

ETHNO-PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICATION IN TIV COMMUNICATIVE SYMBOLS

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jolls.v15i1.17>

Abstract

Interpretation of communicative symbols is largely influenced by the context in which a particular communicative symbol is employed to convey a message. In view of this link between communicative symbols and interpretation of their meanings, this suggests that the symbolic language has a link with the context in which it is used. The objectives of the study are to describe communicative symbols in Tiv and demonstrate how context influences the interpretation of communicative symbols in Tiv. Data for the study were collected through the consultation of thirty (30) native speakers of Tiv covering men and women who are considered to be mature enough to have a good knowledge of the workings of the communicative symbols in Tiv. The researcher used her intuitive knowledge of Tiv to validate the data of the study. The study concludes that there are communicative symbols in Tiv which include: *ikyá-í-wúrē, swèm, gbēgbà-íwya, Ígbè,,átè -íwya, ípyévénikyōndō, ndārēgh-kù-wúrē, ángèr, íshà í tōrand ívō í ákōō*. The study also discovered that each of the symbols plays a crucial role in communication among the Tiv people. In addition, the study found out that the interpretation of the communicative symbols in Tiv is contextually based because the symbols are assigned various communicative roles based on different contexts in which they are used. It was also discovered that the relationship between communicative symbols and their meanings in Tiv is conventional, so the meaning of a communicative symbol in Tiv cannot be universal. The study adds the contextual interpretation of communicative symbols in Tiv to the body of formal linguistic analysis on ethno-pragmatics of communicative symbols.

Key words: Context, Communicative Symbols, Ethno-pragmatics, Tiv.

Introduction

Interpretation of communicative symbols is largely influenced by the context in which a particular communicative symbol is employed to convey a message. In view of this link between communicative symbols and interpretation of their meanings, it is argued that symbolic language has a link with context just as the human language, which is connected to contexts, whereby the contexts largely determine the meaning of verbal expressions in the society. Owing to the use of the Tiv communicative symbols for communication, this means of communication can be called a symbolic language since symbolic language refers to a form of communication that uses symbols, signs, or images to represent ideas, concepts, objects, or relationships. In fact, the symbolic language is different from the literal language where words have a direct and concrete meaning.

In a symbolic language, the people rely on the interpretations that are associated with certain symbols in different contexts. The symbolic language is found among the Tiv people since they communicate through signs, symbols, visual representations, gestures, sounds, to represent abstract or complex concepts, so the study set out to examine the various communicative symbols in Tiv and their contextual interpretations.

Although, several works have been carried out on communicative symbols such as Damkor (2007) on the role of Tiv cultural signs in communication, Tyavmbi (2021) on usage of Tiv cultural signs in communication, and so on; none of the studies carried out is on the ethno-pragmatic analysis of Tiv communicative symbols. Hence, the research gap in terms of Tiv communicative symbols. The present study, therefore, sets out to fill the gap by carrying an ethnopragmatics

analysis of contextual signification of Tiv communicative symbols.

Objectives

The study aimed at carrying out an ethnopragmatics analysis of contextual signification of communicative symbols in Tiv and the following objectives of the study are to:

- i.** Identify the Tiv cultural symbols that are used in communication.
- ii.** Examine the ethno-pragmatic roles of communicative symbols in Tiv.
- iii.** Show the communicative potentials of cultural symbols in Tiv.
- iv.** Examine how context determines the interpretation of Tiv cultural symbols.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the Semiotic Theory of Barthes Roland. The theory analyses how cultural objects function as signs to convey hidden ideological meanings, rather than just linguistic ones. Barthes (1977) developed a two-order system, denotation (literal meaning) and connotation (cultural/emotional association) to reveal how "myths" naturalize dominant societal ideologies. Denotation (first order) relates to the literal, explicit, and objective meaning of a sign (for instance, a photograph of a gun signifies a weapon); while connotation (second order) relates to the subjective, cultural, and ideological associations added to the sign (for instance, the gun signifies danger, power, or impending violence). Barthes (1977) argued that common cultural signs become "myths," which are systems of communication that make cultural, historical, and ideological messages appear natural and "self-evident". He adopted the signifier (form) and signified (concept) structure where a sign consists of a signifier (the physical form, such as a sound, word, or image) and the signified (the concept or mental image it represents); but expanded it to include visual, non-verbal, and cultural texts. Barthes (1977) outlined how narratives are structured through five codes:

- i.** Hermeneutic (Enigma) Code: Mysteries that hook the audience.
- ii.** Proairetic (Action) Code: Actions that imply consequences.

- iii.** Semantic Code: Connotations associated with characters or settings.
- iv.** Symbolic Code: Deep, often binary, meanings.
- v.** Cultural (Referential) Code: References to common knowledge or science.

Barthes' theory primarily aimed to dismantle the "naturalness" of cultural myths, exposing them as constructed, historical, and ideological. However, the theory focuses on signs, symbols, and cultural meanings; and gives some insights on how meaning is constructed and conveyed through visual images and signs. Roland Barthes' mythological aspect of semiotics explores the cultural myths and symbols embedded in everyday objects, events, and images (Barthes, 1977). Since the theory accounts for the description of signs, symbols and cultural meanings, the present study will use the theory to describe the relation between Tiv cultural symbols and their significance based on the following three levels: the denotative, the connotative and mythology. The denotative describes the literal meaning, the connotative is associated with the additional meaning that is ascribed to an object, and the mythology is related to the history, and culture of viewers. The theory will be used to justify the arbitrariness in the relationship between the communicative symbols 'signifiers' and their meaning 'the signified' in Tiv. Since that there is no inherent connection between the physical form of a symbol and what the symbol represents in the Tiv nation.

Conceptual Review

Ethno-pragmatics

Ethno-pragmatics studies speech practices from a culture-internal perspective (Goddard 2006). Thus, for Goddard, ethno-pragmatics seeks to understand how people use language specifically in the way it makes sense to them in terms of their indigenous values, beliefs and attitudes, social categories as well as emotions (Goddard 2006). The notion of ethno-pragmatics correlates with the idea that people in different cultures speak differently because they think differently, feel differently, and relate differently to other people (Wierzbicka, 2003).

According to Clyne (1994), ethno-pragmatics studies the use of language by a people to reflect certain views and orientations that identify them

uniquely from other people. Thus, it is beneficial to explore linguistic forms in terms of social and cultural contexts of use, as it uncovers more specific meanings. Hence, this suggests that ethno-pragmatics is the interface between meaning, and social or cultural contexts. The concept of pragmatics has been defined in various ways by different scholars, however each of the definitions is connected to the study of meaning in context. Ethno-pragmatics, therefore, explores how social agents recognise, produce, and reproduce social behaviours and structures (Geertz, 2003).

Context

In a bid to explicate the concept of context, Widdowson (2000) states that context refers to those aspects of the circumstance of actual language use which are taken as relevant to meaning. Widdowson further asserts that context refers to factors outside the text under consideration or knowledge of these factors and the knowledge of other parts of the text under consideration. In a similar vein, according to Yule (2000), context is the physical environment in which a word is used. In view of the above definitions, this indicates that context is the environment or circumstances in which a message is conveyed.

Communicative Symbols

Udechukwu (2022) asserts that a communicative symbol is anything used to represent, express and stand for an event or situation or it can be regarded as an object used to typify or represent the quality of something else or idea. Udechukwu (2022) further states that communicative symbols direct or guide our behaviour and are used to show an event of past, present or future. The use and interpretation of symbols involves the human mind, religion, science, art, myths, dreams and rituals which can be considered to be all manifestations of symbols. Considering the above views on communicative symbols, this indicates that communicative symbols are symbols that convey messages among a group of people.

Tiv

The personal name 'Tiv' refers to the ancestral father of the people, the language of the people and the people who are native speakers of the

language (Udu, 2009). This assertion about the interpretation of the concept 'Tiv' is confirmed by Adzer (2016) who says that 'Tiv' refers to the ancestral father of the Tiv race, members of the ethnic group who are the children of Tiv and the language of the ethnic group. On the contrary, Tiav (2017) avers that the name 'Tiv' originates from the phrase *Tive* which means 'their name'. In a bid to trace the genetic origin of the Tiv people, Udu (2009) states that Tiv is a splinter group of the Bantu, and Tiv belongs to the Niger Congo language family which is further classified as Benue-Congo language. He further states that the Tiv people are native of some local government areas across Benue, Cross-River, Nasarawa and Taraba States respectively.

Empirical Review

Tyavmbi (2021) conducted a study on the topic 'The usage of Tiv cultural signs in communication'. The aim of the study was to examine the meaning system of signs, so the study adopted idea of conventionality for the analysis of the data. The study discovered that cultural signs have cultural and conventional meanings which enable them to facilitate communication in the society. The study also discovered that the relationship between Tiv cultural signs and their meanings is arbitrary, there is no one-to-one correspondence between the signs and what they signify in the Tiv community. The previous study did not demonstrate the link between culture and pragmatics in the interpretation of Tiv cultural signs whereas the present study aims to assess the role of context in the interpretation of Tiv communicative symbols.

Damkor (2007) conducted research on the topic 'The role of Tiv cultural signs in communication' and the aim of the study was to examine the role Tiv cultural signs play in communication among the Tiv people. The study adopted the de Saussure's idea of the relationship between the signifier and the signified for the analysis of the data. The study discovered that Tiv cultural signs such as *Swēm*, beating of *Ìlyú/Ìndyér*, *Ígbē* and *Ìkyá-í -úrē* among others play significant roles in conveying messages in the Tiv nation, and the comprehension of the messages is based on the conventional meanings assigned to the signs by the Tiv people. The previous study focused on the

semiotic significance of the Tiv cultural signs in communication while the present study focuses on the role of context in the interpretation of Tiv communicative symbols.

Yina (2011) in the book entitled ‘Semiotics of Tiv oral poetry’ submits that semiotics plays a significant role in the Tiv oral poetry, so apart from mere verbal expressions, aesthetically designed symbols of *tsáv* that are of spiritual significance such as *wíná*, *pōō*, *ádzòv*, *gbébà*, *imbōrivungù* and *ákpághēr* are featured in the Tiv oral poetry in order to convey messages. The previous study focused on the crucial role that symbols play for conveying messages in Tiv oral poetry whereas the present study focuses on the role of context in the interpretation of Tiv communicative symbols.

Gbaden (1994) carried out a study on the topic ‘A critical survey of Tiv design motifs’ and discovered nine colours that are associated with the Tiv design motifs. The findings of the study show that the colours on the Tiv design motifs serve as the signifiers and the signified, therefore the colours communicate some messages among the Tiv people. The previous study focused on identifying the various colours on Tiv motifs and their significances whereas the present study examines the role of context in the interpretation of Tiv communicative symbols.

Research Methodology

The study adopted the qualitative research design to obtain data for the study since the research is descriptive in nature. A population of thirty (30) native speakers of Tiv was consulted on the contextual interpretation of Tiv communicative symbols involving six consultants from the selected five local government areas: Gboko, Katsina-Ala, Kwande, Makurdi and Vande-ikya. Each of the persons selected for the consultation was asked to explain to the researcher how the following operate as communicative symbols among the Tiv people: *íkyá-í-wúrē* ‘palm leaves’, *Swēm* ‘A small pot with *ayande*’, *gbēgbà-íwya* ‘A metallic

object in the form of pliers’, *Ígbè* ‘A broken earthenware and bamboo rope’, *Ílyú/Índyèr* ‘A hewn wooden drum made from *íyíasē*’, *Átè - ìwya* ‘A smithing workshop that is half-way roofed’, *Pōō* ‘A big *ákindē* (dome crowned fig ficus) tree in the middle of four sticks and each of them facing one another and two sticks put across the four sticks’, *Ípyévínyōndō* ‘A wrapper which is usually hewn in the middle’, *Ndārēgh-kù-wúrē* ‘palm fronts’ and *Ángèr* ‘A Tiv cultural dress made of black and white stripes’.

Data for the study were collected through the consultation of thirty (30) native speakers of Tiv covering men and women who are considered to be mature enough to have a good knowledge of the workings of the Tiv communicative symbols. Data were audio-recorded for transcription and analysis. The interactions of the researcher with the consulted native speakers of Tiv were recorded for future use since the researcher listened to the responses over and over in order to grasp how contexts determine the interpretation of communicative symbols in Tiv. The researcher used her intuitive knowledge of Tiv to validate the data of the study.

The study adopted the Semiotic Theory of Barthes (1977), which focuses on signs, symbols, and cultural meanings, so the theory supported this study in describing the relation between Tiv cultural symbols and their significance based on the following three levels: the denotative, the connotative and mythology. The denotative describes the literal meaning, the connotative is associated with the additional meaning that is ascribed to an object, and the mythology is related to the history, and culture of viewers. The Semiotic Theory of Barthes (1977) was used to justify the arbitrariness in the relationship between the communicative symbols (signifiers) and their meaning (signified) in Tiv.

Data Presentation

Symbol	Form	Significance
<i>Swēm</i>	A small clay pot with	Symbol of justice and

	‘ayande’ (a shrub-like and slim-leaf tree called <i>costus afar</i>) plant and ashes with bamboo rope.	conscience
<i>Gbēgbà</i>	A metallic object in the form of pliers	It identifies a holder of <i>íywá</i> and initiate of <i>ítyúmbún</i> . It represents one’s immunity against human harm.
<i>Átē-Íywá</i>	A smithing workshop that is half-way roofed.	It represents sacredness and home of refuge.
<i>Ígbē</i>	A broken earthenware and bamboo rope	It enforces the maintenance of law and order
<i>Ílyú/Índyēr</i>	A hewn wooden drum made from either <i>íyásē</i> (afzelia African) or <i>hár</i> (mahogany) or <i>mhō</i> (water berry) wood.	The rhythm of <i>Ílyú/Índyēr</i> Communicates the the great ancestors to welcome the dead to the great world. Its rhythm is also used to ask the ancestors for more blessings. The rhythm of <i>Ílyú/Índyēr</i> is also used to invite members of a community for an assembly for emergency issue such as war.
<i>Pōō</i>	A big <i>ákindē</i> (dome crowned fig ficus) tree in the middle of four sticks and each of them facing one another, and two sticks put across the four sticks.	It represents a warehouse for the dead people. It also represents good luck, protection and honour.
<i>Ípyévēníkyōndō</i>	<i>Ípyévēníkyōndō</i> is a wrapper which is usually hewn in the middle	It shows that a woman was deflowered by another man before getting married to her husband.
<i>Ndárégħ-kú-wúlē</i>	A palm frond	It represents death. It also shows that someone is conveying corpse. It shows the direction to the home of the dead.
<i>Ángèr</i>	A Tiv cultural dress made of black and white stripes. It is a zebra-like black and white coloured Tiv dress.	The black and white stripes represent the skull of Takuruku, the ancestral father of Tiv, and the grass which was used for burning the skull. The dress reminds the Tiv people that their ancestral father is always with them.
<i>Íshà í Tōr</i>	<i>Íshà í Tōr</i> ‘royal bead’ is	It identifies traditional

	worn on the neck by selected crowned members of the Tiv nation.	rulers in the Tiv nation.
<i>Ívō í ákôô</i>	Young female goat given to the mother-in-law'	It represents virginity or better still, it shows that a woman had never married before.
<i>íkyá-í-wúrē</i>	Fresh palm leaves	The leaves convey a message of mourning a dead person.

Data Analysis

The interpretation of communicative symbols in Tiv is determined by the context in which the symbols are used as follows

(i) *Swēm*

Swēm is a small clay pot with *áyándē* (a shrub-like and slim-leaf plant) and ashes with a bamboo rope.

In the context of Tiv traditional inquest, *Swēm* is regarded as the just judge who sees beyond the physical and has the powers to mete out punishment to the offenders without any prejudice. In the context of oath-taking, *swēm* represents the deity that holds the swearers responsible if they go against the solemn promises they make under the oath. In court proceedings, swearing under the *swēm*, ties the swearer to telling the truth or face the dire consequences of lying which most cases lead to death of the person. *Swēm* is ordinarily a cultural artifact of the Tiv people, but has been assigned the conventional role of enforcing justice and working with conscience in the Tiv land. For example, in the context of taking an oath, *Swēm* conveys the message that the words of the person taking the oath are sincere; that is to say that swearing the *Swēm* communicates the message of truth and honesty to the witnesses about subject of discussion. Ascribing the role of enforcing justice and working with conscience to *swēm* is based on conventional meaning, so the relationship between *swēm* and what it represents

in the Tiv nation is arbitrary. Hence, this suggests that the relationship conforms to the connotative aspect of Barthes' (1977) theory of semiotics which highlights that the meaning of any object is additional since the meaning ascribed to the object cannot be seen in the structure of the object. For example, the *swēm* does not carry the phrase 'justice and conscience' for the Tiv people to read and comprehend the messages.

(ii) *Gbēgbà*

Gbēgbà is a metallic device that has a plier-like structure which is usually possessed by an initiate of *iywá* and *ityúmbún*. *Íywá* is a traditional ailment that causes waist pain and can cause impotence. It is an initiate of this *kōmbō* 'idol' that can heal a victim of the ailment. *Ítyúmún* refers to powers of healing vested in a man and he who is vested with the powers is considered as the supreme traditional healer.

In the context of Tiv tradition, *gbēgbà* shows that the possessor as traditional healing powers for waist pains and impotence. It also portrays that the possessor has gone deeply into the initiation of the *iywá* and *ityúmbún*. Idols, thereby he is protected against any form of spiritual attack. Ascribing the role of providing powers of healing to the possessor of *gbēgbà* is based on the conventional meaning among the Tiv people, so the relationship between *gbēgbà* and what it represents in the Tiv nation is arbitrary. Hence, this indicates that the relationship conforms to the connotative aspect of Barthes' (1977) theory

of semiotics which highlights that the meaning of any object is additional since the meaning ascribed to the object cannot be seen in the structure of the object. For example, the object 'gbēgbà does not carry the phrase 'traditional healing powers' for the Tiv people to read and comprehend the messages.

(iii) *Átē-íywá*

Átē-íywá refers to the place where blacksmith works. Usually, this hut is roofed with corrugated roofing sheets or grasses, but the roofing is not completely done to parry the striking of thunder on the structure. *Átē-íywá* 'smithing studio' is usually situated at the roadside, and the criteria to own this place are ritual performance, initiation, and unanimous choice or acceptance of one by one's clansmen to possess the *átē-íywá*, so possession of *átē-íywá* against the wishes of one's clansmen makes it socially rejected.

Ordinarily, *átē-íywá*, is shelter under which the blacksmith carries out his work, but in the context of Tiv culture, it is considered to be a holy place which must not be desecrated with immoral and evil actions such as murder, adultery, fornication and so. Ascribing the significance of a holy place and refuge tent to *átē-íywá* by the Tiv people is tied to their worldview, this suggest that the significance ascribed to *átē-íywá* by the Tiv people confirms the link between symbolic meaning and culture as opined by Barthes (1977) that understanding communicative symbols relies on the conventional significance assigned to an object and the culture of a people who makes use of the object.

(iv) *Ígbē*

Ígbē 'the deadly deity and magical power that causes diarrhea' is a component of *Ákōmbō* which is considered to be the handiwork of *Áōndō* 'God' to regulate the universe and protect it against malfunctioning.

In Tiv traditional religion, *Ígbē* is considered to be the respecter of no one except the initiates, so in the event that you are not initiated but you dare touches *the Ígbē* 'idol' or any item protected by the *Ígbē*, you face the wrath of the Tiv gods. In the context of Tiv traditional religion, the *Ígbē* conveys the message of repercussion or

punishment on the non-initiate of *ígbē* who is suffering severe diarrhea affliction as a result of touching the idol. In the context whereby an item that has been protected by *Ígbē* I na family or community is missing, then the person(s) who is suffering severe diarrhea affliction in the family or community is considered to be the prime suspect for the missing item(s). Ascribing the role of providing enforcing law and order in the Tiv land to *ígbē* is based on conventional meaning, so the relationship between *ígbē* and what it represents in the Tiv nation is arbitrary.

(v) *Ípyévénikyōndō*

Ígbē 'the deadly deity and magical power that causes diarrhea' is a component of *Ákōmbō* which is considered to be the handiwork of *Áōndō* 'God' to regulate the universe and protect it against malfunctioning.

In the context of presenting a gift to a mother-in-law, *Ípyévénikyōndō* (a wrapper which is usually hewn in the middle) is considered to be an expression of displeasure of the son-in-law to the parents-in-law, especially his mother-in-law for her failure or inability to help her daughter to keep her virginity until marriage. Ascribing the role of expressing disappointment with the use of a dress that has been hewn in the middle reflects mythic signification of Barthes' (1977) theory of semiotics which highlights that the interpretation of any object is arbitrary since the meaning does not reflect on the structure of the object.

(vi) *Ndárégh-kú-wúlē*

Ndárégh-kú-wúrē is what is called in English as palm frond. It can be fresh, dried, small, or big, weaved or tangled; It can stand erect or can be fallen down and mounted on the way to the compound of a Tiv man.

In the context of death, *ndárégh-kú-wúlē* (fresh palm frond) is considered to be the mode of announcing the death of someone to the public, the size and style of the mounted palm frond communicates whether the deceased is a child, adult or an old person. If the deceased is a boy, the palm frond is single, small and short, if the deceased is an adult, the palm frond is single and tall, but if the deceased is old, the palm frond is double, tall and the two palm fronds are joined at the top to convey a message about death to the

Tiv people. Ascribing the role of announcement to the *ndárégh-kú-wúlē* (fresh palm frond) exemplifies Barthes' concept of connotation which highlights that the meaning of any object is additional since the meaning ascribed to the object cannot be seen in the structure of the object. For example, the *ndárégh-kú-wúlē* (fresh palm frond) does not carry the phrase 'announcement of death' for the Tiv people to read and comprehend that a member of the family mounted the *ndárégh-kú-wúlē* (fresh palm frond) is dead and has not been buried yet.

(vii) *Ángèr*

Ángèris a Tiv traditional dress that is made up of black and white threads; a zebra-like black and white coloured dress which is worn by the Tiv people on occasions such as marriage ceremony, funeral rite, New Year Day, *Kyeghsha shwa*, and other festivities.

In the Tiv worldview of colours, the white colour in *anger* represents peace, love, reconciliation and purity while the black colour in the dress represents soil fertility and strength. Ascribing the representation of love, reconciliation, and purity to the white colour, and soil fertility and strength with the black colour in the *anger* 'dress' demonstrates the second-order signification of Barthes' (1977) theory of semiotics which highlights that the meaning of any object is additional since the meaning ascribed to the object cannot be seen in the structure of the object. For example, the *ángèr dress* does not carry the phrase 'love, reconciliation, purity, soil fertility and strength' for the Tiv people to read and comprehend the messages.

(viii) *Íshà í Tōr*

Íshà í Tōr 'royal bead' is a set of beads that are made up of black and white colours, and the beads are distributed among the Tiv traditional rulers depending on the status of being a first-class chief, second-class chief and third-class chief.

In the Tiv worldview, the *Íshà í Tōr* 'royal bead' is a symbol of authority and identity among the Tiv traditional rulers. The discernment of the class of chief is determined by the number of royal beads that a chief is wearing, so the interpretation of messages that are conveyed by

royal beads varies based on the context. The white colour in the beads represents peace, love, reconciliation and purity while the black colour in the beads signifies soil fertility and strength. Using *Íshà í Tōr* as a symbolic identity for the chiefs in Tiv nation, as well as their various status in the Tiv traditional council portrays that the Tiv culture and significance of *ishà í Tōr* are intertwined for the communication of messages about death.

(ix) *Ívō í ákôô*

Ívō í ákôô 'Young female goat given to a mother-in-law' is presented to the mother of a woman by the time of paying the bride-price. This act is common among the Tiv communities irrespective of geographical location, however, the *ívō í ákôô* cannot be collected more than once per daughter.

In the context of marriage, *Ívō í ákôô* 'young female goat given to a mother-in-law' which is considered to be a sign that a woman in question never experienced marriage in the past. Hence, if the bride was involved in a previous marriage, then in the present one, the goat cannot be demanded because the presentation of the goat connotes that you are paying to obtain the permission to deflower your wife. However, no one cares to know whether a woman is a virgin before presenting the goat, the only consideration for the presentation is whether a woman was married before or not. The choice of *ívō í ákôô* 'young female goat given to a mother-in-law' as the significance of obtaining permission from the parents of a woman to deflower her is tied to the Tiv culture, this indicates that the significance ascribed to *ívō í ákôô* by the Tiv people confirms the link between symbolic meaning and culture as it is opined by Barthes (1977) that understanding communicative symbols relies on the conventional significance assigned to an object and the culture of a people who makes use of the object.

(x) *Íkyá-í-wúrē*

Íkyá-í-wúrē is what is called in English as palm leaves. The leaves are always fresh, and they are hoisted on a vehicle such as car, bicycle or bus to convey a message of mourning or carrying a corpse.

In the Tiv worldview, *ikyá-í-wúrē* ‘palm leaves’ hoisted on a vehicle such as car, bicycle or bus are understood to be a way of telling the public that the owner of the vehicle is bereaved or the vehicle is carrying a corpse, or the people in the vehicle are on a journey that is associated with a burial arrangement or programme. Using *ikyá-í-wúrē* as a symbolic medium of announcing the death of someone in Tiv nation portrays that the Tiv culture and significance of *ikyá-í-wúrē* are intertwined for the communication of messages about death.

Conclusion

The study concludes that there are communicative symbols in Tiv which include: *ikyá-í-wúrē*, *swèm*, *gbēgbà-íwáyá*, *Ígbè*, *átè -ìwáyá*, *ìpyévénikyōndō*, *ndārēgh-kù-wúrē*, *ángèr*, *ishà í tōr* and *ívō í ákòò*; and each of the symbols plays a crucial role in communication among the Tiv people. The interpretation of the communicative symbols in Tiv is contextually based because the

symbols are assigned various communicative roles based on different contexts in which they are used. Hence, the relationship between communicative symbols and their meanings in Tiv is conventional, so the meaning of a communicative symbol in Tiv cannot be universal.

In view of the above, the study adds value to the body of literature on ethno-pragmatics. The study adds the contextual interpretation of communicative symbols in Tiv to the body of formal linguistic analysis on ethno-pragmatics of communicative symbols. However, continuous studies on the ethnopragmatics of communicative symbols in Tiv and other Nigerian languages is suggested; while other semiotic theories that can also support the study of ethno-pragmatics of communicative symbols in Tiv should be adopted in order to expand the coverage of formal studies on the Tiv ethno-pragmatics.

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