Kakaki*) are used in addition to drums (*Tambari*) to herald the Emir to public functions.

According to Akpabio (2003:19), “Cow horn is used to remove bad blood or poison and administer drugs among the *Hausa/Fulani* [in

Northern Nigeria]. It is also used in consuming palmwine as well as to announce the death of a great farmer”. It dictates tones in music and steps in dances. It tells actors of what to do, how to do, when to do and where to go. It carries and delivers all messages and information that any sound system is required. The sound from it is very high, harsh, inciting and most sensational.

*Ulete* serves in delivering messages like others, but mainly for entertainments, social and personal needs. This medium is blown like a trumpet. It is used by the age group to communicate communal work to members; while youths practised using it to call and invite their loved ones to their secret hide outs without parents knowing what is happening around them (Ogwezzy, 1999).

Mede (1998) stated that the flute referred to as *Imyar* is a phallic symbol and consequently played only by men in Tiv land. It is used to relay information on death, war, marriage or other feasts depending on the tune played. Wilson (1998: 35-36) stated that it is used for praise singing and at funeral of members of *Ebre* society in Akwa-Ibom and Cross-River States); during the installation of *Emirs* and marriages in Northern Nigeria; in announcing *Ogun* festival in Ondo town (a town in Ondo State, Nigeria); and to direct *Ojomu* during new yam festival in *Yorubaland*.

Summarising the functions of aerophones, Doob (1966:100) and Wilson (1998:34) stated that these instruments transmit messages during skirmishes and wars.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Aerophones produce sounds as a result of vibrations drawn from the air to produce the sounds. The player must have enough energy to produce intended sounds; and the skilfulness required, requires training and practice. They are used to entertain, summon people to action at work or war.

In *Ukwuani*, *Ekpili*, *Ulete* and *Ofili* are sensational. They are like earth moving machines. They move men to dare the devil, vault into battle fronts, rush at foes and their guns as if, they are clamping at games on a hunting ground. They set the heart and blood high at war, love and entertainment. Their sounds, if not for entertainments send women and children scampering into their rooms while the men dress up and dash away to clatter swords, cutlasses and embrace bullets on the fields of valour.



## 5.0 SUMMARY

This unit presented aerophones. It looked at the types, features and their communication functions.

### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

List the types of aerophones discussed in this unit.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. List two types of aerophones in your culture.
2. Discuss the communication functions of the two types of aerophones found in your culture, which you listed in (ii) above.

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## **MODULE 6        DEMONSTRATIVE CHANNELS**

Unit 1	The Concept of Demonstrative Communication
Unit 2	Music
Unit 3	Dance and Song
Unit 4	Poetry, Chants and Incantations
Unit 5	Signals, Signs and Symbolography

### **UNIT 1        THE CONCEPT OF DEMONSTRATIVE COMMUNICATION**

#### **CONTENTS**

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Demonstrative Communication: Types and Examples
3.2	Functions of Demonstrative Communication
3.3	Music, Dance and Symbolography Differentiated
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Readings

#### **1.0    INTRODUCTION**

This unit focuses on demonstrative communication. Demonstrative devices are part of items used for communication in traditional African society. They are part of the socio-cultural heritage of Africa.

#### **2.0    OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit of study, students should be able to:

- list the various types of demonstrative communication devices
- discuss the types of demonstrative communication drawing from their cultures
- discuss the communication functions of demonstrative communication devices

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Demonstrative Communication: Types and Examples

Although, Akpabio (2003) stated that there are two main types of demonstrative communication – music and signals, this author is of the view that dance should be included. As certain dance steps communicate as well. So, for our classification, we should adopt music and dance. The examples would now include music, dance and songs.

Again, this author is of the view that instead of signals alone, signs should be included as certain signs communicate as well. So, for our classification, we adopted Signals and symbology. Hence, we have three classifications.

It is important to state here that Wilson (1998:27) grouped symbology under instrumentals, but this author differs on that hence it has been grouped under demonstratives. Also some examples Wilson (1998) gave include decorated bamboo rino *nsibidi*, tattoo, and chalk marks. This author tends to differ also. She sees tattoo and chalk marks as visual forms of communication. Furthermore, the list of what constitutes symbology here was based on Ibagere (1994) grouping. However, this author also differs with Ibagere (1994) grouping and accepted smoke, flames, ashes, and knots under symbology, but transferred the rest of Ibagere (1994) list under symbology to floral a sub-group under iconographic communication.

##### (a) Music and Dance – examples

- Music
- Dance
- Songs/ Coral and entertainment music
- Poetry, Chant and Incantations

##### Signal and Signs-examples

- Canon/Gun shots
- Whistle call
- Camp fire
- Road Blocks
- Mark on roads

##### C) Symbology-examples

- Smoke
- Flame
- Ashes
- Knots
- Marks on trees
- Grasses and leaves tied in certain ways
- Plantain sucker planted upside down
- Destruction of growing crops
- Palm filled with sand

### **3.2 Functions of Demonstrative Communication**

Demonstrative communication devices used in Africa perform different functions depending on the cultural context. This would be discussed in detail in subsequent units in this module.

### **3.3 Music, Dance and Symbolography Differentiated**

There are differences between music and symbolography; and dance and symbolography. Although dance and music can be used to symbolise things and events, symbolography is different from dance because dance is human construct, done by human beings. Similarly it is different from music in that music is instantaneous, but symbolography sometimes might register the message at a later period after it has been conveyed (Ibagere, 1994).

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

This unit has focused on demonstrative communication and argued that signs should be included in the category of signals in African communication devices; and also added a third group - symbolography. So, it explored the three types of demonstrative communication.

### **5.0 Summary**

This unit discussed demonstrative communication, types and examples. Essentially three types were discussed. A differentiation of music, dance and symbolography wrapped up the unit.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

List the types of demonstrative communication discussed in this unit.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Drawing examples from what obtains in your culture, list ten types of demonstrative communication devices.
2. Discuss any two of them.

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## UNIT 2 MUSIC

## CONTENTS

1.0	Introudction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Music
3.1.1	The Communication Functions of Music
3.1.2	The Uses of Music
3.1.2.1	Religious Worship/Festivals
3.1.2.2	War
3.1.2.3	Celebrations
3.1.2.4	Ceremonies
3.1.2.5	Vengeance
3.1.3	The Musician as a Communicator
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Readings

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit focuses on music, a demonstrative communication device. According to Ibagere (1994:90), music is quite an important mode of communication in the cultural milieu of Africans, deriving its significance mostly from its entertainment value. Nobody hates music [at least everyone likes a brand of music].It most certainly attracts attention as soon as it manifests

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit of study, students should be able to:

- define music
- outline the communication functions of music
- explain the role of the musician as a communicator.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 Music

Before the advent of the current trends in communication technology, people all over the world have their indigenous means of communication and entertainment. Though these means of communication may not necessarily be efficient in terms of reaching a large audience, they are no doubt effective; one of such medium of

communication and entertainment is music.

The new *Lexicon Webster's Dictionary* (1972) defined music as “The art of giving structural form and rhythmic pattern to combinations of sound produced instrumentally or orally. Also writing on music, Bunhart (1995) stated that “music is sound arranged into pleasing or interesting patterns. It forms an important part of many cultural and social activities. People use music to express feeling and ideas. Music also serves to entertain and relax”.

Music is a basic form of African communication. Music is defined as “the art or science of combining vocal or instrumental sounds (or both) to produce beauty of form, harmony and expression of emotion.” (Pearsall, 1999:940); while Hornby (1984:772) defines Music as the “art of making pleasing combinations of sounds in rhythm harmony and counterpoint”. This means that music does not only consist of songs but other accompaniments (sounds, lyrics, etc) that go along with the human voice. This definition becomes very important when one considers that various instruments used in African music can convey different messages, even when a combination of instruments is used, it also conveys a message. So, music may be seen as well structured an organised patterns and processes aim at achieving a specific objective. It has a universal language of its own and it is tradition based. According to Ibagere (1994:90):

Music could be referred to as the melodic expression of feelings in sound. This expression is done in harmony. Because of its nature, music is divided into a number of sub-groups through which Africans communicate. The main feature of this mode is immediacy. Although, it can also be used to communicate with someone who is remote from the source (like symbology), it is imperative that the receiver of the message being sent must hear the sound before he would be able to respond to it appropriately

### **3.1.1 The Communication Functions of Music**

From the ancient times, music has been an important aspect of human life. The communication value of music is however more apparent in Africa where music forms a very important part of their rich cultural heritage. The low level of development in the continent, which makes many of modern media of communication inaccessible to many Africans, is failure to promote African forms of communication of which music is an important medium. In various parts of Nigeria, music is used to transmit the cultural values of the society. Hence, it is passed on from generation to generation.

Although the important role of music is to entertain people all over the

world, use music as a medium of communication to achieve different aims both negative and positive. Music as a medium of communication is used to pass on information to listeners and also to give instructions on various aspects of human life. It is used to pass on messages that could have easily been forgotten if given by words of mouth. For example, a group of musicians in the USA formed a group in the early 80s under the auspices of “United Support of Artists for Africa” to release an album, on the need for unity among the different races of the world and particularly to help war victims in Africa with the funds realised. Similar effort was made in Nigeria under the leadership of King Sunny Ade, a foremost *Yoruba Juju* musician. The song was calling for unity among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria (Fola, 1998). So, in Africa, music is a potent means of disseminating information. Another example is “Choice” a duet by King Sunny Ade and Onyeka Onwenu was used to promote family planning in Nigeria.

Again, music provides a veritable source of information and communication. Music to both resident and itinerant groups/individuals entertains, educates, instructs, rebukes, and celebrates life at birth and death. It can be combined with other media such as poetry, using it to convey meaning. Music is used to encourage people to work; lull children to sleep; praise the living and the dead; and even as it is believed in Africa, aids the passage of the dead. Music can be used as a double edged sword to promote peace and war; forge a link between past and present; forge national unity; and sensitise the society and mobilise people for development. Thus, could be used to promote family planning, hard work, honesty, accountability, transparency, and the prevention of HIV transmission. Music could take the form of grapevine stories to alert the people on development planned for them (Wilson, 1998:41). According to Akpabio (2003:20), music has been used even in “modern setting to aid the liberation struggle (Lucky Dube, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Sonny Okosun and other artists) address inequities in society, talk about the virtue of love, relationship and a myriad of other uses”. So, African music is not all about “I love you” or “Nigeria *Jagajaga*”! As Ibagere (1994:90-91) puts it:

Although, like dance, music could be considered simply an art for its own sake, the fact remains that the functional aspect of it in Africa pantheon is of great symbolic significance. One has to be conversant with the cultural background of music before one can actually appreciate its beauty as well as understand the message it passes across and be actually affected by it

### 3.1.2 The Uses of Music



Having looked at the communication functions of music generally, it is important to look at the various occasions and purposes for the use of music. Music is used for various reasons and in sundry places. Generally, people play music during ceremonies, at work, during personal and social activities. In Africa, music is used for different occasions and purposes - it is used during religious worship/festivals, wars, peace time, celebrations/ceremonies (marriage, christening, house warming, chieftaincy, burial, etc) and as an instrument of vengeance by ways of sarcasm or euphemism.

### **3.1.2.1 Religious Worship/Festivals**

Before the advent of Christianity and Islam in Africa, Africans were deeply rooted in African Traditional Religion (ATR). They worshipped different gods. Fola (1998) reported that there are 201 gods in Yoruba land and worshippers of each of them are very devoted. Several gods such as *Ogun, Sango, Oya, Obatala etc* are worshipped in different parts of Yoruba land. This might explain why there are many shrines located in virtually every part of Yoruba towns and villages; hence sacrifices and festivals are important part of life of a traditional Yoruba. Music plays important roles in these festivals. In fact, many of such festivals such as *Osun Osogbo* Festival are more like carnivals. Fola (1998) argued that music was used to announce the beginning of major festivals in most Yoruba communities. He stated that there were usually different drum and drumbeats for announcing each festival. Music was also normally used to herald new seasons. Thus, music can be said to perform additional role of time keeping for the predominantly rural people who have no access to modern day calendar and time keeping facilities.

### **3.1.2.2 War**

In the past and even at present, many Africans, ethnic groups and kingdoms fought various wars to prevent secession and maintain their existence as a single kingdom, prevent incursion of enemy kingdoms into their territories, and conquer places and people. Before going to war, music was used to mobilise local warriors into action. The musicians sing their praises extolling their past achievements, as well as the achievements of their progenitors by singing their *Oriki* (Yoruba term for praise name). On hearing their *Oriki*, the warriors were usually charged and propelled into action because they would like to justify the honour accorded to them. This even goes on during the actual war to encourage them to fight gallantly until they win. On return from such wars and for the party that won, it is celebration galore and music was on hand; hero warriors were celebrated and musicians were always at

hand to eulogise them.

### **3.1.2.3 Celebrations**

Celebration is part of African culture and Africans enjoy celebrating. Africans celebrate after new birth; during house warming, chieftaincy, marriages; and when joining a new age group amongst others. Essentially, any outstanding achievement in life of an individual calls for celebration in Africa. Relatives, friends and well wishers are normally on hand to celebrate and rejoice with the celebrant. Such occasions are characterised by eating, drinking, singing, dancing, donating and rejoicing. It is rare to have a celebration in Africa without music to entertain guests.

### **3.1.2.4 Ceremonies**

There are three most important ceremonies in the life of every African and because of their significances; they are usually celebrated either flamboyantly or conservatively. These are the christening of children, weddings and funerals. Essentially, these three events in the life of an African do not go unmarked.

Parents of new born children normally invite people to christening ceremonies and usually music is used to entertain people, praise, glorify and thank God for the gift of children. Also, at the time a person is getting married, music plays important roles. Apart from playing music to dance and celebrate, the new couple is given several instructions to guide them in their married life through music in addition to the use of words. Fola (1998) argued that new couples are more likely to remember the instructions passed through songs than the ones merely given by words. Again during funeral ceremonies, music is used to herald departed to the grave. The music used to mourn a dead person is known as a dirge. The type of music depends largely on the age of the deceased. If it is a young person that is being buried, they are usually emotional dirges that made most of the people present at the ceremony to weep. However, if the deceased is an aged person, it is usually a form of celebration, marked mainly by the deceased family flaunting his/her wealth.

### **3.1.2.5 Vengeance**

Just as music can be used to honour and praise, music is still being used among the Yoruba as instrument of vengeance. The type of music is usually satire, to abuse a known or perceived adversary. The negative side of the known or perceived adversary is highlighted through music to humiliate and disgrace, knowing that adversary cannot do anything

because of the kind of immunity the musician enjoys, which prevents him from being punished for what he/she sang.

### **3.1.3 The Musician as a Communicator**

Before the advent of the mass media, music served as a means of transmitting messages, especially those with long-term objectives. Prior to now, music was not regarded as a profession in many African countries; hence many parents either frowned or tried to discourage anyone who attempted to make a living out of it. Musicians were regarded as lazy beggars. Many parents would not willingly give out their daughters in marriage to musicians because of their thinking that musicians are not responsible enough to be in-laws (Fola, 1998). However, they were accepted in the society as people who can offer solutions to some societal problems. They provided entertainment for relaxation and leisure; addressed issues concerning the welfare of the society, like propagating community development programmes through their music; and address the excesses of some individuals in the society without fear of reprimand through satirical music. So, it might be argued that musicians in the past were not seen as professionals nor music regarded as a profession, nevertheless, the musician was accepted as a communicator, with the ability to get people's attention easily through his art.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

One very major demonstrative communication form is music. It is very powerful in conveying indigenous messages from generation to generation. It has wide applications and serves as a means of public education. It cuts across barriers and can be used for bad and good. It can be used to educate, praise, entertain or as satire. It is a potent medium for communicating development. It accords musicians some form of immunity. They can satirise dignitaries and groups without getting into trouble. They can be used as grapevine channels to convey information about events being planned for the people. It has the versatility of unlimited reach in terms of capacity to reach people. Music can preach for or against a cause. It requires some form of training to be a musician and it is now becoming a lucrative business, especially in the strictly indigenous music with indigenous instruments. The indigenous music is not outdated and can incorporate even the modern forms of instruments as currently happening in Nigeria as typical with modern church choirs.

So, music is a universal medium that cuts across the barriers of race, religion or gender. It is particularly so among Africans with their rich cultural heritage, in which music plays a major role through its ability to penetrate into the hearts of people. Hence, African music can be used as a medium of transmitting information to Africans, especially the rural

folks. From the above, it is obvious that music performs some unique communication functions in Africa.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

This unit defined music, presented the communication functions of music, uses of music and the musician as a communicator.

## SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What is music?

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. List five uses of music.
2. Explain two uses of music.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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## UNIT 3 DANCE AND SONG

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Dance
    - 3.1.1 The Usage Occasion and Communication Functions of Dance
    - 3.1.2 Types of Dance
      - 3.1.2.1 Okuma dance
  - 3.2 Song (*Amo in Tiv; and Ebu in Ukwuani*)
    - 3.2.1 The Communication Functions of Song
    - 3.2.2 Types of Song
      - 3.2.2.1 Frustration and Sorrow
      - 3.2.2.2 Praise
      - 3.2.2.3 Lullaby
      - 3.2.2.4 Dirge
      - 3.2.2.5 Worship
      - 3.2.2.6 Unity
      - 3.2.2.7 Work Song
      - 3.2.2.8 Satire
      - 3.2.2.9 Love Song
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit focuses on dance and song as potent demonstrative channels of communication.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit of study, students should be able to:

- define dance
- outline the communication functions of dance drawing from African culture
- explain types of dance drawing from their culture
- explain the concept of song
- outline the communication functions of song drawing from African culture
- explain types of song drawing from African culture.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Dance**

According to Ibagere (1994:88):

...dance could be defined as the rhythmic movement of the body in time and space. In the artistic sense, dance could be considered in terms and movement created just for its own sake, even above its interest of meaning. But dance as a mode of communication must be considered against the backdrop of what meaning it connotes to its viewers (Ibagere, 1994:88)

In Africa, dance is an important mode of communication among a people because different dances connote different things. Dance involves the movement of the body, which is the basic material in time and space. So, dance is an art. The regularity of the movement (times) and the design of movements (use of space and steps) combine to give it meaning. Thus in Africa, meanings are attributed to different dances whenever they are performed. In this way, a dance becomes a symbol when completed.

Dance as a mode of communication in African societies is culture specific. So, one has to be literate in the culture of the source of dance to understand what the dance is communicating. Again, Ibagere (1994:89-90) capture it thus:

...one has to be conversant with the particular culture in which the dance is situated to make for proper understanding of the movements as well as grasp what the dance symbolizes at the end. Otherwise, one could misinterpret the dance and use its message to serve another purpose. While, then, a particular dance may be meant to symbolize a particular attribute of people (say, bravery), an ignorant observer might contemplate such a dance as purely for entertainment

##### **3.1.1 The Usage Occasion and Communication Functions of Dance**

Ibagere (1994:88-89) stated that:

In Africa, dances of social significance are usually functional in the sense of their cultural belonging, helping in various ways to project the particular culture in which they are situated....In all societies, dance is an expression of social organisations in that it differentiates and defines the roles of individuals. Social units like age groups as well as different guilds express their identity and cohesion in dance. Such dances are seen

at occasions of social significance and celebration...There are, thus, dances, done to symbolize preparations for war, to celebrate the birth of a baby, to bury the dead, to celebrate victory over an enemy as well as to signify failure [other successes and seasons]

The sound of *Okuma* is a dull, bellowing sensation during mourning ceremonies of heroes and *Ikenge* festivals. The music tells of heroism, valiancy and intrepidity. Only those who could brave the night could foot-touch the drum or ascend it. No coward, however rich, can dare it. The dance is only for the brave. However, including women people could join the dance at a distance. Women according to Ogwezzy (1999) enjoy the dance more because it enables them understand the men with whom they live. They feel happy, proud and gay that their men and sons belong to the gallant daring band. However, the show is becoming obsolete as education and religion switch people's reasoning to other progressive aspects of life.

*Ukele* dance is a show of villainy. *Ukele* dance surrenders to *Okuma* dance when the great stage is set. *Ukele* dance is a warn up for *Okuma* dance in action and sanctity.

Thus dance can be likened to modern mass media which have different uses and gratification to different media audiences. Furthermore, dance as a mode of communication, helps to promote and emphasise the cultural identity of a people. It is usually combined with music which dictates pace and regularity of the movement, and also directs change to another movement.

According to Ibagere (1994:89), "In most communities, there are special dances to celebrate different occasions such as marriage, funerals and other life events; and the attributes proper to the dance as well as attitudes suitable to the occasions are expressed in these dances". Below some dances among the Ukwauni speaking people of Ndokwa West Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria are presented.

### **3.1.2 Types of Dance**

#### **3.1.2.1 Okuma dance**

*Okuma* dance is peculiar to an in-group of people of all ages. When its' awe striking music sounds, children and women tend to scamper away for fear of many things. The make ups of the drum and chaining of it in *Okuma* house, make it mre awful and dreadful. It comes out only during *ikenga* festivals and when war heroes die.

Before the *Okuma* dance, other small drums such as *Ukele* play



supporting shows. For true picture of *Ukele* dance, the escort of *okuma*, swords and cutlasses clatter in the air, while gun shots tear same at intervals. All the appliances speak and chant different aspects of wild life songs and by the forces and realism in their resonances, people bare their true wild life and behaviour of our past. The *ke kpum ke; tu kukpum; kenge kenge; kenkeg ge;* sounds of the drums, the *wa-a-a –wa-wa* blaring of elephant tusk and gourd trumpets, the *fi-li-li fior* – of piccolos rent air with sensations. The clattering of swords and cutlasses make the whole show awful and teasing. All combine to incite men to forget that life has no duplicate. The various sounds pierce into people's hearts. At peak, the people are seen sizzling with sensation like gladiators at show.

Eagle feathers are used to adorn men's heads, while amulets sink into their arms depicting high emotional tensions in them. During the dance, queer cries from the men frighten women and some men to run back and regroup again. It is dare the devil dance.

### **3.2 Song (*Amo in Tiv; and Ebu in Ukwuani*)**

According to Ibagere (1994:84) a song is “couched in spoken language and expressed melodiously in musical succession articulately”. It is the lyric in music and used in particular instance. It is a potent channel of communication in Africa.

#### **3.2.1 The Communication Functions of Song**

In looking at the functions of song, Wilson (1998:41) stated that “in some traditional societies, grapevine stories are presented in songs by cultural groups and other social groups”. Wilson (1998:41) further stated that itinerant music entertainment groups use satire, criticism, moralisation, praise, symbolism, didacticism, suggestion and labelling to communicate with individuals, groups and society at large. Such groups might include the *Akata*, *Ekpo*, and age grades in Akwa-Ibom and Cross River States. Also, gossips about the rich and proud are presented in the lucid details in music.

Again, Mython (1983:86) submitted that “songs can teach, can reinforce the norms of the society and can often provide reassurance of order and continuity in confused and troubled times”. So, songs communicate a nexus of messages, some communicate general philosophies and principles of life while some pass specific messages to specific people. Majority of the songs, however, are for entertainment.

According to Ibagere (1994:85), song most of the time when combined with music is when the entertainment functions is most apt. He further

argued that song as part of culture emphasises social organisations depending on how it is used as a particular social group can express its identity by its communication through particular songs. So, a song is usually functional in the social context of communication i.e. most important songs relate to occasions of traditional significance. As Oreh (1980) asserted, songs can be used for mourning, warring, birth and death. They also serve to commemorate, encourage, praise and worship. For instance, anybody approaching a funeral party does not need to be told that somebody had died as funeral songs convey a motif of sorrow, loss, search, anger and grief.

Also, songs and dances communicate the birth of a new born baby. They communicate initiations, marriages and deaths. They also express, impart and store traditions. In them culture is accentuated. Singing and dancing are also expressions of joy, happiness, achievements, cohesion and valour.

Song is an important mode of communication in Africa because it can perform all the functions of communication at the same time. Song can provide information on social and economic problems and advice on ways of solving such problems. Essentially, various songs are used to express different experiences. Hence there are songs to express sorrow, joy, welcome, rejection, and so on. In this way the culture of a people is preserved. So, in African communication, songs have inherent meaning in them. This might account for why different types of songs are sung at different occasions. Thus songs for social ceremonies like marriage, chieftaincy and christening differ from those that are peculiar to traditional festivals. There are also those that are meant for mobilising people either for war or communal works; even there are abusive ones which are the stock in trade of people in dispute or women rivals. Since different types of songs are used to communicate different messages at different times. Generally, songs in Africa are meant to express the inner feeling of the singer – joy, sorrow, reflections of the past and entertainment amongst others. The types of songs are derived from what they express.

### **3.2.2 Types of Song**

Some songs are for mourning, happy celebrations, while other are for title installation, praise, show of emotions and so on. Songs contain a great deal of information and many songs are essentially used to pass on information to people. Lyrics of such songs are composed for special occasions. They are categorised based on the meanings they portray.

### **3.2.2.1 Frustration and Sorrow**

Among the *Binis* in Edo State, Nigeria, a woman beaten by her husband expresses her frustration in sorrowful songs.

### **3.2.2.2 Praise**

Praise songs are used for praising the Almighty God. They are sometimes composed for respected members of the society and sung at occasions. According to Akpabio (2003:3), they are “usually directed at individuals or gods based on reasons ranging from victory in war, military prowess, coronation ceremonies, bountiful harvest, [highlight virtues of love, kindness, humility] or at inspiration to carry out a task”. Praise songs generally eulogies and shower encomiums – praise heroic acts, encourage good deeds in the community.

### **3.2.2.3 Lullaby**

Lullabies are soft songs with sweet lyrics, which appeal to babies and meant to pacify them. Mothers and caregivers use them to rock babies to sleep. Essentially, they are meant to lull babies to sleep or sooth and stop them from crying. The songs’ rhythmic nature or the promises contained in their lull are intended to send babies to sleep (Akpabio, 2003).

### **3.2.2.4 Dirge**

Sung at funerals of loved ones and is believed to enhance a smooth passage to the world beyond (Akpabio, 2003). It is also meant to encourage the deceased family and friends, to pray God to give them the fortitude to bear the loss.

### **3.2.2.5 Worship**

Songs meant to tune the soul of man to the Almighty God in worship. It is meant to lift the soul from present problems, to give thanks to God.

### **3.2.2.6 Unity**

Songs composed to show and promote togetherness, for instance, the national anthem, church anthems and other songs by musicians.

### **3.2.2.7 Work Song**

Work songs are meant to ginger workers. They are used to energise, boost workers morale, reduce weariness and resist fatigue. According to Akpabio (2003) it is perhaps meant to facilitate the work process and

commonly sung to encourage community members doing menial jobs or facilitate the work process. The example of work song presented below is by E. C. Arinze an Eastern Nigerian Highlife musician during the celebration of Sir Victor Uwaifo 50 years in the entertainment industry as a musician by Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2007 on an NTA live programme tagged “NTA Celebrates Sir Victor Uwaifo”. Below is the song:

Nike Nike}	with strength, with strength
Kai jia lu olu} twice	Is what we use to work
Ndalunu Nike Nike}	Well done, keep fit
Luba Luba Luba	Work Work Work
Nike Nike	Strength Strength
Kai jia lu olu	Is what we use to work
Ndalunu Nike Nike	Well done, keep fit

### 3.2.2.8 Satire

Done to criticise someone or people especially those in authority. It is used to address social problems so as to cause a positive change in society. Essentially, it is used to address inequalities in the society, warn or castigate a bad act/wrong doing in order to free and liberate the people from inhuman, authoritarian and apartheid governments amongst others. Proponent of this type of song is the Late Fela Anikulapo Kuti and a contemporary example is African China who sang:

...If you be senator, senate us well  
 ...If you be governor, govern us well  
 ...If you be police, police well well no dey take bribe

It is also done by one to another who are quarrelling or because of hatred to make one of the parties feel bad. It is very common in polygamous homes among rivals.

### 3.2.2.9 Love Song

Used to express emotional feelings towards a loved one commonly used by lovers. It is also used by parents for their children, vice versa. E.g. “Sweet mother I no go forget you for the suffer when you suffer for me...”

”Nne bu nne- Arize.”

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit has focused on dance and song as channels of demonstrative communication. It argued that dance as a mode of communication in African societies is culture specific. So, one has to be literate in the culture of the source to understand what a dance is communicating.

It posited that songs communicate a nexus of messages, some communicate general philosophies and principles of life while some pass specific messages to specific people. Majority of the songs, however, are for entertainment.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

This unit discussed dance and song as channels of demonstrative communication. It looked at the types, occasion of usage, and the communication functions of dance using examples.

It also looked at the types, occasion of usage, and the communication functions of song using examples.

## SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Define dance.
2. List the types of song discussed in this unit.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Drawing from what obtains in your culture, discuss the communication functions dance.
- 2.a. Drawing examples from what obtains in your culture; write down songs under five out of the nine types of songs listed.
- b. Translate the songs you wrote down into English Language

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## **UNIT 4 POETRY, CHANT AND INCANTATION**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Poetry, Chant and Incantations
    - 3.1.1 Poetry
    - 3.1.2 The Usage Occasion and Communication functions of Poetry
  - 3.2 Chants and Incantations
    - 3.2.1 The Usage Occasions and Communication functions of Chants and Incantations
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This unit focuses on poetry, chant and incantation, as demonstrative communication channel.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit of study, students should be able to:

- define poetry, chant and incantation
- outline usage occasions for poetry, chant and incantation
- explain the communication functions of poetry, chant and incantation
- distinguish between chants and incantation

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Poetry, Chant and Incantations**

##### **3.1.1 Poetry**

Poetry in whatever language is a respected literary genre. Poetry is an important mode of communication in Africa. Poetry is mostly used for entertainment. This does not presuppose that all poetry in traditional African societies is sung, although Mython (1983:86) erroneously believes that “poetry tends to be chanted or sung” in Zambia where he conducted his study.

Poetry is usually regarded as “emotions recollected in tranquillity [tranquil moment]” because of its “high order” as demanded of the poet and audience. According to Ibagere (1994:85), poetry is language with the most connotative meaning. He asserted:

This is a beautiful construction of spoken words about something, an experience, people or the society itself in the best ways. This rendered in the most concise and most connotative of ways. Poetry is usually in verse and the words used are arranged differently from ordinary everyday usage. Most times, emphasis is on sound of words as well as the connotative meaning as distinct from the denotative meaning

### **3.1.2 The Usage Occasion and Communication functions of Poetry**

In Africa, poetry is used at different occasions, especially those of social significance. Poetry is mostly used for entertainment. It could be rendered in form of praise singing as in Hausa/Fulani culture. Among the Yorubas *Ewi* (oral poetry) is often used to inform, eulogise achievements, guide individuals through the murky waters of the world’s hazardous terrain, to celebrate the inexorable link between life and death and to satirise unacceptable behaviours and practices. Again, because of its entertainment, intellectual and instructional values, oral poetry can be laden with and used to convey development information.

## **3.2 Chants and Incantations**

According to Ibagere (1994:86), chants and incantations are closely related to poetry.

Chants are special kinds of songs. The difference between a song and a chant is that while a song is usually done articulately in musical succession, a chant may not. Incantations (emphasis mine) are rendered significantly in praise or worship. Incantation, like poetry, is a specially constructed language, also having connotative meaning

### **3.2.1 The Usage Occasions and Communication functions of Chants and Incantations**

Chants and incantations could be used at occasions of social significance, like occasions designed to provide entertainment and during worship.

Depending on the circumstance, incantation could be used to serve different purposes. In religious worship, it could be used as an inducement to get into character or used to commune with extra-



terrestrial forces. In this regard, it falls under the esoteric mode of communication (Ibagere, 1994:86)

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

This unit has focused on poetry, chants and incantations as channels of demonstrative communication. It stated that they can be used at occasions of social significance.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

This unit discussed poetry, chants and incantations as channels of demonstrative communication. It delved into the usage occasion and communication functions.

#### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What is poetry?

#### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

Distinguish between chants and incantations.

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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### **UNIT 5 SIGNALS, SIGNS AND SYMBOLOGY**

## CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	Signals
3.1.1	Types of Signals: An Example
3.1.2	The Communication Functions of Canon/Gun Shots Signals
3.1.3	Signals and Mass Communication: What Linkages
3.2	Signs
3.2.1	Types of Signs
3.3	Symbology
3.3.1	Symbology
3.3.1.1	Flames
3.3.1.2	Smoke
3.3.1.3	Vines and Ashes
3.3.1.4	Knots
3.3.1.5	The Staff of the Oba
3.3.1.6	Snail Shells and Palm-Fronds
3.3.1.7	A New Wrapper with a Hole
3.3.1.8	Grasses and Leaves Tied in Certain Forms
3.3.1.9	Palm Filled with Sand
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Readings

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit focuses on signals, signs, and symbology as types of demonstrative communication.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit of study, students should be able to:

- define signals, signs, and symbology
- outline the communication functions of some channels of signals, signs and symbology
- outline and describe some types of signals, signs, and symbology.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 Signals

Wilson (1998) stated that instrumental modes of communication produce sounds that signify or symbolise a communication event within the context of a specific setting. The sounds of different drums, flutes, gongs, etc are signals that communicate. So, some communication instruments apart from their various other functions serve as signals. Akpabio (2003:25) argued that “signals are often accompanied by oral or visual messages depending on the communication context”. Although, this is valid, depending on the communication context, this text restricted this sub-group of demonstrative devices to sounds that have specific functions and meaning in a given cultural context.

#### 3.1.1 Types of Signals: An Example

Canon/Gun Shots (*Tiam in Tiv; and Egbe in Ukwuani*): This is a type of explosive with its pointed base buried about two inches in the earth to produce heavy and far reaching sounds. The sound travels a distance of up to four kilometres (Mede, 1998).

#### 3.1.2 The Communication Functions of Canon/Gun Shots Signals

In examining the functions of signals for instance, canon shots are used to announce the arrival of an important guest into a community. They are also used to announce the death of an important personality and used during social ceremonies especially at the conferment of traditional chieftaincy titles (Ibagere, 1994).

Essentially, cannon or gun shots are also used to pass across information in Africa. Succinctly put, Ibagere (1994:87-88), stated that “Gunshots (canon) could be used to signify the death or funeral of a very important personality in the community, as well as to warn or draw attention to some danger in the forest”. According to Akpan (1977), canon shots are used in Erian village either separately or in combination with drums to announce the death of non-members of the church in the village.

According to Ogwezzy (1999), the use of canon shots for communication purposes in Africa is three fold. First, canon shots are used in welcoming important guest into town. This practice is reminiscent of the modern day 21 gun salute to visiting Heads of State and other important statesmen to another country. Canon shots used this way are meant as mark of respect or esteem for the visiting guest. However, unlike the 21 shots protocol among states, there is no conventional limit to the number of shots to be fired in traditional

setting.


Also, canon shots are fired to announce the death of important personalities in the town, especially those that traditionally belong to the family of valiant hunters, and important traditional chiefs. During the burial ceremonies of such people too, canon shots are fired as a mark of respect for the dead person and to tell people that burial rites are in progress (Ogwezzy, 1999). It is used to announce when to meet or assemble, depart at a particular time and place during funerals and chieftaincy installations.

Finally, canon shots are also used during social ceremonies, especially at the conferment of traditional chieftaincy titles on eminent sons and daughters of the town. The significance of firing canon shots at such ceremonies portrays the dignity and eminence of the person being conferred with the chieftaincy title. However, in some communities, the use of canon shots is not strictly confined to any particular person or family in *Efon Alaaye* community in Ondo State, Nigeria.

### 3.1.3 Signals and Mass Communication: What Linkages


In the modern day, there is a marriage of modern and African traditional communication signals, especially in the radio medium as it is used to announce time, closure for the day within the cultural context of the environment of operation. They are also used to announce programmes, which enhance identifications; such as time for women to dance round mock coffins and by the time mock coffins are inserted to the ground, canon or gun shots are blasted.

## 3.2 Signs

Signs mainly include marking of objects to give instructions, warnings and guides on the right ways to follow etc. Sometimes, roads are marked with signs on the way to follow or avoid. So signs are used to convey messages. Such signs are usually arrow (  ) and X indicating road to follow and road to avoid respectively (Ogwezzy, 1999).

### 3.2.1 Types of Signs

An Example and Its Communication Function

Mark on Roads: There are other symbols or marks used to communicate in Africa. Marks on roads with colours, earth, sticks or even mark with sharp strong pointed instruments like the Boys Scouts do. Prominent and popular among the people are arrows (  ) and X signs or marks along or by the road passed or used (Ogwezzy, 1999).

## 3.3 Symbolography

According to a British philosopher, Whitehead cited in Mede (1998), symbology are metaphors that include written and spoken language as well as visual objects, standing for some quality of reality that is enhanced in importance or value by the process of symbolising itself. This means that they are not languages, but the means by which ideas too obscure, dangerous or inconvenient to articulate in common languages are transmitted among a people who have common ways.

It entails the use of writing or representation. They are usually limited to a particular cultural milieu where they are used. Understanding any symbology comes from being part of the culture. “It is the use of certain objects or situations to symbolize something and elicit a particular response from whoever beholds the [sign or] object. It therefore depends on the ability of the beholder to ascertain the true meaning of the symbol before he can respond appropriately” (Ibagere, 1994:88).

Symbology includes such devices as placing objects in a particular way to convey meaning. For instance, certain fetish objects may be placed on a farm to convey the meaning that nobody else should enter (trespass) the farm except the owner...or somebody permitted.... (Ibagere, 1994: 87). So it involves other communication devices but do not involve human body. Some examples of symbology include flames, smoke, charcoal and ashes. The significance of symbology lies in its ability to ensure that communication takes place between individuals who may not be involved in the face-to-face relationship at that particular time. Africans have adopted the use of symbols in their communication systems and some types are discussed below.

### **3.3.1 Symbology**

#### **Types and Communication Functions**

Again Ibagere (1994:88) stated that symbology are also used in sending different messages. Some are used to scare people away from something, protect something from being tampered with and they are culture specific. So the impact depends on the target audience ability to understand and have the belief. So, they are also used to inform (educate) through the shape of objects used and colour of materials used. Symbology is used across African continent. There are many types of symbology understood and accepted among Africans. Below are some examples.

#### **3.3.1.1 Flames**

Bushes can be set on fire to inform people that there is trouble in that area.

### **3.3.1.2 Smoke**

Smoke can be made to inform people that someone is still in the farm.

### **3.3.1.3 Vines and Ashes**

Climbers or vines of a particular type *Olimagwor*. If spread across a gate or round a compound with ashes spread over and along them, tell of ignominy, calamity or a taboo that had occurred. That happens when a pregnant woman dies with a baby in womb or a person commits suicide or died suddenly in the bush. Such dead bodies are never buried within the town; rather they are carried or dragged to the evil forest, the burial ground. It is a declaration of a sad time, which lasts until relations of the deceased libate the land and the god of agriculture (*Ifejorku*). During the period the libation had not taken place, people remain indoors. They keep away from their farms. Anyone who faults the custom would have him/herself to blame.

### **3.3.1.4 Knots**

Knots are normally tied to symbolise certain things in certain cultures to beholders of the symbol.

### **3.3.1.5 The Staff of the Oba**

In Efon Alaaye town, it is believed that if *Opa Ileke* that is the beaded staff of the *Oba* is found on any piece of farmland, it denotes that the farmland is in dispute, so nobody cultivates or does any other thing on such land until the dispute is resolved.

### **3.3.1.6 Snail Shells and Palm-Fronds**

A combination of palm-fronds and snail shells hung at the entrance of any farm denote that trespass on the farmland is forbidden. Again, when such things are hung on crop or fruit trees like oranges; or even on a bunch of firewood; all such things must not be touched by unauthorised persons. The people respect it because of the general belief that whoever violates them, will be struck by the gods of the land with a terrible disease or visited with other calamities.

In Tiv, palm fronds around a farm (or orchard) indicate that one can

only take out of the fruit because one is hungry at that point. The fruits must not be taken away. Palm fronds are also used to direct strangers to the location of a wake keep (Mede, 1998).

### **3.3.1.7 A New Wrapper with a Hole**

According to Mede (1998), a new wrapper with a hole in the middle sent to the parents of a newly married woman by her groom means that the bride came defiled, resulting in the rejection of the deal.

### **3.3.1.8 Grasses and Leaves Tied in Certain Forms**

In Yoruba land, if farmers set out for their farms and agree to meet at an appointed place and time after the day's work. The first among the farmers to get to the spot leaves a leaf to signify his being to the spot and the time he left by the way of placing the leaf. Others will subsequently follow suit.

### **3.3.1.9 Palm Filled with Sand**

Someone with the palm filled with sand approaches his opponent and if the opponent hits the palm and the sand pours on the ground, it means the opponent has accepted the battle and they can commence fighting.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

This unit presented signals, signs and symbology. It concludes that understanding symbology is a function of being part of the culture that uses identified objects or situations to symbolize something and elicit a particular response from whoever beholds the object.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

This unit focused on three types of demonstrative communication devices and argued that signs should be included in the category of signals in African communication devices; and also added a third group - symbology. So, it explored the three types of demonstrative communication.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Define symbology.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Drawing examples from what obtains in your culture, list five types of symbology.
2. Describe two examples of symbology used in your community.

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