

Dialect Variations the Enrichment of Standard Igbo Language: A Linguistic Study

Dom-Anyanwu Ngozi Lovina^{1*}, Benjamin F.C Nwokedi², Eneremadu Queen Esther Chioma³

¹Lagos State University of Education, ²³Alvan Ikoku University of Education

Corresponding Author: Dom-Anyanwu Ngozi Lovina ngozidom@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Igbo Dialect, Languages, Political Unity, Centralized Control

Received : 05, October

Revised : 18, October

Accepted: 22, November

©2023 Lovina, Nwokedi, Chioma: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

Historically, many languages of the world evolved their standard forms through centralized control or political unity. Considering the decentralized nature of the Igbo unity, the dream of evolving a standard form through such means remains a mirage and unrealistic. Therefore, Igbo scholars are faced with the task of achieving this goal; we must use what we have to get what we want. In other words, we cannot enrich the evolving standard Igbo by using dialectal variants in the language. Igbo dialectal variation and the dialect variants as synonyms, with comparative study of five dialects: Owerri, Oguuta, Afikpo, Nnewi and Ngwa (Ibeme) at the phonological, morphological and syntactic levels. The paper discusses the standard Igbo vis-a-vis dialects and meta-language as the tool for its enrichment, which consists of the effect of dialectal variation, including the conclusion and recommendations made that rather than being a conclusive linguistic study on dialectal variation for the enrichment of standard Igbo, would serve as a stimulus for further intensive researches.

INTRODUCTION

Igbo language is among the three major languages officially recognized in the 1979 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria and in the national policy on education (1979: 1981). For Igbo language to attain the status of national language, it has been subjected to a series of transformations, which is a continuous process. The other two major languages; Hausa and Yoruba are not left out in this transformation process.

Igbo literary dialect was initially attempted by the missionaries who realized the importance of developing a pan-Igbo literary standard. However, this attempt recorded no success as it failed to include most dialects from various dialectal groups of Igbo land. With the appointment of the standardization committee in 1972, the society for promoting Igbo language and culture (SPILC) headed by F.C. Ogbalu decided on absorbing or borrowing vocabularies from diversified dialects both written and unwritten. Through the absorption of these vocabularies from various dialects of Igbo, the standard is enriched continuously through its dialect variants makes it possible for the language to be understood and written by every Igbo man irrespective of his dialectal group.

Moreover, for the Igbo to realize the federal Government policy concerning the use of three major languages, in teaching, learning and official correspondences, there is the need for Igbo terms to be expressed in different ways, and this is where the dialectal variants can be useful. Igbo language like most languages has numerous dialects. some of the foreign linguistics like J.F Schon 1841, koellen 1857, I. Gward 1935 etc who came to Igbo land regarded the multiplicity of Igbo dialect for academic pursuit. In this research work, the so called clog created by these dialect is rather reviewed as a very rich asset for the enrichment for Igbo lexico. Dialectal variants are now included into the standard Igbo, to serve as synonyms and sometimes as crucial basic lexical items in some areas. Where there is a vivid gap. In addition, there are many English terms which because of cultural differences do not have ready equivalents in Igbo language. Both with the existence of Igbo dialects variants, many English terms can now be represented with Igbo terms, through some linguistic processes such as borrowing, and Igbonization etc. dialectal words are now used to fill the gap created in areas like animals, plants geographical features and other non pan- Igbo phenomena. Examples of some dialectal lexicons that are indigenous to the standard Igbo presently and where there come from, as represented in Emenanjo (11) are listed below for:

Table 1. Examples of Some Dialectal Lexicons

English	Igbo	Dialect Area
Diplomacy	Nutubiriko	Arochukwu
Lyrical Poetry	Mberi	Aguta
Erosion	Mbuze	Aguata
Lake	Ezu	Agulu
Youth	Evutu	Bende
Accountancy	Opipia Ego	Mbaise
Drama	Ejije	Nnewi
100	Nari	Nsukka
1000	Puku	Orlu

Dialectal variants provide relevant basic terms in area of phenomena peculiar to various parts of the culture as shown in the example above. The standard Igbo draws synonymous from all Igbo dialects, such synonymous as dudi etete, etc exist. These lexicons enrich the standard Igbo and also contribute to the realization of the Igbo and as a met language.

In summary, I can say that standard Igbo has come to stay. The task of increasing the repertoires of its lexical inventory for the purpose of becoming a veritable instrument for discourse in the modern technological world cannot be compromised. Attempts made by linguistic and non-linguistic, especially the missionaries towards developing pan-Igbo literary standard, before the formation of the "standard" created turned out to be artificial and therefore, could not stand the test of time.

Emenanjo, Quoted in Nwadike (8) categorized Igbo studies into four historical particular periods namely; the Isuama, period (1700-1885) the union period (1900-1927), the central period (1929-1961) and finally the standard Igbo period (1966- the present time). The isuama a dialect of Igbo spoken by the Igbo ex-slaves in sierra Leone was developed by the members of Niher mission led by Samuel Ajayi Crowther. The Isuama could not meet the requirements of a standard dialect, as a result of this, it was change to another formulated dialect called the "union". The union Igbo was developed by Archdeacon Thomas John Dennis, during his missionary work at Egbu near Owerri 1906.

As it was the case with Isuama, the union Igbo failed to be a literary standard due to the fact that most dialects of Igbo were neglected while few were used. Accordind to F.C.ogbalu, dialects used in the union included owerri, Onitsha, Arochukwu. Later, idaward published her book called ibo dialects and the development of another literary dialectal variants.

The central Igbo also failed to be accepted as a library standard because of its limitation on the use of dialectal variants. The above review shows that throughout those periods, the choice and development of a standard Igbo proved difficult to achieve, until the society for promoting Igbo language and culture (SPILC) came into the scene in 1949. The formation of standard or literary Igbo which was the brain child of the society for promoting Igbo language and culture (SPILC) started informally in 1966 (that is back to the post-Biafran experience) the period when large number of Igbo people were returning from various parts of Nigeria in anticipation of the Nigeria Biafran war.

By that period, many Igbo refugees dispersed into various parts of Igbo land in search of food and refuge. The process of this dispensation brought about the cross-fertilization and diffusion of dialects. For the fact that Isuama, union and central dialects could not accommodate the dialect variants of Igbo, they were neglected and this gave way to the formation of a standard Igbo which absorbs vocabularies from various Igbo dialects.

Finally, the above background of the existence of standard Igbo is necessary to the topic of discussion because it x-rays what motivated the search for a whole standard Igbo. And it lays its emphasis on the dialectal variation for its development instead of choosing a dialect to represent the standard. No speech community or linguistic group would want its language to be thrown away or neglected, while it spends fortune promoting foreign languages. After all, the language of a group is one of the factors which make it to be commission as quoted in Nwadike (8) noted the importance of the native language in those words.

“Native language is immensely more vital in that it is one of the chief means of preserving whatever that is good in native customs, ideals and ideals and thereby preserving what is more important than all these, namely Native self-respect.... All people have inherent right to their language. It is the means of giving expression to their own personality, however primitive they may be.”

As mention in the introductory part of this work, Igbo language is among the three national language policy recognized in the 1979 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria. For it to assume the status of a formal language, a definite standard has to be created. Although it has been standardized long ago, there is the need for its lexical enrichment. The used of dialectal variant will go a long way to achieve this goal of enrichment. This can be done through teaching and learning. In educational institutions, teachers should be made to insist on the use of this recommended variant forms both in written and oral work. By using this variants in educational institutions, such a methodology would spread in the society and finally be popularized.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researches carried over the years have shown that not much work has been done on the enrichment of standard Igbo through dialectal variants. However, scholars, including linguist and non-linguist have done remarkable

researches on related topics such as Igbo language standardization, and the development of Meta language et cetera. In this section, we will try to discuss the views put forward by some eminent scholars on the topic. Generally in this work, we do not perceive the multiplicity of dialect in Igbo language as a problem, just like what the early missionaries thought it was. In this work, we rather look at the multiplicity of dialects as veritable instrument or assets for the development of the standard Igbo.

Ferguson (17) recorded comment made by one of the missionaries, name section concerning his experience during his missionary work in Igbo land is worthy of note. In 1814, sechon expressed his disappointing during his encounter with the obi of Aboh, and had to say:

“The dialects of the Igbo language on which I had bestowed so much labor in sierra Leone differs widely or totally from the spoken and understood in this part of the country. It never escape my observation, that a great diversity of dialects existed, but I must blame myself for not making stricter enquires about that which would be most useful for the present occasion.”

In our own view and perhaps those of most Igbo scholars, no dialect would have been useful for the occasion as lamented by the missionary, that the present day standard Igbo. And the present day standard Igbo is the one that is devoid of discrimination among dialectal groups. The standard igbo, which is widely accepted in the sense that it makes used of the dialectal variants, which abound in Igbo language is great relevance to the speakers.

“Emenajo (17) observes (that like other languages) Igbo ha a number of mutually intelligible dialects. Even though the multiplicity of Igbo dialects was sometimes regarded as a liability, right now it is been treated as a rich assets for purposes of synonyms and new words in standard Igbo.”

As a matter of necessity standard Igbo has to make use of the multiplicity of dialects in order to increase its lexicon repertoire, language naturally is dynamic, Igbo language is not left out in this dynamic. Therefore, it is pertinent that new ideas and concepts are introduced into the lexicon of the language, and this can be achieved, through the use of dialectal variants. According to Ogbalu(11) “any language that has any pretence to growth must have to be enriched. In addition, Ogbalo (21) suggests that:

“Language planners should direct their energy to the provision of adequate vocabulary to cater for ideas and technological innovations of the modern world. This could be done by agreement on forms of loan words, provision of glossaries, dictionaries containing new technical terms and accepted forms of old ones.”

Borrowing from the foreign languages, which however is a “since quanon” to Igbo language modernization should not be given much priority over our natural resource. Igbo language scholars and planners are charge to move

into the remotest parts of Igbo land and extract lexicons that would be useful to the realization of a definite standard Igbo. It is high time; scholars used what we have, to get what we want.

“Yet anyagham (3-4) is of a view that: The right thing is to enrich our indigenous language. Using a foreign language does not only retard the growth of our indigenous language but has other side effects. Using it result in the concept not being well understood and the application being difficult if not possible. These concepts are invariably clothes in the language used. This simply means that where a language is foreign the student scientist for instance must battle with the language first and then the concepts after which follows the application. When the student scientist master language and concepts, the dissemination of idea is again impeding by the same language barrier and instead of the scientific advancement of the nation he actually becomes and energy sink...”

The above quotation point out that the standard or literary Igbo needs enrichment since it is the only medium of knowledge acquire in school and outside that can be meaningful to people who would enjoy the benefits of such acquired knowledge. Soyinka (61) while presenting a paper at the FESTAC 77 in Lagos was in support of this language enrichment and had to report that one of the resolutions of the 2nd congress of Negro writer and artist in Rome in 1959 is that:

“A term of linguistics be instructed to enrich this one Africa language as rapidly as possible with the terminology for the expressing of modern philosophy science and technology.”

To any Igbo scholars, no other “one African language” is referred to here, than the Igbo language or it is better to say, the standard Igbo. Although borrowing terminologies from other languages would help in the development of a fertile standard Igbo, yet it would be more dignifying, if we draw vocabularies from the abundant resource and enrich the standard Igbo. F.C. Ogbalu (66) in his observation had to say that:

“Examine the different dialects closely, one notices easily wealth of common vocabulary, common behavior and characteristics of the Igbo parts of speech which would form a veritable basis of a standard Igbo. Igwe (15) contributing, added that... the general idea is to make used of the money dialects and assign prices meanings of word, while returning international symbol and terminologies, as far as possible.”

Regarded growth in Igbo language development can be attributed to the fact that over the years, the studies on Igbo language development had not attached much importance to utilize the various dialects in Igbo language Nwachukwu (67) argues That:

"...the idea of insisting on a standard form is to provide authoritative reference point for Igbo by way of grammar and dictionaries. In order to prevent the process of standardization from shifting the language the gate should be open for influx of lexical items, from other dialects into the standard Igbo..."

Present day Igbo scholars are now faced with the enormous task of collecting these lexical resources from the vast dialects of Igbo, so that Igbo language would not be left out in the current wave of technological development. Ogbalu (64) observed, during the third seminar on Igbo language and culture standardization elements in Igbo language that:

"Dialectal variations are now peculiar to the Igbo language but they certainly militate against its quick development and its daily use as a medium of mass communication... a truly standard Igbo eventually emerge as did the lanis English England."

To summarize this section, it is hoped that the dream of having an enriched standard Igbo will be realized. Although it will take time. Above all, researchers in Igbo studies should be encouraged to accomplish this task.

Factors of Differentiation in Dialectal Variation

Igbo dialects vary from one another, as a matter of fact, the speech of one dialectal group is distinct from that of the other group. However, the difference between two or more neighboring dialects may be outstanding or not. Some of the factors of differentiation include geographical, migration, social factors, etc.

Geographical Factors

As we have said earlier, the speech of a particular dialectal group, say Oguta: differs at least slightly from that of any other locality, for example, Nnewi. Differences existing between neighboring local dialects are usually small. In contrast, moving further in the same direction, differences widen. It is also important to note that every dialectal feature has its own boundary of line, called an Isogloss may indicate geographical obstacles that may hinder the easy diffusion of a number of language modernization such as a number of language modernization such obstacles may include sea, mountain, rivers etc.

Migration

When a particular group of speech community moves from one location to another, it moves along with its own dialect. For instance, people from say Nsukka migrating to Owerri, are supposed to notice some innovations, in their dialect after sometime. This affects the other groups dialect too and this equally brings about changes in phonological, morphological and syntactic features of the dialect.

Social Factors

Social strata are very important factors of differentiation. Dialectal differences are somehow connected with social classes. It may be on educational or professional levels. Those who are educated or highly educate and those in a higher social class tend to use what may be called a “refined” dialect. This dialect is contrasted with what speakers in the locality use. To buttress this point further, one usually notices that a student in a higher institution finds it difficult to speak his local dialect because of the influence of his education, in contrary, a speaker who lives within the locality maintains the local dialect without being influence otherwise. Social classes (education or professional encourage innovation in dialects) thereby causing differences in dialects.

Igbo Dialectal Variation

Language is a body of articulated sounds or better still, according to Bloch and Targer (17) a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which social group co-operates. Language is constantly changing in sound (morphology and syntax). The history of pronunciation of an individual word is constantly affected by the influence of sound change. These changed are applicable to dialects.

A Close Examination of Igbo Dialects Reveals Four Important Features

There is a large vocabulary which is common to all dialects to the extent that any dialect could be tested as to know whether it is Igbo or not. To prove this, the under listed item are understood by every Igbo speaker.

Table 2. A Large Vocabulary

Igbo	English	Igbo	English
Nna	Father	Onwu	Death
Nne	Mother	Onu	Mouth
Mmanu	Oil	Akwa	Egg
Mmiri	Water	Enyi	Elephant

Secondly, it is observed that Igbo dialectal variants have same form and meaning but vary in vowels. Examples are shown in word list:

Table 3. Observed that Igbo Dialect

A	English gloss	B	Alteration
Eju	Snail	Eji	[lu]E/i] final syllables variation
Ebulu	Ram	Ebule	[lu] [iei] final syllable variation
Idide	Earthworm	Udude	[li,e] [lu,o] variation of the three syllables

Thirdly, it is noted that variants have at times the same form and meaning but with variations in consonant segments, for example:

Table 4. Variations in Consonants

A	B	Alternations	English Gloss
Ala	Ani	[/G/] [/n/]	Land
Ahia	Afia	[/h/] [/f/]	Market
Uguru	Ugulu	[/r/] [/l/]	Harmatan
Ofo	Ogho	[/f/] [/gh/]	Symbol of authority

Fourthly words may have the same concept but wit variations in both consonant and vowel for example:

Table 5. Consonant and Vowel

B	B	Varried Consonant Vowels	English Gloss
Okpu	Ochu	O,ke//n,,ch/ (vowel) (cons)	Hat
Enyi	Oyi	/e,eyi/o,y/ (vowel) (cons)	Friend
Ejinja	Egiriija	/e,r/ /a,/I: (vowel) (cons)	sweat

In conclusion, it is obvious from the avove lexical samples, that there must be standardization in spelling and forms of these dialect variants through agreement. This agreement could result from formulated rules of spelling when one comes across a new vocabulary. In such cases where different words are used for a particular concept, these words should be simply accepted as synonyms. By accepting and not jettisoning any word found in the language we are enriching it.

Dialectal Variants as Synoymys

Words and expressions from different dialectal group, which are completely different in the phonological arrangement, serve as synonyms below are collected from the working list.

Table 6. Synonyms

English Gloss	Standard	Variants
Afternoon	Ehihie	Ikete, owulo
Foolishness	Iberibe	Inyere,nakakwu apan
Cat	Nwamba	Nna nwuluode, nwanugbo
Husband	Di	Duhum,ji,dibuno
Money	Ego	Nwaohoro,okpogho

Wind	Ikuku	Ihunhe, uwere, ufufe
Heat hotness	Okpomoku	Kukoko,ahuoku
Stone	Okwute	Nkeme, igu

These variants play important role in building a standard dictionary, as well as providing materials for literary works, for instance in the present day literary advancement invariable facilitate phonological, morphological and syntactic analysis of the language. Finally, these variants as enrichment factory place Igbo language near, if not at the same level, with that language that has been long standardized.

METHODS

In this research work, different methods are used and they include consultation, of primary and secondary source materials. In primary source, visits and consultations are carried out to individuals and institutions. The following institutions are visited: private, public and school libraries. National institute for Nigerian languages Aba, was also visited. Individuals consulted include lecturers, students and academics, especially those in the language studies.

The secondary source includes extensive review of books, dissertations, these and seminar papers. Oral interviews are also conducted. Former Imo state word list of 200 basic words compiled by Iche P.A. Ezikeojiaku is dialectal variants are also collected from educated subjects from the selected dialectal groups. Although from the little interview made within students, some of them feel relevant to pronounce what a particular word is call in their dialect, to avoid being ridiculed by others? But after some persuasion, a few of them responded positively. But, the wealth of this data is collected from rural dwellers who pronounced the forms in their original settings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Comparative Study of Five Dialects: Owerri, Afikpo, Oguta, Ngwa and Nnewi

The dialectal variants in this essay have been randomly chosen from five speech communities in Igbo land, namely; owerri, oguta, afikpo, nnewi and Ngwa. However, the dialectal not collected in this data (see appendix). Rather they are intended to serve a source point for the analysis in this chapter. In selecting the five dialects, some care has been taken to ensure that each dialectal group in Igbo land is represented. For instance, afikpo (ehugbo) and Nnewi represents the south-eastern dialects, and Oguta represents the riverine Igbo dialects. These classifications are made by Ezikeojiaku in his conception of dialectal distribution in Igbo land.

Furthermore, some linguistics has done commendable work of these dialects of Igbo. Welmers (46) describe the `central Igbo` which is seen as consisting of dialects spoken in Owerri and Umuahia arrears. In Oluikpe (1), survey of Ngwa dialect is made. Although the main work centered on the grammar he under took to breakdown the various variants of Ngwa dialect into

groups. Ugw (34) did some work on phonological features of the northern Igo dialects.

Elugbe (22) carries a comparative work on Edoid. Armstrong (76) studies a group of five Igbo dialects, Far East of the river. The vocalic and consonantal, features of the five dialects are examined and the wordlist compared in addition ubahakwu (123) discusses dialects are to Igbo speakers. Ikekeonwun (55) attempts a classification of dialects into five groups, using syntactic and phonological criteria. They are as follows:

- a. The Niger Igbo (NI)
- b. Inland west Igbo (IWI)
- c. Inland East Igbo (IEI)
- d. Waawa Igbo/ Northern Igbo (wI)
- e. Riverine Igbo (RI)

These grouped dialects (main dialects) are further classified into variants, which she describes as the satellites. In the data (see appendix) collected, the dialectal variants reveal some level of phonological, morphonological and syntactic variations, which form the focus of our further discussion.

Phonological Analysis

Every language uses a wide range of utterances with resultant phones that exist in the vocal and auditory system of human body. Phonology as defined by franklin and Rodma (101), is “the term used to refer to the kind of knowledge that speakers have about the sound patterns of their particular language. In other word, phonology is the study of speech sounds in a language. This section of the essay is therefore concerned with the comparison of the phonological patterns and variations which exist within the selected dialectal groups in Igbo land, Owerri, Oguta, Afikpo, Nnewi and Ngwa (ibeme) dialects.

In studying the dialectal variants, one notices a wide range of variations in the consonant and vowel segments. The five dialects variants maintain eight viwel system while Afikpo (Ehugbo) dialect is distinguished from the other four by having a nine-vowel system (this is found in words like Eka (hand), Ehia market). These vowels are represented thus:

Table 7. These Vowels are Represented

i	u
i	o
e)
E/e	d

In Afikpo (Ehugbo) dialect, the vowel /e/ is not an allophone of the vowel /e/. it belongs to the set referred to as (expanded). The use of the vowel /e/ is very common in other Northern Igbo dialects namely-Ukwali, Nsukka etc. while owerri or Oguta realize (ahia) or (afia) for market, the Afikpo (Ehugbo) realizes (ehihia), for `weed` Ehugbo realizes (ehihia) while Nnewi and Ngwa (Ibeme) realize (affia) and (ahihia) respectively; more example can be

seen in the data. Within the dialectal variants selected the under listed consonantal phonemes abound. But their application varies from one dialect variant to another.

Plosive

- [k] Voiceless velar plosive e.g. (oke) (rat) found in the four dialects. Ngwa (Ibeme) is distinguished by having it as (nkitaokwe) in (nkitaokwe) (k) in okwe is labialized, resulting in (kw).
- [Kh] Aspirated voiceless velar plosive e.g. (okhe) (male) found in the five dialects.
- [kw] voiceless labialized velar plosive e.g. (akwa) (cloth) found oweri, Oguta, Nnewi and Ngwa (Ibeme) Ehugbo realizes (.k.) in lplace of (-kw-) resulting in (eka) cloth.
- [kwh] Aspirated voiceless labialized velar plosive e.g. (akwha) (egg) found among the five dialects.
- (t) Voiceless alveolar plosive e.g. (nkita) (dog) found in the four dialects but varies to (nkwta) in Nnewi.
- (Eh) Aspirated voiceless alveolar plosive e.g.(atoro) sheep found in the five dialects but (r) changes to /l/ in Nnewi. Voiceless bilabial plosive e.g (apari) (foolishness). Found in oweri dialect.
- (b) Voiced bialabia plosive eg (obu) a specie of bird) found in oguta Nnewi. But vowel alters in the last syllable, resulting to (obo) in Ngwa (Ibeme)
- (c) Voiced alveolar plosive, e.g (odum) (lion) the same realization in the five dialects.
- (gw) voice labialized valar plosive e.g (igwe) (iron) found among the five dialects.
- (g) Voice velar plosive, e.g (aguw) (tiger) the same realization among the five dialects.

Implosives

- (KP) Voiceless velarization bilabial implosive, e.g. (mkpuru) (wrapper) found in Nigeria (beme) dialect.
- (gb) voiced velarized bilabial implosive, e.g. (egbe) (knife) the same realization among the five dialects. But with derivational suffix (te) in Ngwe (ibeme) dialect (egbete).

Africative

- (t) Voiceless palate-alveolar affricate, e.g. () ktj+~l) (dry season) found in the five dialects.
- (dz) Voiced palate-alveolar affricate, e.g. (ngadzi) spoon) found in the five dialects.

Fricative

- (f) Voiceless labio-dental fricative e,g. (efi) (cow)-found in Oguta and Nnewi but the (f) fricative change to (h) in Owerri, Afikpo and Ngwa (ibeme).
- (v) Voice labio-dental fricative e.g (usu) (bat) realized the same among the

five dialects.

- (z) Voiced alveolar fricative e.g. (eze) (king) found in the five dialects.
- (ʃ) Voiced nasalized alveolar fricative e.g (ezi) (pig) as in the five dialect.
- (tʃ) Voiceless palate-alveolar fricative e.g. (ut{it{i}) (midnight) as in owerri. Dialect.

Nassal

- (M) Voiced bilabial nasal e.g. (mkpi) (he-goat) found in five dialects but (nwa) is prefixed to it owerri dialect.
- (n) Voiced alveolar nasal e.g (nna) (father) found in the five dialects.
- (ŋ) Voiced palatal nasal e.g. (ihihia) (Horse) found in the five dialects, Variation in the first syllable from (i) to (@) on oguta dialect.
- (nw) Voice liabialized velar nasal e.g. (nwanugbo) (cat) as in oweri.

The Lateral

- (l) Voice alveolar lateral e.g. (udele)-(vulture) found among the five dialects, but consonantal variation from (L) to (n) in Nnewi

The Rool

- (R) Voiced alveolar rool, e.g. (ngwere) (lizard) as realised in the five dialects

The Semi-Vowels

- (W) Voiced labialized velar semi vowel e.g. [uwe] [clota] but [weje] in Ngwa.
- (J) Voiced palatal semi-vowel, e.g [oji] (cold) as in the five dialects except Ngwa (Ibeme) that has tone variation [oji]

Vowel

For easy comprehensive, the phonetic realization of the vowels can be represented on a cardinal vowel chart.

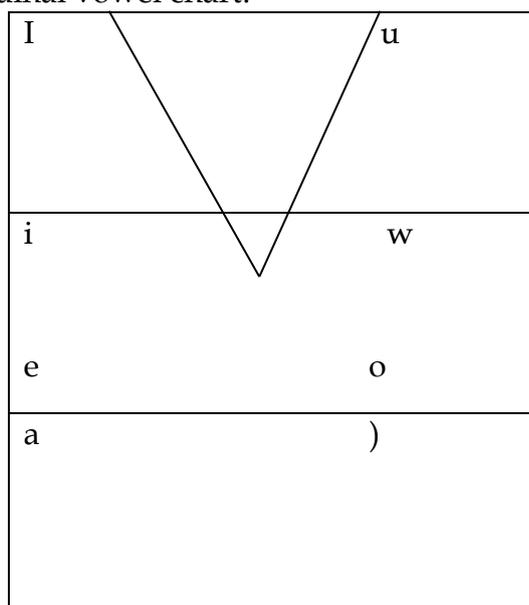


Figure 1. Cardinal Vowel

It is presume that since Afikpo (Ehugbo) shares a common border with the Northern Igbo dialects, that make use of /e/ in Ehugbo vowel system.

- [i] Closed front unrounded vowel, e.g. (ikuku) (breeze) found in owerri and Nnewi. It is realized as (akuku) in oguta (ihuhe) in Ehugbo and ufufe in Ngwa (Ibeme). Here is a case of both consonant k,f,h and vowel variation I,a,v at the initial syllable and lu,e/ at the final syllable. Half-close front unrounded vowel. E.g. [dZiridz@] (sweat) as used in Ngwa (Ibeme).
- (e) Half-open front unrounded vowel, e.g. (edzu) (snail) realized in Owerri, Oguta and Ehugbo but (ndzin@) in Nnewi, edzi in Ngwa.
- [E] Half-open front unrounded vowel e.g. [e,ehia] (market) as in Afikpo. The other four dialects use /a/ as the initial syllable.
- [a] Open front unrounded vowel, e.g. [aw] (load) found in the front dialects, excepts in Ehugbo that uses (e) as initial syllable.
- [ɔ] Open back rounded vowel, e.g. [ɔnwn] (moon) found in the four dialects, with consonant variation [ɲ] in place of [nw] in Nguta.
- [o] Half-open back rounded vowel, e.g. [owu] (afternoon) as in Ngwa (Ibeme) dialect.
- [u] Half-closed back rounded vowel e.g. [uguru] (harmattan) used in the five dialects, but [r] changes, to (l) in Nnewi this [ugulu].
- [ʊ] Close back rounded vowel, e.g. [ugwu] (-hill) as in the five dialects.

The Igbo grammar generally maintains a vowel harmony except in some compound words. This is also applicable to the five dialects from which data were collected for analysis. However, the vowel /a/ of the narrow set interchanges with the vowel /e/ of the wide set. The vowel chart below illustrates this point clearly.

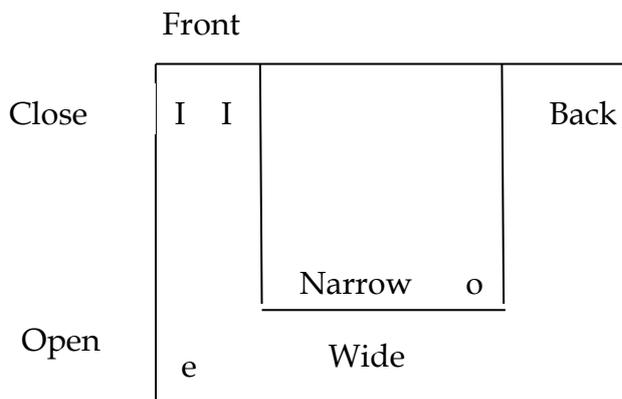


Figure 2. Vowel Illustrates

Certain words do not have vowel harmony because of the interchanging nature of /a/ of the narrow set with /e/ of the wide set, in some dialects. For example [evula] (ram) where the vowels do not harmonize is realized in owerri dialects. While the word harmonizes in the other four dialects.

Vowel Assimilation

Vowel assimilation is a common feature in Igbo dialects, especially during speeches. It is more pronounced in utterances than in writing. For example, we have [itet oku] realized as [itooku] in the five dialects: /I/ in the second segment [oku] has been assimilated. Other examples include [afotibu] realized as [afibu] [protruded stomach] as in oguta dialect. [Agutiyi] realized as [agiyi] (crocodile as in Nnewi dialects).

Consonant Elision

Consonant in Igbo is prominent in Igbo dialects that make first speeches of utterances. This is also true of vowels for instance, in Ngwa (Ibeme) dialect [miri] which is realized by eliding the first syllable nasal (m). but in other dialects, example oguta and owerri, water is realized as (mmiri). Moreover, as dialects grow, certain segments are elided. For instances [nwa] in (nwaimkpi) as realized in owerri dialects, has long been elided in other dialects and they realize [mkpi] (he-goat). In oguta and Nnewi, the second consonant segment /r/ is elided in [agbogho] this (agb))

Nasalization

Nasalization occurs when the pronunciation of certain consonant segments are associated with a nasal `twang` for instance. In oguta, owerri, and Ngwa (Ibeme) we have [ezi] (pig). In Ngwa (Ibeme) `wooden` shovel is realized as [mbozu] as opposed to [mbazu] in other dialects.

Glottalization

Owerri dialect is distinguished, for using the glottalic ingressive alveolar plosive [t] in realization of certain segments, example [aturu] `sheep` [ututu] morning [akpla] messle etc.

Aspiration

Case of aspiration is common in the data collected. But we have examples such as [akwha] `egg` found among the five dialects. And [aturu] `sheep` found among five dialects.

Labialization

Example of labialization is not common. They include [akwoa] `cloth` as in owerri, oguta, Nnewi and Ngwa (Ibeme) dialects. Another one is (igwe) (iron) as in the five dialects.

Palatalization

This feature is not common in data. There are examples such as [bia] `come` as in Ngwa (Ibeme) dialects and (Libya) as in other four dialects. Another example is (iji) friend as in oguta. Finally, it is important to note the attention of the liquids /r/ and the voiced alveolar nasal (n) in Nnewi dialect. In certain segments where [l] occurs in other dialects [n] is used in Nnewi and

oguta dialects. Example [ana] and [ani] [land] respectively. In another example, [uguru] [harmattan] in other dialects, varies to ugulu in nnewi.

Morphological Analysis

Morphological in linguistics describe the internal construction of words, it is the formation of word; or the study of forms of words and used derivation. The morpheme on the other hand, the smallest meaningful grammatical unit. The smallest meaningful grammatical element in Igbo dialects are affixes [that] is, prefix, suffix, and intermix], enclitics and tonal morphemes affixes are, usually inbound in verbal forms in the analysis. We will limit the work only on prefixes and the suffixes as they occur in the working data.

The Prefixes

There are used to derived nouns form verbs and other nominal. In fact it has been observed that most, if not all nouns in Igbo are derived from verbs. For instance, [ochendu] [umbrella] realized in oguta, may be formed by prefixing [o-] to c-che- [prefect] and [n] to di [mature]. Another verb c-nwn].

The Suffixes

In word and syntactic construction of most Igbo dialects, suffixes take c-rv] etc in certain segments. Example, owerri dialect. Realizes [ukwara]=[-rv], while Nnewi realizes [ukwala] =la= [-lv]; while Nnewi and oguta realizes [ogwumagana]= [-na=[-nv] and [ovumag ana] c-na] =c-nv] respectively. In sentence forms, most dialectal variants use [-rv], example [oba [ra] aba] [he is wealthy], as in owerri, and Ngwas [Ibeme]; While Nnewi realizes [oballu,uba], -iv].

These suffixes are not specific, they very with segments-A dialect may use [-rv] in one segment, and change to [-jv] in another. Most words are formed through Noun-noun combination, example [amuma+mmiri]-noun noun] meaning lightening as in owerri and oguta-Ehugbo dialect use one form, that is bound morphemes for lightening example [ovum].

Other examples of noun-noun combination are [ahua+oku] [fever], owerri and ehugbo use a bound morpheme [oji] to mean {fever}. There are cases where lexical items very completely in form: example {okwute} as in-owerri varies with {Nwume}. Realizes in Ehugbo and Nnewi and both forms very with [igu] realizes in Ngwa (Ibeme). Another Example is found in oguta, where [ife-nni]. Varies with the other four dialectal forms [agwo] [snake].

Semantic Variation

Semantic variation occurs in a word like [idere] realizes in oguta as [crocodile] but means- another example is [mfu] realized in Ngwa [ibeme] dialects to mean an opening where rabbit escapes.

Syntactic Analysis

This describes rule for the realization of sentences. Some simple sentence in igbo grammar are generated through subject, verb, object, [SVO] word

arrangement. For instance, owerri and Ngwa [Ibeme] realizes o+bara +aba [he is wealthy] represented thus:

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{O} & & + & & \text{bara} & & + & & \text{aba} \\ \hline \text{S} & & & & \text{V} & & & & \text{O} \end{array}$$

The verbal form [ba/ta]-possess [rv] suffix and thus [rv] unlike other construction dose not depict past tense form it shows aspect rather. The [_rv] suffix varies to [-lv] in Nnewi dialect. The above syntactic construction varies o[nwa] eku in Ehugbo dialect [he is wealthy] in the data syntactic construction, thus, Onwookpogho [he has mone] as realize in ehugbo, and o Nwere ikpeghe. As in Ngwe [ibeme] despite the vowelvariation [o-] [i-o] [o-] [a-=] and the elision of [-rv] suffix in Ehugbo seem to be [ognatees] considering the structure of the construction in such construction above, oguta dialect use [here in place of [where] as used by other dialects -Example onw ere ego as in owerri and o nere ego as in owrri Nnewei. Finally, the analysis is however limited because it is base on the 20 [twenty]basic vocabulary and some culture items adopted, used in the Imo state University [EZIKEOJIAKU] [1982 and known as imo state University basic word used in this essay. The researcher purposely limited the number to 20 [twenty for convenience.

The Standard Igbo Vis-A-Vis Dialect

Standard language of any speech community as opposed to the dialects is dialect which has been transformed into written form and used officially, in education, administration, et cetera throughout a distant area than that of the dialect which is recognized locally. When the standard dialect is used broadly in administrative matters, literature, economic, social life, and so on, it minimizes the occurrence of linguistic variation. The social prestige attached to the standard language nationally and internationally, makes it necessary for every linguistic community to have one for identity. In the realization of this noble goal of having a standard dialect, Igbo scholars have been committed themselves to molding out one from the diversified dialects of the language. Since the period (period when thought for creation of an acceptable standard Igbo standard).

Presently, for the Igbo language to be rated a standard dialect, it has to be rich with dialectal resources, which abound within it, to facilitate mutual interaction among dialectal groups. By so doing every dialectal group would have a sense of belonging or share in the standard form. This situation is different when one dialects dominates the "said standard form" as was the case with union Igbo in which the Onitsha conicha) dialect dominated other dialects.

The creation of standard Igbo as one of the stages in language development makes for unity among the diversified dialectal group of the Igbo land.It is of immense be benefit to the service of political, economic, social and religious groups. Moreover, its importance in the area of publishing, printing, and teaching, examination, in national and international issues cannot be over looked.

Politically, standard Igbo which is enriched with dialectal resources of the language encourages acceptability and mutual intelligibility among speakers in a political area. Whenever any political issues are raised or discussed, there would be mutual intelligibility among the speakers of the same language, dialectal variation, notwithstanding. For instance, the use of standard Igbo would enable a speaker of Ehugbo dialect, for example in executing political participation among speakers of the same language, but diversified dialect groupings.

Standard Igbo creates a wealthy ground for economic growth among its speakers, most linguistic communities of the world, with standard language experience, have high economic growth because it enables effective communication in business transaction. Coming home, for example, a speaker of Ngwu (Ibeme) dialect, who is competent in using standard form of the language transacts business effectively with speaker of Oguta or Idemili dialect, without facing much difficulties associated with dialectal differences.

Socially, language as defined by scholars is the vocal system through which social groups interact with one another. Considering this definition, one may ask how Igbo speakers interact with each other with or without straining their ears, due to dialect differences. The creation of standard form, which enables one dialectal group to socialize effectively with another, without being ridiculed answers the above question.

In religious matters, standard Igbo has contributed a lot (it is true that it has not been fully enriched). The Bible which was written in Igbo before the existence of the standard Igbo proved difficult to read and therefore made understanding the message difficult. Presently, religious materials written with one or more forms taken from their respective dialects. And this makes for an easy understanding.

In teaching, standard Igbo is introduced to facilitate mutual intelligibility between the teacher and the student. Without the standard Igbo, teaching and learning would be relatively difficult, since the teacher may come from a different dialect area, which uses distinguishing tonal system different from that used by his students.

Nationally and internationally standard language is very useful, not only to the Igbo speakers but to other ethnic groups at large. Apart from having other linguistic groups, Igbo language, that is the standard form, identifies the speaker nationally or internationally. Finally, the use of dialectal variants in enriching the standard Igbo, will not only enhance Igbo language development but will curb dialectal prejudices among Igbo language speakers.

Metalinguage As A Tool For Its Enrichment

In modern linguistic discourse, a metalanguage is used for the discussions about a language and every aspect of cultural norms and its development. As defined by Hartman Stirk (40), metalanguage is: "the language or set of symbols of another language". In standard Igbo, these symbols are used to represent items which lack common words in all dialectal groups and also to represent foreign language terminologies used in the standard Igbo for

teaching and learning. In other words, metalanguage constitutes all the new words which contribute to the enrichment of lexicon. in language for the discussions of Igbo in Igbo in Igbo in particular and other languages in general. It includes the conglomeration of all technical or specialized terminologies for describing everything in that language.

Language is dynamic, so is metalanguage. Metalanguage stretches its tentacles to meet up with the shortcoming of the past, present and future. It is a process that makes time to realize. The introduction of metalanguage as a tool for Igbo language enrichment is further necessitated, since government has suggested that Igbo language be among the language used as medium of instruction in the lower levels of formal education, and also the teaching of the subject at the higher levels of education.

For the past decades, there has been commendable effort from different quarters and individual to develop Igbo through the metalangue. notable among these groups are the Igbo standardization committee (ISC), the society for promoting Igbo language and culture (SPILC), the Nigerian Educational Research Development council (NERDC), much success has been recorded, as a materials included Nnaji (1985) and Halliamson (1972) ed. The Nigerian Educational research development Council (NERDC), with the assistance of the society for promoting Igbo language and culture (SPTLC) have compiled a large number of terminologies in the Igbo metalanguage (1978), (1990), (1991) to cater for the effective teaching and learning. Some of these items are randomly selected for clarity. They include:

Table 8. Selected for Clarity

English	Standard Igbo	Field Of Discourse
Multiply	Mubaa	Mathematical terms
Divide	Kee	
Add	Gbakoo	
Subtract	Wepu	
Blood	Obara mmee	Biological terms
Reproduction	Keejimunwa	
Organs	Ke-ejianunuwe	
Electricity	(e) letrik	Physical
Litre	Lita	
Lake	Eza	Geography
Sea/ocean	Iyi/anyim	
Bialabia(adi)	Keegbugbere	Linguistics
Aspiration	Abuo, mkponuume	

Presently, igbo language can be used in describing itself and other fields of study such as science and technology, history, literature, social science and the like. Finally, with expansion of its lexical inventory, standard Igbo and embrace the many facets of culture contact, thereby bridging the gap between Igbo culture and other cultures. Standard Igbo is still in the race for less

interims like other standard languages hence metalanguage serves as a tool necessary for its enrichment.

Dialectal variation, as said earlier, in this work, occurs in a language hence there are differences in phonology, morphology, syntax as well as vocabulary in each dialects of such a language. Considering the effects of dialectal variation, it is important to discuss the positive and negative effects which characterize it.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The words of some scholars so far in igbo dialect variation have shown that Igbo language is fortunate to have many variables which include consonants, vowels, vocabularies, derive from its diversified dialects. Unlike other languages that developed their standard forms through the imposition of the dialect of the central authority or that of the capital. For example, the Igbo language has no other means or source of developing. For example, the Igbo language has no other means or source of developing an acceptable standard form than making use of the available dialectal resources. This is achieved by retaining the attaching definite meaning on such variants to reflect connotative terms. Moreover, the existence of different words in the diversified dialects, meaning the same concept, makes for the availability of synonyms.

For instance, "foolishness" has many synonyms in Igbo language, thus: [apart] in owerri, [n.zuzu] in oguta, [-nyere] in Ehugbo, [ofeke] or [mkpgwu] in Nnewi, [iberibe] in Ngwa [Ibeme] see data no 93. Another example includes a word like "afternoon" having many synonyms in Igbo language as [ogbulo] in owerri, [effie] in oguta and Nnewi, [ehihie] in Ehugbo and [owu] in Ngwa (Ibeme) dialects. When all these resources are injected into the standard Igbo and utilize, it would be better appreciated and recognize. It is pertinent to state here that the other era, when we allowed European and other linguistic scholars such as I.C ward, R.F.G. Adams, professor waterman, M.M. Green and a host of other who visit Igbo land to fashion out a literary form and engage in Igbo language studies for us has gone. The onus of utilizing these dialectal resources in molding an acceptable standard Igbo, rests squarely with the Igbo scholars (linguistic and non linguistic) as rightly observed by leith-Ross in afigbo (373) that "the ultimate future of the language must be lie in the hands of the Igbo himself". it is true that Igbo language is dialectal river. The same problem was applicable to most linguistic communities before they were able to develop a literary standard form and now enjoying national and internal recognition.

Even those languages such as Hausa, and Yoruba which have evolved standard forms, still show large traces of dialect variation. Finally, it is hope that this research work, rather than being a conclusive linguistic study on dialectal variation for the enrichment of standard Igbo, would serve as a stimulus for further intensive researches.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations so further research needs to be done on the topic "Dialect Variations the Enrichment of Standard Igbo Language: A Linguistic Study."

REFERENCES

- Armstrong. R.G (1967); A comparative word list of five Igbo dialects.
Occasional publication Ibadan.
- Carmochan. J. and Belonwu.I, (1963): an Igbo Revision course using the official orthography. Oxford University press.
- Dale .p.s (1976): language development structures and function. New York Dryden press.
- Elugbe, B.O (1986): comparative Ediod phonology and lexicon. University of Port Harcourt press.
- Emenajo, E.N. etal (1990): Igbo metalanguage (Okasusu Igbo press Limited Ibadan.
- Ezikeojiaku P.A. (1989): fonologi nauto asusu Igbo macmillian Educational publishers Ibadan.
- Ferguson, C.A. (1968): language development in fishman .J.et. al (ed); language problems of Developing Nations. New York: wiley and sons.
- Franklin, v. and Rodman .R. (1981): an introduction to language Cambridge University press.
- Green, m.m. igwe, G.E. (1963): a Descriptive Grammar of Igb. Oxford University press academic vering berling.

Hartman, R.R. and stirk f.c. (1973): Dictionary of language and linguistics.
Cambridge University press.

Nwadike .I. (1981): development of Igbo language. MMED Thesis, state
University of New York at Bufallo. U.S.A

Ogbalu, F.c. (1974): Standard Igbo-path to its Development. University press
limited Ibadan.

Ibid, petal (1982): Igbo language and culture. (vol. 2) University press Limited
Ibadan.