



THE KOLANUT RITUAL AS SPEECH EVENT IN SELECTED IGBO CULTURAL CEREMONIES

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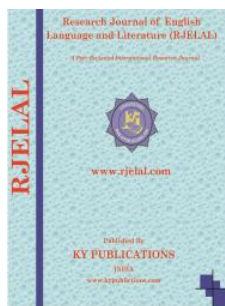
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ABSTRACT

This paper interrogates observed kolanut ritual in four different speech situations in the Igbo culture with the aim of finding out the unique significance of this nut in the discursive practices of the Igbo culture, why its presence engenders unique ways of talk, the speech acts prevalent in these utterances, what cultural factors motivate such language use in this ritual and how the kolanut ritual qualifies as a speech event. Applying Hymes' speaking model, Austin and Searle's speech acts, the paper looks at the different speech situations of traditional marriage, funeral preparation, naming ceremonies and casual meetings where the kolanut ritual as speech event heralds other speech events in these ceremonies. It was found that these different speech situations have different participants who enact different act sequences of promising, pronouncing, vowing, asserting, thanking, requesting, appealing and other acts that elicit different perlocutionary effects on the other participants and at times on supernatural partakers of these events. The paper concludes that the kolanut ritual is a powerful speech event that connects the living and the ancestors in the Igbo culture, and this ritual cannot be obliterated by even Christianity and other agents of civilization.

Keywords: kolanut ritual, speech event, SPEAKING grid, speech situations

Introduction

Every speech community is characterized by unique ways of speaking that are symbolically meaningful to that particular group within the broader spectrum of communicative behaviour. There are equally group-specific labels for communicative practices that index how a particular group attaches these symbolic meanings to certain cultural practices and artifacts. Since, according to Halliday (2), culture is an edifice of meanings, a conglomeration of all meaningful behaviour that

mark particular ways of seeing the world, it therefore provides a rich and productive grid for the study of language as a form of social practice.

The kolanut ritual in the Igbo culture is an age-long practice that is used to connect people, to show friendship and camaraderie, to welcome strangers, to connect the living with the dead and to mark important ceremonies. Without the breaking of this symbolic nut and every member partaking in the eating, no gathering in the Igbo culture is deemed to have been called to order. This

symbolizes that participants in the ritual have goodwill for one another, would have no intention of harming one another and also have some common sense of primordial affiliation towards one another. The nut is also used to invoke very powerful speech acts on the participants, is the mediator between the living and the dead and a vehicle for calling on the spirits of the ancestors for protection on the living. The performer of the ritual is therefore one who is very close to the ancestors, the eldest man (never a woman) who is approaching the status of the ancestors, and who possesses the power to invoke such powerful protective speech acts on the younger ones and such acts are also believed to fortify the community and the entire culture against impending physical and spiritual invasion.

The kolanut comes from a tree usually found in the tropical forests of West Africa. As a symbol of hospitality, respect and friendship, it is usually presented to guests at important social gatherings such as marriage ceremonies, funeral ceremonies, naming ceremonies and casual visits. Eruchalu (NP) itemized some of the purposes to which the kolanut can serve in the culture as follows: ushering in a new day by the head of the family or an elder in a group, welcoming guests in public gatherings like traditional marriages, naming ceremonies, funerals, weddings and so on, divination to enquire from the oracles and ancestors about the wellbeing of the living and the yet unborn, sacrifices and worship to the gods, ancestors and other supernatural beings, oath-taking and other such events. Some also use it for medicinal purposes, in the production of some beverages and soft drinks; it is believed to be the origin of the word "Cola" in some soft drinks.

The presentation and breaking of the kolanut may differ slightly in different parts of Igbo culture but the procedure is generally the same. The first stage is the presentation which is usually the prerogative of the host. The number of kolanuts presented may vary depending on the occasion, but can be as many as twenty, accompanied by the sauce (*okwaose*) or alligator pepper (*oseoji*) to go with the eating. The kola is presented to the oldest or the leader of the entourage who will pass the kola

around for everyone to see. To acknowledge that they have "seen" the kola, each male member touches the plate of kolanuts with their right hand and says, *ojeze di ezen'aka*, (the king's kolanut is in the king's hands), meaning that it is the prerogative of the host who presented the kolanut to break it. During the presentation of the kolanut, the elder will specifically tell the women in the delegation that they "should close their eyes" because the kolanut is not shown to women. This is an aspect of kolanut ritual that may be good candidate for gender studies.

After the presentation of the kolanut, the next stage is the breaking ritual. It is at this stage of the rites that a number of speech acts which we have identified in the study are more manifest. In some places, the eldest blesses the kola and gives the younger ones to break and distribute, while in others, the eldest does the blessing and the breaking. This is the most important part of the ritual. The oldest man, depending on whether he is a Christian or a traditionalist, says the prayers, or calls on the ancestors, the supernatural, the gods, to protect and bless the guests with long life, prosperity, wealth, fruits of the womb, protection against enemies and so on and so forth.

As members of the Igbo culture and also from personal communication with elders in the culture, the authors of this paper deduced that the number of lobes a kolanut has is very symbolically significant to the breaker. Anybody breaking the kolanut will always anticipate more lobes because the more the lobes, the more the blessings it brings to those who partake in its ritual. That is why the Igbo people prefer the *cola acuminata* (oji Igbo) over the *cola nitida* (ojiawusa/gworo). The former has two varieties – the dark-red and the yellowish-cream varieties. The yellowish-creamy variety of *cola acuminata* also called *ojiugois* usually scarcer than the dark-reddish one and called *ojindinze* (eaten mostly by titled men). Both varieties can have as many as six lobes. The latter, *cola nitida* always has only two lobes and so never presented for the breaking ritual. A one-lobed kolanut is regarded as an ill-omen; it is neither eaten by men nor by the gods. It is thrown away. The same ominous attribute is attached to a two-lobed kolanut, but it is not

thrown away, rather eaten by the *ndichie* (elders). That is why it is called *ojindichie*. That is also why the *cola nitida* (*ojiawusa*) which naturally has two lobes is not presented in traditional Igbo ceremonies. A three-lobed kolanut may be better than the other two, yet it is not complete, because it falls short of the numbers the Igbo people consider lucky. The Igbo people will always say *ihebian'ito, o to* ("when an issue gets to the third, it gets stuck") So three is a significant number in Igbo but not a lucky number.

When a kolanut has four lobes, participants in the ritual will clap and cheer because it represents three things: time chronology, reproduction and prosperity. In time chronology, it symbolizes the four market days of the Igbo week (*Eke, Ori, Afo, Nkwo*). It also symbolizes reproduction because children can only be born on the four market weeks (*omumu Eke, omumu Ori, omumu Afo, omumu Nkwo*). That is why the person who breaks the kolanut during marriage ceremonies will always pray: "give the couple *Eke, Ori, Afo, Nkwo* offspring". Lastly, it symbolizes prosperity. The word *ozuzu* meaning (accomplishment/fulfilment) is usually attached to the four market week. To pray for prosperity, the elder asks for *ozuzu Eke, ozuzu Ori, ozuzu Afo, ozuzu Nkwo*. So a four-lobed kolanut is more common than the others and is the most preferred. When there are five or six lobes, they are exceptional and additional blessings and are highly acceptable.

The kolanut is therefore not an ordinary nut in the Igbo culture. It is highly ritualized. It is a nut imbued with both physical and supernatural powers, and performative utterances during the breaking ritual are believed to possess the potency of spiritual preservation. It is on these utterances that the present research zeroes in, with the aim of finding out the unique significance of this nut in the discursive practices of the Igbo culture, why its presence engenders unique ways of talk, the speech acts prevalent in these utterances, what cultural factors motivate such language use in this ritual, how the kolanut ritual qualifies as a speech event and how the speaking grid can be applied to the kolanut ritual as a speech event.

Theoretical bases

A number of concepts come to mind in this work. Anchored in the theoretical frameworks of ethnography of communication (earlier, ethnography of speaking) and speech acts, the work focuses on how different cultures represent different speech communities with different speech situations, speech styles, speech events and speech acts. These five are the taxonomy or units of social communication with the speech event as a minimal unit of analysis in the framework.

Ethnography of speaking/communication is championed by Dell Hymes whose series of papers written in 1960s and 1970s were later collected in his 1974 *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach* (Schiffrin 138). His ideas may be traced historically to the anthropologists and linguists of the 20th century – Malinowski, Franz Boas, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf – the first two being the pioneers in recognizing the influence of the context of culture and the context of situation in the study of language and communication. Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf's linguistic and cultural relativity also provide the foundational theoretical framework for ethnography of speaking (Schiffrin 138).

Hymes sees communication as an interface between linguistics and anthropology but argues that these two areas do not give adequate attention to how people may share the same linguistic knowledge but contextualize the world in different ways. He flaws Chomsky's linguistic competence of the ideal speaker hearer which he claims is too narrow to account for why a particular utterance and not the other is appropriate in a particular situation. To fill this lacuna, Hymes proposed what he termed "communicative competence" – knowledge governing appropriateness in the use of grammar, which includes not only knowledge of abstract linguistic rules but also knowledge as to when to speak, when not to speak, how, where, why and in what manner. Communicative competence includes the ability to use language in concrete situations in everyday life, ability to engage in conversation, to shop in a store, to interview, (and

be interviewed) for a job, to pray, joke, argue, tease, warn and even to know when to be silent.

In his later research, Hymes in 1976 saw the shortcomings of communicative competence which would presuppose that all speakers will be communicatively competent in all situations regardless of differences in culture and this would also lead us to assume that speech communities are homogenous. He thus discovered that even most aspects of communicative competence would be too narrow to explain all the “rules of speaking” – the ways in which speakers associate particular modes of speaking, topics or message forms with particular settings and activities; that is, who the speakers are, where they are and what beliefs and customs are important in their lives. He thus proposed a second descriptive science of language, the ethnography of speaking, concerned not simply with language structure but with language use, with “rules of speaking”. For instance the kolanut ritual in the Igbo culture would require different norms of interaction and interpretation from, say, in Yoruba or Hausa culture; that is, if those cultures attach any symbolic importance to the ritual. This is what made Hymes formulate the foundational premise of the ethnography of speaking as follows:

1. Diversity in the systems of language use is to be explored in all its complexity.
2. Societies differ as to what communicative resources are available to their members, in terms of language, dialects, registers, routines, genres, artistic formulae etc.
3. Societies differ in how these resources are patterned in use, in the work done (or doable) through speech and other communicative means and in the evaluation of speaking as an instrument of social class.

Hymes argues that any description of “ways of speaking” will need to provide data along four related dimensions, linked to judgements of situational appropriateness:

1. The linguistic resources available to a speaker – how many different styles he/she

can choose from: formal, informal, casual, distant or frozen.

2. Supra-sentential structuring – how many differently structured linguistic (speech) events like trials, religious ceremonies, debates, songs, and in our case, kolanut ritual are recognized in the culture.
3. The rules of interpretation by which a given set of linguistic items comes to have a given communicative value; that is, values attached to utterances accompanying the kolanut ritual.
4. The norms which govern different types of interaction, for instance, greetings in different ethnic groups, among peers and for elders in different speech communities, speech styles, speech situations and speech events.

Based on the above premise, Hymes proposed the social units for ethnography of speaking research arranged in descending order of magnitude, namely (qtd in Coulthard ; Schiffrin 139): speech community, speech situation, speech style, speech event and speech act. Every communication is situated in particular speech community which has been described as aggregate of people with shared experiences, concepts and social life recorded in a language, which belongs to them. In our case, we regard the speech community as the Igbo speech community in which the kolanut ritual is universally symbolic. This shared social life is punctuated by different speech situations which may include such cultural ceremonies as traditional marriages, funerals, naming ceremonies and casual meetings with friends and associates and this study has identified four from the numerous other speech situations for analysis. Different speech styles will therefore be appropriate to these different speech situations depending on the degrees of formality/informality, social distance of the participants and the tone of the occasion.

As mentioned earlier, Hymes sees the speech event as the minimal unit of ethnography of communication, and formulated what he termed the SPEAKING model; a grid for analyzing particular

speech events such as the kolanut ritual in speech situations like marriage ceremonies, funerals, naming ceremonies and casual meetings which we have concentrated on in this work. This model is an acronym comprising seven variables, each letter being an abbreviation for a different possible component of communication:

S= Setting of the event,

P= Participants involved in the event,

E= Ends involve the goals/purposes of the event,

A=Act sequence – message form and content, the words used to inform, direct, promise, request, mandate, question, invite, declare. This aligns with Austin's speech acts.

K=Key – tone, manner or spirit with which a particular message is conveyed: satiric, ironic, serious, light hearted, joking, mocking, sarcastic, pedantic, pompous, sad, happy, etc.

I=Instrumentalities – channel (oral, written, signed, multimodal). This also includes physical forms of speech drawn from community repertoire: dialect, code, register and whether the speech is formal, informal, frozen, consultative and intimate. Code switching may also be relevant here.

N=Norms of interaction and interpretation: - specific properties attached to speaking interpretation of norms within cultural belief system. Noiselessness, turn-taking, answer questions from the lecturer, may be taken as norms in a lecture. There are also norms of greeting, addressing elders, cultural differences in loudness, silence, gaze return, body posture when talking to elders, comfortable conversational distance among strangers and among friends.

G=Genre – Textual categories such as a lecture, sermon, vote of thanks, convocation address, a market transaction, a political speech, a marriage transaction, a welcome address and numerous other such genres. These different genres are text types with their unique internal structures which accord with different social goals (McCarthy, Matthiessen and Slade 60).

Hymes framework has been applied in many works and the kolanut ritual will be analysed using the above speaking model/grid in order to discover how this framework can be used to interpret this cultural artifact as a speech event.

The last in Hymes taxonomy of social units in the ethnography of communication is the speech act which also is part of the SPEAKING grid – act sequence. This involves ways in which particular speech communities perform certain actions through speech, such as how thanking is done or requests are made in some speech communities. This also calls to mind the theory of speech acts by Austin in 1962 and Searle in 1969 (qtd in Ezeifeke 50, 59) which claims that every utterance is action capable of achieving tremendous consequences on our shared experiences. For our sample speech event, the incantations in the kolanut ritual contain many forms of speech acts that are capable of bringing special protection on the people on whom the blessings and prayers are conferred. In this work, therefore, these speech acts that are prevalent in the kolanut ritual will be explored and highlighted.

Methodology

Since the kolanut ritual is a universal phenomenon in the Igbo speech community, we regard it in this work as a speech event that occurs in numerous speech situations. We shall therefore, in this work, examine the speech situations that symbolically place the kolanut ritual as the harbinger speech event in their performance. Four Igbo cultural speech situations have been selected for the study: traditional marriage ceremonies, naming ceremonies, funeral ceremonies and casual visits between friends. We take one sample each from these speech situations to illustrate the importance of kolanut ritual in the social lives of the Igbo people.

The sample prayers were collected through participant as members of the culture. Most of the information in respect to the symbolic significance of the number of lobes of kolanuts were got from elders through personal communication. The data are presented in tables; the Igbo version of the speech events and the translations in the nearest

English equivalents. Thereafter the samples are subjected to Hymes SPEAKING grid and Austin and Searle’s speech acts.

Data presentation and analysis

The observed prayers over kolanuts in the different speech situations studied are presented in the four tables below. It will be observed that the

prayers in our data are admixture of Christian and traditional ritual. It is not our intention in this paper to differentiate between the two beliefs, rather to illustrate how participants enact this ritual and the prevalent factors of interaction in each instance, using the SPEAKLING grid which we illustrate in Table 5.

Table 1: A Sample Marriage Kolanut Ritual

<i>Ndiogoanyi, anyiga-adinu...Ise</i>	Our in-laws we shall all live... Amen!
<i>O ga-adiriadaanyinammadiri di yanamma...Ise</i>	It shall be well with our daughter and our in-law....Amen!
<i>Ada anyiga-abungozinyeunu...Ise</i>	Our daughter shall be a blessing to you...Amen!
<i>O ga-amuozuzu Eke muaozuzuOrie...Ise</i>	She’ll bear Eke and Orié offspring ...Amen!
<i>Unuga-amutaozuzuAfonaozuzuNkwo...Ise</i>	You will bear Afo and Nkwo offspring...Amen!
<i>Iheunuga-ejizuoumuunuagaghiakounu...Ise</i>	You shall not lack resources with which to raise them...Amen!
<i>Unuga-azuumuunu...</i>	
<i>ha ga-azukwaunu...Ise</i>	You shall take care of your children
<i>Ihejooobulaagaghiakpounuiru...Ise</i>	and they will take care of you in return...Amen!
<i>O ga-adiruununamma...Ise</i>	You’ll be protected from all forms of evil...Amen!
<i>Unugana-apuna-abata...Ise</i>	It shall be well with you...Amen!
<i>Unugana-ebin’ihunanya,udonaidin’otu...Ise</i>	You shall go out and come in in safety...Amen!
<i>N’onwaiteghete, anyiga-anuakwanwa...Ise</i>	You shall live in peace, love and unity...Amen!
<i>O ga-adirianyiniilemma...Ise</i>	In nine months’ time we shall hear news of child delivery...Amen!
<i>KaOlisa bi n’elugozieoji a kaanyitaatatandu...Ise</i>	It shall be well with all of us...Amen!
	Let God bless this kola that as we eat we shall eat life... Amen

The above table illustrates a sample prayer usually said over kolanut during a traditional marriage ceremony. Applying the speaking grid, we represent the speech event as follows: the setting (S) of this speech event is the home of the bride; participants (P) include the bride, groom, relations, well-wishers and friends. The ends (E), that is; the goal of the ceremony is to enact a marriage contract. Several act sequences (A) are evident in Table 1 such as: promising, vowing, requesting, questioning, pronouncing, thanking and so on. The tone or key (K) is a happy one, jubilant and expectant, that the marriage will bring the two families together and cement a lasting relationship. The channel of communication or instrumentalities (I) is mostly oral, with systematic turn taking

between inlaws, well-wishers and friends. Norms of interaction (N) for kolanut ritual is usually culturally prescribed to be performed in Igbo, it is believed that *ojianaghianuoyibo*: the kolanut does not hear English. The linguistic genre (G) shows that the kolanut is usually blessed using a lot of figurative language: proverbs, idioms, anecdotes, and other metaphoric statements.

Since speech acts is part of Hymes ethnography of communication, we observe that the illocutionary acts performed by the speakers and the perlocutionary effects culminate in the marriage contract. We have identified promising, vowing, requesting, questioning, pronouncing, thanking and so on and these acts manifest at different stages of the event.

Table 2: Preparation for Funeral Ceremony

<p><i>Ndi be anyianyenweeoji.</i> <i>Owetaluojiwetalandu.</i> <i>Onwuakpokotagoanyin'iheuru</i> <i>manaanyina-ariosi 'ozoemezina'...Ise!</i> <i>Chineke, anyina-ariokaiwezugaraanyi</i> <i>onwuerughierunairuuju...Ise</i> <i>Nye anyiogologonduna-aruike...Ise</i> <i>Nyekwaanyiihe e jieletandu...Ise</i> <i>Buru anyiuzokpereanyiazu...Ise</i> <i>Kaodirianyimma...Ise</i> <i>KaChinekegozieoji a</i> <i>kaanyitaatandu</i> <i>n'afajisosKraistbuonye new anyi...Ami</i></p>	<p>Our people, we have kola. He that brings kola brings life. Death has brought us together but we pray, 'no reoccurrence'...Amen! Almighty God, we pray for long life and good health...Amen! Give us resources with which to take care of life...Amen! Go ahead of us and come after us...Amen! Let it be well with us...Amen! May God bless this kola that as we eat we shall eat and gain life in Jesus name...Amen</p>
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Table 2 illustrates another type of speech situation where the kolanut ritual is indispensable but not accorded its full ceremony, because it is believed that the ritual should not be fully performed during funerals. But on the day of invitation of relations, inlaws and friends for the funeral ceremony preparation, the day called *ubochiokuogonaikwunaibe*, the ritual may be just to plead with the ancestors to put death at a distance. Kolanut rituals are not usually performed on the funeral day proper. The SPEAKING grid in this case will differ from what we had in the marriage ceremony. The sketch is provided in Table 5:

Table 3: Naming Ceremony

<p><i>Chinekekereeluigwekeeuwa.</i> <i>Gionyesiteren'obarakpuondu</i> <i>anyijioji a na-ekelegi</i> <i>makandunwaohuu a.</i> <i>Anyina-ekelegimakaimuyan'udo</i> <i>nakwaaruikenkeneya.</i> <i>Chineke, anyiagbakabagotaata</i> <i>Kaanyiguanwaa aha.</i> <i>Anyina-aguyalfeoma.</i> <i>Ya mere iheomagana-agbasoya...Ise!</i> <i>Ihejoagaghikwaezutaya...Ise!</i> <i>Dika aha yasiridi,otu a</i> <i>kanaaniiheomagana-esoya...Ise!</i> <i>O ga-adiriyamma...Ise!</i> <i>O ga-adikwaraanyiniilamma...Ise</i> <i>KaChinekenaraanyioji a gozie</i> <i>Kaanyitaatandu</i> <i>n'ahalisosKraistbuonye new anyi...Ami</i></p>	<p>Almighty God,creator of heaven and earth, You who create life from blood, With this kola we thank you for this new born baby. We thank you for her safe delivery and the health of the mother. God, we have gathered today to name this child. We name her lfeoma So good things will pursue after her ... Amen! No evil will befall her...Amen! As her name goes only good things will follow her...Amen! It shall be well with her...Amen! It shall be well with all of us...Amen! Let God take this kola and bless it That as we eat we shall gain life...Amen! In Jesus Christ our Lord ... Amen</p>
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In Table 3, the speech event may be performed by the newborn's father or grandfather depending on who was preferred or present. Naming at times may be given by the grandmother or mother, but since women do not break kolanuts in the Igbo culture, the ritual is thus the strict prerogative of the male members of the family.

Table 4 illustrates the kolanut ritual in casual visits, which differs from the other events in the level of ceremony involved. However, if the host does not perform this ceremony for his guest, it shows lack of welcome and unfriendliness.

Table 4: Casual Meeting between Friends/Neighbours

<p><i>Enyi m naagbataobi m, anyiga-adinu... Ise</i> <i>Olisa bi</i> <i>n'elubiataaajimakaonyinyenkendunaaruisiike... Ise</i> <i>Anyijioji a na- ario</i> <i>ka I na-ehekwaopupunambataanyi....Ise</i> <i>Chekwaanyinaumuanyi...Ise</i> <i>Ekwekwalakaiheojoogbabidoanyi...Ise</i> <i>Ihejoonoron'ihukaanyinoron'azu...Ise</i> <i>O noron'azuk'anyinoron'ihu...Ise</i> <i>Nye anyioganihun'ubochitaa...Ise</i> <i>Kaiheanyiga-eribiaranyi...Ise</i> <i>Kankega-erianyigharaibia...Ise</i> <i>Anyidikaumuakana-awuarun'afon'afu</i> <i>ya mere ekwelakaanyikpooukwu...Ise</i> <i>Olisa bi n'eludikaanyina-awaoji a</i> <i>taan'ogbe, kaanyitaan'ibe</i> <i>n'afajisosKraistbuonyenweanyi...Ami o</i></p>	<p>My friend and neighbour, we shall live...Amen! God in heaven,come and eat kola for giving us life...Amen! With this kola,we pray that ... you keep our going out and coming in....Amen! Protect our children...Amen! Don't allow evil to overtake us Amen! When evil is at the back, may we be in front...Amen! When it is at the front, may we be at the back...Amen! Give us success today...Amen! May what we shall eat come to us...Amen! May what will consume us not come ...Amen! We're like little kids that bathe only their bellies. Therefore do not allow us to fumble...Amen! Almighty God, as we break this kola, eat it in whole while we eat in pieces in Jesus name...Amen!</p>
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Table 5: Summary of the application of the SPEAKING grid in the four speech situations

SPEAKING components	Speech Situations under Study		
	Funeral	Naming	Casual
Setting	Deceased home	Parents' home	Home of host
Participants	Deceased family, inlaws, friends	Child, parents, priest, friends	Host and guests
Ends	Burial planning and condolence visit schedule	Name a new born child	Welcome guests, show camaraderie
Act Sequence	Declaring, appealing, requesting	Naming, declaration, pronouncing	Welcoming, declaring, thanking
Key	Sad, solemn, subdued	Happy, expectant,	Friendly, hospitable
Instrumentalities	Oral with structured turn-allocation	Same as in funeral	Same as in funeral
Norms of interaction	Must be performed in Igbo language	Same as in funeral	Same as in funeral
Genre	Fixed phrases/subjunctives ("may it not happen again")	Figurative language: proverbs, idioms, and other metaphors	Same as in naming

Since we have set out the various components of ethnography of communication as they apply to the marriage ceremony, we did not repeat them in the above table. We have therefore presented the other three speech situations in Table 5, and how the kolanut ritual appeals to the speaking components of the model.

Discussion of Results

Marriage ceremony is highly valued in the Igbo culture. It is the beginning of life, of procreation and so powerful prayers needed to be offered to the new couple. Applying the SPEAKING grid, in the marriage ceremony as a setting, the participants are the two people who have consented to be married, their parents if they are still alive, and the *umunna* (kinsmen) of the bride and the groom. The goal of the speech event – the kolanut ritual – is to contract

a marriage between the two families. Of particular interest is the act sequence. In Table 1, from the illustration of sample utterances of the elder breaking the kolanut, it is obvious that speech acts of requesting (directives), promising, offering, guaranteeing, vowing (commissives), congratulating, thanking, appreciating, greeting (expressives), declaring, pronouncing, (declarations) are replete in the kolanut ritual on marriage rites. The tone and manner of speaking which constitute what Hymes calls "key" is a happy tone, jubilant, since both families desire the marriage, while instrumentalities is the oral medium; the kolanut ritual is an oral tradition handed down from generation to generation. One of the strongest norms of interaction in the kolanut ritual is that it must be performed in the Igbo language. During such ritual, one commonly hears such expressions as *ojianaghianuoyibo*, meaning 'the kolanut does not hear English'. It thus requires one to be versed in the language, have good oratory skills. Just as Achebe (5) would say that "proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten", as a genre, the kolanut ritual is highly marked by profound use of proverbs, idioms, anecdotes and other wise sayings to captivate the audience.

For the funeral ceremony, the kolanut is broken and eaten but without the elaborate presentation and prayer ceremony. The only prayer the elder will say is usually *ozoemezine* (let there be no repeat occurrence). The speech act that accompanies this is appealing to the supernatural to forestall untimely and premature death, thanking the gods for other gifts and pronouncing long life to the living. In naming ceremonies, this is where the speech acts of naming is paramount, because once the name is pronounced, it becomes the child's name for life. The kolanut ritual heralds this ceremony and helps to assign it with conditions of felicity as the father of the child who is to break the kola is also the one to name the child.

For casual meetings and visits, the kolanut ritual is very important. The interactants are friends or neighbours who have goodwill and friendship with one another. The speech acts of greeting, promising, declaring, thanking asserting and others punctuate such meetings and participants are

always conscious of the turns they take and the roles such meetings confer of each person.

From the above discussions it is seen that the kolanut ritual is an indispensable speech event in most ceremonies in the Igbo culture. In spite of the fact that most of these cultures have been eroded with the advent of Christianity and western civilization, the kolanut ritual persists and has been transported into the Christian prayer. As we can see from our sample prayers above, the endings are Christian in nature even though the wordings portray cultural artifacts such as *ndimbunan di egede* recognized as the ancestors which may be at variance with Christian beliefs.

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