The interface of verbal and nonverbal communication at Shona funeral milieu: Sociolinguistic implications.

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ABSTRACT: *This study is an analysis of the speech acts or verbal utterances that accompany Shona funeral contexts, alongside the attendant nonverbal communication antics which go with verbalized actions. Through participant observation and interview, largely at funerals among the Karanga of Masvingo Province, the researcher noted that the general relational aspects between verbal and nonverbal communication [substituting; complementing; accentuating; conflicting] help to shape the funeral mood. The study also noted that traditional burial rites and rituals among the Shona have resisted the erosive power of both time and Western influence, reflecting the enigma of death among the Shona people: even the funeral houses have had to tailor-make their commercialization of death in keeping with traditional practices. Accordingly, the Shona funeral is a fountain of a rich diversity of Sociolinguistic nuances on Shona anthropology.*

KEYTERMS: *Interface; Sociolinguistics; Communication; Speech Acts; Nonverbal communication.*

I. INTRODUCTION

This study analyses the interface of verbal and nonverbal communication (NVC) at Shona funerals. The Shona people of Zimbabwe are one of the Bantu-speaking people of Southern Africa. This group has five broad sub-groups based on dialect: *Karanga; Ndau; Manyika; Zezuru; Korekore.* The Shona share common cultural tenets on burial rites. The study examines the import of various speech acts and attendant non-word actions characteristic of Shona funeral contexts. The study used participant observation and interview to gather data on how speech acts and nonverbal communication antics help to shape the Shona funeral. The researcher's main objective was to explicate the nuances of meaning from various utterances and NVC modes at Shona funeral contexts.

II. BACKGROUND

Following the deaths of two very close relatives, mother and mother-in-law, the writer was intrigued by the verbal utterances and attendant non-word actions that characterized the burial rites and rituals at the respective funerals. From that point onwards, the writer decided to take a participant observer role at the subsequent funerals of friends, neighbors and church mates of Shona descent, to probe more into the nuances of meaning embedded in the labyrinth of both verbalized and non-word actions at Shona funeral milieu. Interview of elderly members of Shona society and professors of Shona anthropology corroborated the perspectives from the observations made at different funerals attended.

Death, among Africans, has remained an enigma that burial rituals and rites practiced many years ago have resisted the wear and tear of both time and cross-cultural influences. The Speech Acts and accompanying nonverbal communication antics that characterized traditional African funerals are still persisting to this very day. It is against this background that funeral houses such as *Nyaradzo* have decided to tailor-make their commercial approach in keeping with Shona anthropology. That is, the Company name, alongside the vehicular inscription: '*Sahwira Mukuru'* and '*Ibasa remukwasha kuviga Vatezvara'*- reflect Shona sociolinguistic implicatures. That is, *Sahwira* is a Shona term meaning 'friend' while the adjectival additive [*mukuru]* gives the dimension of a 'great friend'. In Shona anthropology, family friends to the male figure head were greatly revered, especially at funerals (Bourdillon, 1990), with one of the *Sahwira's* duty being the role of easing the tense and eerie funeral mood through humor. Accordingly, to call themselves *Sahwira Mukuru* is a commercial ploy by *Nyaradzo* to appeal to Shona people's roots. Equally, the caption that *"It is the sole responsibility of a son-in-law to see to the proper burial of his deceased father-in-law" ["Ibasa remukwasha kuviga Vatezvara"]*

equally derives from Shona anthropology that a son-in-law should see to it that his deceased father-in-law has been accorded burial that is both decent and dignified.

It has come to the researcher's notice that the Shona revere death out of fear. This fear, according to an interviewed Professor of Shona anthropology, has a very long history stretching back for many years. The basic tenet is that the Shona believe that a dead person is very powerful and that he/she can unleash and inflict great vengeance or punishment upon the living if he/ she is not treated with dignity during burial. This is the sole reason why the general pattern of how to handle a dead body right up to the position that the body assumes in the grave/tomb have remained totally unchanged, in spite of the erosive influence of Christianity and Western ideals.

At the same time, the researcher has noted that the ethos of Shona people's sense of 'brotherhood' or 'unhu' (Gelfand, 1970), is crystallized at a funeral where all neighbors come together, volunteering labor, sharing one another's loss and grief. Accordingly, the death and funeral specter stands out as an impregnable archive of a remnant of what the Shona people esteemed as their core value and essence, the philosophy of *Unhuism*, a philosophy which many scholars have taken great pains to explicate, chief among whom are the following: Mbiti (1999); Ramose (1999); Samkange and Samkange (1980); Wright (1984); Peresuh and Nhundu (1999).

III. METHODOLOGY

A multi-disciplinary approach was used to gather data for this study. The phenomenological and Sociological approaches were used. Phenomenology hinges on a descriptive accuracy, performing *epoche* (that is, bracketing or suspending pre-conceived ideas), empathy and establishing the *eidetic* intuition (that is, respecting the views of participants). According to Cox (1996), Phenomenology allows the researcher chance to observe phenomena within its context. Thus, the researcher was an active participant observer at funeral contexts in the Karanga area of Masvingo Province.

The Sociological approach complemented Phenomenology. With social analysis, the researcher was able to unearth a variety of implications from the Speech Acts and attendant NVC cues at Shona funerals. That is, since death and burial rituals among the Shona are part and parcel of Shona (traditional) religion, the Sociological approach helped to explicate the way religion affects Shona funeral rites, in keeping with the observation by Bourdillon (1990) that religion influences society and vice versa.
Within the Phenomenological and Sociological dimensions, participant observation and interview came in hand to gather data.

Theoretical Framework
The theoretical basis of this study unravels the following aspects: The Speech Act Theory; Nonverbal Communication (NVC) modes; Relational aspects between verbal and nonverbal communication; a glimpse into a typical Shona funeral.

The Speech Act Theory
The *Speech Act Theory* is attributed to the work of Austin (1962) who postulated that language is a mode of action. That is, the theory holds that in saying something one is actually performing an act. If saying something amounts to the performance of an act, it follows that all speech utterances are examples of speech acts. Accordingly, this paper analyses typical utterances at funerals as speech acts.

Searle (1969) and Grice (1989) both elaborated on the thesis by Austin (1962), highlighting that an utterance has a meaning based on intention. Crystal ( ) adds that the principles of the Speech Act Theory centre on the effect of an utterance in relation to the behavior of the speaker and listener. Based on the theoretical framework postulated by Austin (1962), a given utterance takes three distinct, but closely related dimensions: the locutionary force; the illocutionary force; the perlocutionary force.

The locutionary force is the act of saying something. That is, an utterance is hereby treated as a statement of fact. The illocutionary force reflects the performance of an act through saying something. On the other hand, the perlocutionary force relates to the effects of saying something.

It should be noted that the meaning of an utterance is construed in relation to certain conditions called felicity conditions (Ascombe, 1963). That is, given the grave and somber atmosphere that characterizes a Shona funeral, the somewhat dry humor of the *Sahwira* would not be welcome if uttered by anyone else.

This paper, therefore, explores how Speech Acts at Shona funerals intertwine with non –word actions to shape the funeral mood.

Nonverbal Communication Modes

Communication loosely refers to the sending or transmission of a message from a source to a receiver with or without feedback. For the purpose of this paper, communication can be understood from the conceptualization of Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin (1998:4) who contend that it (communication) is:

A conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional process in which
feelings and ideas are expressed as verbal and/or nonverbal messages, sent,
received, and comprehended.

This brings out three salient issues about the communication matrix: firstly, communication can be conscious or intentional on one hand, and unconscious or unintentional on the other hand; secondly, the hallmark of communication centers upon expression, and ultimately conveying of feelings and ideas, which should be comprehended or understood by the receiver; finally is the dichotomization of communication into two strata, verbal and non-verbal.

While verbal communication refers to the spoken or written mode, nonverbal communication refers to "...all those messages that people exchange beyond the words themselves" (Burgoon, Buller and Woodall, 1996:1).

Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin (1998) discuss eight dimensions of NVC: kinesics; vocalics; proxemics; chronemics; olfactics; aesthetics; physical characteristics. These modes do not operate in isolation, but may occur in any combination or cluster**.** Pearson et al (2003) add tactile communication or haptics as a ninth dimension.

Kinesics, a derivation from the Greek term 'kinesis', "meaning movement [is the] study of posture, movement, gestures and facial expression" (Pearson et.al, 2003:108). Thus, people communicate through how they walk or stand, through gestures and through the face and eyes (Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, 1998).

Hickson and Stacks (1993) contend that vocal quality (vocalics) communicates nonverbally to the one listening. According to Pearson et al (2003), vocal cues include pitch (how high or low is the voice); rate (speed); inflection or pitch variety; volume (how loud or soft); quality (resonance of voice, for example huskiness or raspiness); non-word sounds ('mmh', 'huh', 'ahh', as well as pauses). Notable in vocalics is that meaning is not a function of what is said, but how that which is said is conveyed. Silence is yet another dimension of vocalics which, however, signals a dark side of communication (Oslon, 1997).

Proxemics refers to how space is used to communicate. Hall (1966) is the scholar credited for introducing the study of the human use of space. To date, two concepts are considered essential in the study of the use of space; territoriality and personal space, respectively (Pearson, et al, 2003). While the former alludes to one's "need to establish and maintain certain spaces" one calls one's own, the later reflects the 'personal bubble' of space that moves around with you" (Pearson, et al, 2003:112).

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Personal distance, extending from 18 inches to four feet (Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, 1998) or 0.4 – 1.2 meters is observed during interaction with acquaintances or friends usually referred to as " the comfort bubble" (Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, 1998:116).

While social distance (4 to 12 feet or 1.2 m – 4m) is observed for business transactions, public distance (exceeding 12 feet) is used for public speaking (Pearson, et al, 2003).

Related to the study of personal space is what Burgoon (1983: 129) call the "expectancy violation theory" which centers on the relationship between "personal space expectations and the communicative impact or violations of those expectations". This implies that unfavorable outcomes usually follow up a violation of personal space.

Chronemics, the study of how people use and handle time (Pearson, et al, 2003) is yet another significant component of NVC. That is, some people value and strictly observe time while others may not. Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin (1998) hint that some cultures or communities treasure 'precise time' more than others.

Olfactics is the study of smell, that is, how people communicate through smells (Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, 1998). In essence, many public personnel tend to value how they 'smell', hence the use of various perfumes and colognes.

Aesthetics involves communication through color or music (Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, 1998). Hospitals, schools and prison centers seem to acknowledge the power of different shades of colors to a person's mood. Thus, softer colors (pink, blue or pastel) are used in hospital due to their alleged calming effect (Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, 1998) while the field of 'behavioral kinesiology' contends that slow beat or tempo of music is calming while loud and pulsating music tends to be emotionally stressful. Therefore, what colors are used alongside music played may have both negative and positive effects upon people, both unconsciously and consciously.

Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin (1998) add that physical characteristics can either draw or repulse people from oneself. That is, the way one looks is seen to either attract people or repel them. In fact, today's advertising and marketing industry seems to project this perspective by way of use of attractive models. Consequently, the attractive and appealing physical characteristics of the 'model' would be used to draw targeted people towards the advertised article.

Ornaments, adornments, alongside jewellery, make-up and clothing, constitute artifacts (Pearson, et al, 2003). According to Proctor (1978), artifacts are a form of personal expression that tell a message about who one is and how one perceives oneself or how one may wish to be perceived by others. However, Ross (1989: 228) says "we cannot change everything about our physical appearance through clothing".

Haptics or tactile communication refers to "the use of touch in communication" (Pearson, et al 2003:116). One thing to note is that touch involves an invasion of another person's personal space. Therefore, it can be unwelcome or construed as sexual harassment, or very welcome where it reflects being wanted and warmth.

Relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication
According to Knapp and Hall (1997), the main relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication is four-fold in nature: substituting, complementing, conflicting and accenting. That is, there are times where a non-verbal cue, such as a nod completely replaces words. Also, a verbal utterance could be used simultaneously with a non-verbal code to complement each other for emphasis. That is, "shaking your head horizontally from side to side while saying 'no' reinforces the negative verbalization" (Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, 1998:108). Sometimes, though, what one says may contradict body movements, bringing out the conflicting relationship where the 'actual' message is not the one verbalized, but the nonverbal one. In the accenting relationship, the nonverbal code accents the verbal code.
These relational aspects are key to the interpretation of verbal and nonverbal communication at Shona funerals.

A glimpse into a typical Shona funeral situation
When death occurs, there are two typical means of announcement: a wailing tone from female members of the deceased's family, then the singing and drum beat to herald to all and sundry that a member of the community or neighborhood has died. The wailing stands out as a synonymous feature of both traditional funeral rituals and contemporary Shona funeral rites.

Following the death announcement, neighbors and relatives immediately file towards the scene of the funeral. At the site's courtyard, women immediately start a shrill wail, mostly with no tears coming out [from women from the neighborhood], while men file in with hands behind their backs, silent and wearing somber faces.

Once in the courtyard or house [for urban dwellers] and kitchen hut [at rural settings], women embrace the deceased member's immediate relatives wailing, while men hold hands with the bereaved members followed by the utterance

> *"Nedzoyi"* or the equivalent *"Nenhamo",* with both utterances translating to:
> "Deepest sympathy on your loss."

The men would then crouch, while women kneel and verbalize the words of condolence for the benefit of those already gathered. The womenfolk slightly clap their hands while heads are tilted or eyes gazing to the ground if they are addressing a group of men.

Meanwhile, a group of women move about from house –to-house [for urban dwellers] or from homestead-to-homestead [for rural –based funerals], collecting mealie-meal contributions and money to help in the feeding of those who would attend the funeral. Neighbors volunteer free labor to hew firewood, to cook, to fetch water and to do errands required to facilitate the smooth organization of the burial process.

The body lies in state in the kitchen just behind the door, female relations positioned closest to the body. Women sleep in the kitchen singing and beating drums. Due to the influence of Christianity, the songs are a mixture of Christian hymns and traditional pieces. Common Christian-based hymns include: '*Hatina Musha Panyika*' ['*This World is not our Home*']; '*Kana vakundi vopinda*' ['*When the saints go marching in*'].
Men, for their part, make a huge fire in the open courtyard where they discuss various issues, mostly unrelated to the funeral. The community clowns or humorous figures usually create jokes to lighten the mood. The raucous laughter that booms, eyes watery and glistening with tears of amusement, dispel what should otherwise be an ominous atmosphere filled with both tension and a foreboding feeling.

On the next day, burial either takes place before noon or after noon, but never during mid day. This rite has stood intact from time immemorial. The singing of the day usually assumes a semblance of conviviality, some women shaking their hind sides with reckless, if not voluptuous, abandon. The grey haired cronies usually look on the dancing women with glee.

Before the body is taken to the final resting place, close male relatives do the final rituals in the kitchen, and then a select group carries the body outside. In this era of Christianity, a Minister of Religion conducts a prayer before the body is carried out. Outside, while [for occasions of the contemporary times] the coffin is in full view to all gathered, the Master of Ceremonies [MC] presides over the main stages, always reminding speakers of the day to respect time.

Speeches start with the deceased's closest relatives right up to friends and neighbors and/or workmates. Typical of the Shona funeral speeches is the philosophy: *"Wafa wanaka"* ['*'Once dead, one's past faults are forgotten.''* As such, speaker upon speaker would shower praises upon the 'good' deeds of the departed member. At times, though, where the praises genuinely echo the good deeds of the deceased, the praise singer would fail to contain his/her emotional turmoil, completely breaking down into howling that others would take up, only to be controlled by the apparently stoic MC. In this regard, the MC [who is a man *always*] should control his emotions.

The last stage is the actual burial, and then all present are thanked. There after, people settle down to eat sadza before dispersing. Every one is expected to eat something, the unwritten code being that no one refuses food at a funeral. Men usually sit to their side, separate from women.

Typical Speech Acts and Attendant Nvc Cues at A Shona Funeral and Their Import [Based On Participant Observation]
(a) Following the loss of the mother, the girl or female children of the deceased would wail, whimper and howl, tears cascading down their cheeks. As they wail, some may throw themselves to the ground making such utterances:

"Nhai mhai wee! Mhai kani! Mati tisare naniko?"

This translates to:

"Dear mother! Oh mother! Why have you left us alone?"

Onlookers either gape at the mourning group or join in the chorus. At times one would go and hug the wailing figure intoning soft words of comfort.

Interpretation

Since the mourner[s] would be addressing someone dead, as if the person actually hears, this suggests a belief that the dead can actually hear. This is an offshoot of a Shona belief that a person does not really die, but just changes from one plane of being to another.

Taking the utterance in its locutionary force, the utterance first reflects the illocutionary aspect of helplessness, thus inviting sympathy from others in its perlocutionary dimension. Linked up with the kinesics of a contorted facial configuration, alongside the vocalic effects of the 'mournful', 'melancholic' and 'somber' tone, this builds up the essence of grief and loss of a dearly loved one.

On the other hand, the hug demonstrates two NVC dimensions: haptics and proxemics. That is, touch [haptics], combined with the closeness [proxemics], demonstrate a sense of togetherness. That is, a distance of 0-0.4 meters is the intimate zone (Hall, 1966), which, for the funeral context, reflects sharing of grief

(b). When death strikes at the remaining parent, leaving children of very little age orphaned, sympathizers may give utterances as follows:

"Mwari *mati zvigodii? Vana cava vodii hail Wedenga?"*
[*"God, why did you let such a tragedy to happen? What will these children do,*
 Lord?]
 OR
"Iri ndiro jambwa chairo…" ["This is really a tragedy…"

As the speaker makes the utterance[s], either alone, or to a group, the speaker would be shaking his/her head, onlookers doing the same while intoning the echoing response:

"Tsh! Tsh! Tsh!"

Interpretation

The utterance, "*God why did you let such a tragedy happen? What will these children do, Lord?"* or its equivalency [in semantic terms], "*This is really a tragedy…"* convey the illocutionary force of magnifying the tragic specter at hand, thus invoking sympathy upon the orphans, in its perlocutionary dimension. At the same time, the utterance[s] reflect the speaker's helplessness in the face of death, an idea that underlies the enigma of death among Shona people and African communities at large.

The import of the verbal utterance is complemented and accented by the non-word actions or NVC cues, thus reflecting how verbal and nonverbal communication work hand in hand to shape the mood of the Shona funeral.

(c). During the speech-making part of the burial ceremony, the following speech acts ensue:

MC: *"Tava kusiya nguva kuvatauri…toted gwi gwi kuti tigotanga basa…"*

[*"We now leave time to our speakers…let's be time conscious so that we can start our main job…'*

SPEAKER A: " *Ini sababa vemusikana arere apa, handina masker mazhinji….asi kukutendai hama dzangu mose nekubatirana nesu kuti tiradzike mwana wedu…"*

["As *the father to this girl who is sleeping here, I don't have much to say…except to thank you my dear colleagues for assisting us in the laying to rest of our daughter…"*

SPEAKER B: *"Hama dzangu…Nhasi taunganira gamba remukadzi….Mabasa*
omunhu anomutevera…Uyu munin'ina wangu akarwa hondo yake akakunda…"
[*"My dear colleagues…Today we have gathered for a woman hero…One's works follow him/her… This, my younger sister fought her life battle and triumphed…"].*

SPEAKER C: *"Nhai iwe Vongai…Wati vana vako vosara nani…hii..hii…hii…* [Weeping, unable to contain her grief]

[*"Vongai…Who do you think will take care of your children?"]*

MC [interrupting, abruptly and with a condescending disposition]: " *Veduwe veduwe kani! Chii ichi chomoita munhu mukuru? Magarwa nei…Horaiti, vatorei vabve pano….muvarege vacheme vapedze shungu…"*
[*"Oh goodness! What is this, from an elderly person? What has gotten over you…Okay, take her away…let her cry out to assuage her emotional turmoil…"]*

Interpretation

The brusque and rather curt manner with which the Master of Ceremonies discharges his duty may, on face value, seem out of place. However, if one takes cognizance of the philosophical basis of meaning of language, one would find both the speech acts and attendant NVC cues in keeping with the context. Thus, Alston (1964) identifies three broad theories of meaning from a philosophical view point: *referential*, *ideational* and *behavioral*. While the *referential* perspective identifies meaning of an utterance or expression with that to which it refers, the *ideational* perspective identifies the meaning of an expression with the ideas with which it is associated, while *behavioral* meaning hinges upon the utterance's relation to the stimuli that evoke its utterance. Consequently, since the MC's role is to ensure that time is not wasted by convoluted speeches or emotional breakdown of a speaker, his words, curt as they may sound, have an apt referential, ideational as well as behavioral import in keeping with Shona anthropology.

There is also need to interrogate the Sociolinguistic import of the lexical items "*…tigotanga basa…*"; "*…tiradzike…*"; "*…gamba romukadzi…*"; "*…akarwa hondo akakunda…*"; "*…vapedze shungu…*"[**"…so that we can start the job…"; "…to lay to rest…"; "…woman hero…"; "…fought her battle and triumphed…"; "…to assuage her emotional turmoil…".**]

That the burial proper is a kind of a job is worth noting. According to a Professor of African Traditional Religion who was among the interviewees, "*…the burial or entombing of the body constitutes the pinnacle of a Shona funeral…it is a sacred rite that needs to be conducted with reverence, owing to the awe with which the Shona hold their dead…"* Why the Shona revere the dead was explained by another interviewee [a Professor of Shona] who said "*…the Shona have totally failed to fathom death…they can't fully explain it…What remains in their faculty is a compelled reverence out of fear…When you see men weep openly, that signals how enigmatic the death specter is…"*

To say someone dead is actually asleep is a kind of euphemism which, according to another interviewed Professor of Theology, stems from the awe with which the Shona hold their dead. The interviewee added that the Shona do not believe that one actually dies, but hold that one transcends to a more superior form of being, into a world of ancestors [*Nyikadzimu*].

"*Kana munhu afa…anaka…"* [*"Once dead, one is purged of past or life-time taints…"],* added yet another Anthropologist. This position, the Anthropologist affirmed, is the root of the praise eulogies at the burial site.

To describe the deceased Vongai as a ***female hero*** suggests that heroism is a preserve of men, not women. So, a woman who performs acts of heroism would have crossed the female stalk boundary, to that of men. According to a Professor of Sociololinguistics who was interviewed, much as today's world is propagating for gender-sensitivity, this is not the case with many Africans, especially the Shona. In her rather indignant tone, the interviewee summed up her chagrin thus:

"The linguistic terrain of the Shona is very unhygienic…it should be disinfected…"

On the other hand, to regard death as a form of victory or triumph stems out from Shona anthropology where life is viewed as a battle of great trials and tribulations, death coming in as a respite from the travails of life. Existentialists would construe Shona cosmology as a pessimistic philosophy inclined on escapism, yet the Shona themselves [according to interview transcripts of elderly Shona men, traditional leaders and scholars of Shona anthropology] this attitude is not an indication of pessimism or a fatalistic resignation to a fate that is

difficult to comprehend; rather, it is the crystallization of the Shona people's hope and belief in a better life after the worldly one.

Commenting on why an emotionally overwhelmed and grief-stricken individual is allowed to cry out without being restrained, an interviewed Psychology lecturer stated her case as follows:

"My dear… aren't you aware that tears have a healing effect? They help cleanse a heavy-laden soul…"
What stems from the foregoing comment is that tears have a healing effect. Accordingly, Shona anthropology relishes principles of Psychology on mind [soul] healing.

General perceptions of death and dying among the Shona
[BASED ON INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION]

(a). Why death is feared among the Shona
From a sample of 10 purposively selected interviewees, the general perspective was that there is an inherent fear of death among the Shona. The interviewees stressed that the death of a married woman is treated with great trepidation, lest the spirit of the woman decides to wreck vengeance upon the living. This view point is enacted by the Zimbabwean fiction writer, Chenjerai Hove (1990) in his novel, *Ancestors*. In his fictional work, Hove presents two female characters who live separate, but similar lives of abuse from the male members of their society. The two characters, on their death, come back to avenge for the ills done to them when they lived. That the dead Miriro can commune with the narrator reflects an Afro centric view that people do not 'die'.

(b). Why the Shona funeral rites have resisted the erosive force of cultural intercourse
During an open discussion following the presentation of this very paper at the 39th edition of the SASE Conference, one delegate asked why Shona funeral rites have remained unchanged over time. The responses gleaned from the ensuing informal interview suggested that death rituals are part of the Shona's core values. With no better alternative, the rites have remained unchanged.

Of note, therefore, the funeral houses are now on a stampede to outbid each other for clients, the main advertising ploy being recourse to Shona anthropology. Thus, Doves Morgan, Moonlight, Nyaradzo, among others, all concentrate on the core values of the Shona. For example, Nyaradzo coined the company name from the import of a *memorial*
service, while the artifacts of umbrellas all bear this anthropological perspective.

(c). The import of the funeral songs and drum beat
Two lecturers of Musicology, one from the United College of Education and the other from the Great Zimbabwe University, both held that the dancing antics of women at Shona funerals have both a symbolic and anthropological import. On why women tend to take delight in shaking their bottoms with abandon, the two interviewees pointed that this emanates from tradition surrounding the woman's waist line. They held that the old generation of Shona people ascribed fertility associations to a mole. Consequently, dance patterns such as *Mbakumba* and *Jerusarema*, where the dancers swayed their waists with voluptuous abandon came into being, imitating the digging movements of the mole. Paradoxically, these dance styles were banned by the Rhodesian colonial regime, the argument being that they had too glaring sexual inclinations; hence these antics were adjudged as unchristian.

At the burial of the researcher's mother-in-law [27 September, 2011] and that of the researcher's mother [12 January, 2012], the researcher noted how the daughters-in-law for either of the deceased danced voluptuously to the pentatonic modulations of the drum beat. During the climax of the January 12, 2012 episode, the researcher could not hold back a torrent of scalding tears cascading down his cheeks, beholding the somber poll bearers filing to the already prepared *imba [final resting **house**]*, his wife leading the vibes of the Christian song : *'Kana vakundi vopinda' ['When the Saints go marching in']*. Then a neighbor immediately changed the tune and started belting out the Shona dirge:

Hokoyo
Hiya Hiya
Iwe Hokoyo-o
Hiya Hiya

Ndanga ndakarara
Ndamuka

> *Hiya Hokoyo-o-o*
>
> *Jabu ari pano*
> *Hiya Hiya*
> *Siba ari pano*

The lyrics translate to:

> *Beware*
> *Hey Hey*
> *Please Beware-e*
> *Hey Hey*
>
> *I was asleep*
> *But am now awake*
> *Hey Beware-e*
>
> *Jabu is here*
> *Hey Hey*
> *Siba is here*

The lyrics of the above song, according to an interviewed Musicology lecturer, suggest the triumphal connotations ascribed to death among the Shona. It is the beat of the drum, alongside the staccato of the vibes which paints the unique nature of the Shona funeral. From the NVC point of view, music is part of aesthetics, dealing with emotional appeal. The choric effect, combined with the drum beat and the dance and ululation, all help to shape the mood of the funeral.

The song word takes the dimension of the voice of the deceased, stating that she has been asleep, but is now awake. This suggests the anthropomorphic belief of Shona people that death is a mere transposition of one state of being into another more superior form (Bourdillon, 1990). At the same time, when the lead vocalist now assumes the person of a mere observer, asking the deceased whether she has formally bed farewell to her sons Jabu [Jabulani,the researcher] and Siba [Sibanengi, younger brother to the researcher], this further suggests that the Shona a deceased person can, in the 'dead' state communicate and hear.

According to Professor of African languages from the Midlands State University [Zimbabwe] who was interviewed, the ululation that accompanies the dance and song at a Shona funeral is meant to ease the otherwise eerie atmosphere that death induces to Shona people. In this regard, music comes in as an important soothing, if not comforting tool.

(d). Attendant sociolinguistic implications
When asked what they consider to be key facets of a Shona funeral, the majority of the interviewees from among the sample of university lecturers and traditional leaders posited that the Shona funeral rites stand out as a unique cultural vestige that has resisted the corroding effect of Western culture. They held that since the very burial rituals and rites practiced many years ago are still alive, this reflects a cherished cultural component. In line with the foregoing dimension, interviewees reflected that the communal lifestyle of traditional Shona society is fossilized in the context of the funeral. That is, in traditional society, the guiding philosophy was the ideal of *Unhuism*, crystallized in the belief of togetherness, helping one another and standing with and for each other in moments of celebration or grief. At the different funeral set ups attended, the researcher noted that both rural and urban Shona communities come together to volunteer whatever service is required. In rural areas, in particular, labor to fetch water, to hew wood, to cook and to dig the grave is 'given' freely, on a voluntary basis. This communal lifestyle echoes traditional Shona life, driven by the philosophy of *Unhuism*.

One interviewee, however, highlighted that funeral houses now commercialize the whole idea of the funeral organization. Most funeral houses now do the 'body washing' and 'dressing' as well as the provision of transport and cash to buy food , but since this is only provided to 'fully paid up members', the services are not for free. Nonetheless, the majority of people in Zimbabwe, the Shona included, now opt for this *convenient* way to expedite the funeral rites.

IV. DISCUSSION

The foregoing exposition of what goes on at a Shona funeral reflects that there is an interplay and intricate relationship between verbal and nonverbal communication antics at play. The speech acts, alongside the non-word actions (NVC) help to shape the funeral mood. That is, there are certain peculiar behavior patterns which communicate certain messages: hand-holding or shaking, accompanied by words convey the message of condolence; posture and walk into the court yard, with hands on the back while people are silent, facial configuration somber, all build up to the funeral mood characteristic of Shona culture; the songs and drum beat, accompanying dance patterns, all build up and shape the Shona funeral; sitting arrangement when feeding, with men on their own and women to their side, reflects the entrenched gender disparity that characterizes traditional Shona society.

It has also been highlighted that some women, when they enter the homestead where someone has 'passed away', take up the funeral lament, but without shading tears. On face value, the wailing or howling sound denotes deep sorrow, yet the really aggrieved Shona women shed tears. Therefore, we note the conflicting relationship between the verbalized wailing and the attendant NVC cues from a face without tears. Since NVC cannot be faked, according to Ross (199), the real message is that the wailing is just artificial, not genuine. As such, the wailing is a ritual that shapes the funeral specter in Shona culture, just like the role of the *Sahwira* or family friend, alongside the eulogies and dance antics.

In light of the above, the Shona funeral stands out as a peculiar reservoir and archive of the Shona people's heritage and culture.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted how the Shona funeral stands out as one area where the culture of this group has resisted the erosive power of Christianity and Western values. The paper also stressed that the Shona funeral context reflects the multifarious layers of meaning imbedded in words and non-word actions.

Again, it has been highlighted that the Shona funeral context is shaped by the interplay of particular speech acts and attendant NVC cues; these modes forming a kind of synergy through the complementing, accenting, substituting and conflicting relationship.

Above all, the paper posits that death unites people who come together to assist one another. At the same time, the paper pointed that commercial funeral houses have capitalized on the reverence that is accorded to death, now cashing in from this. That is, *Nyaradzo, Moonlight, Doves Morgan* and various other mushrooming service providers now see 'death' as a very lucrative business.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the enigma associated with death among the Shona, alongside the meticulous and methodical approach that typifies the Shona funeral rites and rituals, this paper recommends the following:

- Elders from the Shona communities should continue to pass down to younger generations the ways used to 'lay to rest' the 'departed' members of society;
- Anthropologists could, with the consent family members concerned, immortalize the burial rituals of the Shona through live video coverage;
- University curricular for Zimbabwean universities and colleges could also tape from this reservoir of culture.

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