

THE ART OF RHETORIC AMONG THE IGBO PEOPLE OF NIGERIA

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Introduction

Rhetoric has been in existence ever since the origins of language. From time to time, there are various rhetoricians who existed in different locations. Known rhetoricians include Mahatma Ghandi of India, Mao Tse Tung of China, Winston Churchill of England, Martin Luther King, Jr, Bill Clinton, Barak Obama, etc of the United States of America, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria etc.

From time to time, African people are treated to rhetoric. This could be arranged for as the cases have been at political campaigns, religious sermons of the clergy among Christians, African Traditional Religion worshippers or other religions all over Africa. Rhetoricians are also found in social gatherings such as traditional or Christian wedding, naming ceremonies, among others. Given the dire demand for rhetoricians, Esther M. Hamon explains about America:

Perhaps the times were becoming more troublesome, for, as we go back through our history, we find that times of social unrest called for rhetorical speeches. We find them in the Federalist papers (these papers urging the adoption of the US. Constitution) the speeches of Thomas Paine: we find them in practically perfect classical form in the speeches of Frederick Douglas as he argued for freedom for his people; and again in times of war in times of social strife that affect our country today (5).

On many occasions, some individuals felt motivated and rose to address the crowd. Sometimes it could be at parties or the festivities in which they have been well fed. When one's mind is at rest and ebullient, one may indicate an intention to make a speech. Sometimes still, the spontaneous speeches of rhetoricians result from bad emotions of deaths of one's relatives, loss of property, among other reasons.

Rhetoricians have perfected the art of endearing themselves to the audience. They do this, sometimes, by assessing the contents of their rhetoric, such that the audience may not find them wanting. They have to be factual in their points more so when they are referring to historical issues. They also have to remain clear in the eyes of their audience by using stylistic expressions that would hold their audience spellbound. They have to support their expressions with demonstrations that would register indelible imagery in the minds of the members of their audience.

Definition

Rhetoric has been defined by Della Summers et al as "the art of speaking or writing to persuade or influence people." They went further to state that the contents of persuasive expressions are not sincere or very useful (1222). It is quite true that rhetoric aim at persuading people to change their minds and accept the view of rhetoricians but it is an overstatement to dismiss the contents of rhetoric as something that is not sincere or very useful. It is not always that the ideas sold by rhetoricians to their audience are sugar-coated fallacies. Rhetoricians have to say truthful things that are reasonable otherwise they would be faulted. Once they are faulted they have failed to enjoy the attention of their respective audience. The idea that their stories are not very useful might refer to

falsehood already handled above, otherwise one can say that the contents of their expressions are very much useful in gingering their audience to believe them and act in order to achieve success. No venture; no success, they say.

Read et al define rhetoric as “the art of discourse, skill in the use of language ... the power of pleading or persuading” (1080). Their definition is objective. They seem very evidential that it is an art or skill aiming to manipulate language in order to win the heart of the audience. This is a true definition in that once the word rhetoric comes to mind, one feels, albeit strongly, the ability to command language (whether spoken or written) with the aim of convincing the audience.

For John Wilson, Carroll C. Arnold and Molly Meijer Wertheimer, there are certain conditions a speech has to fulfill before it can be adjudged a rhetoric: “... a complex of persons, events, objects and relations presenting an actual or potential exigency... creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action” (18). The above definition is interested in the science which would be arranged for with respect to persons being presented at events about objects and relationships. This will be done before making reference to the use of language with style by which the rhetorician can sway the minds and thoughts of the people from their stand to the acceptance of his views. It is true that rhetoricians perform their arts on occasions but it is not out of place for one to talk rhetorically without having formally arranged occasions. Rhetoricians can perform their art at informal gatherings.

Winifred Byran Horner is interested in Aristotle’s qualities of rhetoric. The qualities are three: ethos, pathos and logos. By ethos, he means that a rhetorician’s character should be upright. He should not be a person of questionable character. This will enable him gain the audience of his listeners. By pathos, he asks how much the rhetorician can persuade his listeners. This concerns his power of eloquence to win his listeners to his side of argument. It also involves his capacity for using rhetorical devices to move their minds. He is also interested in how truthful his expression is. He rejects the view that rhetoric should be a matter of selling falsehood to the audience (2).

Having considered others’ views on this topic, it is important to take a look at the meaning of rhetoric. Rhetoric, therefore, is the art of manipulating expressions in order to persuade, convince and win the hearts of the audience by speech or writing on formal or informal occasions. With the contents of the expressions, rhetoricians may be truthful or not but whatever the case the contents must contain some iota of truth otherwise they would be flawed and consequently lose their audience.

Rhetorical Questions

Rhetoricians register their points in the minds of their audience by the use of rhetorical questions. Such questions are sharp. They are not meant to be answered; rather they are meant to drive points home. They are questions that have obvious answers that everybody seems to know. M. H. Abrams defines rhetorical question as “a sentence in the grammatical form of a question which is not asked in order to request information or to write a reply, but to achieve greater expressiveness for him than a direct assertion” (80). For B.M. Mbah and E.E. Mbah, the rhetorician uses the rhetorical question in conjuring the feeling of his ideas or heightening the emotions of the audience for easy acceptance of his logic (380). M.N. Okonkwo as well holds the same view about the rhetorical question and states that it is used to strike emphasis and the speaker does not “anticipate answers” from his audience (94). The speaker achieves the importance of the rhetorical question by turning a statement into a question. One example is: “*A na-enyo eziokwu enyo?* (Does one question the truth) instead of “*A naghị enyo eziokwu enyo*”. (The truth is not questioned?). The answer to the question is *mba!* (no!), but nobody would seem to openly offer such answers.

R. Wayne Pace, Brent D. Petterson and M. Dallas Burnett state that rhetorical questions are framed in the negative form. They argue that it is that which “expresses a negatively valued judgement about the organization... conveys a kind of negative feeling but does not describe what it is (77). One may agree that rhetoricians tend to portray rhetorical questions more in the negative sense but there are positively structured ones. If an orator is presenting the negative side of a story, he will structure his rhetorical questions positively so that their answers will be ‘no’. The negative answers, although would not be said, will synchronize with the negative impressions he created in his story. For example, Obi told his audience that Chidi had told him lies on many occasions and that he had concluded that Chidi is dishonest. The rhetorical question to Obi’s statement is ‘Is he?’

Richard A. Katula, Celest A. Martin and Robert A. Schwegler believe that the rhetorical question demands “an immediate response” which is obvious (57). In other words, no individual has ever found the answers to the rhetorical questions difficult. Rather they are so obvious that everybody seems to know them thus it demands no answers. They go further to state that there are two kinds of the rhetorical question. The first is the indirect type in which the speaker has a lot of questions after which he concludes again. Its example can be found in an advertisement of a medicine for headache: “When suffering headache, will you buy Tablet A? Will you buy Tablet B?” Not at all, when Phensic is available to cool it. In the direct type, the speaker asks a rhetorical question giving an opportunity to answer although it will not be answered.

Preparation

Anyone who wants to talk to another must prepare himself or herself no matter how sudden it is. Even in impromptu speeches or oral compositions as students are trained and examined, one’s mind runs fast all over the topic as one stands up to speak through the microphone. When one wants to make a speech, one should think out one’s points. One should make sure one’s points are truthful, consistent and very much logical in reasoning. One should not mention wrong names, dates or any other false pieces of information. This will guarantee the credibility of one’s speech and so enable one enjoy peaceful audience. Rather than boo the speaker or murmur at him, his audience will accord him rapt attention as though what he says will be of great interest to them.

The same is the case with writers, if the information is written. When readers come across wrong information they are likely to sigh, murmur or express other kinds of disappointment. They will likely underline the wrong pieces of information and criticize the author in writing. Such critiques leave indelible marks on the authors of works that contain errors. So the rhetorician should be very much sure of his points. The need for preparation by rhetoricians before speaking or writing cannot be over emphasized. Dale Carnegie states that preparation enables the rhetorician develop self confidence: If that experience has engraved on his mind anything more deeply than another, surely it is the urgent necessity of preparing a talk before one starts to make it and of having something clear and definite to say, something that has impressed one, something that won’t stay unsaid. Aren’t you unconsciously drawn to the speaker who, you feel, has a real message in his head and heart that he zealously desires to communicate to your head and heart? That is half the secret of speaking (29).

Opening

Every rhetorician has to use the opening step in drawing the attention of his audience. It is very necessary. It is not hurriedly done more so when there is much noise.

It is better done in a sing-and-chorus pattern. If the audience responds, it makes them drop whatever discussion they are holding individually. Lyrin Hareld Hough states that the good opening helps him: "To get an arresting opening, something that will seize the attention immediately" (Carnegie 153).

The opening repartee of the Igboman's rhetoric is bellowing three or four times as the audience responds with "Yaa":

Igbo kwenu!

Yaa!

Igbo kwenu

Yaa!

Kwezuonu

Yaa!

'Kwenu' means 'do respond' and the response is "Yaa!"

In the place of 'Igbo', names of towns, clubs etc can be used in substitution to make it specific. This can be seen in various written rhetoric. One good example is Ogbuefi Ezeugo's opening repartee at the market-place in Umuofia in order to inform the people of Umuofia of the murder of the wife of Ogbuefi Udo in Mbaino:

In the morning, the market place was full. There must have been ten thousand men there, all talking in low voices. At last Ogbuefi Ezeugo stood up in the midst of them and bellowed four times, "Umuofia kwenu", and on each occasion he faced a different direction and seemed to push the air with a clenched fist. And ten thousand men answered "Yaa!" each time. Then there was perfect silence. Ogbuefi Ezeugo was a powerful orator and was always chosen to speak on such occasions. He moved his hand over his white hair and stroked his white bear. He then adjusted his cloth, which was passed under his right arm-pit and tied above his left shoulder.

"Umuofia kwenu: he bellowed a fifth time, and the crowd yelled in answer (Achebe, 10).

He bellowed the fifth time because he had allowed some time to pass after the fourth one. Another good example is the opening repartee of the leading *egwugwu* (a masquerade) in attracting the attention of the people before a court session. He stated:

"Umuofia kwenu" shouted the leading *egwugwu*, pushing the air with his raffia arms. The elders of the clan responded, "Yaa!"

"Umuofia kwenu!"

"Yaa!"

"Umuofia kwenu!"

"Yaa!" (Achebe, 81).

After submission and cross-examinations, the masquerades went into their chambers to confer. When they came out to deliver their judgment, they used the same opening repartee to call the court to order once more (Achebe, 84).

The opening repartee is done with force. We can see same in the case of Ogbuefi Ezeugo. He would thrust a fist in a different direction each time he bellowed. Where one cannot do that, somebody else can do the opening repartee otherwise he would not be given audience. It was done for Okika because he does not have a loud voice despite the fact that he told Umuofia the plight of the six men (including himself) who were imprisoned by the District Commissioner for the burning down of a church by the people of Umuofia:

The first man to speak to Umuofia that morning was Okika, one of the six who had been imprisoned. Okika was a great man and an orator. But he did not have the booming voice which a first speaker must use to establish silence in the assembly of the clan. Onyeka had such a voice, and so he was asked to salute Umuofia before Okika began to speak (Achebe, 182).

In the village square of Ifite-Amaeke, the traditional ruler of the town, Obi Udeaja, addressed the people on the alarming rate of robbery in the community. He used the following opening repartee:

Ifite-Amaeke kwenu!
Yaa!
Kwenu!
Yaa!
Muonu!
Yaa!
Zuonu!
Yaa! (Ubesie, 5)

The new addition '*Muonu*' is wishes that they would beget children and *Zuonu* is the prayer that they would train the children. One influential personality who is angered by the crime wave in the community spoke as well. He is Mazi Obijiofo. He opened his speech thus:

Ifite-Amaeke Kwenu!
Yaa!
Rienu!
Yaa!
Kwezuonu!
Yaa! (Ubesie, 17)

The new expressions here are '*Rienu*' which means that they are wished to feed very well and '*kwezuonu*' that means asking them to complete their response.

'Kwenu' is the most popular. There are other forms of opening repartee. One of them is *Makaanu* which is wishing the audience health and other good conditions of life:

Abatete Makaanu!
Yaa!
Abatete Makaanu!
Yaa!
Abatete Maanu mma o!
Yaa!

Good Personality of Rhetoricians

One of the qualities of rhetoric according to Aristotle is ethos. By this he refers to the good character of the rhetoricians. M. H. Abrams describes it under persona, tone and voice as the rhetorical concepts of a speaker's projected character that functions as a means of persuasion. The rhetorician has to be a person of integrity to enable him or her enjoy the audience of the people whether in speaking or writing. If the rhetorician is a robber or any other kind of criminal, he would be booed. If it is a written material, the reader would sigh and feel cynical about the credibility of his message. People like Okonkwo, Obierika, Ogbuefi, Ezeugo, Okika, Onyeka, among others, in the lead of

Umuofia are people of integrity and so are acceptable to the people. In Ifite-Amaeke, we can see that it was the traditional ruler, Obi Udeaja, and Mazi Obijiofo who have decent and imposing personalities as rhetoricians.

Contents

In referring to truth in expressions, Aristotle uses logos. The expressions of the rhetoricians have to contain truth or logical reasoning otherwise he would fail in selling his ideas to his audience. They should ensure that they have truthful stories to tell. They also have to make references to correct dates, names, places etc. For example, the truth in the oratory of Ogbuefi Ezeugo before about ten thousand men was that the people of Mbaino murdered the wife of Ogbuefi Udo without any reason. Whatever he said or acted is a matter of persuasion. This could be seen in the way he built up the anger of the people of Umuofia. He aroused their emotions by stating that the people of Mbaino had dared them (the people of Umuofia), gleaming his clenched teeth, bowing down his head and gnashing his teeth later on. Achebe states that he then paused and so “allowed a murmur of suppressed anger to sweep the crowd” (11).

Aesthetics

With respect to pathos, Aristotle asks how much the rhetorician can persuade the people. He should possess proper language expression so that the audience does not criticize him on the pitfall of grammatical inaccuracy. He should have a command of his language as a result of which he is fluent.

He should use good breath stops to put suspense in the minds of the members of his audience so that they will be anxious for his information before he releases it. Ogbuefi Ezeugo did that while addressing Umuofia. After bellowing for the fourth time in his opening repartee, he should have started the delivery of his message. But he took some time to adjust his cloth and fondle his head and bear. It was because of this delay that he bellowed the fifth time to make sure the attention of his audience is still fresh (Achebe, 10).

To achieve persuasion, he uses aesthetics to add beauty, humour and credibility to his expression. He should raise the qualities of his expressions by economizing words to avoid verbosity. He should simplify expressions for general understanding and make his expressions clear and not vague. He should also make his point consistently organized so that they would cohere. He should embellish his expressions with ornaments like proverbs, idioms, fables, euphemisms etc (Eke, 1999:1-13). The use of literary ornaments cannot be over emphasized. Ernest Emenyonu states that the “effective and persuasive speaker among the Igbo is usually one who correctly and effortlessly integrates proverbs, sayings and witticisms within the mainstream of his speech” (156). It is in the same vein that Rems N. Umeasiegbu argues that proverbs among Igbo speakers are so useful that they very often use proverbs in their speeches and that the ability to understand proverbs calls for wisdom because somebody “may be present at a meeting without understanding what is being said yet the meeting is conducted in his own language”(64). It is because of the profuse usage of proverbs by Igbo people that they call it the palm oil with which they eat words as Chinua Achebe popularizes it in his *Things Fall Apart* (6). The rhetoricians of Igbo extraction use various rhetorical devices in beautifying their expressions. They include the following:

(a) Proverbs

B. M. Mbah and E.E. Mbah define it as “the wisdom of many and the wits of one” (200). By this they refer to the accumulated wisdom many people had added to proverbs before particular users in the new contexts. For Inno Uzoma Nwadike, the proverb is the

word of wisdom, with deep meaning, which the Igbo use for the purpose of linguistic aesthetics (18). F. O. F. Onwudufor defines proverb as the compressed expression and the brief expression that is enlarged, in which elders coded the philosophy of the world (1). And M. N. Okonkwo states that the “value of the proverb to the Igbo is very great,” sees it as the “mark of a mature speaker” who “aims at making an impressive and powerful speech before an audience of respectable, experienced or elderly Igbo” (107).

This figurative expression is the linguistic ornament that has representations of entities being talked about, in which the rhetorician sums up his ideas very vividly and catchy for intelligent and non-childish audience with a view to making his point clear and entertaining.

Proverbs have meanings and so are not used by force. They are used where they fit in, so their meanings and contexts are considered in choosing suitable ones. Igbo proverbs include the following:

- (i) **Egbe bere ugo bere, nke si ibe ya ebela nku kwaa ya.** - Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch, whichever says no to the other, let its wing break. (This proverb will be good in the context of dispute where the strong person bullies a weak one and the latter or his sympathizer uses the proverb to injure the heart of the former).
- (ii) **E zuo ka aha eri udele, a toṭuo ngiga.**- When those that eat the meat of the vulture gather, the basket in which it is hung is brought down. (This proverb is used to urge the beginning of the business of those that have a common interest as soon as they have all assembled. It could be used as an introductory statement by their moderator or the first person to speak. One of them who thought that calling their meeting to order was delayed could use the proverb to ask the person responsible for the commencement to begin).
- (iii) **Aka aja aja na-ebute ọṅụ mmanụ mmanụ** - Soiling hands provides the mouth with food. (The above proverb fits in where an elder is advising a young person that wastes his time at the period he should be working for his daily bread).
- (iv) **Nkụ dī na mba na-eghere mba nri** - The firewood in a diaspora town heats the food of the people of the town in the diaspora. (The proverb avers that a town prides itself with its great men and women).
- (v) **Ọkụkụ e bu n’isi amaghị na ije dī anya-** The fowl borne on the head does not know that the journey is far. (This is good in the circumstance where the person that is being catered for does not understand the difficulties experienced by his/her caterer/guardian).
- (vi) **O were otu ọkụkụ gbuoro mmụọ abụọ.** - He has immolated one fowl for two deities. (This has the same meaning with the English proverb. He has killed two birds with one stone. This **explains** the act of being economical).
- (vii) **Awọ adighị agba ọsọ ehie n’efu-** The toad does not run in the day time for nothing. (This proverb is the equivalent of the English proverb, No smoke without fire. It is good for giving a reason for an issue).

- (viii) **Osisi anaghị adụ mmadụ ugboro abụọ n'anya.** - A piece of stick does not thrust into one's eyes twice (This proverb means: Once beaten, twice shy. After the first event, one should have been conscious enough to prevent the second attack).
- (ix) **Mmiri bụ ndụ azụ** - Water is the life of fish. (This means that without water, fish cannot survive because it needs it every time. The proverb exemplifies the nature of the indispensable).
- (x) **Oti ọkpọ anaghị eti isiakwụ-** The boxer does not box a palm head. (The palm head is full of thorns, so the boxer does not attack it. This proverb is good in referring to what is invulnerable).
- (xi) **Mmadụ anaghị anyụ nsị n'ubi ata.** - One does not defecate upon the grass that is taller than he. (This proverb stipulates the importance of attempting only what is within one's capacity. It means the same thing as this proverb: Cut your coat according to your cloth).
- (xii) **Ogori lua di abụọ ọ mara nke ka ya mma** - When a lady has married two men in turns, she should know the better one. (This proverb is good in asking one who has tasted or tested two things to find out the better one).
- (xiii) **Onye ji isi kote ebu, ya ka ebu ga-agba** - He that stirred the wasp would be attacked by the wasp. (This means that whoever committed an offence will bear the consequences).
- (xiv) **Mmiri maa ọgazi, n'elu maa ya n'ala, akika ya dīriri ya n'ahu** - However the rain beats the guinea fowl, its spotted colours are still there. (This is used to state that whatever difficulty one had undergone, one will still survive).
- (xv) **Afọ ekweghị ụkwụ zuo ike-** The stomach does not allow legs to rest. (The stomach is hungry and so legs do not have rest as they have to move about to fend for what the stomach would eat).
- (xvi) **E lewe okenye anya n'ọnụ ọ dī ka o jighi ya nūọ ara-** Looking at the mouth of the aged one, it would seem as though he did not suck his mother's breasts (This proverb means that who overgrows a particular stage of life looks as though he did not pass through it).
- (xvii) **Onye kpatara nkụ arurụ si ngwere biara ya ọriri** - He that fetched ant-ridden firewood invited the lizard to his house. (This is used to tell one who created the opportunity for his problem is equally responsible for the problem).

(b) **Wellerism**

Wellerism is very much like the proverb, only that the idea of the proverb is heard from an entity which may be a human being, an animal, a tree or any other natural phenomenon. B. M. Mbah and E.E. Mbah define wellerism as "witty expressions usually in the form of the reported speech attributed to some fictional characters including

humans, animals and even inanimate objects” (201). But it is important to remark that wellerisms are not only the sayings of fictional characters. There are known individuals that are quoted with wellerisms, whether they are still living or dead. For example, a notable orator in Abatete, Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State, who has died is still quoted: “Omaliko Akukwe si na ogiga ka okwukwu mma. Maa onye maa ya kwuru ka ya na-aga”. Omaliko Akukwe said that moving (no matter how much slow) is better than standing at a place and whosoever disagrees should stand somewhere as he walks away”.

There are wellerisms in various languages all over the world. Nobody can state when it started to exist. But the term – ‘wellerism’ started to exist after Charles Dicken’s publication of Pickwick Papers. This is because wellerism is a term formed from a character in the publication which uses supposed proverbs that serve as quotations of people. Brunvand (1968:40) holds this view when he states that wellerism was “named for Charles Dicken’s Sam Weller...”. From the English name of this figure of speech, Igbo people, fashioned out their term, Asịnilu. This means that the proverb in which a character is quoted as having said it.

There are various examples of wellerism. They are as follows:

- (i) **Onye ara sị na ara amaka kama na njenje dị na ya erika-** The mad man says that madness is very good but that it entails a lot of loitering. (By this the user means that madness is not good because the emphasised disadvantage is greater than the benefit).
- (ii) **Nwamkpi sị ka a gbaara ya afa ndụ na ọ bughị afa uto n’ihi na onye dị ndụ ga-
etoriri uto -** The little he-goat demands for the divination of life and not for the divination of growing tall for he believes that one who is alive will surely grow tall. (By this, the user is asking for the positive result of probability and not for certainty because that one is assured).
- (iii) **Ụsụ sị na ya ma ka ya dị were abalị na-apụta-** The bat says that it knows how (ugly) it is and decided to fly only by the night. (This is good for someone who had already decided to maintain a certain standard in life and chosen to ignore certain other positions meant for another person, no matter how better it is).
- (iv) **Amazụ sị na kemgbe ya hụrụ ike diochi, na nkwụ ọ na-eteta agbuna ya. –** Amazụ said that since he saw the buttocks of the wine tapper his palm wine does no longer appeal to him.(This is used for an entity that has reduced in quality)

(c) **Idiom**

This speech device is mistakenly taken as the proverb, but it is not. It has an agreed meaning from culture to culture so its meaning is analytically realized from the individual meanings of the words that make it up.

- (i) **Anyā erughị mmadụ ala -** He does not look downwards (It means that the person is not careful)

- (ii) **Ọnwụ ọkwa n’aka-** He came with the partridge in his hand. (This means that he came early),
- (iii) Ọ tara isi mbe – He ate the head of the tortoise. This means that he does not feel pains
- (iv) Ọ moro obi n’azụ – He positioned his heart at his back. The meaning is that he is wicked.
- (v) **Onye ohi ahụ na-esi igwe n’imi ugbua** - The thief perceives the rod now. (The meaning is that the thief is behind the bars where he struggles to see the light of the day).
- (vi) **Ọ na-eme aka abụọ.** - He is using both hands in doing something. (This means that he is a thief)
- (vii) **Ọ nwere isi mmebi** - He has a damaged head (He is mad, is the actual meaning).
- (viii) Ọ gbara isi akwara – He developed nerves on the head. It means that he is unyielding and disobedient.
- (ix) Ọ moro ntị n’azụ – He grew ears behind. This means that he is disobedient or heady.
- (x) Ọ nwere anya ukwu. – He has gigantic eyes. – This means that he is envious.

Euphemism

This rhetorical device is used in mitigating a severe situation in such a manner that the harshness of this situation would reduce. It could also mean saying what is indecent to the ear (especially before a mixed audience of different classes of people) so that it would be graceful. Examples include:

- (i) **Ada bulara akwukwọ unyahụ.** - Ada went to submit the book yesterday. (This means that Ada died yesterday).
- (ii) Agara m ihu mmiri ọhja. – I went to pour water into the bush. This means that I have gone to urinate.
- (iii) Nna m na-ezu ike n’ime Onyenwe anyị. – My father is sleeping in the lord. This means that my father is dead.

(d) **Fable:**

This is a story one can tell so that his audience would deduce what he has in mind. Inno Uzoma Nwadike defines fable as a little story that performs the function of the proverb about human beings, animals or events which one can put into his speech for teaching an idea in a mild way (18).

An example is the story that a wealthy man told someone who came to borrow money from him. He did not want to give the borrower the loan. So he said to him: “I’ve been giving people loans but since I gave Mr. Eze Okoye a loan and he refused to pay back as we agreed, I stopped giving more”.

All the rhetorical devices used in giving the examples elucidate how their usages in speeches and writings work magic more than plain expressions can do. They are what the rhetoricians of Igbo extraction use in moving the minds of the members of their audience.

Conclusion

The rhetorician should be careful about ending his message. He should retire when the ovation is loudest so that it will leave an indelible impression of the rhetorician’s capability in the rhetorician’s audience. Dale Carnegie notes the importance of a good ending: “...the close is really the most strategic point in a speech; what one says last, the

final words left ringing in the ears when one leaves – these are likely to be remembered longest”. When the rhetorician finishes delivering his message, he has to announce the end by the closing repartee. The closing repartee is the same as the opening in some cases but less emphasized. Sometimes the speaker would simply say thank you. In conclusion, this essay has demonstrated that the Igbo people are noted for the usages of proverbs and other figurative expressions in beautifying their speeches and writings. There is no doubt that rhetoricians abound in Igboland. They perform their art so creditably well that they are sought after whenever the need arises. This act is effectively used by Igbo writers of the literary genre. An example is Pita Nwanna in his *Omenụkọ*, Tony Ubesie in his *Isi Akwụ Dara n’Ala*, to mention a few. Those who write in the English language also make use of these rhetorical devices including Chinua Achebe who blazed the trail with his *Things Fall Apart* and other works that have inspired so many other writers.

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