



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN SOCIAL SCIENCE
ARTS & HUMANITIES
Volume 12 Issue 11 Version 1.0 Year 2012
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Drumcommunication: The Trado-Indigenous Art of Communicating with Talking Drums in Yorubaland

By Samson Olasunkanmi Oluga & Halira Abeni Litini Babalola

Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman

Abstract - The talking drums of the Yoruba people of the South West of Nigeria are like many other types of drums found in other parts of the world in that they are melody producing/enhancing musical instruments accompanying song and dance performances made of hollow round frame with tightly fixed plastic or skin membrane on the surface(s) beaten with the hand(s), stick(s) or other materials. However, the Yoruba talking drums of the South West people of Nigeria are unlike the many other types of drums found in other parts of the world in that they are not just mere melody producing/enhancing musical instruments. This is basically because they can be used to disseminate vital messages and to respond to disseminated information. This paper introduces the term drumcommunication to explain the use of Yoruba talking drums to send and receive messages or information. The paper attempts a taxonomy of the Yoruba drums to establish the real talking drums. It explicates the functions of effective drumcommunication and barriers to effective drumcommunication. Most importantly, it suggests steps that can be taken to enhance the effectiveness of drumcommunication.

Keywords : Drumcommunication, Communication, Talking Drums, Trado-Indigenous Art, Yorubaland.

GJHSS - A Classification : FOR Code : 160503, 160502



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



Drumcommunication: The Trado-Indigenous Art of Communicating with Talking Drums in Yorubaland

Samson Olasunkanmi Oluga^α & Halira Abeni Litini Babalola^σ

Abstract - The talking drums of the Yoruba people of the South West of Nigeria are like many other types of drums found in other parts of the world in that they are melody producing/enhancing musical instruments accompanying song and dance performances made of hollow round frame with tightly fixed plastic or skin membrane on the surface(s) beaten with the hand(s), stick(s) or other materials. However, the Yoruba talking drums of the South West people of Nigeria are unlike the many other types of drums found in other parts of the world in that they are not just mere melody producing/enhancing musical instruments. This is basically because they can be used to disseminate vital messages and to respond to disseminated information. This paper introduces the term *drumcommunication* to explain the use of Yoruba talking drums to send and receive messages or information. The paper attempts a taxonomy of the Yoruba drums to establish the real talking drums. It explicates the functions of effective *drumcommunication* and barriers to effective *drumcommunication*. Most importantly, it suggests steps that can be taken to enhance the effectiveness of *drumcommunication*.

Keywords: *Drumcommunication, Communication, Talking Drums, Trado-Indigenous Art, Yorubaland.*

1. WHAT IS DRUMCOMMUNICATION

The term *drumcommunication* as can be seen is newly coined or derived from two existing words namely “drum” and “communication”. It is therefore a product of linguistic *fabrication*. Specifically, the word has been *manufactured* through a morphological process called blending. Morphology is a branch or an aspect of linguistics (the science or study of language or languages) that has to do with the formation or derivation of words from words. Denham & Lobeck (2010: 517) defines it as “the study of the system of rules underlying our knowledge of the structure of words”. To Gianico & Altarriba (2008:77) it is “the system of word –forming elements and processes in language”. Blending simply has to do with mixing, merging or mingling two words harmoniously to realise another word hence, the New Lexicon Encyclopedic Dictionary of English Language simply describes it as telescoping of two words into one. The derivation of the new term is therefore in accordance with that of words

Author α : Phd student, faculty of arts and social science universiti tunku Abdul Rahman (utar), kampar perak campus, Malaysia.
E-mail : samoluga@yahoo.com

Author σ : Phd chief lecturer/deputy rector the federal polytechnic ede p.m.b. 231 ede osun state , Nigeria.

like “televangelism”, “docudrama”, “infomercial” etc, which are relatively new words that have become part of English lexicon or vocabulary via the same morphological blending. However, the semantic interpretation of this new term or concept *drumcommunication* will be based on the meaning of each of the two component words i.e. “drum” and “communication” which represent the linguistic source of the term or concept.

The word “drum” according to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English refers to a musical instrument made of a hollow round frame with plastic or skin stretched tightly across one end or both ends, which is played by hitting it with stick(s) called drumstick(s) or simply with the hands. The New Lexicon Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of English Language similarly describes a drum as any of the various types of percussive musical instruments consisting of a hollow cylinder or hemisphere of wood, metal etc usually with a skin stretched tightly over the end or ends struck to produce a sound. Akpabio (2003) points out that drums made of skin are common all over the continent of Africa where they are used as musical instruments accompanying song and dance performances but also confirms that some are capable of “talking”. Various types of drums with various types of names can be identified in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular (Carrington 1949 and Raffray, 1992). We have pot drums which have the shapes of pots beaten with foam-like objects peculiar to those in the Eastern part of Nigeria which Doob (1996:100) describes as “drums like water pots made of baked clay”. We have other drums of various shapes and sizes like the *dundun* and *bata* of South West Yoruba people of Nigeria. We have the *jebi*, *kalangu* and *kanzangi* of the Hausas in the Northern part of Nigeria. We also have the *eka ibit* and *etok ibit* of the South-South people of Nigeria to mention just a few.

The word communication has attracted myriad of definitions and/or interpretations, which is evident in the one hundred and twenty six (126) published definitions of communication listed by Dance and Larson (1976). It is against this background that Little (1983) has described Communication as a chameleon of a word that changes the colour of its meaning with a change of speaker or listener. He however, defines

communication as the process by which information is passed between individuals and/or organisations by means of previously agreed symbols. Communication according to Wood (2009) is the systemic process that facilitates human/people's interaction with the aid of interpretable and meaningful symbols. Devito (2012) identifies some basic communication elements in his definition. He defines communication as a situation where one person (or more) sends and receives messages (or information) that can be distorted by noise (physical, linguistic, or psychological) which occurs within a context (physical, socio-psychological, temporal or cultural) with some possible effect and opportunity for feedback. In a similar vein Oluga, Adewusi and Babalola (2001) point out that effective communication is that which does not fail neither to pass meaningful information nor to attract a desired response.

The term *drumcommunication* going by the semantic interpretations of its constituent parts will then refer to the process which involves the use of drums or drumbeats to disseminate properly conceived ideas, appropriately coded or articulated via meaningful and comprehensible drumbeats that can be decoded or understood or interpreted by the target listeners or intended audience who respond to the message of the drumbeat with the aid of appropriate, desired or expected feedback. It is important to point out at the juncture that while most African/Yoruba drums can be used to say one thing or the other, the "speech ability or competence" of the drums are not the same. While some have limited speech ability or competence some have unlimited speech competence. The *dundun* can be regarded as the straightforward Yoruba talking drum that uses a kind of surrogate language while the *bata* is a stammering talking drum that uses more or less a dialect of the language it imitates. So these are the drums that come to mind when the phrase or expression "talking drum" is mentioned.

II. TAXONOMY OF THE YORUBA DRUMS

Various types of drums/drumsets can be identified among the Yoruba people of South Western part of Nigeria used for various purposes. We have the straight forward real talking drumset called the *dundun* set or *dundun* talking drum family. We have the dialect speaking stammering talking drum called *bata*. We have other Yoruba talking drums like *sakara*, *apinti*, *batakoto*, *ipese*, *agere*, *gbedu*, *igbin* etc which are discussed below in line with Laoye's (2005) classification:

III. DUNDUN DRUMSET

This according to Laoye (2005) is the real talking drum of the Yoruba people with very high "speech competence or capability". It is made of a piece of carefully carved 'apa' wood to form a

hourglass-like frame with two ends covered with membranes of kid's skin which are also carefully joined by some strings made of goat skin. It is usually beaten with a curved stick called drum stick. The *dundun* drums according to Omo (1978) para-phrasing the idea of Laoye (1954 and 1959) can possibly imitate the tones and gibes in the Yoruba speech hence, apart from being able to produce music for dancing can be used to communicate insults, praises, admonition and even proverbs. Ngozi (2001) also states that the *dundun* in addition to its ability to produce music for dancing can also announce the arrival and departure of eminent personalities at a social gathering, can be used to recite peoples' praise names, can be used to rain abuses when the need arises to the extent that it can be said that the *dundun* drums among all others enjoy some "freedom of drumcommunication". Daramola and Jeje (1995) state that the *dundun* drumset consists of six slightly different types of beautiful looking talking drums which are discussed below:

IV. LYA ILU DUNDUN

This is mother *dundun* drum and the first among the *dundun* talking drumset. The *lya-ilu dundun* is also the longest in size compared to all other members of this family. It is usually beaten with the curved stick, in one hand while the second hand is used to grip its leather strings so that by tightening or loosening the grip the pitch tone of the drumbeat can be heightened or lowered respectively. This will then produce different tones by which various messages can be communicated just as in Yoruba, which is a tonal language. The *lya-ilu dundun* is the only *dundun* drum that has small bells fixed round its surface, which jingle as the drum is beaten thereby adding to the melody of the *lya-ilu dundun* drum beats.

V. THE KERIKERI

This is the *dundun* drum that is next in size to the already discussed *lya-ilu dundun*. Its shape is also similar to that of the *Tya-ilu dundun* but it does not have the jingling small bells fixed round the surface of the *lya-ilu dundun*.

VI. THE GANGAN

This is the *dundun* that is next in size to the above discussed *kerikeri* and both are similar in shape hence, it has virtually everything that the above discussed *kerikeri dundun* drum has. It does not have the jingling bells as well.

VII. THE ISAAJU

This is the *dundun* drum whose wooden frame is smaller than that of the above discussed *gangan* and which can guide or lead other drums in terms of whether

the beat will be fast or slow hence, its name meaning 'the lead'.

VIII. THE KANNANGO

This is another drum in the *dundun* family whose wooden frame is still smaller than that of the above discussed *Isaaju* but which still has everything that the *Isaaju dundun* drum has hence, when beaten sounds also like *Isaaju*.

IX. THE GUDUGUDU

This is otherwise called *emele dundun* and it is the last and probably the least of the *dundun* talking drumset. One wonders why it is included in this category or family considering its round shape that is different from others, its single face beaten with a pair of leather straps and not curved stick like others, its being hung on the neck with a long leather strap and not on the shoulder and most importantly its very limited 'speech competence'.

X. BATA DRUMSET

This originally, is the drum of the *Sango* worshipers and *elegun* traditional masqueraders hence, the worshipers of *Sango*, the god of thunder and the traditional masquerades people/adherents were those who usually danced to the drum beats of date especially during their annual worships/ritual festivals and burial ceremonies of aged ones among them. But with modernization and the need for cultural promotion, development and preservation we now have culture promoting musical groups and other traditional performing artistes using the *bata* drums. The shape of the wooden frame with which the *bata* drum is made is usually conical unlike the hourglass-like shape of the *dundun* with the exception of *gudugudu*. The wooden frame of *bata* is also made from the *apa* wood just like the *dundun*. However, about four main types of drum that make the *bata* set can be identified:

The *bata* drums, whether the long conical ones or the three round ones tied together, are usually hung on the neck of the *bata* drummers (*alubata*) when beaten and they are usually played with a stiff leather strap on hand and the palm of the second hand of the *alubata* simultaneously. But in the case of the round face three in one *bata*, two leather straps are usually used just like that of *gudugudu*. There are four types of drums that make the *bata* drumset namely: *Iya-ilu bata*, *emele-abo bata*, *omele-ako bata* and *kudi*, which are briefly discussed below:

XI. IYA-ILU BATA

This is the biggest of all the *bata* drumset hence, its name which literally means or can be directly translated as the "mother *bata*" drum". This drum just

like the mother *dundun* drum usually has jingling small bells fixed round its surface.

XII. EMELE-ABO BATA

This is the *bata* drum that is next in size to the above discussed *Iya-ilu bata* but which does not have small jingling bells fixed to its round surface. Its name can literally mean the female *emele bata*.

XIII. EMELE-AKO BATA

This is the third in the *bata* drum family and this drum whose name literally means the male *emele bata* is smaller in size to the female *emele bata*. It has no small bells fixed to its round face but has a tone higher than those of the *Iya-ilu bata* and *emele abo bata*.

XIV. KUDI BATA

This is the fourth type of the *bata* drum which is very short and which is not thin below like the *emele ako bata* and does not have a high sounding tone of the *emele ako bata*.

Different tones can be realized by beating the different part of the skin membrane on the surface of the *bata* drum separated by a dark substance stuck on the face of the drum to produce varying sounds. The language of the *bata* drum is not as easily comprehensible as that of the *dundun* drum hence, some believe the *bata* drum speaks a dialect of the general language, which the *dundun* speaks. Some believe the *bata* drum is just a stammerer hence, it is regarded as a stammering talking drum. However, the *bata* drum is also capable of communicating proverbs and praise names or chants or poems of people and places.

XV. OTHER YORUBA DRUMS

Apart from above discussed drums in the *dundun* and *bata* talking drum families, we still have some other traditional Yoruba drums which though may not be as "linguistically competent" but which have recognized indigenous values and cultural uses. Some of such drums as identified by Olatunji (1984:5) are *apinti*, *batakoto*, *ipese*, *afere*, *gbedu* and *igbin* discussed below:

XVI. THE APINTI

This is used at major ceremonies. It has *Iya ilu* with a hollow in the wood with which it is made and with just one face. Its hollow opens to the other side not covered by any membrane. It also has *omele*, which is similar in shape to the *Iya ilu apinti*. Both the *Iya-ilu apinti* (mother apinti) and the *Omele apinti* are hung on the shoulder, usually the left, with a rope when beaten.

XVII. THE BATA KOTO

This is a form of *bata* with members of its family smaller than the real *bata* drums but made of calabash and soft skin. It has an *lya-ilu* that is not quite big, an *omele ako* made of a smaller calabash and with a high sounding tone like its name and an *emele abo* also made of a calabash that is not smaller than the *emele ako* but with a wider breath.

XVIII. THE IPESE

This is the drum of the *Ifa* Priests/worshippers beaten during their festival or during the burial of an *Ifa* Priest or leader. It has various types like those already discussed. We, *ipse* proper that is six feet tall beaten with stick. We have '*afere*' that is next in size to *ipse* which is not as tall but with a wider breath and three stands. We have *aran* that is not as big or tall as the *afere* and also with three stands. The surface of the drum can be stiffened by pressing down the wood on the edge of the drum.

XIX. THE AGERE

This is the drum of the hunters beaten during their festival and also beaten when leading hunters or other members die. We have three drums making this set namely, the *agere* proper, *feere* and *afere*. The *agere* is the biggest, made of a wooden frame with two equal faces. The *feere* is smaller in size to the *agere* while the *afere* is the smallest of the three drums.

XX. THE GBEDU

This is a traditional Yoruba drum otherwise called *agba-iyangede*. The set has *afere* a four foot drum that is long, big and heavy. It also has *afere* that is next in size to *afere* hence, it is not as tall and with a surface that is not as wide.

XXI. THE IGBIN

This is the drum of the *Obatala* worshippers hence, it is not meant for everyday drumming/use. It has *lya-ilu*, *lyadun*, that is next to the *lya-ilu*, *keke* that is next in size to *lya-dun* and the *afere* which is the smallest of them all.

XXII. THE PROCESS OF EFFECTIVE DRUMMUNICATION

There are five basic elements of the process of *drummunication* just as five good stages of the process of effective *drummunication* can also be identified. The elements are more or less the bedrock of the stages and these five elements are the *drummunicator*, the drumbeat message, the drumbeat channel, drumbeat audience and the drumbeat feedback. The five stages are the conception/initiation of ideas by the

drummunicator, selection of appropriate channel, encoding of the ideas into meaningful drumbeat message, decoding of the coded drumbeat message by the audience and sending of appropriate feedback. These are discussed stage by stage below:

XXIII. THE DRUMMUNICATOR CONCEIVES AN IDEA

This is the first stage of *drummunication* which involves the initiation of an idea by the *drummunicator aludundun*, or *alubata* (*dundun* or *bata* drummer) as the case may be hence, the equivalent of this stage in general communication is called the ideation stage by experts. The *drummunicator* who uses the *dundun* drum to communicate or the one who uses the *bata* to communicate i.e. the *aludundun* or *alubata* can initiate the idea of welcoming some people to a given occasion or ceremony, passing vital messages to those in the neighbourhood, greeting the king who is just coming from his bedroom, reciting the *oriki* of important people or places or reminding subjects of the supremacy of the monarch within a kingdom. Whichever be the case, the conception of a good idea makes/marks the beginning of effective *drummunication*. The Drummunicator Selects Appropriate Channel.

This second stage of *drummunication* has to do with the choice of ideal means of disseminating the *drummunicator's* message, that is, the specific talking drum that will be used to pass the intended message. The *drummunicator* can choose the use of the very eloquent *dundun* talking drum, which is believed to be more comprehensible than others especially when he does not want the listener to have too much difficulties in interpreting his message. The *drummunicator* can use the *bata* talking drum if his intended audience or listeners are also experts in *bata drummunication* or if he wants them to rack their brains a little before grasping his intended message.

XXIV. THE DRUMMUNICATOR'S IDEA IS CODED INTO DRUMBEAT MESSAGES

This third stage of *drummunication* process has to do with the choice of appropriate language or style of drumbeats with which the intended message will be coded. For example, straightforward drum language can be used which virtually everybody who understands the tonal language imitated by the talking drum can easily comprehend. Similar expressions that listeners or audience are already familiar with can also be used to achieve the same easy-to-comprehend *drummunication*. However, the use of proverbs, historical allusion or esoteric language can be adopted or employed when the intended audience of the *drummunicator's* message as versatile in indigenous communication like elders with rich knowledge of culture and tradition.

XXV. THE DRUMMUNICATOR'S AUDIENCE DECODE(S) THE DRUMBEAT MESSAGE

This fourth stage of communication has to do with the interpretation of the *drumunicator's* coded drumbeat message by his/her audience or listeners. The audience expected to decipher the drumbeat message may be a single person like the king welcomed back to his palace from a trip by palace talking drummers. The audience can be important dignitaries or eminent personalities at an important occasion. The audience can even be supernatural beings like the masquerades or spirit being appeased by spiritual drumbeat message. The audience can also be a group of listeners like members of a family whose family praise song/poem is played by the *drumunicator*. Whichever be the case, there will be effective *drumunication* if both the *drumunicator* and the audience understand the code of the drumbeat so that the latter easily decipher and understand the message.

XXVI. THE AUDIENCE/LISTENERS SENDS A FEEDBACK

This is the final stage of the process of *drumunication*, which is basically about the response of the listener to the *drumunicator's* message sent via the talking drum.

Such a response according Ngozi (2001:2) "can be positive, negative, limited, zero, verbal or non verbal". This means response to the *drumunicator's* message can be the positive that is expected or the negative that is not expected. The response can be partial which represents the limited feed back or there may be no response at all which is the zero feed back. Also, the response can be verbal if it is via the use of words or speech sounds and may be non-verbal if it does not use words or speech at all. For example, a man whose *oriki* (praise poem) is played by a *drumunicator* may just smile, wave, stand and dance or send money to the *drumunicator*. It is also possible to respond to the drumbeat message with a drumbeat message as done by those from the families of drummers. The late monarch (Timi) of Ede land Oba Adetoyese Laoye was able to respond this way to the messages of his palace drummers about people's arrival and departure because he was a very good drummer. The feedback therefore, can be a good parameter or yardstick for determining the effectiveness of *drumunication*.

XXVII. FUNCTIONS OF DRUMMUNICATION VIA TALKING DRUMS

There are various reasons why people in traditional Yoruba setting especially the Yoruba people

in the South West of Nigeria something opt for *drumunication*. Some of these reasons tally with some basic purposes of general communication while some don't. We can classify the functions of *drumunication* under informational functions, social function, cultural function, religious function, extra-mundane function, commercial function and creative function. These are all discussed below:

XXVIII. INFORMATIONAL FUNCTION OF DRUMMUNICATION

A most fundamental function of any means of communication, whether traditional or modern, exogenous or endogenous, verbal or non-verbal, interpersonal or group, is to ensure the dissemination of vital messages or the transmission of important information. Gerson & Gerson (2012) therefore point out that informing the target audience of known facts is one of the basic goals of communication. The talking drum communication is not an exception because it is primarily used to pass meaningful messages or information that is also comprehensible to those who understand the language of the talking drum in question. For example, "Kaabo se daa daa lo de" meaning "You are welcome, hope you have arrived safely" can be played to inform people of the arrival of somebody being expected. Also "ki le n f'Oba pe Oba o Oba alase Oba" can be beaten to remind people of the authority of the king especially in a traditional setting.

XXIX. SOCIAL FUNCTION OF RUMMUNICATION

This function is necessitated by the fact that human beings have been identified as social animals, right from the time of Aristotle the ancient Greek philosopher till the present time of contemporary modern social psychologists like Aronson (2007). This is because human beings are fond of relating or interacting with one another, doing things in collaboration and participating in social functions like naming ceremony, wedding/marriage ceremony, house warming ceremony and burial ceremony. The social function of *drumunication* can therefore, be regarded as the entertainment function. This is because the use of the talking drum has become a common phenomenon at such social gathering. During the introduction ceremony that usually precedes a marriage ceremony proper you will see a talking drummer by the side of the presenter or programme coordinator helping to complement or drive home the message of the presenter. He/she can use the drum to say expressions like "Iya ni wura iyebiye tia ko le fi owo ra" or "Baba o! Baba o!! Baba o!!! Olorun da Baba si fun wa" meaning "The mother is previous gold that can be bought with money" and "Father! Father!! Father!!! God preserve the life of the Father for us" respectively in honour of the

mother or father of either the bride or groom. Juju and Fuji musicians also usually have talking drummers performing the same function.

XXX. CULTURAL FUNCTION OF DRUMMUNICATION

Culture according to Devito (2012) refers to common beliefs, values or behaviour of a group of people passed down from one generation to another. Baumeister & Bushman (2011) equally see culture as everything that a group of people share or have in common like food, language, government as well as artistic and historical achievements. They further point out that human beings are not just social animals but are also cultural animals. It is therefore not surprising that there is an increasing use of the various talking drums to communicate in various areas of human endeavours. Those who advertise various products and services on the bill boards, those who do advert jingles on the radio and television etc now make use of the talking drum more than before. Many enlightened people now show interest in study or art of the talking drum just as in many traditional festivals where talking drummers display dexterity in the art of talking drumming. This is just to ensure the promotion, development and preservation of the indigenous cultural belief or art. It is therefore not surprising that even foreigners from Europe and the Americas now show interest in Yoruba culture of talking with drums. It is in the light of this that one can say promoting the art of *drummunication* is tantamount to promoting the people's culture.

XXXI. RELIGIOUS FUNCTIONS OF DRUMMUNICATION

This has to do with the use of talking drums basically for religious purposes. It may be for the worship of the traditional gods of the Yorubas like *Sango* (the god of thunder), *Ogun* (the god of iron) *Obatala*, (the god of creation/creativity) *Osun* (a river goddess) etc. As earlier mentioned the *bata* talking drums are used basically by the *Sango* worshipers especially during their festival or worship, but could be accompanied by other drums. Also the *igbin* drum is used by the *Obatala* worshippers, which could be accompanied by others too. For example, the expression "Baa ba se yi tan a se mi si, a se se tun se" meaning "we will celebrate this year and many more years" is a common expression usually beaten by, *drumunicators* during traditional worships/festivals as a form of prayer to the admiration of all worshippers. It is important to point out the fact *drummunication* is not peculiar to traditional worshippers only because nowadays we find talking drums among the musical instruments of the Choir(s) of various Churches used to

disseminate useful information especially during praise worships.

XXXII. EXTRA-MUNDANE FUNCTION OF DRUMMUNICATION

This is a kind of extra ordinary spiritual use of the talking drum to communicate extra ordinary or spiritual information especially with/to supernatural beings like spirits, gods, goddesses, ancestors etc. This may sound incredible to those who have not experienced such but believable to those from places where it happens. There are some drumbeats that one will hear and take to his heel if he is not initiated because such drumbeats like the one used to evoke certain spirits are not meant for the hearing of ordinary people. Such an extra mundane communication is displayed in the Nigerian home video titled "*Saworo Ide*" where something was put on the face of a given talking drum and its drumbeat was used to call another person, who is supernaturally connected to the drum from a distant village, home to come and beat the drum to the hearing of an uninitiated ruler who on hearing the drumbeats was immediately affected by the mysterious drumbeats.

XXXIII. COMMERCIAL/OCCUPATIONAL FUNCTION OF DRUMMUNICATION

This is the use of the talking drums to communicate so as to make money or as a means of livelihood. It is now common in traditional Yoruba setting to see groups of talking drummers of different ages at various occasions like during weekly or monthly market days, wedding/marriage ceremonies, burial ceremonies, house warming ceremonies or naming ceremonies beating talking drums to praise people or to play the personal family or town's *oriki* (praise poem). All they strive to get are the names and places of origin of such people having known the praise poems of as many names and places, they just start to communicate with the talking drums to the amazement and amusement of their target audience. They don't do this for nothing of course as they expect those people who enjoy their *drummunication* to reciprocate. Really, some do respond by standing up, dancing and placing some money on the forehead of the lead drummer. The leader in such a case would be expected to take care of others who in most cases are his close associates or relations.

XXXIV. PROVERBIAL FUNCTION OF DRUMMUNICATION

This is the use of the talking drums to preserve and promote the use of proverbs, which are wise or witty saying used in a special way. Onibonoje (2002:53) describes a proverb "as a phrase of sentence that expresses some recognized truth about life". Samovar,

Porter, McDaniel & Roy (2013) point out that proverbs reflect “the wisdom, biases and even superstitions of a culture and are so important to culture that there are even proverbs about proverbs.” They equally point out the belief of the Yoruba people of Nigeria that “A wise man who knows proverbs, reconciles difficulties”. Proverbial communication of messages is very common in *drumcommunication* which is not surprising because the Yoruba language which the various Yoruba talking drums imitates its tones and jibes as put by late Timi of Edeland, Oba Adetoyese Laoye is also very rich in proverbs. There is also a common saying that “Owe lesin Oro, Oro lesin Owe T’oro ba so nu owe la fi nwa” meaning “A proverb is the horse (vehicle) of a word/an utterance just as a word or an utterance is the horse (vehicle) of a proverb. When a word is missing, proverb will find it.” So, *drumcommunicators* do use meaningful and understandable proverbs to communicate intended ideas or messages.

XXXV. HISTORICAL FUNCTION OF DRUMMUNICATION

Talking drummers in Yoruba land in the course of *drumcommunication* often makes reference to or reminding the listening audience” of some past events or happenings of historical relevance. This is because *drumcommunication* makes such historical allusion possible as a way of buttressing or substantiating communicated information. For example, if a seemingly wealthy man who expectant commercial talking drummers have been saying a lot of good things about with the aid of the talking drums with the hope of getting substantial amount of money just gives them the peanut in his pocket, they maybe annoyed or disappointed and forced to play “A lowo ma jaye eyin le mo, awon to j’aye lana da won ti ku won ti lo” meaning “Those who have money but cant spend should remember that even those who had and spent yesterday (in the past) have died and gone”. They can also play “Bo se re (2ce) Ose fun ara re (2ce)” to warn evil doers. This is reminiscent of a madman who was given a poisoned food by some people who hated his critical and satirical utterances but who because of his benevolence and generosity gave some young kids who coincidentally were the kids of those who gave the mad man the poisoned food.

XXXVI. CREATIVE FUNCTION OF DRUMMUNICATION

What this function tries to establish is the fact that *drumcommunication* is not just a medium or system of indigenous Yoruba communication or a branch of performing arts but also a creative traditional art. This is because of the fact that many wonderful ideas, philosophical sayings or expressions are often created by *drumcommunicators* consciously or unconsciously, when inspired, impressed or depressed. It has even been

discovered that many of the *Orikis* (praise poem or names) of notable people like kings, warriors, chiefs, great men etc have been created by drummers who perform at different occasions and who would want to recognise the presence of such people by saying some good things about them. Some of these praise names, praise poem or praise chants as the case may be created by talking drummers often become permanent to the extent that lexical ones become the name by which such people are called or recognised and the surnames of the offspring e.g. “Arowomole” meaning one who has money to build houses. It is in the light of this that Olatunji (1984:71) declares in support of this function that “Drummers coin new orikis for important men in the society”.

XXXVII. BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE DRUMMUNICATION

It is important to point out at the juncture that just as with some modern or other means of sending and receiving vital information, there are some factors that can constitute barrier to effective dissemination of comprehensible information via the Yoruba talking drums. Some of such barriers are susceptibility of *drumcommunication* to ambiguity, linguistic incompetence, faulty construction of talking drums, faulty *drumcommunication* process, possibility of noise, information overload, distortion or misrepresentation which are discussed below one after the other:

XXXVIII. SUSCEPTIBILITY OF DRUMMUNICATION TO AMBIGUITY

The message of the talking drums can be ambiguous when such a communicated message is capable of having double or multiple semantic interpretations especially where the available contextual information does not clarify or specify the intended meaning. Oluga (2010) attempts semantic interpretation of the term ambiguity and explicates form of ambiguity in human communication. The susceptibility of many drumcommunicated messages to ambiguity has made many people to give different interpretations to such messages, for example, the drumbeat of some broadcasting stations in Yoruba land.

XXXIX. LINGUISTIC INCOMPETENCE / BACKGROUND

The language background of the *drumcommunicator* and the listener/audience is very important. If they both speak/understand the Yoruba language for example, it will be easier to ensure the dissemination of comprehensible information because talking drums imitate the tones and jibes of the Yoruba language. If they are both good in the use of this same language and the audience could differentiate between

direct and indirect or literal and implied language use as well as knowing the proverbs of the Yoruba language then the disseminated information will be meaningful not only to the *drumunicator* but also to the audience.

XL. FAULTY CONSTRUCTION OF TALKING DRUMS

The way the talking drum that is the instrument of *drumunication* has been constructed as well as the type of materials used can affect the tone of the drum and the kind of message that will be communicated. As earlier said, the 'apa' is the wood that can be used for a good talking drum and a kid skin membrane used to cover the two faces with strings of goat skin. The design or construction of each of the various talking drums, because of their varying sizes, requires some artistic skills. This is the only way the string controlling the tone when pulled with the hand or pressed under the arm will bring the right to which can be articulated to pass meaningful and understandable messages.

XLI. FAULTY DRUMMUNICATION PROCESS

A fault at any of the already discussed stages of the *drumunication* process can serve as a barrier to effective dissemination and/or comprehension of the message of the talking drum. For example, if the *drumunicator* does not initiate or encode the message very well like mistakenly beating the praise poem of one person for another person or using codes that intended listeners find difficult to decode or where due to distance, they cannot hear the drumbeats of the *drumunicator* intended to pass vital messages, very well.

XLII. POSSIBILITY OF NOISE IN DRUMMUNICATION

This according to Ngozi (2002:22) refers to "obstacles that can reduce the amount, quality or fidelity of disseminated information" which can occur or be present at any stage. It can be physical if it is the loud sound of the instruments of a musician playing in the same gathering where *drumunicators* are also playing. It can be linguistic noise if the *drumunicator* uses esoteric language of drummers that the audience/listeners can't decipher. It can be psychological if the intended listener already blocks his/her minds on seeing the drummers may be because of their look or because he/she has headache or because he hates noise at close range peculiar to commercial *drumunicators*.

XLIII. INFORMATION OVERLOAD

This has to do with saying too many things at a time or passing too many information in a moment possibly by different communicators. This can also

occur in *drumunication* when the *drumunicator* assumes the intended audience can understand virtually everything said with the talking drum and at the pace of the drumbeat. It can also occur when two talking drum groups want to impress the same audience and messages start to flow from left and right. It will be difficult to ensure absolute comprehension in such a situation hence, such information overload constitute a kind of barrier to effective *drumunication*. The best that can be done by the *drumunicator's* audience is to filter or/and omit the message or information.

XLIV. DISTORTION OR MISREPRESENTATION INFORMATION

The message of *drumunication* is usually subject to distortion and misrepresentation just as it is common to all forms of non-verbal communication. The talking drum beats of various broadcast stations in the South West of Nigeria like the Lagos State Broadcasting Station and Oyo State Broadcasting Station have been given various interpretations that suit different people. This must have informed the decision of some other broadcasting stations like the Osun State Broadcasting station (OSBC) to tactically guide listeners/viewers in the interpretation of some *drumunicated* messages that precede major news broadcast. This way distortion or misrepresentation will be prevented or reduced.

XLV. STEPS TOWARDS EFFECTIVE DRUMMUNICATION

The use of talking drums as means of communication is such that should not be seen as an archaic means or local medium that should be neglected or jettisoned. Rather, it should be seen as part and parcel of the people's cultural endowment, which should be developed, promoted and preserved in line with the global yearning for cultural promotion and development. Some of the steps that can be taken to enhance the effectiveness of *drumunication* are:

XLVI. PROMOTION OF CULTURAL EDUCATION

People should be exposed the more to an important traditional art or cultural practice like *drumunication*. This way many more people from within and without the talking drum zones will be more versatile in art of talking drum communication. Beier (1956), though a European, has contributed to the study of Yoruba talking drums just like other African culture researchers because of his profound interest in cultural education especially that of the Yorubas in Nigeria. Many more people will understand the mechanics of *drumunication* and how it can supplement general communication if they care to learn more about the art.

XLVII. LINGUISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Linguistics according is the study of language(s) hence, by linguistic development we mean the development of language skills especially that which serves as a means of communication. Since the language of the talking drum is the indigenous tonal language of the people it will be good for people to be good in such a language of immediate environment. Foreign languages which some enlightened people first expose their wards to should not be allowed to relegate or bring the local language to the background. Effective *drumcommunication* will be enhanced if people understand their local or native language, which the talking drums imitate very well.

XLVIII. PROVISION OF CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

The contextual information has been identified as a factor that can aid clarification of the meaning of an idea and disambiguation. Moulton and Robinson (1982) opine that disambiguation of communicated information relies on context-dependent-pragmatic information given linguistically or non-linguistically. Also, the audience of a *drumcommunicator's* message will comprehend *communicated* messages faster and better if enough comprehension-aiding-contextual information is supplied or provided directly or indirectly.

XLIX. USING GOOD MATERIALS IN TALKING DRUM CONSTRUCTION

It is important to point out the fact that the adage or expression "garbage in, garbage out" also applies to the making of talking drums. This is because if bad materials are, what go into the construction of the talking drums then bad production of tones and sounds will be the outcome or output of such talking drums. However, the beauty of *drumcommunication* lies in the ability of the listener to decipher the communicated message(s) easily which is possible when the tones comes out correctly as well as the intended message(s).

L. REITERATION OF DRUMBEAT MESSAGES

This is also important because the level or pace of comprehension of people differ. Just as an oral passage listeners may not comprehend at the same level or pace so also is the message of *drumcommunication*. So some listeners due to their background or experience may need to listen just once to understand or comprehend, some may need to listen over and over or even rack their brain to understand or grasp communicated information. For effective *drumcommunication* therefore, *drumcommunicators* may need to

repeat or reiterate drumbeats that communicate vital messages or important information.

LI. PREVENTION/REDUCTION OF OTHER BARRIERS

If the belief that a problem known or identified is half solved is anything to go by then some of the barriers to effective *drumcommunication* not yet touched under this section could be addressed as steps towards effective *drumcommunication*. For example, *drumcommunication* should avoid or prevent any fault at any of the stages of *drumcommunication*. *Drumcommunication* milieu or environment should be such that will not given room for information overload or distortion. Noise of all kinds should be reduced to the barest minimum if not totally prevented or avoided. These, other things being equal, will enhance effectiveness of *drumcommunication*.

LII. CONCLUSION

The basic similarity between the Yoruba talking drums and other drums is that they are melody producing musical instruments while their difference lies in the fact that the talking drums are also instruments of information dissemination or media for transmission of vital messages. It is in the light of this that the term *drumcommunication*, morphologically derived from the blending of the two words "drum" and "communication", has been introduced to explain the process which involves the passing of vital messages or sending of important information via the Yoruba talking drums. Talking drums in this context however, refers to the "linguistically competent" drums that can display relatively high communicative competence "by imitating the tones and gibes of the Yoruba language especially the *dundun* and *bata* drumsets. The various functions of effective *drumcommunication* show that *drumcommunication* is part and parcel of the cultural or traditional values of the Yoruba people which going by the contemporary global yearnings for cultural development should be encouraged and preserved. However, the various factors militating against effective *drumcommunication* should be properly addressed by considering the suggested means of ensuring effective *drumcommunication* so as to maximise the benefits of effective *drumcommunication*.

REFERENCES RÉFÉRENCES REFERENCIAS

1. Akpabio, E. (2003). *African Communication Systems: An Introductory Text*. Lagos: B. Print Publications.
2. Baumeister, R. F. and Bushman, B. J. (2011). *Social Psychology and Human Nature* (2nd ed.). Belmont: Wadsworth.
3. Beier, U. (1956). "Yoruba Vocal Music" in *African Music* Vol. 2, No. 3 P. 23-28.

4. Bolaji, E. B. and Alabi, V. A. (1994). *The Principles and the Practice of Communication*. Ilorin: I. G. S.
5. Carrington, J. F. (1949). *The Talking Drums in Africa*. London: Carey Kingsgate Press.
6. Cayne, B. S. and Lechners, D. E. (1992). The New Lexicon Webster's
7. Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language. Danbury: Lexicon Publication Inc.
8. Daramola, O. and Jeje, A. (1995). *Awon Asa ati Orisa He Yoruba*. Ibadan: Onibonoje Press.
9. Dance, F. E. X. and Larson, C. E. (1976). *The Functions of Human Communication: A Theoretical Approach*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
10. Denham, K. and Lobeck, A. (2010). *Linguistics for Everyone: An Introduction*. Boston: Wadsworth.
11. Devito, J. A. (2012). *Human Communication: A Basic Course* (11th ed.). Boston: Pearson Edu. Inc.
12. Doob, L. W. (1996). *Communication in Africa: A Search for Boundaries*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.
13. Fong, M. (2012). The Nexus of Language, Communication and Culture. In Larry A. Samovar, Richard E. Porter and Edwin R. McDaniel (eds.). *Intercultural Communication: A Reader* (pp. 271-279). Boston: Wadsworth.
14. Gerson, S. J. and Gerson, S. M. (2012). *Technical Communication: Process and Product* (7th ed.). Boston: Prentice Hall.
15. Gianico, J. L. and Altarriba, J. (2008). The Psycholinguistics of Bilingualism. In Jeanette Altarriba and Roberto R. Heredia (eds.). *An Introduction to Bilingualism: Principles and Processes* (pp. 71-103). New York: Taylor & Francis Grp.
16. Laoye, A. (1954). "Yoruba Drums" in *Nigeria Magazine*, 45(1), 5 – 13.
17. Laoye, A. (1959). "Yoruba Drums" in *Odu*, 7(1), 5 - 14
18. Laoye, W. (2005). "Fundamentals of Yoruba Talking Drums". Unpublished Cultural Awareness Public Lecture.
19. Little, P. (1983): *Communication in Business*. London: Longman.
20. Ngozi, A. B. (2001). *African Communication Systems*. Effurun: Omobala Educational Publishers.
21. Oluga S. O., Adewusi, C. O. and Babalola, H. A. L. (2001). *Basic Communication Skills* Ede: BOA Educational Publishers.
22. Oluga, S.O. (2010). Ambiguity in Human Communication: Causes, Consequences and Resolution. *Jurnal Komunikasi- Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences*, 26(1), 37-46.
23. Olatunji, O. O. (1984). *Features of Yoruba Oral Poetry*. Ibadan: University Press Limited.
24. Onibonoje, B. (2002). *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Ibadan: A Onibonoje Communications Limited.
25. Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English (2000). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
26. Raffray, R. S. (1992). "The Drum Language of West Africa" in *African Affairs-Journal of the African Society*, 22(1), 302 - 316.
27. Samovar, L.A, Porter, R.E, McDaniel, E.R. & Roy, C.S. (2013). *Communication between Cultures* (8th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth.
28. Wood, J.T. (2009). *Communication in Our Lives*. Boston: Wadsworth.