
The Use of Drum Language for Security Education and Awareness in Tiv

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Abstract

Insecurity is a global menace, which has escalated to such a worrisome level that certain measures have to be put in place in order to checkmate it. The fact that there are security challenges in Nigeria and West Africa as a whole and indeed the world at large is no longer news to anyone. In this study, the research seeks to explore the use of drum language in Tiv as a means of security awareness and prevention of crime and violence in the society. Drum language in Africa served as a means of communication long before the wireless cell phones were invented. In those days, drums were used to send detailed messages from village to village much faster than a person could walk in an era where there were no vehicles. Even in contemporary times, the drum language is still being explored. The research has used the Gratification Theory propounded by Blumler, Katz, and Gurevitch in 1974 to explicate on the effects of drums on the audience. It is gathered that drums are cheaper and more easily accessible by the natives. Also, for security reasons, the use coded language that is no easily deciphered by strangers. Data for this research was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Oral interviews were conducted and the authors also used their intuitive knowledge to gather information. These gave credence to the work. The study finally established that the appropriate use of drums serves as preventive measures as well as mobilization and awareness creation to dispel insecurity. The aesthetic values of drums also instill peace in the hearts of the audience thus causing warring parties to lay down their arms. The research established that drum language, if effectively used, will curb insecurity and easily create awareness and sensitize the populace and impending security challenges.

Keywords: communication, drum language, gratification, insecurity, security awareness

1. Introduction

Insecurity is the state of being vulnerable, unguarded, defenseless, undefended and unsafe. The period of insecurity makes it difficult for people to sleep with both eyes closed. The state of insecurity makes things unpredictable by both the government and the masses. In Nigeria, West Africa and indeed the world at large, there is so much insecurity that there is never a day one wakes up without hearing about one security challenge or the other. This is prevalent both in the rural and urban areas. This paper seeks to bring to bear some of the security challenges as well as methods to tackle them. The use of the drum language is the measure that is being advocated to ensure security education and awareness creation to curb insecurity.

Before the advent of the telephone and other Western based channels of communication in Africa, there was a medium of communication, which allowed Africans to relay messages from one village to another without any worry of interception. This channel of communication was the drum; it enabled people to communicate at a distance of ten miles and sometimes greater, depending on the time of the day and the activities in the village.

In traditional African society, drums are essentially significant mediums of communication, which serve as a voice of the whole community and communicate their desires and wishes. Although, drum messages are not languages in their own right, they are however, based on actual natural languages. Sounds produced by drums are idiomatic signals based on a particular speech pattern with fixed context dependent messages. This makes drum languages culturally defined, depending on the linguistic boundaries of that particular culture. Sometimes misinterpretation could occur in decoding the message and sometimes it could be interpreted

correctly. The message is usually exclusively understood by those that share the same cultural background because it is usually passed with cultural precision.

In the Tiv cultural environment, drums were used to communicate from village to village, community to community among others across the length and breadth of Tivland as well as communicating with the supernatural world. Drums were fashioned to enhance grassroots mobilization for developmental needs of the society. Drum messages were meant for formalized announcements about impending danger, birth, death, marriage, forthcoming hunt or wrestling contests for instance. Drums were played at the death of important community leaders to announce, give alert or signal the members of the community concerning the news of such death. Aside from announcement and messages; drum languages were used as the most common form of expression and were understood very well by the populace.

As important as drum language is to the dissemination of information, very little concern and attention has been given to address the phenomenon of this language among the Tiv people of recent. As a general information tool, it has been neglected not to talk of using it for a highly needed purpose like security education, and the governments of West Africa have also done very little or nothing concerning security education and emergency preparedness. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to advocate for the revival of the drum language, not just as a form of communication by which to impart security education and create awareness among the members of the community to arise to security consciousness in the wake of so many security challenges. The major aim of this study is to advocate for the use of drum language for security education and awareness among the Tiv populace.

2. Literature Review

In this segment, a brief review of some related literature is done. The concepts reviewed are as follows:

2.1 Drums and Drum Languages

The drum is a member of the percussion group of musical instruments, technically classified as the membranous. The drum consists of at least one membrane called a drumhead or drum skin. The skin is stretched over a shell and struck either directly with the player's hands, or with a drumstick, to produce sound (Grove, 2001:26). According to Uzuoku (1997:17), the drum is a unique symbol or instrument of communication in Black Africa and is comparable to the Bible and the Koran because it carries the primordial word which is identical to the primordial word of these books. Uzuoku (1997:19) again opines that human beings experience life in Africa through rhythms of sound created by drum languages.

Fabre (1996:31) states that the drum is the symbol of African culture where the sound of drums forms the acoustical writing in the culture of Africans than any other culture; hence, drums have played a more important role in writing in most African cultures, making them a cultural matrix through which messages pass. Drums are found in nearly every culture in the world and have existed before 6000BC. They have had ceremonial, sacred, symbolic functions and take a more prominent role in tribal ceremonial gatherings where they accompanied ritual dancing and celebration.

According to Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia/drumseNotes.com>), drums can be classified into two main types, namely the slit gongs and pressure drums. The slit gongs, also known as message drums are larger all-wood instrument hollowed out from a single log. Slit gongs have long narrow openings with hollow chambers that resonate when struck

with a stick. The tone of the sound largely depends on the wall thickness of the log. Hence, the bigger the log, the louder the sound generated as well as the distance covered. Moreover, the slit gong is given a stand at each end of the log to enhance the tone of the sound created. Slit gongs are either crafted with intricate designs or made simple. The slit gong can send messages over a distance of 8 kilometres.

Johnson (2011:29) states that the drum is the oldest instrument in the world dating back to 4000BC in Kemet, North-East Africa. He (Johnson, 2011) further describes the drum as a tool for telegraph type of communication in Africa. He also maintained that the drum was used by our ancestors to communicate from village to village, community to community among others across the length and breadth of Africa as well as used to communicate with the supernatural world. The drum set the pace for dance and worship, ritual and rites. Other practical uses include signaling the start of the day, to lead celebrations and notify the people as well. Each drum language according to him (Johnson, 2011:34) is influenced by the geographical location, the size of the drum, the drum style, number of drums and the rhythm or beat pattern.

Moreover, drums are instruments widely used in the Tiv community and have survived through decades in relation to other instruments such as *Toho u nanden* (bush burning) and others which are rarely being used in recent times in the Tiv socio-cultural communities for communication.

2.2 Communicative and Cultural Significance of Talking Drums

Without communication, members of a society may not be able to transfer knowledge of their norms and values among themselves. The talking drum is an important cultural instrument in the African society. It is a functional communication instrument used for

disseminating information from one African community to the other.

In many African societies, the talking drum serves as a potent channel of traditional communication. It is one of the most efficient communication methods used in villages and rural areas to enhance grassroots mobilization for societal development. The real significance of the talking drum lies in the role it plays in communication. In its earliest form, the talking drum served as an aid to ancient storytellers. These traveling poets and musicians would use the talking drums to carry on the oral traditions of their culture. Talking drums were used as a means of inter-village communication by themselves rather than any accompaniment.

Instead of hand-delivering a summons or warning from one village to another, a message could be sent directly and instantly via drum language. Players were taught the corresponding drum phrase for any given word. Messages would then be sent through drum players beginning with the name of the recipient, followed by the name of the sender, and then finally the message. When danger approached a village, the talking drum was used to warn villagers using sounds plucked from the beat in tones that matched the speed of the approaching danger. The drum beats travelled across the air with clarity and, faster than a horse rider would, and thus, saved time. This postulation is according to Akume (2021: 18-19).

The talking drum is a means by which Nigerians communicate with their identity. It is used in different cultures and has different names. The Bambaras (Mande people of Mali) call it Oondo or Dondo; the Yoruba (Western Nigeria) call it Gangan or Dundun, the Hausa (Northern Nigeria) call it Kalangu or Dan Karbbi, and Songhai (Central Mali) call it Doodo, the Tiv people call it *Gbande* (singular) or *Agbande* (plural), to name a few. They

all reflect the cultures and identities of the various people that use them.

Culture is the way of life of a people in a particular society and the talking drum serves as an instrument to celebrate and promote the cultural heritage of people of a particular society. Talking drums have been the most effective means of communication and information dissemination, not only in Tiv land but its informational value spreads across Sub Saharan Africa. The talking drums are employed not only in social gatherings among Tiv people but they are also used in the traditional festivals such as Dance festivals and New Yam festivals. The talking drum served as an important function in West African culture and had a language specific to each region. It was used to assist in storytelling, used to relay an important message as summon to a ceremonial dance or as an aid in telling fables that taught important life lessons.

When people hear of the talking drum, they believe it is just an instrument to be drummed for people to dance but it is not just that, it is also used as a means of conveying messages. Messages can be conveyed in diverse forms. One can convey messages in a long or short distance depending upon the situation at hand. Drums are also used in places of worship like the church.

2.3 Types of Drums in Tiv

The Tiv people have different types of drums as earlier mentioned; but due to time and space constraint, only three (3) are being discussed here. The three types are:

There are certain contexts in which plurality is marked in Etulo by means of reduplication. The noun stem is fully reduplicated to mark entities that are more than one. However, for inanimate nouns, plural marking using the reduplication strategy is optional. Below are some examples:

- i. **The Tiv Indyer:** The *Indyer* is a heavy wooden instrument carved out of mahogany trunk. Ugbagir and Cuttings (2013:18) describe the *Indyer* as “a Tiv indigenous ritual slit wooden hollow log instrument for communication used to be the most potent communication device in the Tiv-fold. Apparently, ownership of *Indyer* was vested in the hands of Agnate Kinsfolk (*ityô*) and matrilineal kinsfolk (*igbya*); and owners of *Indyer* were noble men in the Tiv society and communicant members of the Tiv indigenous religion. Anyone desiring ownership of *Indyer* was required to inform his *Ityo* and *Igbya* to get permission, after which he consulted the *Indyer* carver (or *gban indyer*) to carve it for him.



Fig.1: Showing a picture of the indyer drum.

Oral history has it that the making of *Indyer* required series of blood sacrifices. The blood needed for sacrifice for the making of *Indyer* was that of human and the Tiv native cow

(Bua Tiv). The costs and sacrifices involved, notwithstanding, it was a potential tool for communication among the Tiv people. The *ilyu* and *Indyer*, according to Gbenda (2005:39) are also used in communicating with the ancestral world.

- ii. **The Ilyu:** The *ilyu* is a light wooden instrument which was used to pass messages to people in the villages. This was either for the invitation of the people for a particular meeting of the elders at the king's palace or for the people to gather at the market square for a message from the king. Akume (2021:24) posits that the *ilyu* is now used as an instrument to indicate the death of someone. It is also used during marriage ceremonies to announce the marriage of important personalities.



Fig. 2: Showing the picture of the ilyu drum

However, the *ilyu* is smaller than the *indyer*. It is used for marriage ceremonies along with the Agbande and Kwen. In places of worship (churches) too some smaller versions of *ilyu* are used alongside with Agbande to give beautiful rhythms that accompany the spiritual songs.

- iii. Gbande:** The gbande is a memberanophonic wooden musical instrument made of artistically carved wooden pipetry and is covered with animal skin. According to Akume (2021:25), the Tiv gbande is “a hollow cylinder of wood or in advanced Tiv technology, metal, with skin or vellum stretched on ring-like frames fitted over one end, kept with hook and cords.” It is played by beating the head or the heads if it is double-sided with *ave* (hands) or *asavagbande* (drum sticks).



Fig. 3: Tiv Gbande (Talking drum)

The construction of *gbande* is a highly technological process that demands skill and training to make it perfect. The history of *gbande* making or construction dates back to 1758AD under a renowned stone mason and blacksmith called Gyar Anyi. The *gbande* belongs to the African instruments category called the membranophones. A membrane material is stretched over a frame and it is attached through pegs or hides strips. Drums are the most common membranophones and are the most popular musical instruments in the Tiv nation and the entire Nigeria. Invariably, the sizes of *agbande* (drums) vary from *ichorough* to *birim* (*abirim* plural) and *indyergenga* which means from very small ones to the ones that reach 11 to 13 feet; and their shapes vary from cylindrical to cask, and in x-shape form. The position of playing *agbande* essentially depends on the size, combination and shape. Some of the *agbande* are placed on the ground, between the knees or simply slung over the shoulder of the player. The position depends on the size and weight of the drums. In some cases, two or more *agbande* are combined and laid on a platform for a player who is dexterous in managing the beating and tone of the respective drums. Akume (2021:26) further reiterates that in the Tiv traditional technology, the purpose for which a drum is made and the meteorological conditions of the geographical location where it is to be played are the fundamental determining factors for choosing the type of materials that will be used in constructing the *agbande*. The best wood used in carving the *gbande* frame is *Gbaaye* tree, which moth and other insects as well as water cannot destroy. In terms of *imande* (peg – singular) or *amande* (pegs plural), the trees used for making them are: ikpine,

ikpikyegh, baverkpua and the like. The *ikyôvor* (hides, membrane or skin) is made from goat, sheep, electric fish, deer or other animals' skin. The rope for slinging the drum over the shoulder is extracted from the skin of antelope. The *gbande* is of different sizes ranging from big, medium and small.

2.4 The Drum Chief (TOR-AGBANDE)

The concept of executive chieftaincy was alien to the Tiv until when the British colonialists came to establish the indirect rule system of governance in Nigeria during the colonial era. It was then that the British insisted that the Tiv should also have some chiefs through which they (British) would be ruling them (Tiv). This was what gave rise to the selection of the first set of chiefs in Tiv land known as *Tor-agbande* (drum chief). This is aptly captured by East (2003:406) thus:

The arrival of the chief was announced by the blowing of a wooden trumpet and the beating of cone-shaped drums (hence the title “drum chief”). The chief was not allowed to sit down until a specially appointed official had set him down with a bed set for him, on which was spread a leopard's pelt.

It can be deduced from this extract that the drum chiefs were so named because of the drums that were beaten to announce their arrival. They were not the drum players.

2.5 Security

The word security has been defined by different scholars in different ways. It is derived from the old French word *securite* (meaning safety) and Latin *securitas* (meaning freedom from care; carelessness; safety) etc. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2006:063) defines it as the activities involved in protecting a

country, building or person against attack, danger or protection against something bad that might happen. All these definitions have a central focus that is protection and safety. For the purpose of this research, the definition by Har (2018:5) below is very essential. He considers security as:

The development and implementation of mitigating measures by an individual, organization or a nation to protect lives, properties, image, reputation, procedures, policies and information from threat, harm or any form of danger by the adversary (enemy) category (sic) after a careful conduction of a Risk Assessment.

He further defines Risk Assessment as the process of determining what type of measures or security controls to be selected and the cost of such security measures presented to management for approval (Har, 2018:5).

In this study, we are taking a careful look at security awareness and education. Security education is the awareness creation of the presence or imminence of danger and ways to protect and safeguard lives, properties and places. The absence of security which is insecurity is closely related to crimes.

2.6 Crime

A crime is an illegal action or activity for which a person can be punished by law, an act committed in violation of a law prohibiting it, or omitted in violation of a law ordering it; often specific such as an act of felony. Crimes are variously punishable by death, imprisonment or imposition of certain fines or restrictions. The range of crime includes felonies and misdemeanors, but not petty violations of local ordinances. In the legal parlance, crime is also known as offence but not all offences are criminal. On the other hand, all crimes are offensive. Har (2018:31) defines crime as:

Any action or omission that is punishable by law which is committed against an individual and/or the state. There must be reasonable evidence that an action or offense was committed for it to be considered and treated as a crime.

The last sentence, in essence, means that even if one commits a crime and there is no evidence to convict him, he can go free.

There are different types of crime in our society. Among them are; theft, armed robbery, burglary, kidnapping, drug addiction and abuse, human trafficking, arson, fraud, rape, cultism, murder, pilfering, sale of fake drugs, workplace violence, ritual killing, cattle rustling, herdsman attacks, banditry and terrorism. The presence of these and many more not mentioned here make the society so insecure that people cannot sleep with both eyes closed. Something needs to be done in order to curb them.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

This study is analyzed using the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) otherwise simply known as the Gratification Theory. The theory was propounded by Jay Blumler, Elihu Katz and Michael Gurevitch in 1974. It states that people choose to consume certain kinds of media because they expect to obtain specific gratifications as a result of those selections. According to Wikipedia (2022), the Uses and Gratification Theory is an approach to understanding why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. UGT is an audience-centered approach to understanding mass communication. Uses and Gratification Theory is a well utilized theoretical framework for explaining the different motives and reasons behind the use of any given communicative medium. The users usually preferred the messages from the talking drums for security reasons. According to them, the talking drums have a peculiar and secretive way of passing information to the natives that

is not easily decipherable by strangers. This gives them a sense of security such that they feel they have an edge over their enemies. They also argue that drums are part their culture; also they are cheaper and less technical to operate than other communication gadgets.

The drum is a traditional medium of communication that can be used for various purposes. Each type of drum depending on the culture, has its peculiar purpose. Some drums are used for ceremonial purposes like festivals; others are used to communicate messages such as the death of a king, the birth of a child, announcement of war, appointment of a new king and so on.

The Gratification Theory suggests that peoples' needs influence what media they choose. It differs from other theoretical perspectives in that it regards audiences as active media users as opposed to passive receivers of information. While other traditional media theories focus on "what the media do to people" and assume audience as homogeneous, the Uses and Gratification Theory is more concerned with "what people do with media". The Gratification Theory discusses the effects of the media on people and in this case, the drum language. In other words, it can be said that the theory argues what people do with the media rather than what the media do to people. In relation to this study, the theory explains that the cultural and communicative benefits or lack thereof, derived by the Tiv people while using the drum as a medium is dependent on how they use the drum to attain their needs such as information, entertainment and in this case caution and security awareness. This theory is very relevant as it advocate for proper use of drum language to sensitize the populace on security matters.

3. Methodology

Data for this research were collected chiefly through primary sources. The unstructured interview method was used to elicit information from the informants. The target population was wood carvers of drums and some traditional drummers. Observation and recording of some drum languages were also done.

3.1 Messages Imbued in Tiv Drum Languages

In this segment, the day to day use of the drum language is discussed. After that, the aesthetic qualities of drum language are presented and analyzed, and in addition, how to use the drum language for security education and awareness is the highlight of this segment. The following are the various purposes for which the drum language is used:

WAR;

TIV	GLOSS
Kabera utya kabera utya kabera utya (3x)	Sound of war People should gather at once
I kase gborototo	A bad thing is coming
Kwagh ngu van u bo	All together all together all together
Kembera kembera kembera	

DEATH;

TIV	GLOSS
Kpe! or kpe! gidiya! gidiya!! gidiya!!!	Died (Rhythm) Tiger-lord God bless the king (3x)

Takuruku anyamazenga Aondo A ver Tor (3x) Tor tile jighjigh Keghen waningyo (3x) Waningyo ngu van Sha kumun kumun Kumun utamen (3x) Karen nen akar (iti) kpe	Takuruku	Do royally stand upright And await the passage Of your brethren transiting On the ancient broad-way Of the great beyond (Yina 2011:95) Come over quickly (name) has died Somebody has died! Somebody has died!
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MARRIAGE;

TIV	GLOSS
Kun kun kun kun	Rhythm
Akpera kwase	Mortar woman
Iyar kwase	Buffalo woman
Kwase zende kpilidididi	Woman walks majestically
Kwase doo kwase doo	Woman is beautiful (2x)
Kwase u he nyor ooo	The bride has arrived oo

These were gotten from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are from Mr Akua Ugbede the oldest man in Mbayogo district in Vandeikya Local Government Area in Benue of Benue State and others. The unstructured questions are at the end of the references as appendix 1

Apart from the above purposes, drums are used during traditional dances and cultural festivals. With the advent of the Christian religion, drums are also used by Christians in their places of worship to accompany the songs of worship.

3.2 The Aesthetic Effects of Drums on the Audience

The rhythm of drums has not just a communicative effect but other spiritual and cultural effects on the listeners. When the Tiv drums are played, all the listeners present, whether they understand Tiv or not, are moved to dance to the rhythms. As for the warning signals, those that understand them are alerted and act immediately.

As for how the drum language can be used to give security education and awareness, this can be done by summoning the villagers together in the market place or village square to pass the information across to them. In times of emergency, the indyer can be used to pass across messages to the villagers to alert them of the danger that is looming ahead. For example, the drums can be beaten to inform the villagers of strange faces in their village and warn them to avoid following some routes that are not safe. In fact, drum language can be used to prevent or forestall criminal attacks on the Tiv communities as well as a way of apprehending criminal elements.

4. Recommendations

Having looked at the importance of drum language in the society, it is also observed that there is less use of the drum language in the Tiv society of recent especially for communicative purposes. This research, therefore, recommends that:

- i. The use of drum language should be revived and modernized so as to check-make the insecurity in the society.
- ii. Drum language should also be taught as a course unit in the Department of Languages and Linguistics.
- iii. The younger generation does not really comprehend drum language as much as the older ones. The drum language, especially the talking drum should be used

side by side with modern communication gadgets so that the younger generation will also grasp it.

- iv. Drums and drum languages should be properly documented for future references.

5. Conclusion

This study has taken a critical look at the state of insecurity in Nigeria and the world at large and advocated that drum language should be used as an effective tool for security education and awareness. In doing this, the Uses and Gratification Theory has been used to analyze what people do with the drum medium of communication. The prompt response of the listeners to the warnings and promptings by the messages from the drums will improve the security of the society and reduce criminality to the barest minimum

This study has succeeded in bringing to the front burner the fact that drum language is very important as it can be used for security education and awareness creation. The work has also suggested for the modernization of drum language in the age of technological advancement to suit the hi-tech and high profile security challenges in Nigeria and the world over.

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Appendix I

Unstructured Interview Questions

1. What is the importance of drum language?
2. What types of drums do the Tiv use chiefly for communication?
3. What are the other purposes for which drums are used?
4. Why do you prefer the use of the talking drum to other communication gadgets?