



## **Riddles and the Structure of Language: A Stylistic Study of 10 Ibibio Riddles**

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### **Abstract**

The riddle has too often been restricted to children. Our study shows the riddle to be an eclectic source of imaginative descriptiveness without the weight of longer forms of literature. The aptness of language and precision of deployment unveils a perceptible awareness of nature while contributing to a child and adult's awareness of the constitution of their environment. Ibibio riddles, with their emphases on rhythm, tonality and parallel structure, are insightful vehicles for the elucidation of Ibibio experience and thought patterns, and an indication of their exploitation and sheer enjoyment of language.

**Keywords** Descriptiveness, Precision, Awareness Experience and Enjoyment of Language

### **Introduction**

#### **Oral literature/riddles**

Oral literature is a body of composition of any particular cultural area rendered by word of mouth from generation to generation. It is rendered in an imaginative and artistic form, and is couched in language, and language, we know, is a powerful index of culture. Again, oral literature has a lot to do with tradition and culture.

Oral literature is divided into genres: drama – masquerades, puppets, etc.; prose narratives – myths, legends, the epic etc; poetry – ritual incantations, libation, praise poems or panegyric, the ballad, etc. Moreover, oral literature is divided into the longer oral art compositions – myths, legends, epics (*Sundiata*, *The Mwindo*



*Epic*), praise poems, among others, and the shorter oral art compositions – anecdote, witticism, epigram, proverb and riddle. In some cultures, the riddle is part of the set formula of most folktale recitations, and these recitations always start with a kind of guessing game where the narrator or members of the audience ask questions (riddles), and answers, usually known by the audience, are given. Of course, in saying this we are not claiming that the riddle is exclusive to folktale recitation sessions, but can be enjoyed at any moment of the day and can be used to test a child's knowledge of his/her environment. Riddle has always been referred to as a light-hearted type of oral poetry which involves the participants in a guessing game.

The riddle is expressed briefly and concisely; it involves analogy, whether of meaning, sound, rhythm, or tone and, despite its close link with such forms as enigmas, dilemma tales, epigrams, praise-poems and especially proverbs – the world view of the proverb is a rationalized one in which events have been fitted into their place, while that of riddles expresses irrationality and doubt (Dathorne 70) – it is a distinct type of literary expression considered to be the special domain of children and, unlike proverbs, it is for entertainment rather than for serious consideration. Despite this, it still is able to reveal insights into the constitution of society and present an insightful apprehension of the human condition.

Riddles often involve metaphorical or poetic comment (Finnegan 426). Aristotle is quoted in Georges and Dundes as referring to this when he said that “good riddles” are capable of:

... (providing) us with satisfactory metaphors: for metaphors imply riddles, and therefore a good riddle can furnish a good metaphor (116).

The metaphors which riddles unveil, like those in other literary forms, reveal insights into a people's apprehension of human nature, behaviour and situation. For instance, the riddles, “little things that defeat us – mosquitoes” and “the house in which no one can turn – grave”, are not just veiled expressions without import, but pithy sayings with the pith giving expression to the prevailing human condition.

The harsh nature of the human condition makes it difficult for it to always be expressed as it is; the topography of language provides for varieties of modes of giving expression to all types of realities. The riddle may be regarded as a euphemistic means of expressing reality. Through employing pithy and catchy conundrums they excite our apprehension of the panoply of language while their metaphorical and poetic content highlight a depth of imaginative vividness and description which sensually emphasizes the speaker's awareness of his



environment and his attempt to capture it in, at once, poignant and obstructive language.

### **The Nature of Riddles**

What stands the riddle out from other literary forms is its question and answer format; explicit questions are asked and the respondent is expected to tease out an answer from them. Not all riddles take the question and answer form; however, many African riddles are not interrogatives at all but statements. Listeners are usually faced with allusive statements with analogous referents such as images, sounds, situations, and words, which the listeners are obliged to unravel. The listener has to latch on to the image or sound or words or generalization spoken and through recognizing a similarity of situation, character or behaviour in the statement, he reveals the answer. The similarity may not always be semantic. It may be even tonal; sound patterns are employed to represent ideas.

There are simple riddles; strophic riddles; tone riddles; riddles interspersed with idiophones, and song riddles. The style of presentation of these riddles reside in their characteristic descriptiveness, in their opening questions being literal or metaphorical, in terms of their solutions, and in their allusion often being made to some other specific noun. The language of riddles sometimes is said to be archaic, and oftentimes, as well as meaningless words, it consist of puns and word play, reduplication, idiophones and diminutive (Finnegan 437). The content of riddles include just about every imaginable spheres of natural and human life, and reflect the pre-occupation and custom of the cultural area in which it emanates – this is why an understanding of riddles, sometimes resides in the ability of the respondent to be knowledgeable in the ways of the particular society.

We can state again that riddles are really not restricted to folktale sessions, but can be enjoyed at virtually any time of day, especially since they are fundamentally heuristic in nature, encouraging children to learn by discovering things for themselves. They are also verbal exercises which encourage language dexterity, and interaction with the environment.

### **Stylistics**

Language is a natural phenomenon and a very complex, abstract and highly creative means of communication that is central to most forms of human activities. Linguists, over time, have shown interests in language because of its significance as a vehicle for communication between human beings. For communication in language to be effective and possible, phonic and graphic symbols are employed – which symbols are arbitrarily used in expressing ideas and thoughts within a speech community. Language consists of resources or linguistic elements – grammatical, phonological, semantic, morphological and lexical – which are used



in producing language in actual use. The rules which govern the realization of language are finite, but using them, language is infinitely produced. The finiteness of these elements restricts the possibility to which the language user can explore language – for instance, a house cannot ever be a tree, just like a man cannot ever be an animal – but when language is exposed to social contexts it blossoms into myriads of trajectories which the prevailing social experiences throw up, thereby extending the borders of language. Because language is used idiosyncratically in various fields of discourse it is said to be diatypic in nature.

Stylistics is a discipline within the area of applied linguistics that studies language in use; how language is used distinctively in various contexts. It studies style in spoken, written, literary and non-literary varieties of language. In the study of styles of texts, the stylistician taps exhaustively from and must be well-versed in the linguistic tools of precision which are at his disposal. The use of these tools – rules of the language – is dependent upon and affected by the circumstances of communication, which begin with: what are the meanings you want inferred from your text?; What objectives do you propose to achieve through that meaning?; What are the options from the linguistic elements that are available to the language user?; How proficient is the language user?; How knowledgeable is he/she of the prevailing social condition that gave birth to the speech activity? among others. Style, therefore, answers these questions since it emphasizes the social contexts within which the language user uses language, and the language user's ability to navigate the concourse of language, in the process, picking only those elements of language that would help him effectively communicate the message that he conceives in the best possible way.

Niyi Osundare emphasizes that:

...language is shared, social; the culture which nourishes language and is nourished by it is equally social and shared.... Some of the writer's options are made for him by the culture in which his subject matter is rooted, and the language he employs in articulating it (16).

For Osundare, style is the sum total of a writer's appreciation of his culture and the options that culture unveils for him and which he is constrained to work with. Speaking in the same vein, J.O.J. Nwachukwu-Agbada avers that "style is the final result of what the author does with the materials he employs – his characters, the environment of his story... (32).

Style generally refers to the idiosyncratic way of giving a literary activity its unique shape and flavor. It is the elegance of texture, of order; it is what supplements grammar with vividness; it is ornament; it is the optimization of message transmission, and control of the decoding process (Pavel 27). It is its



abstract and complex nature that has attracted to it a multiplicity of definitions from various schools of thought. Buffoon, a French scholar, emphasizing the individual element, defines style as “Le, style c’st L’ home meme”, meaning “style is the man himself” (see Tibetts & Tibetts 32).

Enkvist, Spencer and Gregory see style as:

...an individual’s creative utilization of the resources of language which his period, his chosen dialect, his genre and his purpose within it offer him.

They here see style as presupposing choice, and the central operational concept of language is the category of choice the individual or group has to make in order to arrive at his or their idiosyncratic style. Idiosyncratic style simply means ways of recurringly organizing both conventional and innovative linguistic features that give to a text, writer or group its peculiar perceptive physiognomy (Pavel 27).

### **Group/Literary Style**

There is a perceptible relationship between language and its user. Every normal human being uses language, but the way that language is used by one individual differs from the way it is used by another. In stylistics, there are both individual and group styles. The group style, which is our concern in this paper, is characterized by a conscious selection or exploration by a writer in that group of linguistic elements from the language system. His choice of these elements is peculiar to and characteristic of a group and this constitute a usage distinctive and peculiar to that group. For instance, fields of discourses such as law, religion and scientific literature, among others, have their respective registers and a writer in those fields aims at and succeeds in total self-effacement – which self-effacement is arrived at through their conscious use or exploration of group categories.

Language is an indispensable vehicle of literature, and is a very important and central aspect of literary discourse. As much as the language of literature is an exemplification of the language system, it is also a deviation from the language of everyday discourse, and displays patterns which are different from or beyond the needs of everyday communication. Examples of these patterns include imagery, metaphors, parallelism, among others. These patterns, which are essentially departures from the linguistic code, de-automatises the linguistic code, making the reader sensitive to them in the texts such that he/she is surprised into a fresh awareness of the linguistic medium/code. Metaphors, for instance, ornament everyday words such that they lose their everydayness. In literature, our attention is drawn to the linguistic medium because the writer is doing something much



more than an ordinary selection from the resources of language in order to communicate.

### **Riddles in Ibibio Folktale Tradition**

The Ibibio folktale tradition has three formulas one of which is the riddle. The others include time and place settings and the stereotyped salutation before each narrative. Riddling in the folktale context is a guessing game and a fertile ground on which the seeds of the story proper would grow. Sometimes the riddle said after a particular narrative may be a concise summary of that narrative. For the performer and audience, riddling actuates a cohesion that enables the smooth transition from one stage of the folktale session to another. Riddling is done in a hearty manner as all participants are privy to the questions and answers to the riddles, and where the answers are unavailable, the questioner readily supplies the answer. The Ibibio call the riddle, as they do the proverb and folktale, 'nke'.

### **Ibibio Riddles**

- A. (i) The moon is up, there is wetness below.  
(Ọfion ke'yon ndedeḡ ki sọḡ)
- (ii) The person who loves you also backbites you.  
(Owo ọs ^ kuma edidọk ke'sid)
- B. (iii) What is it that dresses in armour but doesn't go to war?  
(Nsi bọbọ mbọbo ekọḡ odo anye ikaha ekọḡ?)
- (iv) Rafia Palm  
(Ukọd)
- C. (v) What is it our Father-God has but is not used in cracking kernels?  
(Nsoke etenyin-abasi anyie owo mmibenne ikpi isip?)
- (vi) Egg  
(Nsen Unen)
- D. (vii) You potatoe leaf that grows on the roof-top, who will pluck you?  
(ediam, afo abiokko ọdọk ọnyon ufok, aniewo idi ko?)
- (viii) You father that dies, who will take care of your child?  
(Ete, afo akpahha okpon a ayin ami, aniewo idibook?)



- E. (ix) *K<sub>ɔ̃</sub>n k<sub>ɔ̃</sub>n* the rat walks down the toilet road.  
(Ekpu k<sub>ɔ̃</sub>n k<sub>ɔ̃</sub>n od<sup>^</sup>k us<sup>^</sup>η nto)
- (x) Your Father swallows garri (or yam/cassava foo foo) with eyes bulging.  
(Us<sup>o</sup> amen us<sup>^</sup>η ɔsi<sup>o</sup> nd<sup>^</sup>d ayen)
- F (xi) What is it that when it visits one it does not salute one?  
(Nsi do akpe'ka uf<sup>o</sup>k owo ikom'mo owo?)
- (xii) Flood  
(Ndio<sup>o</sup> edim)
- G (xiii) What is it God has but we cannot sit on it?  
(Nsi do nkpo Abasi obot'to, owo ikanna iben itie?)
- (xiv) A bunch of palm fruit  
(ifene eyip)
- H (xv) What is it that is in the forest but knows the market day?  
(Nsoo isine ke esid ikot idio<sup>o</sup> 'o usen urua?)
- (xvi) Vulture  
(Utere)
- I (xvii) What cloth is so valuable yet it is never worn?  
(Nsi do of<sup>o</sup>η od<sup>o</sup>ηo akanam owo isineke?)
- (xviii) Jute bag  
(Ekpat atridem)
- J (xix) What is it God has that does not die from beating?  
(Nsoke Abasi obot'to, ikpahha ntim?)
- (xx) sand  
- (Ntan)



## Stylistic Analysis of the Riddles

### *Graphological Features*

Riddles are generally spoken and as such do not display unique graphological feature. When written down, graphological features are used as in other literary contexts. In the Ibibio language, written riddles display Ibibio language orthography as indicated above.

### *Phonological Features*

The Ibibio language has been described as a language in which tonality is a significant feature, and riddles, more often than not, are characterized by the analogy between statement/question and reply being that of form, that is, tone and rhythm. That is to say there is sometimes no logical relationship between the question/statement and reply, except in the rhythm or balance that exists in the two units. These units are what the Swiss anthropologist, Henri Alaxendre Junod, referred to as strophic riddles and they are like two little verses, balancing each other in a poetical way.

This balance or rhythm is noticed (in the Ibibio version) in the first, fourth and fifth riddles. In these three riddles there is rhythm in the syllables so that each syllable in the question/statement is correspondingly reduplicated in the answer/reply. For instance, rhythm generally and rhythm in the syllables of riddles number one (A) could be appropriately illustrated, in Ibibio, thus:

\\Ofiŋ\ 'ke\ 'yoŋ\ 'nde\ den\ ki\ 'soŋ\\

\\O\ wo\ 'os^kk\ uma\ 'edi\ dŋk/ke\ 'sid\\

Each of the eight syllables of the statement part of the riddle is rhythmically duplicated in the reply. We notice that the nouns: Ofiŋ (moon), eyŋ (up or sky), ndeden (cold), isoŋ (floor or below), owo, etc. are accented.

The intonation pattern in the two units is also similar in structure; there is a balance and tonal parallelism between question and answer. For example:

\\Ofiŋ\ 'ke\ eyŋ\ 'nde\ den\ ki\ 'soŋ\\

\\Owo\ 'os^k\ uma\ edi\ dŋk/ke\ 'sid\\

Another thing of note is that in the second, third, fourth, and sixth to tenth riddles one notices the presence of the interrogative intonation. The Ibibio language unlike the English language, does not normally distinguish a question, particularly a yes-



no one, from a statement intonationally. The wh-question type has a mandatory pitch pattern. Such a pitch, like in the second (B), third (C) riddles, and sixth (F) to tenth (J) occurs sentence-initially with ‘Nsi’, ‘Nsoke’, ‘Nsi do’ and ‘Nsoo’ (what and what is) beginning the sentences (Essien 63).

We also see alliteration as part of the phonological scheme: the first riddle (A) has ‘Owo Os<sup>^</sup>kuma’, ‘afo abiokko’, ‘odok onyony’; ‘afo akpahha’; ‘ayin ami aniewo’ in riddle four (D) and ‘uso’, ‘us<sup>^</sup>ny’ and ‘k<sup>∂</sup>n k<sup>∂</sup>n’ in riddle five (E). Other examples may be found in (G) ‘obot’to owo’; (H) ‘isine...ikot idiong’o’ ‘usen urua’ and (I) ‘ofony odooho’. When consonants are repeated in composition they emphasize and highlight sounds, create rhythm, “reinforce ... meaning ... (and) ... provide tone colour and enhance the palpability of enunciating the words” (Abrams 9).

Riddles sometimes display other acoustic images: the ideophone in the fifth (E) riddle is one such image. The ideophone, sometimes called mimic noun, intensive or descriptive noun, and indeclinable verbal particle etc. is a special word or set of words which convey a kind of idea-in-sound and is commonly used to add emotion and vividness to a description or recitation. They are sometimes referred to as being onomatopoeic (Finnegan 64).

The ideophone, ‘K<sup>∂</sup>n k<sup>∂</sup>n’ in riddle five (E) is introduced to heighten the descriptiveness of the riddle, but more important, it is a pictorial sound most appropriate and fitting in this context in that it creates a luminosity that makes one able to see and hear the rat making, not only the ordinary sound an ordinary rat makes, but something much more; the granting ‘k<sup>∂</sup>n k<sup>∂</sup>n’ sound of a waddling, rotund, well-fed and fearless rat as it walks majestically down the toilet road.

## ***Grammatical features***

### ***The Sentience***

As has already been stated, the language of riddles is usually short and concise, since its aim is to bring so much sense into so little space, thereby making the process of unraveling the enigmas not too easy. This is because the narrator in any folktale session may want the participants to work a little. The riddle is the only means he has.

Twenty sentences make up the two units of the ten riddles. Structurally, sentences two, three, five, seven, eight, ten, eleven, thirteen, fifteen, seventeen and nineteen are complex sentences, while sentences four, six, nine, twelve, fourteen, sixteen, eighteen and twenty are simple sentences. Sentence one is however a compound sentence. Functionally however, sentences one, two, nine and ten are declarative



sentences, while sentences three, five, seven, eight, eleven, thirteen, fifteen, seventeen and nineteen are interrogative sentences. The interrogative sentences are non-polar questions as their reply or answer are not the yes-no type; the questions seek and demand information which is produced in the reply. Examples of this are ‘Raffia palm’ and ‘Egg’, ‘flood’, ‘palm fruit’, ‘bunch’, ‘vulture’, ‘jute bag’, and ‘sand’.

The first sentence is an example of a compound sentence: “The moon is up, there is wetness below” The sentence combines two main clauses, using a comma to conjoin them rather than the traditional conjunctions. The two main clauses are two kernel sentences that could each stand on their own and make sense. Sentence number five is an example of a complex sentence:

What is it our Father-God has, but is not used in cracking kernels?

The sentence has one main clause: “what is it our Father-God has” and one subordinate clause: “but is not used in cracking kernels”. We notice, like is traditional, that the subordinate clause relies on the main clause to make sense.

There is a predominance of complex sentences in riddles, as riddles by nature are purely descriptive and pregnant with the most enormous nuances of meaning. Their being couched mostly in compound and complex sentences is to adequately give all the descriptive details possible in an analogy that is at once brief, concise and detailed. However, it is noted that sentences four, six, twelve, fourteen, sixteen, eighteen and twenty, are simple sentences in their barest minimum.

The sentence structures of riddles are often flexible, which is why we have such grammatical constructs as inversion and fronting. Inversions and fronting are often used in sentences to displace the conventional elements of sentence patterns. While inversions place an idea in focus, fronting is used to focus attention on a particular word a writer/speaker doesn’t want the reader/listener to miss. In riddles, inversions and fronting are used merely to emphasize or foreground a point more strongly. Examples of inversion in the riddles of this paper are the two sentences in riddle number four:

- a. You potatoe leaf that grows on the rooftop, who will pluck you ?
- b. You father that dies, who will take care of your child?

We notice that the logical syntactic sequence would have been:

- (i) Who will pluck you (you) potatoe leaf ... and
- (ii) Who will take care of your child you father...



The sentences in the riddle are the way they are because the emphases and highlights are on ‘You potatoe leaf’ and ‘You father that dies’.

### ***Clause Structure***

In sentences five, seven and eight we have introductory adjectival clauses which function to qualify the noun or nominal in the group. Example of this include ‘What is it...’ and ‘that is not’ in sentence five and ‘what is not in sentences eleven, thirteen, fifteen, seventeen and nineteen; ‘that grows...’ and ‘who will’ in sentence seven and ‘that dies’ and ‘who will’ in sentence eight. The excerpted parts of the listed sentences are adjectival clauses qualifying the nouns: our Father-God; potatoe-roof-top; and father-child respectively. Another clause structure is the adverbial clauses: ‘who loves’ and ‘also backbites’ qualifying ‘you’; in that sentence, the adverbial clause of manner is introduced by the adverbial ‘also’. The person who loves you *also backbites you* – here the verb ‘backbites’ is modified by ‘also’.

### ***Nominal Groups***

*The nominal groups are made up of noun phrase (NPs) and its minimal structure consists of a noun. We have NPs such as the moon, the person, our Father-God, you potatoe\_leaf, the roof-top, your child, the rat, the toilet\_road, your father, with eyes. We also have nouns such as Kernels, raffia palm, egg, garri, God, forest, vulture, cloth, jute-bag, and sand.*

The NPs are simple in the riddles; riddles normally do not make use of significant complex pre – and post-modifiers. A close look at both the NPs and nouns would show that the nominal groups in these riddles are made up of the one-and the two element type: that which is made up of just the ‘head’ (one element), for example – kernels, raffia palm, and that which is made up of two elements – modifier(M) and head(H). Examples of this include ‘the (M) rat (H), ‘your (M) child (H), our (M) father-God (H), etc. We also have the second person pronoun ‘you’ and its possessive counterpart ‘your’, and the first person possessive pronoun ‘our’. Noun compounding is a fixture with most Ibibio riddles. It is an important lexical as well as grammatical phenomenon in Ibibio language – it is this that lends itself to the language of riddles, we have such compound words as ‘Eteyin-Abasi’ meaning ‘our father-God’, ‘Unam-inyang,’ literally water animal, etc. Numerous such descriptive constructions may be built to describe people, especially gods and the deity, and objects. What is of note, however, is that whether they are used to describe objects or the deity, they are usually praise-names which show awe and reverence.



In sentence five, the compound noun ‘our Father-God’ is intended that, among other things, the flippant reference to the deity (in this case) would shock the listener (Dathorne 72) into a new awareness of the relationship that exists between the deity (God) and mortals, and the reverence with which the mortals hold Him. ‘our Father-God’ seems to be telling the listener that He (God) is our father and He is God. This compounding is very effective in its ability to carry and convey more meaning and shades or nuances of meaning that if a paraphrase or a descriptive had been introduced.

### ***Verbal Group***

The structure of the verbal group is not distinctive. We have in sentence one *loves*; *backbites* in two; *dresses* and *go* in three; *cracking* in five; *grows* and *pluck* in seven; *dies* and *take care* in eight; *walks* and *swallow* in nine and ten respectively; *visits* and *salute* in eleven; and *knows* in fifteen. They ensure full meaning in the sentences in which they respectively appear. In sentence eight the subordinate clause is ‘who will take care of your child?; the verbal group that ensures meaning in that sentence is *will take care*.

### ***Prepositional Phrase (PP)***

Riddles make use of PP, especially since the whole meaning of riddles rely on or reside in the relationship that exist between the parts of the analogy. That is to say, PPs show the relation, either of time, space or manner that holds between the reference and the analogy. For instance, we have the PP *in armour* which shows the relation of the object and the armour in terms of space – the object is inside the object or that the armour swaddles the object like a soldier is swaddled by the armour he wears.

Another example of PP is *on the roof-top*. This phrase shows the relation of the object and the roof-top in terms of space and position – the object (potatoe leaf) is actually positioned *there* on the roof-top. In riddles, PPs are employed to show us or direct our attention to the very needful relations in the questions/statements that help to unmask the enigmas.

### ***Lexis***

The language of riddles is sometimes said to be archaic and certainly often contains apparently meaningless words or puns (Finnegan 437). The content of riddles often includes just about every sphere or human and natural life. It is this reason which makes the choice of words in riddles not restricted or discriminatory. The major lexical features in the ten riddles of this paper include nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives and articles.



### ***Nouns***

The sentences display both concrete and abstract nouns and gerunds (verbal nouns). Concrete nouns refer to names of objects, things which can be felt or seen. We have such concrete nouns as: 'moon', 'person', 'armour', 'raffia palm', 'father', 'kernels', 'egg', 'potatoe leaf', 'roof-top', 'child', 'rat', 'toilet road', 'eyes', 'garri', and 'war', 'palm fruit', 'vulture', 'forest', 'cloth', 'market', and 'sand'; we have 'wetness' as abstract noun, with 'cracking' and 'bulging' as gerunds. The nouns, more often than not, refer to culture-items which are traditionally imbued with meanings above and beyond their ordinary lexical meanings. For instance, the reference to raffia palm and kernels is cultural; they are items or crops which are inextricably linked with the pleasure and fortune, respectively, of the people.

### ***Verbs***

The verbs give necessary details about the action(s) taking place involving the nouns (objects). We have 'loves', 'backbites', 'dresses', 'go', 'cracking', 'grows', 'pluck', 'take' 'care', 'walks', 'swallows', 'bulging', 'beating', 'salute' and 'sit'. They are all lexical verbs and make reference to the activities of the nouns.

We also have a serial verb construction in the main clause of sentence eight: '... take care...'. A serial verb construction typically comprises two or more verbs in series. It usually has two or more actions being depicted as comprising one complex action. The serial verb construction could be an idiom or a construction deliberately created to depict action or events in a tale or riddle etc. In sentence eight 'take care' emphasizes action rather than description, and it is stated with an economy of words which heightens dramatic impact.

### ***Pronouns***

The pronouns consists of 'you' and 'your', second person pronoun and second person possessive pronouns respectively, and 'our' first person possessive pronouns.

### ***Prepositions***

These include 'in' 'on' and 'below' They all show the relation that exists in space, between the objects in the riddles.

### ***Collocation***

Collocation refers to all the relationship between words in a sentence or to the behavior of certain word combinations in sequence. We notice that certain words behave as if they were single words in a sentence, while some words keep



company with others and therefore function as single units in the sentence. We have fixed or habitual, usual and unusual, stable, versatile collocations, etc.

In riddle A, moon is the linguistic centre (nodal item). 'Up' and 'wetness' are within the collocational range of moon, both literally and metaphorically. In the Ibibio idiom, when the moon is 'up' the coolness of the atmosphere suggests wetness to the eye. We are made to understand that moon as a heavenly body is quite cool. This collocational range is extended, metaphorically, to include backbiting - which is a cold habit. The collocation here is versatile.

In riddle B, we have 'war' as the nodal item and its collocational range includes both 'armour' and, idiomatically, raffia palm. War and armour have fixed collocation. Palm wine, the brew from raffia palm, in certain quarters, is idiomatically regarded as the most potent armour against whatever wars against man.

In riddle C, the collocational pattern is unusual on the one hand, and usual on the other. It is unusual in that there seems to be no noticeable relationship between the egg and cracking of kernels. But on the other hand, it is usual because what our Father-God has that is not used in cracking kernels must be an egg. This is so because 'whatever' is fragile (and the egg is fragile) cannot be used in cracking kernels.

In riddle D, 'potatoe' is the nodal item and its range of collocation incorporates 'grows', hence they can linguistically co-occur. The collocation is versatile. However, their co-occurrence suggests something more than the literal linguistic relationship. Idiomatically, in Ibibio that is, if the potatoe leaf, which normally grows or creeps on the ground, decides to climb on to the rooftop, its use as an edible leaf will be lost since it will no longer be accessible. Just like the father who dies is useless to his child who now becomes an orphan. Father and child have a habitual collocation.

In riddle E, 'rat' and 'father' are the nodal items. The collocational items include 'toilet road' and 'bulging eyes'. This collocational pattern is unusual. These interactions between usual and unusual, fixed and unfixed, and versatile collocations are a permanent fixture of Ibibio riddles. The analogy which aids the unraveling of the enigmas in riddles lies wholly in the juxtaposition of like and unlike image patterns.

In riddle F, 'visit' is the nodal item and its collocational item is 'salute'. This collocational pattern is usual since a visit collocates naturally with salute. In riddle G, like in riddle C, the collocational pattern is unusual since there does not seem to be a palpable relationship between palm fruit bunch and sitting down. This riddle



does not emphasize sitting down; the emphasis is on not sitting down and we cannot usually sit on the bunch of a palm fruit. Riddle H has 'forest' as the nodal item while 'market day' is the collocational item. The collocational pattern is unusual. In riddle I, 'cloth' is the nodal item while 'valuable' and 'worn' regular collocational items. And the pattern is usual.

### ***Cohesion in Riddles***

Riddles depend solely on a logic that is internal and applicable only to it. This logic is typified in the progression or stages of progression that lead a respondent from the statement/question part through to the answer/reply. Cohesion in riddles is aided by the use of coordinating conjunctions, and where absents, the comma. They help in binding the units or segments of clauses into whole sentences, which ensure unity and consistency of ideas. The question-type riddles have a fluidity that is marked in the sequential movement from the question through to the answer.

### **Conclusion**

We have shown in this paper that riddles do not put so much stock on meaning as on word play, on objects and sounds. We have also shown that, in spite of the fact that riddles have been regarded as the exclusive preserve of children; they do however display stylistic features which make them worthy of study. It remains to add that the aesthetic appreciations of riddles reside in the flexibility of language, and that they thrive on the build-up of sense patterns which are important and familiar to the people from which such riddles emerge. Thus, we can say that language is a nexus which makes or gives riddles their beauty. The Ibibio riddles are based on an acute perception of nature and make an important contribution to a child's perception of and participation in his social milieu through emphasizing critical thinking and knowledge transfer.

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