



PHONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF ANGLICIZED IGBO PERSONAL NAMES

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Abstract

Name points to the bearer which could be humans, trees, places, concepts. It makes the thing named distinct from others of their kind. It is a remarkable fact that every person has a name. Surely, no one in the entire world is nameless, poor or noble, hence; parents give a name to every child at birth. A personal name is a name that belongs to an individual and which serves as a label for him or her. It is the distinct identity which every individual bears. Anglicism is the adaptation of the linguistic features of English to other languages and cultures. Some issues necessitated the researchers' investigation into this study; one of which was the fact that some Igbo people tend not to be proud of their Igbo names as well as Igbo language. To them, Igbo names appear to be too local for the modern world. So, in a bid to appear modern and civilized, and to also show prestige, they anglicize their names. This study is essential for understanding the impact of language contact on indigenous language like Igbo. It aims to investigate the phonological changes that occur when Igbo personal names are adapted into English. The study was carried out in three primary schools in the Ukwulu community which are: Udodimma primary school, Central school and Amagu migrant farmers' school Ukwulu. It also focuses on online social network Facebook, for data collection. It employed the purposive sampling technique for the selection of Igbo personal names. It adopted the Knoblauch's (2008) Phonological awareness theory for the analysis of data. The Green and Igwe's (1963) tone marking convention was adopted. The International Phonetic Alphabets (IPA) were employed in the phonemic transcription of data. The findings reveal that Igbo personal names have undergone significant changes in their sound patterns, including the adoption of English phonemes, syllable structure, and stress patterns. One of the phonological processes adopted in the analysis of the Igbo personal names and their anglicized versions is manipulation of sounds or syllables which is equivalent to substitution. Some sounds are substituted with other sounds; for example the diphthongs /oi/ in Chibuike /tʃibuike/ to /ai/ in Chibye /tʃibaik/, /i/ in Obinna to /ai/ in Obaiño /ɔbaino/ and other phonological processes. These changes have resulted in the loss of indigenous Igbo phonological features and the emergence of new, anglicized forms. There is need for language preservation and promotion efforts to safeguard the phonological integrity of indigenous languages like Igbo. Further research should be conducted to explore the impact of Anglicism on other aspects of Igbo language and culture.

Keywords: Personal names, Anglicism, phonological processes

1. Introduction

This discourse pertains to the assimilation of the English language and culture, encompassing the adaptation of English nomenclature. It signifies the condition of being English. Numerous scholars concur that for Anglicism to manifest, adaptation must precede it, as illustrated by the substantial integration of Anglicisms within Europe. Fischer and Pulaczewska (2008) assert that "the spread of Anglicism in European languages in recent decades proves that English has undoubtedly become a pan-European means of communication, supplanting Latin and French as the predominant languages of scholarship, political discourse, commercial practices, and international media."



2. Literature review

2.1 Conceptual review

2.1.1 Igbo Personal Names

A meticulous examination of Igbo personal names reveals that they predominantly exhibit an elongated structure, with the utilization of abbreviated forms being a prevalent practice among the Igbo populace. Complete names are typically reserved for formal interactions and official documentation, whereas the shortened variants are employed in informal, quotidian conversations. Proper names constitute a system that varies across cultures, serving as a reflection of the society from which they emanate. They represent linguistic items that fulfill a referential function. According to Lyons (1969:337), “Proper names are to be regarded as the most ‘substantial’—the most truly ‘nominal’—of the expressions in a language.” Although proper names are categorized as mono-referential, they are by no means mono-functional (Nord, 2003:183). Beyond their prominent role as identifiers, names serve additional purposes. Firstly, names are typically, though not invariably, gender-specific, enabling recognition of the name’s association with a male or female. Secondly, a name may convey information regarding the social class, religion, or ethnic origin of its bearer, thereby presupposing a particular “category.” Thirdly, in addition to manifesting our identity, origins, and affiliation with cultural or social groups, names play a significant role in social classification. Personal names not only inform the community of an individual’s identity but also elucidate to the individual his or her standing within the community (Ainiala et al., 2008:18). Personal names form the bedrock of one’s identity. The subject of names has captivated the attention of philosophers of language, ethnographers, anthropologists, and linguists, each contributing their own perspectives and theories regarding nomenclature (Nkamigbo, 2019).

2.1.2 Phonology

Phonology is conventionally defined as the exploration of the systematic patterns of speech sounds within a specific language and the governing principles that underlie them—particularly those pertaining to the composition and amalgamation of speech sounds. As Comrie (2007) articulates, phonology is concerned with the tangible properties of the sound system that speakers must acquire or internalize to effectively utilize their language for communicative purposes. Conversely, Anagbogu, Mbah, and Eme (2010) assert that the principal objective of phonology lies in comprehending and delineating how sequences of sounds, along with their accompanying prosodic features, convey meaning within a language. Mbah (2016) characterizes phonology as predominantly focused on the distinctive (contrastive) speech sounds of particular languages and the patterns of their combination, which elucidates how these sounds are structured within a given linguistic framework.

2.1.3 Anglicism

Anglicism serves as a generic term denoting the borrowing from various forms of English, including American English, British English, and other English-speaking regions such as Canada, Australia, and South Africa (Yang, 1990:7). Eisenberg (2012:3) defines Anglicism as a foreign word from English and it expresses the fact that it is not an English word, but one that is English, or rather one that originates wholly or in part from English.” Badea (2009:241) offers a broader perspective, emphasizing that “Anglicism is a word borrowed from British or American English, which designates a word or concept typical of English culture. Its incorporation into the foreign language may be deemed either necessary or superfluous.” According to Avram (1997) and Kristin (2015), the notion of Anglicism pertains to any linguistic unit and its pronunciation, extending beyond mere individual words.

2.1.4 Phonological processes

Phonological processes encompass various modifications that speech sounds undergo to attain greater similarity to their neighboring sounds. These processes are referred to by several

terminologies. Erlinda (2010:87) describes the phonological process as an allophonic phenomenon. She enumerates five distinct types of phonological processes or allophonic rules: aspiration, assimilation, fusion, elision, and insertion (epenthesis). In alignment with Erlinda, Tench (2011:61) refers to phonological processes as allophonic variations. Alternatively, Yule (2010:46) perceives phonological processes as coarticulation effects, necessitating the articulators to transition from one sound to the next without interruption. Roach (2000:120) designates phonological processes as connected speech. In accordance with Roach's terminology, Radford (2009:4) notes that many words undergo alterations in their phonetic form, specifically in pronunciation, during connected speech, where sound changes are influenced by the characteristics of adjacent sounds within a word, phrase, or sentence. A particular sound may transform into another under specific conditions, with the distribution of sounds being governed by phonological rules. This indicates that a phoneme can be altered into a different sound during connected speech due to the influence of neighboring sounds.

2.2 Empirical studies

Fajobi and Akomolafe (2019) investigated the phonological processes involved in the anglicization of Yoruba personal names. Their findings revealed that the anglicized names analyzed predominantly exhibit stress shift as the primary prosodic strategy employed by speakers to anglicize Yoruba personal names. Additional phonological processes identified include resyllabification, contraction, elision, and substitution; however, the bearers remain largely unaware of these processes. Furthermore, their research disclosed that although the “new names” are structurally more aligned with English than Yoruba, they are nevertheless pronounced with Yoruba tonal qualities by certain bearers.

Table 1: Structural syllabification of the selected original and anglicized Yoruba names

| Origin al names | No of syllabl es | Structural syllabificatio n | Angliciz ed version of names | Pronunciati on of names | Numbe r of syllabl es | Structural syllabificati on |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Àbáyò | 4 | V+CV+CV+ | Yommy | [jɔmɪ] | 2 | CV + CV |
| mí | 3 | CV | Bussy | [busɪ] | 2 | CV + CV |
| Bùsáyò | 2 | CV+CV+CV | Daiji | [deɪdʒɪ] | 2 | CV +CV |
| Déjì | 2 | CV+CV | Fm | [efem] | 2 | VC + VC |
| Fémī | 3 | CV+CV | Flaky | [fleɪkɪ] | 2 | CCV + CV |
| Fòláké | | CV+CV+CV | | | | |

Achebe (2013) in his investigation of the discrepancies in the realization of Igbo personal names and losses in semantic context observes that there are various discrepancies in the realization of Igbo personal names. Some of the major causes of these discrepancies are:

1. Shortening of various kinds with simple reasons to fraternize.

He reveals that shortening of names leads to obscurity of the meanings of such names. Examples:

- i.
- | | | | | |
|----------------|--|------------|--|---------------------|
| B (elɔ) | | o (li) s a | | Bosa |
| (Belu + Olisa) | | | | |
| ↓ | | ↓ | | |
| But for | | God | | If not for the Lord |



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1. Recognizing when words rhyme,
2. Segmentation of words in a sentence.
3. Blending syllables,
4. Segmentation of syllables,
5. Deletion of syllables,
6. Identifying sounds in words,
7. Blending sounds,
8. Segmentation of sounds,
9. Deletion of sounds,
10. Addition of sounds,
11. Manipulation of sounds,

From the above, this study selected only three skills as the phonological processes under which the Igbo personal names were analyzed. The three skills are:

1. Addition of sounds (equivalent to epenthesis)

Epenthesis is the addition of a vowel or consonant between sounds. It is divided into two. Excrescence (if the sound added is a consonant) and anaptyxis (if the sound added is a vowel). A sound added at the beginning is called prothesis. If added at the end of the word, it is called paragoge.

2. Manipulation of sounds / syllables (equivalent to substitution, re-syllabification, consonant cluster and consonant finalization)

- i. **Substitution:** This is the systematic replacement of one linguistic feature for another or one phoneme for another.
- ii. **Re-syllabification:** The Anglicism of Igbo personal names do not only affect the orthography and segments in Igbo, but also syllable structure. In Igbo language, words can take these permissible syllable structures and even more V, CV, VCV, CVCV, SCV, etc. Anglicism sometimes modifies the syllable structure of the original indigenous Igbo personal names.
- iii. **Consonant cluster and consonant finalization:** Consonant clusters are sequences of two or more consonants that occur together within a syllable without intervening vowels. These clusters can appear at the beginning (initial clusters), middle (medial clusters) or end (final clusters) of words. Similarly, consonant finalization connotes the process of adding a consonant to the end of an Igbo word. In Igbo phonotactics, consonants neither cluster nor end an Igbo word. Igbo words typically have intervening vowels and must end in a vowel, following the phonological patterns of the Igbo language. However, due to Anglicism, some Igbo personal names have undergone changes, resulting in consonants clustering in some names or even some names ending in a consonant. These phenomena of consonant Cluster and finalization seen in Igbo words do not conform to the native Igbo phonological patterns.

3. Deletion of syllables (equivalent to contraction)

Contraction refers to a phonological process by which a sequence of sounds that constitutes one or more words is reduced or fused, (Trask 1996:19). The reduction may be accompanied by additional changes of the sound segments; these changes usually belong to the family of lenition processes (Kupò 2010, Bauer 1988).

3. Methodology

This study employed qualitative research approach, in which case the collected data were subjected to analysis, as based on case studies to expose the phonological processes involved in the Anglicism of Igbo personal names. The study was carried out in three primary schools in the Ukwulu community which are: Udodimma primary school, Central school and Amagu migrant farmers school Ukwulu. It also focuses on [online social network Facebook, for data collection](#). Ukwulu is a



community in Igbo land. It is one of the towns in Dunukofia Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. Ukwulu has five villages, which are Adagbe, Amaegbu, Enuagu, Iruezeagu and Umugama. The entire Igbo land made up the **population** of the study. The purposive **sampling technique** was adopted in the selection of seventy names out of the seven hundred Igbo personal names contained in the admission registers of the three public primary schools in Ukwulu and fifty Igbo personal names out of the three thousand, five hundred (3500) researchers' Facebook friends, making it a total of one hundred and twenty (120) Igbo personal names. The names of pupils were collected from the admission registers of the three public primary schools in the Ukwulu community. The names were copied from pupils who registered from the year 2010 to 2024. The preference of the years is as a result of the flashy Igbo names these 21st century mothers give to their children. Data were phonemically transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabets (IPA), and the transcribed data were tone marked using the Green and Igwe's (1963) tone marking convention where the high tone is left unmarked and the low and down step tones are marked with the grave accent (`) and macron (-) symbols respectively. The work provides the English gloss of the written data. The phonological process of the anglicized Igbo personal names were carried out using the Knoblauch's (2008) phonological awareness theory.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Phonological processes anglicized Igbo personal names undergo.

The original Igbo personal names undergo various phonological processes in the course of Anglicism. Some of these phonological processes can be seen in the analyses below:

4.1.1 Addition of sounds (equivalent to epenthesis)

Table 2: **Contraction and Epenthesis**

| Original Igbo personal names (paragoge) | Transcription | Anglicized names | Transcription | Epenthesis |
|---|----------------------------|------------------|------------------------|------------|
| 1. Chukwuebùka | [tʃuk ^w uebùka] | Bukason | [bukasən] | -son |
| 2. Chiàmaka | [tʃiàmaka] | Makas | [makas] | -s |
| 3. Amāobi | [amāobi] | Mobis | [mobis] | -s |
| 4. Chichèkwa | [tʃitʃèk ^w a] | Chekwas | [tʃèk ^w as] | -s |
| 5. Chikàdibìà | [tʃikàdibìà] | Chikas | [tʃikas] | -s |
| 6. Chisòm | [tʃisòm] | Sommy | [somi] | -my |
| 7. Chukwudì | [tʃok ^w odì] | Chuks | [tʃuks] | -s |
| 8. Tòbechukwu | [tòbetʃukwu] | Tobis | [tobis] | -is |
| 9. Tòchukwu | [tòtʃuk ^w u] | Toks | [toks] | -ks |
| 10. Ùwàezùòkè | [ùwàezùòkè] | Uwas | [ùwas] | -s |

Looking at some syllables of the original names in table 2 above, there are simultaneous deletion and addition of other sounds. The phonological processes of contraction and epenthesis make the names to sound more English.

4.1.2 Manipulation of sounds / syllables (equivalent to substitution, tonal alteration, re-syllabification, consonant clustering and consonant finalization)

Sounds are manipulated in the course of Anglicism of the Igbo personal names. They could be manipulated through substitution, tonal alteration and re-syllabification, consonant clustering, consonant finalization and so on). In the course of this work, **substitution, consonant clustering and consonant finalization** are considered.



4.1.2.1 Substitution

Table 3: Showing alternations of sounds with other sounds

| Original Igbo personal names | | Anglicized version | | Substituted sounds |
|------------------------------|------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 1. Chibùike | [tʃibùike] | Chibyke | [tʃibaik] | [-oi-aɪ] |
| 2. Ejike | [edʒike] | Ejyke | [edʒaik] | [-i-aɪ] |
| 3. Èmèlife | [èmèlife] | Emelyfe | [emelaɪf] | [-i-aɪ] |
| 4. Obinnà | [obinnà] | Obaino | [ɔbaino] | [-i-aɪ] |

Substitution is also a phonological process anglicized names also undergo as evident in the above examples. /oi/ was substituted with /aɪ/, and /i/ with /aɪ/ respectively.

4.1.2.2 Consonant Clustering and Consonant finalization

Instances where consonant cluster and finalization occur in the anglicized Igbo personal names are evidential below:

| Original Igbo personal names | | Anglicized consonant Clustering | |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|
| 3. i. | Chinonyerem̄ [tʃinɔ̄nerem] CV+CV+CV+CV+S | Nomzy [nɔ̄mzi] CVS+CV | |
| ii. | Chisim̄dì [tʃisim̄sɪdì] CV+CV+S+CV | Simdy [simdɪ] CVS+CV | |
| iii. | Chukwudì [tʃʊkʷɔdì] CV+CV+CV | Chuks [tʃuks] CVCC/CV+CV | |
| iv. | Èjim̄nkeonye [èdʒim̄nkeɔ̄ne] V+CV+S+S+CV+V+CV | Ejims [edʒimz] V+CVSC | |
| v. | Èkentà [èkentà] V+ CV+ S+CV | Kenta [kenta] CVS+CV | |
| vi. | Ìkèmdìrim̄ [ɪkèmdìrim̄] S+CV+S+CV+CV+S | Kemdy [kemdɪ] CVS+CV | |
| vii. | Som̄tòchukwu [som̄tòtʃukʷu] CV+S+CV+CV+CV | Somty [sɔmtɪ] CVS+CV | |
| viii. | Tòchukwu [tòtʃukʷu] CV+CV+CV | Toks [toks] CVCC | |

The data in 5 (i-viii) above show that consonant clustering is only common in the anglicized Igbo personal names. They are evidently not seen in the original Igbo personal names where syllable-final consonants are typically avoided.

Original Igbo personal names

Anglicized consonant finalization

| | | | |
|-------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 4. i. | Àdaùkè [àdaùkè] V+CV+V+CV | Duke [djuk] CV+CV | |
| ii. | Amāobi [amāobi] V+CV+V+CV | Mobis [mobɪs] CV+CV+C | |
| iii. | Àzikiwe [àzikiwe] V+CV+CV+CV | Zik [zik] CVC | |
| iv. | Chèkwube [tʃèkʷube] CV+CV+CV | Chekwus [tʃekʷus] CV+CVC | |



| | | |
|-------|---|--------------------------------|
| v. | Chiàmaka [tʃiàmaka] CV+V+CV+CV | Makas [makas] CV+CV+C |
| vi. | Chukwuebùka [tʃuk ^w uebùka] CV+CV+V+CV+CV | Bukason [bukasən] CV+CV+CVC |
| vii. | Ejīke [edʒīke] V+CV+CV | Ejyke [edʒaɪk] V+VC |
| viii. | Ejìmetòchukwu [edʒìmetò] V+CV+S+V+CV+CV+CV | Jim [dʒim] CVS |

The data in 4 (i-viii) above reveal the presence of consonant finalization which is not permissible in Igbo phonotactics. They evidently show that of a truth, anglicized Igbo personal names take the features of English. They all end with a consonant which is not in any way seen in the original Igbo personal names.

5. Findings and conclusions

This study has examined Anglicism of Igbo personal names within the framework of Phonological awareness theory. The study was carried out in order to ascertain the phonological processes in the anglicism of the Igbo personal names. Some of them include 1. Contraction and epenthesis. Some sounds of the Igbo personal names were deleted while some sounds were added to the final position (paragoge) of the anglicized Igbo personal names. 2. Manipulation of sounds or syllables which are equivalent to substitution, tonal alteration, resyllabification, consonant cluster and consonant finalization. Some sounds were substituted with other sounds; for example the diphthongs /ui/ in Chibūike /tʃiʊike/ to /aɪ/ in Chibyke /tʃiʔaɪk/, /i/ in Obinna to /aɪ/ in Obaɪno /Obaɪno/. Consonant cluster and consonant finalization which are not permissible in the Igbo phonotactics, manifested in the anglicized Igbo personal names, thereby disrupting the structure of Igbo phonology. Some examples of consonant cluster Nkemdilim [kemdy], Tochukwu [toks] and consonant finalization Ụwaezuoke [ɔwas], Tobenna [Tobis].

6. Recommendations

There is need for language preservation and promotion efforts to safeguard the phonological integrity of indigenous languages like Igbo. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of language contact and cultural exchange, and underscores the importance of preserving linguistic and cultural diversity in the face of globalization. Further research should be conducted to explore the impact of Anglicism on other aspects of Igbo language and culture.

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