
A stylistic study of Igbo folktales in musical rendition

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Abstract

Folktales form part of the Igbo oral tradition. They are meant for teaching and entertainment. This study sets out to examine some stylistic use of language in the trickster folktale Mbe na Enyi (The Tortoise and the Elephant), which was rendered into music by the minstrel, Gentleman Mike Ejeagha. The purpose is to bring to the fore the artiste's creativity to show that the language of folktales derives from every day speech of human life. The whole story was transcribed from Ejeagha's recorded CD containing different Igbo folktales. The transcription constituted the data from which excerpts were extracted to illustrate stylistic devices like personification, iteration, repetition, proverb, onomatopoeia, sarcasm, enumeration, sound symbolism and 'character contrast', among others. Our findings show that Gentleman Mike Ejeagha employed Igbo language use to showcase the richness and closeness of folkloric language to speech in daily life. Similarly, he creatively weaved the stylistic devices into the folktale to achieve maximal stylistic effect; and importantly, to show how animal activities are personified to teach and entertain mostly children and the youth. Seeing that the folktale Mbe na Enyi has been revitalized and popularized through music, the researchers, therefore, suggest that minstrels should endeavour to render folktales and possibly other oral genres, into music to make them accessible and interesting to the modern Igbo and non-Igbo alike.

1.0 Introduction

Folktales, according to Starmack (2018), “are stories passed down verbally from generation to generation. From ghost stories or fairy tales to animal fables, folktales are beloved by people of all ages and cultures.” Apart from being entertaining, folktale is didactic. This genre of oral literature has always been employed and enjoyed by the Igbo for their relaxation, entertainment and imparting of knowledge. Among the modern Igbo, it seems that this oral literary genre is no longer appreciated as before; no thanks to modernity. Thus, this genre is almost eroded in the Igbo language since it is hardly used in recent times in many Igbo speaking communities where modern way of living, security issues, technological appliances, among other factors, are seriously working against the survival of this genre.

Fortunately, rendering folktales in music has kept hope alive not just for the survival of the Igbo folktale but also for its enhancement and development. People from all cultures have and naturally enjoy music since, in the words of Onwuekwe (2016:228), “Music is a universal phenomenon that exists in every culture of the world”, playing significant role in the promotion of the values of the people. Some notable Igbo musicians like Gentleman Mike Ejeagha, have toed this path of greatness as far as Igbo folktale is concerned. Folktale in musical rendition is creatively crafted while still retaining its basic characteristics of entertainment and teaching, especially of wisdom and morals. This way, many Igbo folktales which probably would have been lost and since forgotten are revitalized.

Emenanjo (1977) says that the folktale is a fully fledged genre in its own right. It belongs to oral literature, and whether rendered in music or out of music, it is imbued with features of language used in daily human life. Although the authors of

folktales are not known, the literary creativity which the Igbo folktales embody is never in question. According to Emenanjo (1977), folktales can be classified into different types, which are the ‘Tortoise’ or trickster folktales, moral or didactic stories about animals also referred to as fables, the aetiological or ‘Why’ or *pourquoi* stories and the fairy tales. Trickster folktales have a cunning character called the trickster who always tries to take advantage of other characters by trick. In Igbo, the Tortoise symbolizes this character; hence, such stories are called ‘Tortoise’ stories. Fables have animals with human characteristics as their characters and teach morals without overtly stating it; aetiological or ‘Why’ or *pourquoi* stories explain ‘the why’ of natural phenomena; fairy tales have at least one character with magical powers, as a ghost or fairy.

This paper sets out to do a stylistic study of Igbo folktales rendered into music. Our purpose is to bring to the fore the artistes’ creativity in their stylistic uses of language with which they craft Igbo folktales, even as they are rendered in music in order to achieve maximal lyrical effect and to buttress that the language of folktales heavily draws from daily human speech. Moreover, folktales show how animal activities are personified for both didactic and entertainment purposes for the benefit of children, the youth, and adults as well. This kind of ability exhibited by the minstrel is replete in Igbo indigenous knowledge, which according to Olisaeke (2016: 240) means the ability of the Igbo to recognize indigenous cultural practices from which the cultural group draws materials necessary for its survival and utilize them in stories for didactic purposes. Apakama, Amadi and Njoku (2016:249) explain, “This knowledge is acquired through careful study of the environment and recurrent trends occurring in the processes of

eking out a living from the fragile ecosystem. The consistency of occurrence authenticates the belief as being reliable.”

For our data, we relied on Gentleman Mike Ejeagha’s (1983) musical rendition of Igbo folktales. We particularly selected one of the folktales in his CD, which is a popular Igbo trickster folktale – *Mbe na Enyi* (The Tortoise and the Elephant). We played the music and transcribed the entire folktale, which is of focus and constitutes our data. The data were tone marked using the convention of leaving high tone unmarked, marking low and down step tones with grave accent [`] and macron [¯] respectively. Excerpts from the transcription were drawn for illustration in the analysis. We also retained the dialect of the artist, and supplied the line by line English equivalents of the folktale to enhance the readers’ comprehension and enjoyment. The data were qualitatively analyzed.

2.0 Literature review

Described as part of oral tradition, folktales are meant to be told aloud, usually by an elder. Emenanjo (1977) aptly observes that in Igbo, the role of story-telling is mostly done by females, young or old. Traditional format for folktales is used in order to bring the stories alive in a special way in the minds of the audience (Starmack, 2018). Emenanjo (1977:ix-x) has an extensive description of the setting for folktales. According to him,

Folk-tales were usually told in the evenings after the days’ chores, or on the way to or from streams to fetch water, or the bush-farm to collect firewood or farm produce. In a typical evening the children usually congregated at agreed points, usually in the village square when there was moonlight or in the houses of women or children who were more favourable to or liked by children and, of course, had

an inexhaustible store of interesting and varied folk-tales and the ability to tell these in the most spectacular manner.

Characteristics of folktales, according to Starmack (2018) include: a regular beginning format involving fantasy time (Once upon a time, A long long time ago); good and bad characters are usual; the good character often has a problem to solve; the characters can be humans/animals/spirits; the characters/events usually come/happen in sets of three; stories presented are of everyday life; stories are presented in simple easy-to-understand format; folktales contain moral lessons; and they usually have a happy ending. These characteristics contribute in making folktales interesting, appealing, entertaining and educative and connect the listeners to the common values of the particular tribe, ethnic group or culture.

We must explain that although most of these characteristics are universal across cultures, there could be mild variations. For example, the Igbo folktale narrator does not begin with the time format. It comes after he/she must have given an indication to his/her audience that he/she is about to tell a story and then gets their approval. This has two popular versions:

Narrator: Chakpii

Audience: Wọọ

or, the narrator outrightly tells his/her audience that he/she has a story to tell them and they give him/her the authority to tell the story:

Narrator: O nwere akụkọ m ga-akọrọ unu

‘There is a story I have for you.’

Audience: Kọrọ anyị ka obi dị anyị mma

‘Tell us for us to be happy.’

Taiwo (1967:11) rightly claims that the oral literature, including folktales, as told in any society is influenced by the nature of the society. According to him,

What oral literature is current in any area depends on the character, temperament and occupations of the people. A sea-faring people will base much of their folklore on the sea and rivers, and since they are likely to be fishermen, on fishing, fishes and other sea creatures. A race of hunters will dwell much on hunting and animals in their oral literature. The experiences of a mountainous people will be different from those of people who live in the lowlands. People who live in the tropics are likely to have been exposed to influences different from those of people who live in temperate climates.

This assertion is also true of the Igbo society where folktales from the riverine areas feature fishing expeditions, mermaid spirits etc. Conversely, the folktales of the upland Igbo feature stories on farm crops and crop farming, rearing of animals etc. Thus, each Igbo community has folktales that feature their flora and fauna.

According to Ogbalu (2015:246), the Igbo place much value on people with oratorical skills, referred to as orators. She says, “An orator is one who commands great artistic use of language in his public speech in order to produce maximum effect on his audience.” She explains that Igbo parents encourage their children to be orators and so expose them early in life to that which will enable them acquire the needed skills. “This can be found in story telling sessions ... folktales, myths and legends are introduced to the child by his parents or any other elders in the family” (p. 247). Her assertion captures a very important significance of folktales which is often not mentioned.

Ajalla (2010) is on Igbo cultural values with respect to globalization. She points out that any society that loses its cultural values has lost its identity, for the society thrives through the maintenance of its cultural values. She claims that the cultural values of the Igbo people are part of who they are. This is why the (traditional) Igbo made efforts to ensure their transmission to the younger generation. One of the ways of this transmission is folktales. Thus, “Children are told a lot of folktales during moonlight by the elders” and these folktales usually teach such virtues as service, humility, courage and obedience. They, therefore, understand from these folktales the need for them to imbibe these virtues.

In their study of how the Igbo are contending with the intrusion of English in their indigenous knowledge system, Apakama, Amadi and Njoku (2016:249) lament the threat to the survival of indigenous knowledge,

Most unfortunately most indigenous knowledge systems are threatened. The oral medium adopted in the transfer of knowledge system greatly limits the range and quality of transfer. Today, formal education introduced in the wake of (Western) civilization takes the children away most of the day replacing the practical everyday learning with controlled curriculum which sometimes negates the vast valuable aspects within the indigenous knowledge systems that help people live sustainably.

On whether folklores are still relevant in Igbo society, their respondents comprising parents answered in the affirmative, but all but one excused themselves for not telling folklores, including folktales, to their children. This confirms our earlier claim that folktales are no longer told in most Igbo homes, nay communities.

There could be many versions of the same folktale and even addition of modern materials in them partly as a consequence of oral medium in transferring folktales, but more importantly because, “at every stage and with each group the content of the story changes to suit the needs and beliefs of the group” (Taiwo, 1967:11).

Runyi, Ekpe and Udochi (2017) stress the need for every society to preserve its language and culture. For them, culture is universal to every society, and has its strands as language, stories, songs, dances, artifacts, arts and crafts, buildings, practical skills, and sacred sites. This shows that folktales (stories) are an essential part of Igbo culture that must be consciously preserved. On his part, Olaosebikan (2017) advocates the use of traditional music in moulding the character of Nigerian youth. This is because the lyrics “give reasons for good character and lay emphasis on the joy of maintaining good characteristic virtues.” This is one of the major things that folktales do that make them very relevant for the proper upbringing of children.

Rendering folktales in music is a very productive way of making more people have interest in them. When they listen to the folktales, they enjoy the music, and may sometimes join in singing the lyrics. Onwuekwe (2016:229) aptly captures the scenario when she says, “Apart from listening to and enjoying music for entertainment, a lot of lessons are learnt in terms of moral values through the lyrics of the music.” This prompted the researchers to embark on the study of folktales in music to, among other things, showcase their interesting stylistic devices.

Summary of the folktale and data presentation

3.1 Summary of the folktale

The folktale tells us how Mbe, the Tortoise, was able to marry the Princess. The Princess insisted that she could marry only the man that brings an elephant. Mbe tricked his friend Enyi, the Elephant, into believing that the King had appointed Enyi to be the Chairman during the King's *Qfala*. Enyi was very happy for this. On the appointed day, Mbe purposely came late to lead Enyi to the palace. As both were going, Enyi urged Mbe to quicken his steps so that they would arrive early for the occasion. Mbe complained that he could not walk faster. He pleaded with Enyi to allow him mount on his back. To this Enyi agreed.

However, Mbe could not mount on Enyi's back because he could not climb the height. Again, he requested Enyi to allow him tie a rope round his (Enyi's) neck for him (Mbe) to hold on to the rope and climb on Enyi's back. Enyi, being eager to reach the palace early enough for the event, and not being suspicious of his friend, gave his consent. Meanwhile, as they walked and were approaching the palace, Mbe called out to the King, using a song, that he had succeeded in kidnapping Enyi and bringing him to the palace. Each time Enyi queried Mbe concerning the kidnap issue in the song, Mbe would deny having said a thing like that. He convinced Enyi that he was only praying Ani, the Earth Goddess, to lead and guard Enyi. This way, Mbe handed the tethered Enyi to the King and so qualified to marry the Princess. The moral lesson is, 'Be careful who you call your friends, how you trust them and where you go with them.'

3.2 Data presentation

The entire transcribed story and its line by line glossing, which form the data for the study, are found as the appendix to this paper. In the analysis, excerpts from the transcription were extracted to illustrate different stylistic devices.

4.0 Data analysis

In this section, we engaged in the stylistic analysis of the folktale to investigate such devices as personification, iteration, repetition, onomatopoeia, sarcasm and enumeration.

4.1 Personification

Personification is generally defined as a literary device that assigns human qualities and attributes to objects or other non-human things, like animals, birds, etc. In the story, the two major characters, which also appear in the title of the folktale, are *Mbe na Enyi* ‘The Tortoise and the Elephant’. The story about them is used to illustrate the type of things that can happen in human affairs between two supposedly bossom friends as indicated in this excerpt:

Mbè nà Enyi bù ezigbo òyì. Tortoise and Elephant are very good friends.

Sometimes, among such friends, some people personified in tortoise, on the one hand, are terribly tricky and can obtain whatever they want in life by playing on the intelligence of their so-called and unsuspecting friends, colleagues, etc. An example is an excerpt showing how tortoise deceived elephant by lying to him that the King sent him (tortoise) to inform him (elephant) that he has been made chairman of the occasion for the forthcoming *Qfala* festival,

Ò sị yā nà Ezè sị nya gè zìe gī

*He told him the King said
he should go and inform you*

*nì a gà-àgba Ofalà, that he will celebrate Ofala festival,
nà ngī̄ bu Enyi gà-àbụ onyeisiochēē! that you the Elephant will be
the chairman.
Nya à, nà mbòsì a gè-ème nya bụ̄ ivē Meaning that, on the day of
the said festival
nì a achō̄kwa kààà, m̀m̀m̀, that he does not want tooo,
mmm,
kà a chọ̄ọ yī̄ achọ̄ọ, to look for you/people to be
searching for you,
nò ọ̄ n̄gī̄ gààà-ènyekwu ọ̀rà that you are the one that
wiiiill even present
ndị gā-ābīānụ̄ ọjī̄. cola to the entire people who
will attend.*

On the other hand, some people personified in elephant can be so naïve and simplistic in life that they can trust anyone, especially those they wrongly believe to be friends, and can believe things on their face value without proper investigation. An excerpt exemplifying this view is where elephant whole heartedly believing what tortoise said, excitedly tells tortoise to repeat his (tortoise's) statement,

*Enyi wèè sị Mbè nya kwukene ifo ọ̄ Elephant then told Tortoise to
repeat what
o kwùlù ọ̀zọ. he had just said.*

Furthermore, this class of people like elephant can be so obsessed about material quest that they jump into anything they see as golden opportunity without actually considering the pros and cons. An illustration is,

*Enyi nùlịaaa, nùlịaa, nùlịchachasịa; Elephant rejoiced, rejoiced,
and rejoiced greatly;*

màkàrà ò nà-àchọbu uzò ò gà-èlu because he has been looking
nà be Èzè òso, for the opportunity
kà ò malụ mà nà gà-èje okwu to approach the King's
ādā Èze è nūì. palace,
for him to know if he will be
able to seek the hand of
the said King's daughter in
marriage.

Again, in this story, elephant was so terribly desperate to honour the so-called invitation, which he never bothered to crosscheck from the king and his household, that he allowed tortoise to do whatever he wanted, even tethering him: a move that ruined him. An excerpt illustrating it is,

Ò wèè kpọọ Enyī, sị yā nọ ò He (tortoise) then called
fūgo, nù ukwu nya etōrō ōgōnōgō Elephant, told him that he
nkè nya imāgolu n'azu nya bụ Enyi. has seen, that his legs are not
long
to enable him jump unto his,
Elephant's back.
Biko, kị a wèlunụ elili à Please, let him use this rope
nya chị n'aka wèè kedi ē n'onu, he carrying in his hand to tie
on his neck,
kị a wèè lịgolu n'azu nya bụ Enyi, to enable him climb unto his,
Elephant's back,
kà va wèè jebenụ. that they can then continue
going.

4.2 Iteration

Iteration is a device that involves saying something that expresses the repetition of an action. There are many instances of iteration in folktale. They include the following:

dogàgìdèlè, nà-àdoga 'making a strenuous effort to hasten one's steps'
bìakàtààlù, bìakàtalu, bìakàtalu 'coming repeatedly for a purpose'
Onye enū bìa, onye ànì bìa 'different people coming time after time'

4.3 Repetition

This is a recurrence of an utterance. It is usually employed for emphasis or to achieve rhythmic effect. The minstrel used this device effectively to make the music melodious also. The chorus of the folktale, 'Gwogwogwo ngwo', is a good example. Other examples are:

Nnaa m Eèzè akpàtaā m̄ Enyi! 'My father the King, I have kidnapped the elephant'

Nnaā m̄ Eèzè akpàtaā m̄ Enyiiiii! 'My father the King, I have kidnapped the elephant'

Nwa Mbè! Ì sị nà ì kpàta ōnyee? 'Little Tortoise, who do you claim to have kidnapped?'

Nwa Mbè! Ì sị na ì kpàtá ōnyeee? 'Little Tortoise, who do you claim to have kidnapped?'

Nà asị m̄ Anī nya dùbe Enyī chèbe Enyīī! 'I told the land to lead and guard the Elephant'

Ò dị kà à sị nà akpàta m̄ Enyiiiii! 'It seemed I said I have kidnapped the Elephant'

Nà asị m̄ Anì nya dùbe Enyī chèbe Enyīī! 'I told the land to lead and guard the Elephant'

Ò dị kà ā sị nā akpàta m̄ Enyiiiii! 'It seemed I said I have kidnapped the Elephant'

<i>À kwà Enyi gà-àbụ isiochēēē</i>	<i>'The Elephant will be the Chairman'</i>
<i>À kwà Enyi gà-àbụ isiochēēē</i>	<i>'The Elephant will be the Chairman'</i>
<i>Enyi na-àga n' ayị sò ì n' àzụụụ!</i>	<i>'Keep moving, Elephant; for we are solidly behind you'</i>
<i>Enyi na-àga n' ayị sò ì n' àzụụụ!</i>	<i>'Keep moving, Elephant; for we are solidly behind you'</i>

Different types of repetition were employed in the story: sentential repetition as exemplified above; clausal repetition and word repetition. Examples of clausal repetition are,

<i>“Gba nkịtị! Gba nkịtị!!”</i>	<i>“Never mind! Never mind!!”</i>
<i>nà fa adaāà,</i>	<i>that they are nooot,</i>
<i>nà va adaāà...</i>	<i>that they are nooot...</i>

Examples of word repetition are,

<i>bịàkàtààlù, bịakatàlụ, bịakatàlụ!</i>	<i>came repeatedly</i>
<i>nùlịaaa, nùlịaa, nùlịchachasịa;</i>	<i>rejoiced, rejoiced, and rejoiced greatly</i>
<i>“Ngwa! Ngwa!!Ngwa!!!”</i>	<i>“Hurry! Hurry !! Hurry !!!”</i>

4.4 Proverb

Proverb can be described as a wise saying that requires very deep thought or reflection for its proper understanding. In their popular proverb about ‘proverb’, the Igbo describe it as the palmoil with which words are eaten. Examples of proverb in the folktales are,

‘Òyì m dùga m̄ ozi’ nà iveè yì.

*‘My friend accompany me’
has something following it.*

This proverb can be compared to the English proverbs: ‘Look before you leap’ and ‘All that glitters is not gold’. It teaches that one should look well before one leaps because all that glitters is not gold. Most times, things that are treated with levity usually turn out to have so many others fallouts, that is, grave consequences.

4.5 Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is any use of language whose sounds are an imitation of the entity that it names. It gives a vivid or graphic representation of the idea expressed. Apart from its rhythmic value, it adds humour to the lyrics. There are many examples of onomatopoeia in the folktale:

gwògwògwò ngwò

‘the gait of the elephant’

gwogo! gwògò! gwogo!

‘the trot of the elephant’

tìkọm, tìkọm, tìkọm, tìkọm

*‘struggling movement of the
hind legs of the tortoise’*

4.6 Sarcasm

We take sarcasm to be a way of expressing an idea using over-emphasis to insincerely convince the hearer of the truth of what has been expressed. In the folktale, Mbe the trickster uses a lot of sarcasm to trick Enyi into believing that Mbe is his true friend who is taking him to where he will be the Chairman of the occasion. Examples:

À ’kwà Enyi gà-àbụ isiochēē!

*‘The Elephant will be the
Chairman!’*

À ’kwà Enyi gà-àbụ isiochēē!

*‘The Elephant will be the
Chairman!’*

that indicates heaviness/heavy weight. Similarly, *tịkọm*, *tịkọm* symbolizes something very short and thin/tiny; that is, tortoise's legs.

4.9 Character contrast

'Character contrast' can be described as a device that denotes opposing ideas, nature, etc. It is employed for stylistic effect to compare two or more things that differ from each other in various remarkably conspicuous ways. In the folktale, elephant is huge and mighty in size compared to the tortoise. Their characteristics also identify them and their individual nature. Whereas elephant's mighty height and bulkiness is easily identified with *gwogo!* *gwògò!* *gwogo*, tortoise's diminutive natural characteristics is identified with *tịkọm*, *tịkọm*. Even elephant used a diminutive *nwa* 'little, small, tiny, etc.' in addressing tortoise as *nwa mbe* 'little, small, tiny, etc. tortoise', as in the excerpt,

Nwa Mbè! Ị sị nà ị kpàtá ọnyee? 'Little Tortoise, who do you
claim to have kidnapped?'

Nwa Mbè! Ị sị na ị kpàtá ọnyeee? 'Little Tortoise, who do you
claim to have kidnapped?'

3.0 Summary and conclusion

We discussed some stylistic features found in the Igbo folktales that are rendered into music. By this we highlighted the stylistic creativity crafted into these Igbo folktales by the minstrel. We focused on the trickster folktale *Mbe na Enyi* 'The Tortoise and the Elephant.' The folktale was rendered into music by a popular Igbo minstrel, Gentleman Mike Ejeagha (1983). In the story, Mbe, who is the trickster in Igbo folktale, tricked Enyi into a snare and claimed victory that qualified Mbe to marry the Princess. We investigated stylistic devices like personification, iteration,

repetition, proverb, onomatopoeia, sarcasm, enumeration, sound symbolism and what we referred to as character contrast. The paper attests that Gentleman Mike Ejeagha creatively weaved many stylistic devices into the lyrics of the folktale to achieve maximal effect, including teaching and entertainment.

The folktale *Mbe na Enyi* has been revitalized and popularized through music. The researchers, therefore, suggest that minstrels should do more to render folktales, and possibly other oral genres, into good music (as Gentleman Mike Ejeagha has done with the *Mbe na Enyi* folktale) to make them accessible to the modern Igbo and save them from being lost to modernity and technological inventions. Although the folktale we studied attests many linguistic features, like lexical contrast, pitch modulation, sound elongation, we concentrated on the stylistic devices. As well, we identified the presence of the Igbo people's indigenous knowledge system at play in the story. However, we recommend these aspects of the Igbo language and their use in the folktale for further studies for both appropriate linguistic and cultural analyses.

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Appendix

(Introductory music)

Refrain

1. *Nnaa m Eèzè akpàtaā m̄ Enyi!* 'My father the King, I have kidnapped the elephant!'

Nnāā m̄ Eèzè akpàtaā m̄ Enyii! 'My father the King, I have kidnapped the elephant!!'

Nwa Mbè! Ì sị nà ì kpàta ònyee? 'Little Tortoise, who do you claim to have kidnapped?'

Nwa Mbè! Ì sị na ì kpàta ònyeee? 'Little Tortoise, who do you claim to have kidnapped?'

2. *Nà asị m̄ Anī nya dùbe Enyī chèbe Enyīī!* 'I told the land to lead and guard the Elephant!'

Ò dī kà ā sị nā akpàtá m̄ Enyiiiii! 'It seemed I said I have kidnapped the Elephant!'

Nà asị m̄ Anī nya dùbe Enyī chèbe Enyīī! 'I told the land to lead and guard the Elephant!'

Ò dī kà à sị nà akpàta m̄ Enyiiiii! 'It seemed I said I have kidnapped the Elephant!'

3. À 'kwà Enyi gà-àbụ Isiochéēē! 'The Elephant will be the
Chairman!'

À 'kwà Enyi gà-àbụ Isiochéēē! 'The Elephant will be the
Chairman!'

Enyi na-àga n' àyị sò yì n' àzụu! 'Keep moving, Elephant,
for we are solidly behind you!'

Enyi na-àga n' àyị sò yì n' àzụu! 'Keep moving, Elephant,
for we are solidly behind you!'

(Repeat 2 and 3)

Gwògwògwò ngwò (explaining: 'the gait of the elephant')

Chorus (interlaced with music): Gwògwògwò ngwò (ugboro 3)
'the gait of the elephant' (3ice)

Narrative A (**Chorus** 6 times, interlaced with music)

I gèè ntị, If you listen,
ị gà-ànụ kà e sì wèe lee onyeisioché, you will hear how they sold
theperson in charge,
nèkè a nà-àkpọ 'Chịamānù'. the one they call 'Chairman'.

4. (Repeat 1, 2 and 3; then 2)

5. Enyi na-àga n' àyị sò yì n' àzụu! 'Keep moving, Elephant, for
we are solidly behind you!'

Gwògwògwò ngwò Gwògwògwò ngwò ('The gait
of the elephant')

Enyi na-àga n' àyị sò yì n' àzụ! 'Keep moving, Elephant, for
we are solidly behind you!'

Chorus: *Gwògwògwò ngwò (ugboro 3) 'The gait of the elephant' (3ice)*

Narrative B (Chorus repeatedly, interlaced with music)

Ádá Èzè kà di bìàkàtààlù, bìakàtalu, Suitors came repeatedly for the hand of the Princess in bìakàtalu! marriage!

Onye enu bìà, onye ànì bìà, ò jù. The highly placed people came; the lowly placed people came, she refused.

Anu enu abìa, anu ànì abìa, ò jù. The flying animals/birds of the air came; the walking animal/animals on lands came, she refused.

Chorus: *Gwògwògwò ngwò (ugboro 5) 'The gait of the elephant' (5 times)*

Narrative C (Chorus after each line, interlaced with music)

Ò wèe lue òfu mbòsì, There came one particular day,

nnìa wèe kpọọ nyā, bu Eze; her father then called her, the King himself;

kpọọ nyā, kpọọnni ē, kpọọ ụmì a called her, called her mother, called his other

ndị òzọ; children;

wèe sị yā, “Kèdi ive kpātalumū and said to her, “What exactly is the cause

di òki ìzìzì àbìa, ì jù; the first suitor came, you refused;

òkì ìbùà abìa, ì jù; the second one came, you refused;

̀nki ̀ĩō abia, ̀i ju; *the third one came, you
refused;*
̀nki ̀ĩnō abia, ̀i ju?” *the fourth one came, you
refused?”*
Nĩ a chòlù kà ùm̀nn̄ē n̄ĩnē na onye *That he wants all her
siblings and his wife*
bi e solu jukene adì a nwaanya ajuju. *to join in questioning his
first daughter.*

Musical

Narrative D (Chorus after each line, interlaced with music)

Ọ nà-àdikwọnu mmā, *It is always proper,*
a nokàta, *once in a while,*
onyeisi nwē ̀nò, *the head of the family,*

ọ bụlụ nnà, *if it's the father,*

Ọ kpọkọọ nnē, kpọkọọnu ùm̀akā. *he calls the mother, also calls
the children all together.*
Fa n̄ĩnē àgbakọba, *All of them then gather,*
nwee nzụkọ, *have a meeting;*
onye ọbụ̀nà èkwuo ive nē-ēwi ē, *everyone states the source of*
his/her annoyance/anger,
onye ọbụ̀nà èkwuo uchi e, *everyone airs his/her own
views,*
màkàná, ọ nā-àmaka. *because, it is a noble thing.*
Ebe à kà ùm̀akā n'ònwē vā s̄i wèè *This forum enables the
children themselves*
na-àghota ònwē vā; *to understand one another;*

*nne àna-àghọta,
nnà àna-àghọta umụ̀akā.
understand the children.*

*the mother understands,
the father also comes to*

*Kà va nwèzìlì nzùkọ à va nwelù,
this meeting they had,
ogē à kà Àdeèze jì wèe meghee ọ̀nụ̀,
then bared her mind,
wèe sị nà onye ọ̀bū̀nà
ga-abụ onye yā-ānụ̀ yā,
her,
nọ ọ̀ yà-àkpūtālìlì Enyī,
Elephant,
kọ ọ̀ yà-àbụ,
o nwee emume a nà-ème nà be va,
in their home,
nyà àlìgolu n'enu Enyī à,
Elephant,
nyà àna-àgaghālì,
about, riding on it,
à malụ̀kwa nà nya bụ̀ Àda Èzè.
she is the Princess.*

*When they eventually held
this was the time the Princess
and said that whoever
will be the person to marry
that he must present an
so that,
if they are having a ceremony
she will climb on (top of) this
(and) she will be moving
People will then know that*

Musical

*Gwògwògwò ngwò (ugboro 3)
times)*

'The gait of the elephant' (3

6. (Repeat 1, 2 and 3; then 2 and 3)

Chorus: *Gwògwògwò ngwò. (ugboro 3) 'The gait of the elephant'
(3 times)*

Musical

Narrative E (Chorus after each line, interlaced with music)

Ogè e nè-èkwu iva à niñe, *When (news of) all these*
things became public,
Mbè nòdònwí ē èjègo okwu nya ā *Tortoise himself had gone to*
seek the hand of
nwatàkìlì nwaànyà. *this young lady in marriage.*
À chụa nyā ukwū elū ànà. *They gave him the chase of*
his life.

Chorus: *Gwògwògwò ngwò. (ugboro 3) ‘The gait of the elephant’*
(3 times)

Narrative F (Chorus after each line, interlaced with music)

Mbè nà Enyi bụ ezigbo òyì. *Tortoise and Elephant are*
very good friends.

Chorus: *Gwògwògwò ngwò. (ugboro 3) ‘The gait of the elephant’*
(3 times)

Musical

Narrative G (Chorus after each line, interlaced with music)

Mbè wèe kùnie jebe nà be Enyī, *Tortoise set off and went to*
Elephant’s house,
wèe je gà gwa Enyī, *and went and told Elephant,*
sí yā nà Ezè gà-àgbakwanụ Ọfalà. *told him that the King will*
celebrate Ọfala festival.

“Ezè gà-àgba *Ọfalà!*”
Ọfalà festival!”

Ezè sịkwù nya zìe yī
inform you

nò ọọ ngị gà-àbụ onyeisiochē.
chairman.

“*The King will celebrate*

The King even told him to

that you are going to be the
chairman.”

Chorus: *Gwògwògwò ngwò. (ugboro 3) ‘The gait of the elephant’*
(3 times)

Musical

Narrative H (Chorus after each line, interlaced with music)

Enyi wèe sị Mbè nya kwukene ifo ọ
to repeat what

o kwùlù ọzọ.

Ọ sị yā nà Ezè sị nya gè zìe gī
should go and inform you

nị a gà-àgba Ọfalà,
festival,

nà n̄gī ịbụ Enyi gà-àbụ onyeisiochē!
that you the Elephant will be
the chairman.

Nya à, nà mbòsị a gè-ème nya bụ ịvè
the said festival

nị a achọkwà kààà, m̀m̀m̀,
mmm,

kà a chọọ yī achọọ,
searching for you,

nò ọọ n̄gī gààà-ènyekwu ọrà
wiiill even present

Elephant then told Tortoise
he had just said.

He told him the King said he

that he will celebrate Ọfalà

that you the Elephant will be

the said festival

that he does not want tooo,

to look for you/people to be

that you are the one that

*ndị gā-ābiānū ojī. cola to the entire people who
will attend.*

*Enyi ñùlịaaa, ñùlịaa, ñùlịchachasịa; Elephant rejoiced, rejoiced,
and rejoiced greatly;
mākānà ọ nà-àchọbu uzò ọ gā-èlu because he has been looking
for the opportunity
nà be Èzè òso, to approach the King's
palace,
kà ọ malụ mà nyà gā-èje okwu for him to know if he will be
able to seek the hand of
ādā Èze è nù. the said King's daughter in
marriage.*

7. (Repeat 1, 2 and 3; then 2 and 3)

Chorus: *Gwògwògwò ngwò. (ugboro 3) 'The gait of the elephant'
(3 times)*

Chorus: *Gwògwògwò ngwò. 'The gait of the elephant'.*

Musical

Narrative I (Chorus after each line, interlaced with music)

*Kà va kpàlịsịzịlù nya bụ nkàta, "When they had finished the
said conversation,
bụ Mbè nà Enyi, that is, Tortoise and
Elephant,
Mbè wèe naba, Tortoise left,
wèe je gā gwa Eze and went to tell the King*

sìya nee mbòsì nya gà-àbìà
come
okwu ādāyī.

and fixed the date he will
to marry your daughter.

Ezè wèe sị nyā, “N̄gì n̄k̀wàlì
you at all hear
ive Áda kwùù?”

The King said to him, “Did
what the Princess said?”

Ò sị nyā n̄gì ekw̄s̄ikwānī ā ike,
talk much about it,
n̄gì rapū yā, nya b̄iazia,
he eventually comes
ive nyaaaf̄ùlù, ò wèlù.

He told him not to worry or
that you should leave it, when
whatever he sees, he takes.

Kà chi mbòsì ā lùzìèlù,
reached,
Mbè wèe jekwulu Enyī.
Elephant.

As the appointed date finally

Tupu ò jee nà be Eñyī,
house,

Tortoise went and met

chi agbāgōnītāsīgō,
anwū èkesibego ikē.

Before he went to Elephant’s

fierce.

the day was very far spent,
the sun was already very

Enyi sị yā, “Mbè!
“Tortoise!

Elephant said to him,

Kèezi kì i sì wèlù àbìà k̄t̄àa?
coming?

How come you are just

Ebe nwā a sị n̄ià gà-àb̄uIsioché,
said he will chair,

The awaited ceremony they

òò kè e mezie kĩa ghàlì ijē n'oge?" is it that it would be said that he won't be there on time?"

Mbè sị yā, "Gba nkịtị! Gba nkịtị!!" Tortoise said to him, "Never mind! Never mind!!"

Nà va gà-èjesi ikē. That they will hasten up/walk fast.

Enyi sị yā, "Ngwa! Ngwa!! Ngwa!!!" Elephant said to him, "Hurry! Hurry!! Hurry!!!"

Nya kwàdoo kà va jebe ējēbē, He should prepare for them to start going immediately, nò o tègolì, èli ũtũtũ kĩa jì kwado, that it's been long, since early morning, he got prepared, jikwaluchachasia, na-èchi ē kò ọ bịa, was fully well kitted, waiting for him to come.

Mbè sị yā nà ọ bũlũnũ ijè. Tortoise told him that they were ready to set off on the journey.

Musical

Chorus: *Gwògwògwò ngwò (ugboro 9) 'The gait of the elephant' (9 times)*

Narrative J (Chorus after each line, interlaced with music)

Kà va nà-èjezi n'uzò, As they were going on their way,

Enyi sị Mbè nya gasibeni ikē. Elephant told Tortoise to quicken his steps.

"Gasibeni ike!" Nà, nà fa adaàà, "Quicken your steps!". That, that they are nooot,

nà va adaàà... èjesikweni ikē, that they are nooot ...,
walking fast enough,
nà va gāfū anò n'uzò, ive va nà-èje, that they will likely be on the
way,(to) the ceremony they
are attending
ndị mīmādū ànasĩa, (and) people will all go (the
ceremony will be over),
ò wèè bulị a bù nì a ejēkwūteāzī and it will turn out to be that
he does not meet
nya bụ ife. the said occasion.
Enyi nàfū èkwu. Elephant keeps saying.
Mbè wèè kpọọ Enyī, Tortoise then called
Elephant,
sị nà ọ mà nà ụkwu ñkèèè nya saying that Elephant knows
that his ooown legs
kàlịlị ñkì e ogonogo, are longer than his,
ọ gakàtanụ, nya na-èchetunị ā that intermitently,
after some strides, he should be waiting for him
nwa ntịntị. a little.

Enyi wèè kpọọ Mbè, Elephant then called
Tortoise,
sị ā nà nya amāā nchezikwi ē, and told him that he will no
longer wait for him,
nà nya gà na-àgasi ikē. that he will be walking
briskly.
Mbè wèè sị Enyī nya biko, Tortoise then pleaded with
Elephant,
kị a lịgolu n'azị a nụ. to allow him climb unto his
back then.

*Enyi wèe sị ya, ì ga-àlìgòlū n' àzị ā, Elephant then told him, if you
desire to climb unto his back,
gị mèe ọsị̄sọ̄ līgòlū n' àzị ā, kà fa you should climb on to his
back quickly, so that they
jebenu ọsị̄sọ̄. can set off quickly.*

*Mbè àmagolu, Tortoise jumped up,
Mee ukwū: tìkòm, tìkòm, tìkòm, tìkòm! Strengthening his legs:
tìkòm, tìkòm, tìkòm, tìkòm!
kà ọ magolu n' àzụ Enyī. struggling in an attempt to
jump unto Elephant's back.*

*Ò wèe kpọọ Enyī, sị ya nò ọ fugo, He then called Elephant, told
him that he has seen,
nù ukwū nya etōrō ọgōnōgō that his legs are not long
n̄kè nya ìmāgolu n' àzụ nya bụ Enyi. to enable him jump unto his,
Elephant's back.
Bikō, k̄ià wèlunụ elili à Please, let him use this rope
nya ch̄i n' aka wèe kedi ē n' onu, he carrying in his hand to tie
on his neck,
k̄ià wèe līgolu n' àzụ nya bụ Enyi, to enable him climb unto his,
Elephant's back,
kà va wèe jebenu. that they can then continue
going.*

*Enyi sị yī, “I malị n̄kè i n̄-ème, Elephant replied him,
“Whatever you know you are doing,
n̄gị mèbe ọsị̄sọ̄”, you should be fast about it.”
kà va jebe ējebē, nò ogè n̄afu àga. that they should be going,
that time is flying.*

Mbè wèè wèlù ùdòṅṅù wèè *Tortoise then used that rope*
and
kedo Enyī n'onu, *tied it on Elephant's neck,*
wèè nyigolu n'àzù Enyī, nòdù ànị. *and then climbed unto*
Elephant's back, and sat down.

Gwogwogwo ngwo (ugboro 3) *'The gait of the elephant' (3*
times)

Musical

Nya kà a nà-àkpudèbezi be Èzè òso, *Then, as they were*
approaching the King's Palace,
Mbè wèè wènie onū: *Tortoise then raised his*
voice:

(The following interlaced with music and chorus)

Refrain

1. Nnaa m Eèzè akpàtaā m Enyi! *'My father the King, I have*
kidnapped the elephant'

Nnaā m Eèzè akpàtaā m Enyiii! *'My father the King, I have*
kidnapped the elephant'

Enyi sị yā, "Ị sị gịnị?" *Elephant asked him, "What*
did you say?"

Nwa Mbè! Ị sị nà ị kpàta ònyee? *'Little Tortoise, who do you*
claim to have kidnapped?'

Nwa Mbè! Ị sị na ị kpàtá ònyeee? *'Little Tortoise, who do you*
claim to have kidnapped?'

2. Mbè sị yā, "Mbà!" *Tortoise replied him, "No!*

Nà asī m̄ Anī nya chebe Enyi chebe Enyiii! That I told Earth Goddess to lead and lead Elephant!

Ò dì k̄ā ā sī n̄ā akp̄àta m̄ Enyiīīī! It seemed I said I have kidnapped the Elephant!

Nà asī m̄ Anī nya dùbe Enyī chèbe Enyīīī! That I told Earth Goddess to lead and guard Elephant!

Ò dī k̄à à sī n̄à akp̄àta m̄ Enyiīīī! It seemed I said I have kidnapped the Elephant.

3. À 'kwà Enyi gà-àbụ isiochēēē? Is it not the Elephant that will be the Chairman?

À 'kwà Enyi gà-àbụ isiochēēē? Is it not the Elephant that will be the Chairman?

Enyi na-àga n' àyị sò yì n' àzụụụ! Keep moving, Elephant; for we are solidly behind you!

Enyi na-àga n' àyị sò yì n' àzụụụ! 'Keep moving, Elephant; for we are solidly behind you!'

Repeat 2 and 3 (interlaced with music and chorus)

Chorus: *Gwogwogwọ ngwọ. (ugboro 3) 'The gait of the elephant' (3 times)*

Musical

Narrative K (Chorus after each line, interlaced with music)

*Ifè à kà Enyi dọgàgìdèlè,
Elephant strenuously tried,
ebe ọ nà-àdọga ijè:
his paces:*

*It was this way that
while struggling to hasten*

'Gwogo! Gwògò! Gwogo!'

(Elephant's trots)

̀̀kè onye gā-abụ̀Isioche! 'Chịamaā̀nụ̀! 'By way of one that will be in charge! Chairman!

*Mbè wèe luzie na be Eze,
the King's palace,*

Tortoise eventually reached

wee wèlụ̀ ̀̀dò̀nụ̀ ̀̀ o jì n'aka nyefèe Ezè, and handed over that rope in his hand to the King,

sị ā, nò̀ò ̀̀ ife nya jì bịa ̀̀mụ̀ ada ̀̀ nwaànyà. told him that it is what he came with to marry your daughter.

Nyaa bụ̀, ndị be ānyị̀! ̀̀nụ̀ gā-àma nà, That is, our people/kinsmen! You should know that,

*'Ọ̀yị̀ m d̀̀ga m̄ ozi' nà iveē yị̀.
has something following it.*

'My friend accompany me'

Nya à nà onye nā-ēdūgākwa m̄mā̀dị̀ ozi, That means that any one accompanying a person on errand,

*Uchè ̀̀ d̀̀kwị̀ ā!
cautious!*

Use your senses!/Be

Repeat 1 and 2(Chorus after each line, interlaced with music)

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