





**Vol.2 No.1, 2022**



IGIRIGI  
*A Journal of African Studies*  
VOL. 2. NO.1, 2022

**PRINTED BY:**

BESING Books  
NO. 9 Wisdom AVENUE  
Suleja, Niger State, Nigeria

**BRANCH OFFICE:**

EMMA NNAEMEKA STREET AWKA, ANAMBRA STATE  
TEL: 08060850177

Journal website is powered by **Myrasoft Systems** ([www.myrasoft.ng](http://www.myrasoft.ng)) @ 78  
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# IGIRIGI

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*Igirigi : A Journal of African Studies*, is a multidisciplinary peer-reviewed, original researches that focus on African issues relating to: arts, humanities, medicine, science, technology, geography, education. This annual journal accepts well researched and original submissions from: languages, linguistics, history, religion, philosophy, creative and performative arts, mass communication, sociology, anthropology, education, sciences, political science, information technology, and any study that relates to Africa.

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## **The Decline of Igbo Culture in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*:**

### **A Literary Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* mirrors the Igbo ethnic group in South Eastern part of Nigeria and her culture in pre-colonial and colonial eras. This novel comes as a response to the negative depiction of Africans as savages, brutes, uncivilized and without culture by some European writers. Through the portrayal of Igbo culture, Achebe depicts Africans as people with established religious, judicial, political and economic systems. Before the coming of the colonialists, Africans already have set of rules and regulations that guide certain conducts in their society. From the novel, one observes that the justice system via the masquerade (Egwugwu) is much similar to the present day "Supreme Court" and its verdict is final. Also, issues affecting the entire community are discussed by all adult male children and decisions taken are implemented accordingly; religious functions are well defined and each deity worshiped has a priest that oversees the affairs of its worship and the economy of the people is hinged on agriculture. This paper discusses how these established culture and way of life declined following the British colonial incursion into the hinter land of Africa. This research is qualitative, permitting a postcolonial theoretical analysis of the text under study. It concludes on the note that Igbo culture has a long history but that culture is weakened by Western influences which may strangle it as those meant to preserve it are attracted to the culture of their new found masters- the colonialists.

**Key Words:** Culture, Literary Perspective, Chinua Achebe, Igbo and Decline



## Introduction

The novel, *Things Fall Apart* is Chinua Achebe's reaction to the grim presentation of Africa by the colonialists. Before its publication in 1958, what is known literally about Africa comes from personal documentation and works of some European explorers and writers. Thus, the world is presented with a single story of Africa as a land full of savages parading as human beings. Achebe through the novel tells the story of Africa from an insider's perspective. Bekler (2014: 96), maintains that Achebe, through his works "changed the prejudices of those who had never been to Africa, and he managed to convert the negative ideas and feelings caused by the portrayal of his continent to positive ones". He shows through his novels, especially, *Things Fall Apart* that Africans are not savages; they have well established and organized society with strong sense of tradition and culture. He maintains that Africans are civilized with established judicial, religious, political and economic systems.

The novel which has its setting in pre-colonial and colonial Africa, presents to us a people whose collective destiny was truncated by the incursion of the colonialists. The novel begins at the height of Okonkwo's fame. We are told how he rose to fame through his personal achievements: he defeated his opponent in a wrestling bout and overcame the unfriendly weather to become one of the greatest farmers and one of the lords of Umuofia. Okonkwo has a humble beginning. His father Unoka is a loafer and a debtor who barely feeds his family. He impacts negatively on Okonkwo that he despises him and hates everything he stands for. He believes his father to have been weak, effeminate, lazy, ignominious, and poor. Consequently, Okonkwo strives to be strong, masculine, industrious, respected, and wealthy. In fact, the fear that he may end up like his father becomes the controlling force behind Okonkwo's actions. Achebe succinctly describes Okonkwo's predicament in the following lines:

With a father like Unoka, Okonkwo did not have the start in life which many young men had. He neither inherited a barn nor a title, nor a young wife. But in spite of all these disadvantages, he had begun even in his father's lifetime to lay the foundations of a prosperous future. It was slow and painful. But he threw himself into it like one possessed. And indeed he was possessed by the fear of his father's contemptible life and shameful death (Achebe, 1958:13).

This fear equally contributes to his many failings as he becomes too obsessed with what people will say than to what the tradition demands. This leads to his killing of Ikemefuna, against the tradition and warning of Ogbuefi Ezeudu, one of the elders in Umuofia. He tells him while announcing the verdict of the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves not to have a hand in Ikemefuna's death for the boy calls him father (Achebe, 1958). He rules his entire family with iron hand and often scolds his son Nwoye who he sees as too effeminate. He flogs Ojiugo, his youngest wife during the Week of Peace, thereby committing a crime against the earth goddess. He equally beats his second wife, Ekwefi for allegedly killing his plantain tree and almost shut her with his gun. Okonkwo's killing of Ezeudu's son, though in advertently, the day the boy's father is buried ruins his ambition of taking the highest title in the land. Killing of a clansman is a crime against the earth goddess and the tradition of Umuofia demands, in this case, that he should go on exile for a period of seven years.

While in exile at his mother's land at Mbanta, the British imperialists came with their religion and government and take a stronghold in Umuofia. His son, Nwoye joins them against his wish. By the time he comes back to Umuofia after his exile, Okonkwo discovers that many things have changed. His clan has lost its spirit and has grown cold like leftover ash. He could not understand why the



clan could not declare war on the Whitemen despite being provoked by them and their adherents. He decides to avenge himself after being humiliated by the prison guards even if the whole clan decides against that. He kills the Whitemen's chief messenger and then takes his life since his people allow the rest to escape.

## **Culture**

Culture has been defined in various ways, and many of these definitions point to the fact that culture is "the way of life of a group of people". Hornby (2010:357) defines culture as "the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group." Taylor (1958) cited in Idang (2015:98) in his work *Primitive Culture* sees culture as that "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs or any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of society". This definition which was made many decades ago has become a term of reference in the definition of culture by modern scholars. Taylor's definition entails that culture encompasses the entire life of a group of people. Taylor also emphasizes that culture is not inherent but a learned behaviour (Isidienu, 2021). Sociologists, according to Cole (2020) believe that culture "consists of values, beliefs, systems of language, communication and practices that people share in common and that can be used to define them as a collective".

The importance of culture in a society cannot be over emphasized. Culture plays a crucial role in the everyday lives of the people in a given society. It helps in shaping their relationships socially, maintaining and challenging social order and equally determines how they make sense of the world and their place in it. On this note, Isidienu (2021) states that, "it is obvious that culture is an important phenomenon in human existence. Culture makes for a well fulfilled living. It gives meaning and hope for the future. Culture is a harmonized living that gives a society an identity and so remarkable in the life of that society." The culture of every society is made up of the shared values, understandings, assumptions and goals that the members of such society learnt from their forebears, enforced by the current members of the society and is still passed on to the upcoming generation. Thus, the three main characteristics of culture are: people/society creates it; it evolves due to human activities and it is passed on from one generation to another generation.

Culture is composed of material and non-material aspects. Material culture is made up of things which human beings make and use. It ranges from architectural designs (in terms of buildings, road construction and so on), clothing, literature, music, dance, art and so on. Non-material aspects of culture consist of the values, beliefs, language, and communication and so on. Material and non-material aspects of culture are very important aspect of culture. For Isidienu (2021) "both the material and the non-material aspects of culture complement each other. One uses material culture to understand and appreciate the non-material culture better.

## **African Culture**

A researcher familiar with Africa and the Africans may likely come to the conclusion that defining African culture will be a herculean task owing to the diversity in existence in Africa and in Africans. Even with this challenge, some scholars still come up with definitions of African culture. Ezedike cited in Amposah, Omorogie and Ansah (2018:50) defines African culture as:



The sum total of shared attitudinal inclinations and capabilities, art, beliefs, moral codes and practices that characterize Africans. It can be conceived as a continuous, cumulative reservoir containing both material and non-material elements that are socially transmitted from one generation to another. African culture therefore refers to the African heritage.

Also Anyanwu and Falolaqtd in Amposah et al (2018:50) equally concur that “culture is a complex whole that embodies the totality of the African in a community, a lifelong process that bestrides birth and death.” African culture embraces those elements that are distinctively African which separate her from the rest of the world, especially in the area of beliefs, entertainment, arts, literature, architecture, morals, and values and so on. Africa has diverse cultures which vary from country to county and to the different ethnic groups which inhabit these countries. This diversity in cultures of African countries and those of their ethnic groups serve to distinguish the culture of a people from the rest. Aziza in Indang (2015:98) supports this view when he asserts that:

Culture... refers to the totality of the pattern of behavior of a particular group of people. It includes everything that makes them distinct from other group of people for instance, their greeting habits, dressing, social norms and taboos, food, songs and dance patterns, rites of passages from birth, through marriage to death, traditional occupations, religious as well as philosophical beliefs.

African culture is unique and it is passed from one generation to another. Thus, a person exposed to a particular culture through birth or migration tends to imbibe such culture through the process known as socialization. According to Fafunwa (1974:48):

Culture in traditional society is not taught; it is caught. The child observes; imbibes and mimics the action of his elders and siblings. He watches the naming ceremonies, religious services, marriage rituals, funeral obsequies. He witnesses the coronation of a king or chief, the annual yam festival, the annual dance and acrobatic displays of guilds and age groups or his relations in the activities.

The culture of a people is very important because it defines them and sets them apart from other cultures. There can be no society without culture. In other words, culture is society bound and people oriented. That is why Fafunwa (1974:48) maintains that “the child in a traditional society cannot escape his cultural and physical environment”.

Basically, Igbo culture is the totality of the custom, tradition, belief system and practices of the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria. It evolves over a long period of time and was handed over from one generation to another. Kalu (1983:38) cited in Chinweuba and Ezeugwu (2018) puts it that, “culture for the Igbo can thus be understood as a unified picture of the cosmos, explained by a system of concepts that order the natural and social rhythms and the place of the Igbo in the world.” Generally, every aspect of the life of the Igbo is attached to religion. An allusion that *ihe anaghị eme na nkịtị*, literally means that nothing happens without a cause forms the bases for almost everything they do in life. Chinweuba and Ezeugwu (2018) affirm that “this culture is notably permeated by traditional religion that almost every reality has metaphysical imports, connotations and explications.” It is how the Igbo perceive the universe and everything in it, the visible and the invisible, the living and the non-living, etc. that forms their philosophy of life. This therefore reflects in



the political, social, economic, moral codes, judicial and every aspects of their life. However, it is this organized way of life of the Igbo that waned by the coming of the Whiteman as reported by Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

## **Theoretical Framework**

In analyzing the decline of Igbo culture in *Things Fall Apart*, the post-colonial theory is considered apt and is therefore adopted. Post-colonial theory according to Tyson (1999:364) "...focuses on the experience and literary production of peoples whose history is characterized by extreme political, social and psychological oppression". It equally concentrates on literatures of cultures that develop in response to British colonial/imperial domination. Post-colonial theory seeks to identify colonialist and anti-colonialist ideologies in a literary text. For instance, it can analyze the ideologies that impact the colonized to adopt the colonialist's values in preference to their own. Again, it can study what ideology (anti-colonialist) promotes the resistance by the colonized against the colonialists. In carrying out a post-colonialist criticism/theory in a literary text, the main objective is to discover the ideology (whether colonial or anti-colonial) that informs the literary work. Thus, a post-colonial criticism can be carried out in a literary text, even if such text is not classified as a post-colonial one.

In line with the above, post-colonial criticism is considered very apt in the analysis of this paper. This theory is employed in order to successfully analyze the ideology (colonialist) that led to the decline of the Igbo culture in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

## **Traditional Judicial System**

Before the incursion of the colonialists in the traditional Igbo society, the people already have an established system of adjudicating on issues according to the norms and traditions of the land. The importance of this traditional judicial system which the novelist dedicated a whole chapter to, can never be over emphasized. In the novel, we see the roles the family and the entire society through the Egwugwu (masquerade) officially referred as 'the Fathers of the clan' play in settling marriage dispute.

The above played out between Uzowulu, Mgbafo's husband and his in-laws represented by Odukwe, the eldest of Mgbafo's three brothers. Uzowulu reported his in-laws to the Egwugwu, claiming that they came to his house, beat him up and took his wife (their sister) back. He is of the opinion that since his wife left on her own accord, that tradition demands that the bride price he paid on her should be returned to him. This he asked his in-laws to do but they told him that, "... they had nothing to tell me" (1958:64).

Odukwe's defence belied the crucial role which the family members play in marital issues. He told the group of Egwugwu whose leader is Ajofia that:

...Uzowulu is a beast. My sister lived with him for nine years. During those years, no single day passed in the sky without his beating the woman. We have tried to settle their quarrels time without number and on each occasion Uzowulu was guilty. (1952:65)

In addition, the incessant beatings which her sister receives from her husband have caused her to miscarry a pregnancy. To him, her life is always in constant danger and this made them (Odukwe and his brothers) to beat up her husband and took her away. This is acceptable in traditional Igbo society (for their actions were not condemned by the Egwugwu) where ones' brothers are expected to rescue their sister from imminent danger in her matrimonial home. They refuse to hand over their sister to her husband until desirable change is seen in him and a promise not to batter their sister ever again.



From the literary work, the marriage institution in traditional Igbo society is very sacred and is highly revered. Thus, the final verdict of the Egwugwu is geared towards upholding this institution. Unfortunately, this judicial system waned significantly with the introduction of the British colonial courts. Instances abound in the novel where the traditional judicial system was relegated to the background and the British imperial court was used in trying people for offences that already have a laid down procedure for its adjudication. People are tried in these courts for adhering to the customs and norms of the land. In the novel, Achebe states that the colonial courts house prison “full of men who had offended against the white man’s law. Some of these prisoners had thrown away their twins and some have molested Christians” (1958:123). In fact, the words of the District Commissioner to the leaders of Umuofia underline the objectives of the British in setting up these courts and which explicitly show that the courts have come to stay and equally supersede any other judicial system in operation in the land. Achebe emphasizes it this way:

We have a court of law where we judge cases and administer justice just as it is done in my own country under a great Queen. I have brought you here because you joined together to molest others, to burn down people’s houses and their places of worship. (1958:123)

The British incursion into the traditional Igbo society is subtle. They surreptitiously imposed their judicial system on the people and equally violated the customs and traditions of the land which has bound the people together for centuries. This together with the attraction which their religion, education, economic and so on have for some of the people in the traditional Igbo society, weakened the traditional Igbo judicial system. As more people embrace the whitemen, the more their judicial system is strengthened and the traditional judicial system wanes.

## **The Traditional Religious Belief**

The Igbo of the South Eastern Nigeria practices traditional religion before the coming of the white man. They believe in the worship of Chukwu or Chineke, the earth goddess (Ala) and other deities and spirits. They equally believe in their ancestors and pour libations to them with the firm hope of their protection. Achebe succinctly explores this in the novel and we get to know more about this belief system from the conversation between Akunna (a traditionalist) and Mr Brown (the white missionary). Akunna informs Mr Brown that the people “...believe in him and call him Chukwu. He made the entire world and the other gods” (1958:126).

In the novel, one cannot fail to observe that the cosmology of Igbo people is shaped in line with their religious belief. The gods or deities determine virtually how things are run in the community. In the novel, we learnt that the earth goddess requires that before any planting season that the people must observe the week of peace. Achebe through Ezeani (the priest of the earth goddess) emphasizes the importance of this religious ceremony. He states that:

...our fore fathers ordained that before we plant any crops in the earth, we should observe a week in which a man does not say a harsh word to his neighbor. We live in peace with our fellows to honour our great goddess of the earth without whose blessings our crops will not grow (Achebe, 1958:22).

In addition, the killing of a fellow clan’s man is totally forbidden. It is an offence against the earth goddess and where it is done inadvertently, the person will go on exile for seven years. This is actually what led Okonkwo to flee Umuofia to his maternal home at Mbanta after he inadvertently killed Ogbuefi Ezeudu’s son during the burial of the boy’s father. Also, killing of the sacred python is an offence against the god, Idemmili. Also, one is not expected to kill one’s ward or a person that comes to live with one’s household and that person calls one, ‘father’. Ogbuefi Ezeudu advised Okonkwo on this but he ignored him and ended up killing Ikemefuna at last.



With the coming of the colonialists, this religious system begins to wane. They introduce Christianity alongside formal education and these attract few people initially. Subsequently, more people embrace Christianity due to the "...growing feeling that there might be something in it after all..." (Achebe, 1958:126). Thus, what would have sparked off crisis between the two religions was contained until the overzealous ones from the Christian folk spark off tension by unmasking the Egwugwu, an act that is considered a sacrilege in the traditional religion. Achebe states that "one of the greatest crimes a man could commit was to unmask an Egwugwu in public, or to say or do anything which might reduce its immortal prestige in the eyes of the uninitiated. And this was what Enoch did (1958:131). In order to pacify the spirit of the clan; the elders have to cleanse this abomination committed by Enoch. This includes the destruction of Enoch's compound and that of the church building.

Unfortunately, the church (Christianity) has the backing of the government and through it, gains control over the traditional religion. Some of the elders of the land were imprisoned and fined for destroying the church building. Even when they gather to discuss the recent happening in their land, they are commanded by the District Commissioner to stop the meeting and disperse. Thus, from the literal perspective, one can see that the colonial government works towards destabilizing the traditional religion, while supporting the growth of its religion (Christianity) thereby leading to the decline of this aspect of the people's culture. Generally speaking, the Igbo natives as a compassionate and friendly society welcomed these Christian missionaries. Yet, they were oblivious of the fact that their guests intend to rule their lands and replace their culture and religion (Chinweuba and Ezeugwu, 2018).

## **System of Government**

Uchendu (1965) and Isichei (1976) cited in Ibenekwu, (2012:3) are among the scholars that have given historical accounts of the pre-colonial Igbo society and "have described it as acephalous, segmentary or stateless". He further states that "This classification is based on the fact that the pre-colonial Igbo society consists of autonomous villages and village groups ruled via diffused authority without any sort of formalized, permanent or hereditary leadership systems." This system of government is replicated in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as the novel presents us with the pre-colonial system of government in Igbo land. As stated above, this system is acephalous in that it has no single recognized leader. Political power is invested on adult male members of the community, the eldest in a family or in the village. For instance, when Ogbuefi Udo's wife was murdered by Mbaino men, it was all the adult male members that assembled and took decision on going for war if the people of Mbaino did not accept their terms of peace from their emissaries. Also, we see the eldest of Mgbavor's three brothers representing their family during the marital case before the Nine Egwugwu's at the village square. Ogbuefi Ezeudu, the oldest man in his village (probably of the same village with Okonkwo) officially announced the death sentence pronounced on Ikemefuna by the Oracle of the Hills and Caves to Okonkwo. Some priests equally wield political cum religious power as we see in the priests of Ezeani and Ezeidemmili, the priests of the earth goddess and the water goddess, respectively and the priestess of the Oracle of the Hills and Caves, priestess Chika and priestess Chielo. The government system in pre-colonial Igbo society is not different from their culture. It is part and parcel of their daily existence and the system runs in such a way that one already knows what is expected of one at any particular time.

This system of government begins to decline with the introduction of colonial administration in the traditional Igbo society. They impose their system of government on the people and enact laws with which they try offenders. The district Commissioner sees the destruction of the church building as an offence against the colonial government. To him, it constitutes the disruption of peaceful coexistence of people in the society and thus, the perpetrators must be punished without recourse to the culture of their people or their system of government. The assembly of adult male members of the community where issues affecting the community is discussed is mandated to stop and these encumbrances on the traditional system of government in Igbo land affected it in such a way that it declines irremediably.

## **Economic System (Farming)**



Farming plays a key role in the economy of the pre-colonial Igbo society. Every member of Igbo pre-colonial society engages in it. Afigbo in Mbakwe (2015:134) states that “in the pre-colonial Igbo society, agriculture was the most important economic activity with regard to both the number of people who engaged in it either on full-time basis or the prestige attached to it”. In fact, one of the criteria for adjudging one wealthy is the size and number of one’s barn. In describing Nwakibie as a wealthy man, Achebe says “There was a wealthy man in Okonkwo’s village who had three huge barns...” (1958:13).

Farming activity in this era is gender structured in that some crops are meant for the male while some are meant for the female. From the novel under study, one can easily observe that the pre-colonial Igbo society places yam in high esteem and as such, accords it the exclusive reserve of the men. Men plant yams, tend and harvest them while women plant cassava, maize, cocoyam, beans and so on and equally weed the farm.

An important aspect of farming in this era is that of share-cropping. According to Achebe (1958:16) “Share-cropping was a very slow way of building up a barn of one’s own. After the entire toil one only got a third of the harvest”. It is through this process that Okonkwo builds his barn. Thus, many industrious men of Okonkwo’s era that do not have enough seed yams opt for share-cropping in order to build up their barns.

Also, farming in pre-colonial Igbo society is highly ritualized. Before any farming activity is performed, ritual cleansing is done both at the society level and at the personal level. At the society level is the observation of the Week of Peace, dedicated to the earth goddess whose blessings for plentiful harvest is sought at this ceremony. Individuals equally perform rituals at personal level as could be seen in the character of Unoka:

...before I put any crop in the earth, I sacrifice a cock to Ani, the owner of all land. It is the law of our fathers. I also kill a cock at the shrine of Ifejioku, the god of yams. I clear bushes and set fire to it when it is dry. I sow yams when the first rain has fallen... (Achebe, 1958:12-13)

This economic activity begins to wane with the coming of the colonial masters. The white men introduce formal education and encouraged the people to train their children there. Initially, some objected but when the gains of being educated become clearer, more people enrolled their children. These people become teachers, court clerk, interpreters and even church workers. This greatly affects farm work as people begin to shift focus from farming to white collar job.

Another factor that greatly aids the decline of pre-colonial Igbo society’s economy (farming) is the introduction of trading centers that deals on trading in palm oil and kernel. The White men build a trading store where palm produce are traded for money and this leads to much inflow of money into the pre-colonial Igbo society. Thus, the people begin to shift grounds on their understanding of wealth. The idea of been wealthy practically changed from the number of one’s barn to other factors like education, trading and so on.

## **Conclusion**

Truly, change is inevitable in human history for it enhances the life, growth and development of such society. Mbakwe, (2015: 133) is not far from the truth when he asserts that “theorists throughout human history believe in the inevitability of change”. The decline of Igbo culture so far analyzed is deeply rooted in the concept of change which takes the pre-colonial Igbo society by storm. The simple, quiet, agrarian and peaceful communities of South Eastern Nigeria represented by the fictional communities like Umuofia, Mbanta, Mbaino, Abame, Obodoani and so on in the novel under study experienced an imposition of the British culture. The British colonial masters and their white missionary accomplices introduced a culture that is quiet alien to the pre-colonial Igbo society. The initial attitude of the people to these white men is that of the treatment given to a stranger one knows that will inevitably leave the land. By the time they realized that they are not ready to leave any time soon but have converted their sons to their fold, they tried to restrain



further activities of the white men. The church in Umuofia was razed down as a result of the crisis occasioned by the conflict between the two cultures. Ajofia literary told the missionary in charge of the church to "...go back to his house and leave us alone" (Achebe, 1958:134).

Unfortunately, the people could not achieve much as regards the protection of their revered culture. The colonial masters have permeated the judicial, political, religious, and even the economic systems of the traditional society. Those that are not attracted to their government are attracted to their religious, educational or their economic system. These greatly affected the culture of the traditional Igbo society that it decline greatly, during the colonial era and has risen to its revered status even to this day.



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## English Studies in Igbo Land: The Impact of the Covid-19 Menace in Orlu and Awka

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### Abstract

*Teaching is a sine-qua-non of human existence on earth as human beings are taught from the cradle for survival. Hence, the teaching of English language is a bedrock of communication and the medium of social relation in every modern and developing society. English like every other language is associated with numerous challenges. The brain behind this research is to investigate the factors influencing the teaching and learning of the English in the Covid-19 era in selected secondary schools in the Orlu and Awka parts of Igbo land with their accompanying remedies. Some of the factors associated with the teaching and learning of English language can be linked to the inefficiency of teachers, a high influx of unfamiliar words into the lexicon of the language, disinterestedness posed by economic instability, retrenchment of English language teachers, unqualified teachers, time streaming and shift in timing of classes. The data for this study are collected through questionnaires and oral interviews. Up to one hundred questionnaires were administered. Our investigation reveals that the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has an adverse effect on the teaching and learning of the English language in this part of the world. It also poses a serious setback in the performance of students on the language during examinations which is a prerequisite for their further studies. This work also reveals that the setback experienced in English language teaching/learning adversely affects the interaction of students with their contemporaries and subsequently, stunts the growth and development of the Igbo students for individual and national development.*

**Keywords:** National development, Covid-19, English



## **Introduction**

Language is a method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of word in a structured and conventional way. It can also be seen as a system of communication used by a particular community. This is a feature every human being is associated with. Language affects all areas of human activities as it provides a base for interactions and serves as a tool in solving the problems of man in the areas of science and technology, health, religion, education, politics to mention but a few. Scholars like Sapir (1921) define language as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires utilizing voluntarily produced symbols. Going further, Anagbogu et al (2010) define language as a means by which human beings have devised for themselves for communicating ideas, feelings, emotions, desires etc. through complex vocal or written symbols. For them, language is normally a learnt system of symbols and other complexities which every fluent speaker must go through just as we have in the English Language. Asiyanbola (2012) adds that language is “a human vocal noise or the graphical representation of that noise used systematically and conventionally by a group of people in a community”. This definition is encompassing as it goes further to enumerate the characteristics of language which is its nature of belonging to a speech community and has an agreed set of symbols.

Ipsso facto scholars like Bamgbose (1971:35-48) classify all the languages in Nigeria to be 450 and the 2005 Ethnologic data, 521 indigenous languages, the English language stands out as the official form. Little wonder Igboanusi and Peter (2005:11) in Dada (2010) aver that, in Nigeria, the dominance of English is overwhelming in practically all domains: government and administration, education, the mass media, the parliament, the judiciary (excluding Sharia courts and customary courts), science and technology and literary creativity. It is also a language of interethnic communication. English language as a foreign and second language, occupy a unique place in the Nigeria education system because of its significance in our national life. In spite of its colonial origin, it has become over the years the language of official business and vital link language between the various ethnic groups in the country as well as at the international level.

### **The Advent of English Language in Nigeria**

According to Taiwo (2009), English as a foreign language had its way in Nigeria as far back as the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century with the arrival of the British merchants who traded on slaves and the Christian missionaries who were settled in Badagry and Calabar. For the Christian missionaries, their interest was to help the people get closer to God and introduce them to God as they were pagans at that time; hence, the need to get a language of instruction for their religious needs. Basically, the people started with learning how to read the bible in English and from there they became competent and the language was established. It was following this incident that Bishop Ajayi Crowther translated the bible which was in English language to the Yoruba language.

After the British colonization, English became the official language in Nigeria. Furthermore, there was need for these missionaries to found schools in the quest to get the western education. The National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1997 which was revised in 1981 and 2004 states that English language will be used for the first three years of primary school as the language of instruction. This prescribes that the students in the junior secondary school will have to take the English language and two Nigerian languages as language subjects.

Today, English language performs myriads of function even as it extends to the health sector with the translation of sophisticated machine languages to English just like the case of most psycholinguistic machines and others used for medical computing which are translated to help humanity. In the aspect of creative writing, some writers like Chimee Adioha, Ukamaka Olisakwe, Roy Ubaka, Adachioma Ezeano, Chibuihe Obi and others who do not have their L1 as English have influenced and contributed to English literature over the years. Also, in the entertainment industry especially that of the film industry, English language has been explored widely and developed the industry for a wider audience.

### **The Post Covid-19 Era**

Following the coronavirus pandemic, the world had to adapt to so many changes caused by the pandemic. In fact, the pandemic brought about “transformation”. Meanwhile, the problem of mass failure of students in English language has been a universal one as it cuts across all other parts of Nigeria but became worse after the pandemic. This study will focus on discussing the negative impact of the pandemic in the learning of English language, particularly in the Awka and Orlu parts of the South Eastern Nigeria. The problem has been a concern to “education patriots” of both cities and an issue that needs a thorough analysis and prompt action by the government (Federal Ministry of Education) and other stakeholders, parents and the general public to avert. In Nigeria, we refer to such situations as students’ mass failure. Hitherto, the researchers try to illuminate the causes and suggest remedies. The next section looks at different concepts associated with the learning of English as a second language in Nigeria.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

This section reviews related literature on the topics presented under the following headings.

1. (a) The concept of language  
(b) The role of language in Nigeria education  
(c) The effects of students’ background on their English language
2. The secondary school English language curriculum
3. Language policy making and planning
4. Some studies in English learning.

## The Concept of Language

Language consists of all meaningful sounds, words and possible sentences which are basic to all communication the world over. It is through communication that we pass information from one person to another; Our ideals, feelings, knowledge, and request-indeed, every aspect of human life Awoniyi (1983:321).

Language is important in the political, economic, social, religious and educational activities in the country. Language therefore remains the content that holds the curriculum together. English language currently is the most widely spoken and written language worldwide with about 380 million native speakers. Awoniyi (1983:322).

## The Role of English Language in the Nigerian Educational System

The role of English language in the Nigerian Educational system means the importance of English language in the Nigerian Educational system. Nigerian students studying English aim at acquiring five basic skills.

Understand the language

Speak the language

Read books in the language and

Write in the language. Ayodele et.al (1995:19)

English to Nigerians is a second language and the nation's official language. According to Williams (1990:19), language usage maybe considered fewer than three different plans.

Conventional Usage

Transactional Usage

Institutional Usage

i. **Conventional Usage:** This means following the opinions and behavior that most people in the society consider to be normal, good and acceptable. To live and enjoy life in a society, there is need to learn and understand, then make the conventional use of the language in that community.

ii. **Transactional Usage:** In this wise, it is only meant to be used for business purpose and transactions.

Communicative language use have their formula for buying and selling in the market, posting letters at post office, sending mails, chatting, withdrawing money from banks, boarding of flight at the airport, buying of beverages at the minimart etc. with

appropriateness of usage, communication can lead to better understanding in business administration.

**iii. Interactional Usage:** This is meant for the day-to-day activities that ensure communication among people. Most of our encounters are relational rather than transactional because we are not always on business trips. We therefore, compulsorily talk about the weather, greet friends, ask about the health conditions of our colleagues and neighbors etc.

Again, English language education inculcates and develops four basic language skills in learner in order for him/her to be competent in the use of the language, both in oral and written communication. These skills are receptive language skills and writing skills.

English language education starts from kindergarten through primary school where the language is taught as a school subject in the curriculum like any other subject in the secondary school. Where the English language subject is accorded two important positions in the curriculum as a core subject and as a medium of instruction.

Therefore, all the learners must have to receive English education especially in order to able to learn other subjects in the curriculum.

In addition, at the tertiary level, English language retains an enviable position as an important subject and a medium of instruction with a new nomenclature such as use of English and communication skills. Therefore, for any student to be successful in his/her career, irrespective of whatever he/she is studying, he /she must be proficient in the language. Those who could not pass it in SSCE find it difficult to further their education. Some end up practically as drop outs. In the same vein, those who could not pass the subject at the tertiary level end up not graduating.

### **Language in policy making and planning**

Bamgbose (2003), on the reality of language policy in planning opines that language is a reoccurring decimal in that it is used in all facets of planning both in Nigeria and in other parts of the world. According to him, the prominence of language maybe due to a number of factors such as population, prestige, status, functionality and nationality etc.

### **Educational background of a student**

- a) The quality of English that the parents speak to their children affects their proficiency, the children will learn to speak intelligible English too.
- b) The extent to which parents emphasize correct usage of the language matters. It is the duty of parents to instantly and always correct mistakes in their children's use of English. Parents should make it a priority to patiently correct their children's usage.
- c) To enlarge vocabulary and increase student's general proficiency in English, they should be provided with adequate motivational materials like libraries, internet access and other supplements to reading readiness.
- d) Physical surroundings especially at home should be convinced for learning for instance, a dirty environment will not only disturb a child's ill health but will also affect his or her learning.

Dada (1999), holds the view that performance is realization of competence (what you do with language) and that it is a performance that can be used to determine the level of goals reached in language learning.

Attitude to English language are distinguished from other attitudes by fact that they are precisely about language. Attitudes to English language also include attitude towards speaker of the language, Grejean (1982)

### **The Economic background of the student**

It is important to note that a second language as a skill can only be learnt and not inherited. Hence, the economic background from which a student comes from must encourage the student towards the learning of English language.

### **Social Background of Student**

Parents have a great influence on learner's performance in school. Their efforts range from the influence they exert on learners unconsciously to those deliberately inculcated. Most parents dictate to their children on the subjects they should study very hard.

Abiola (1985) and Obeneta (1996) agree that the intelligent and thus the achievement of learners increase with improved social status of parent's a great deal of parents affects their children's performance by setting unrealistic goals for them. Some parents choose course of study for their children without considering whether they children have the potential and suitable environment required for effective performance in such courses. In many Nigerian homes where the only medium of communication is their indigenous language, students often are not afforded the opportunity to practically improve on the English taught to them at school. Parents in such homes should make concerted effort to minimize this disadvantage, knowing the importance of the reverse case. They could do this by sending their children to extramural classes and by consciously encouraging then use of English language among other children.

### **The Secondary School English Language Curriculum**

In spite of the other languages existing in Nigeria, English language came into Nigerian through the foreign traders dominated by English people who later became the colonial masters and ruled the country from 1914-1960. English became the official language of trade and socialization. It is for these reasons that English language has become prominent in the school system in Nigeria.

Tiffen (1969:7) argues that the child growing in English speaking Africa is surrounded by a complex language situation. Far beside having to master his own and often a second or third indigenous language, he also requires a thorough (good) command of

English language if he is to be educated in modern sense of the world. With these difficulties notwithstanding, English language continues to dominate the school curriculum. Tiffen (1968:8) in this regard claims that if the speaker is to understand and be understood, he must be within the general accepted norms of English, from point of view of pronunciation and grammatical usage. English language dominates the school curriculum right from the nursery school up to the university level. This therefore shows that English language as one of the subjects recognized in school presently, covers about 6-8 periods every week on the school timetable.

### **Some Studies in English language teaching in Nigeria**

Dozie et al (2019) carried out an evaluation on emerging trends in written English among university students in South Eastern Nigeria with a focus on the students. The aim was to find out the degree to which students use emerging trends in their handwritten academic work using a three stage

random sampling. Questionnaires were also administered to facilitators at the Imo state University, Owerri. The researchers discover that there are emerging trends and a very high frequency as they graded scripts while identifying the causes of usage as poor learning in English, social media influence and just conforming to the trend. The study revealed how facilitators frequently give corrections to their students by adopting different methods like giving assignments, essays. Finally, the study recommends a hands-on approach on the correctness of grammar.

In further research, Ibrahim (2018) investigated the factors affecting effective learning of English language learning among undergraduate students in North-West Nigeria which was survey design based. The aim of the research was to fish out the lecturers' role and students effective learning of English and also, the relationship between students and teachers. The conclusion by Ibrahim is that an awareness program should be flagged off on the salient role of lecturers on the language learning by undergraduate students and even in the wider society. The next section gives a rundown on the method adopted by the researchers for the research.

### **Research Method**

In an attempt to get data relevant for this research, questionnaires were designed and administered in four schools as the research is purely quantitative based. The area used by the researchers for the study is Orlu and Awka zones, two in Orlu and two in Awka. Orlu is a popular local government area of Imo state while Awka is the capital of Anambra state. The questionnaires were shared to students and teachers of the schools. The states of both cities have a common boundary. The people of Orlu are predominantly civil servants and a few traders with a number of them who are subsistent farmers. In Awka, with the level of urbanization and number of higher institutions, there are only very few farmers. In Awka, almost 90% of the population, is civil/public servants and few traders too. Marist International Secondary School, Owerre-Ebeiri and Community Secondary school, Owerre-Ebeiri were visited for Orlu and the Redeemers' High School and Unizik high School were visited. For Awka.

Four major themes were selected as identified in the abstract. They were represented and analyzed in a table following a detailed discussion.

### **Rationale for Study**

For a balanced data, some schools are private/mission owned and the others owned by the government. Up to twenty-five students were given the questionnaires for the two schools in Awka and twenty each for the schools in Orlu. This is attributed to factors like population and differences in urbanization.

### Data Analysis

This section deals with the collection and interpretation of data collected from the questionnaires issued to both students and teachers in the above mentioned secondary schools. A total number of 102 copies were distributed. 94 copies were given to students and 8 to teachers.

**Table 1: Qualification of teachers**

| S/No | Qualifications | Number Available | Percentage (%) |
|------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1    | Graduates      | 8                | 100%           |
| 2    | NCE            | Nil              | Nil            |
| 3    | Others         | Nil              | Nil            |
|      | Total          | 8                | 100%           |

From the table above, it could be observed that 100% of the teachers in the schools who responded to the questionnaires are qualified secondary school teachers both for the junior and senior sections. Therefore, we could posit that they are qualified but are few in number. They can't meet up to the standard and serve the needs of the students. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, most of these schools had some teachers retrenched. A French teacher who teaches the English language was disallowed by the researchers to attend to the questionnaires. This is exactly what happens in other schools. Some people claim to be qualified while they are not. As solution, the government can advertise for the recruitment of English teachers and even in other fields.

**Table 2: Efficiency of teachers in the post-covid-19 era**

| S/No. | Teaching Appraisal | Number Available | Percentage (%) |
|-------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1.    | Positive           | 36               | 38.29%         |
| 2.    | Negative           | 56               | 59.57%         |
| 3.    | Void               | 2                | 2.12%          |
| 4.    | Total              | 94               | 100%           |

The table shows the minds of the students so far from their experiences since the outbreak of the novel corona virus pandemic in Orlu and Awka to be precise. The teachers have changed their teaching methods for so many reasons like the reduced periods of class. Some schools used to have English language class almost every day but the story has changed today owing to the pandemic. This is what the ministry should look into. It can be observed that what the students are taught here is not and cannot be enough for their final school certificate exams.



**Table 3: Disinterestedness**

| S/No. | Interest  | Number available | Percentage |
|-------|-----------|------------------|------------|
| 1     | Morning   | 67               | 71.27%     |
| 2.    | Afternoon | 5                | 5.31%      |
| 3.    | Both      | 22               | 23.40      |
| 4.    | Total     | 94               | 100%       |

Having represented the figures of the findings, the interest of the students seems to have been shifted. According to the table, majority of them love to have the class in the morning for the situation on ground. Some of the schools visited by the researchers disclosed that they have some classes in the afternoon to cover up. Now, when the subject is taught, so many will be disinterested in learning. It's just like teaching Mathematics in the afternoon. This may be a reason for their poor performance visited, there, the English teacher was from the French discipline.

**Table 4: Provision of books**

| S/No | Books | Number available | Percentage % |
|------|-------|------------------|--------------|
| 1.   | Yes   | 66               | 70.2%        |
| 2.   | No    | 28               | 29.78%       |
| 3.   | Total | 94               | 100%         |

### Recommendations

The government and owners of these institutions have done well by providing the necessary books required by the student for the language subject even now that the economy is shaky. It is pertinent to note that the 29.78% response came from those in the government owned institutions as the government does not pay attention to the books used by students. The ministry should mark out funds to provide free books that can be shared to the students; books like dictionaries, encyclopaedia, thesaurus and even foreign texts like Longman and others. These books should not just be used as a status symbol for decoration in the libraries. This step can be beneficial to those in the public school.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the learning of English language as a second language in Orlu and Awka is facing a trying time and not up to standard in these towns. This gives rise to so many anomalies we experience in the regions today. However, further findings show that the government and even private owners lack qualified and efficient staff strength for the job. The high influx of unfamiliar words has also affected the students' performance as the teachers don't perform as expected. The post covid era stands to be significant in this regard as the economic instability has drastically affected the interest of these students. In addition, the streaming of the time table due to the pandemic as pointed out by some students has also worsened the situation as some private owners of these educational institutions also retrenched their English language teachers because they can't afford to pay experts. This was very well portrayed in one of the schools the researchers visited.



From the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

- Teachers should try their best to attend classes, create conducive atmosphere for the students, apply all teaching methods relevant to the learning of English as a second language and try to do their job with happiness.
- Again, teachers should try to always update their knowledge of the new words in the English language lexicon. On the other hand, the government should provide these updated linguistics text books that handle lexicographic topics and dictionaries. Some of the schools attested that the school owners don't provide textbooks for the students. In our today post covid era, there are many unfamiliar words.
- Parents and stakeholders, are not excluded in this assignment, parents of these students should also try to provide textbooks for their children, engage in discussions in the family using English as the code, as this is done constantly, the children will be getting familiar with the language.
- Qualified teachers should only be allowed to teach the English language to avoid worsening of the situation.
- Enlightenment programs should be organised from time to time on the importance of English language by secondary schools especially for schools in the rural areas. This can also be done during the moral instructions also, if the management cannot organise one. On the part of the government, the ministries and other agencies in charge of education, seminars and workshops can be organised for more trainings specifically targeted at the language teachers. The teachers confirmed that they don't receive any.
- All education policy makers should review the languages taught to school children in schools.

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## **Indigenous Language Revitalization for Sustainable Development: Igbo Language in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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### **Abstract**

Language is endangered when it is on the path towards extinction. This occurs when its speakers cease to use, reduce its communication use or fail to pass it on from one generation to another. Language revitalization efforts are rooted in the community initiatives, investment and commitment. Igbo language can be said to be in danger since majority of the young generation cannot speak or write Igbo. Revitalization of the indigenous languages will help to reduce underdevelopment in most spheres of life. Most countries like China that use their mother tongue for all communicative purposes are progressing more than their counterparts because it fosters intellectual development. The question now is how can the Igbos effectively initiate processes that will consequently revitalize the language for sustainable development? Data for the research was collected from children living in the urban and rural areas of Igbo community. Data analysis was done using descriptive method and the researcher's intuitive knowledge of Igbo language. Findings reveal that causes of language endangerment are mostly political and educational subjugation, government control, people's negative attitude toward their language and so on. Moreover, children in the rural area speak and write Igbo language more effectively than those in the urban areas. This suggests that Igbo language is more endangered in the urban areas than in the rural areas. It was recommended that parents should speak Igbo to their children. School administrators and teachers should also stop the syndrome of no speaking of vernacular and obey the Nigerian policy on education which stipulates that the medium of instruction for the first three years in primary schools should be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community. Government should restructure school language curriculum to favour the learning of the indigenous languages in all levels of education.

**KeyWords:** Language, Indigenous Language, Language Revitalization, Sustainable Development, Igbo Language.

## Introduction

An indigenous language is a language that is native to a region and spoken by indigenous people/native people. It is a language from a linguistically distinct community that originated in the area. Many indigenous people worldwide have stopped passing on their ancestral languages to the next generation and have instead adopted the majority language as part of their acculturation into the majority culture. Igbo people are not exempted from the above assertion. In the major cities in Igbo land, it will be difficult to find an Igbo child speaking Igbo language. These kids mainly speak the official language which is English or Pidgin English. Parents have the notion that it is only through the colonial master's language that one can progress in life. School administrators and teachers follow suit in order to please their clients (Ramlatu2014).

Many indigenous languages are endangered while some are at the point of extinction. This is why United Nations proclaimed the year 2019 as the International year of Indigenous languages in order to draw attention to the critical loss of indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote them.

Language revitalization refers to as an act of reversing the decline of a language or revive an extinct one. It is the process of rescuing of a dying language. <https://en.eikipedia.org/wiki/indigenous>.

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, there has been several development concerning dwindling interests in the Igbo language as a first language by some of the indigenes who should uphold their language. UNESCO says that the Igbo language faces the risk of possible extinction in the next 50 years. Some scholars have drawn attention to the fact that Igbo language is a language in danger. For example, Kuju (1999:55) in Igboanusi (2006) makes the following observation:

It is not only the so called minority or small languages that are endangered in Nigeria. Even the rich also cry. Of late, there has been an increasing outcry by concerned Igbo indigenes that the Igbo language is registering fewer and fewer speakers. The Phenomenon is noticeable even among the Igbo resident in Igbo towns and cities where ordinarily, Igbo should be the chief means of communication.

Igboanusi (2014:449); in his own view states that the dominance of English and the low value with which Igbo is rated and the bane of the Igbo language in schools in turn leads to the trend to bring up children as monolingual speakers of English.

Indigenous languages have much role to play in sustaining national development. In the words of McCarthy (2003) in Adeyemi (2012), research conducted in the field of linguistics, anthropology and cognitive psychology unequivocally state that students who enter schools with a primary language other than the national or dominant language perform significantly better on academic tasks when they receive consistent and cumulative academic support in the native heritage language. Experiences from Philippine, Mexico, Wales, Canada, Russia, Yugoslavia, Japan and China have proved that the indigenous languages which Igbo is one of them are fit for

all levels of education as effective means of instruction that is capable of eliminating pedagogical difficulties in learning, enhancing better understanding and in the long run promote sustainable development if well implemented. Thus, the above assertion supports the need to revitalize indigenous languages and Igbo language in particular for sustainable development. Emeka-Nwobia



(2015:114) rightly opines that “a nation is best developed by the way the language that best portrays its ideology is used.

### **Research Methodology**

Ten homes were randomly selected from Owerri municipal in Imo state and Item in Bende Local Government Area of Abia state. Total numbers of twenty homes were used for data collection. Children used were between the ages of 7 to 12. Ten simple sentences in Igbo were structured; all in question forms, the children were expected to read and answer each question orally and in written forms in Igbo. Their responses and written forms were analyzed using the intergenerational language transmission table to ascertain the degree of intergenerational language transmission in both areas.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Conceptual Review**

Knowing a language means having the capacity to produce sounds that signify certain meanings and to understand or interpret the sounds produced by others. Humans in all their activities in life employ language in every facet of life. Language can serve as a vehicle through which nations can rise to global recognition. It is a tool for communication. Bewaji (2002) sees language as “a central interactive process”. He identifies four ways by which language is used in the society, namely as a means of expression, for the purposes of record, to set matter in motion and as an instrument of thinking. This is why Rezvan (2008) describes language as a process of thought... and great manifestation of thought that once acquired helps to develop cognition and later on enhances higher intellectual functioning. Eyisi (2000) in her own view opines that every conceivable human activity revolves around language. She narrates that we use language to express love, hatred, anger, happiness, praise, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, to comment on the political, social, educational or economic situation in the country, to confirm or express religious beliefs, to comment on the weather and even to fill a vacuum when there is nothing else to do especially in the exchange of pleasantries. Language is the bedrock of social interaction and social harmony without which no meaningful economic development can be attained. Olaoye (2013), states that language is a catalyst in educational development; which is an important index of national development. It is the most important tool for youth empowerment. Language is a viable means for the upliftment of the underprivileged, marginalized, uninformed or illiterates in the society. One of the millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that runs through the National Economic Empowerment and development Strategy (NEEDS) by the past administration which is designed to engender sustainable change in democratic governance is carried out through education and language is the tool for doing this.

Language exists to convey information and also to condition our thoughts in a positive and constructive way. It is therefore pertinent to state that no business enterprise or corporate body can be effectively run without the positive contribution of language.

### **Indigenous Language**

Indigenous language is the language that is native to a region and spoken by indigenous people of the same cultural value and belief. It is a local means of communication between members of a people or community which contains wisdom of the people or community. It helps the child in



his/her mental, moral and emotional development. Rezvan (2008:13) supports the above statement by stating that “when the child masters his/her mother tongue through interacting with others, language helps in intellectual functioning”. Thought leads way to language, then language leads way to thought as well and the circle continues throughout the life of an individual.

According to Ramlatu (2014:11), indigenous languages are the tribal, native or local language spoken by the people. The language would be from a linguistically distinct community that has been settled in the area for many generations. There are about 500 indigenous languages in Nigeria and only few of these languages have written forms (Adeniyi and Bello 2006 in Ramlatu 2014). Bamgbose (1992) in Abidogun and Adebule (2005) maintains that the indigenous languages in Nigeria are 513 in number. Despite these numbers of indigenous languages in Nigeria, only three languages namely Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba are national languages. They are being neglected and are mostly restricted to their domains or regions of use notwithstanding their status as the national language. Many of the indigenous languages around the world are in danger notwithstanding their numerous works. This is why United Nations declared 2019 as the year of indigenous languages in order to raise awareness of them, not only to benefit the people who speak these languages, but also for others to appreciate the important contribution they make to our world’s rich cultural diversity. This idea is a right step in a right direction.

Research results in the field of education, linguistics, anthropology and cognitive psychology are unequivocal that students who enter school with a primary language other than the national or dominant language perform significantly better on academic tasks when they receive consistent and cumulative academic support in the native heritage language (McCarty, 2003 in Adeyemi 2012). Many scholars agree that indigenous language when used in instructional purpose, is capable of enhancing cognitive understanding and removing pedagogical barrier in learning thereby enhancing sustainable development.

The adoption of English language as the official language of Nigeria is impacting negatively on the growth of many indigenous languages in Nigeria. In many homes now, English language has taken over as mother tongue. Parents speak English to their kids as first language. Even in most schools English is their media of instruction.

### **Empirical Review**

Adeyemi (2012) did a research on indigenous languages and techno-scientific development. He explores how an often neglected cultural element, such as language could be developed, scientificalized and used effectively with dominant European languages in Africa polity. Various researches conducted in education, communication and psychology that prove the role of indigenous languages in knowledge acquisition, enhancing cognitive understanding and also removing pedagogical barriers in learning were analysed. He moreover advocates that indigenous languages should be officially approved, adopted accordingly as classroom media with consequential provision of scientific books.

Rezvan(2008) did a study on mother tongue, a necessary step to intellectual development. The research focused on the important contribution of mother tongue to children learning through the process of cognitive development using Piaget and Vygotsky's views for investigation. When children are learning through their mother tongue, they are learning concepts and intellectual skills that are equally relevant to their ability to function in their entire life. He also states that supporting development of the mother tongue enhances the development of the second language.

Hermes and King (2013) work on Ojibwe language revitalization, multimedia technology, and family language learning. They examine how urban Ojibwe participants utilize computer-based language learning technology with their families at home. How a particular multimedia tool might jumpstart communication in the Ojibwe language at home was investigated. Families were regularly video-taped using the software and participated in weekly audio- video recorded interviews regarding their language use and learning. Finding suggests that technology-based language learning was incorporated into existing family dynamics and was helpful in providing a starting point for learning and language use within established extended networks. Technology allows communities to rapidly create and distribute language materials and resources.

Agwu (2016) worked on language as a vehicle for sustainable development. She states that language permeates every aspect of life; harmony and disharmony in life is derived from proper use or misuse of language. A languageless society would be a meaningless and underdeveloped society devoid of meaningful existence, a society of disorder, anarchy, hopelessness and helplessness. She is equally of the view that language is the most essential tool that can bring development in the economic, social and environmental life of the people of any nation in this 21st century. Language helps to develop the mind, assess, appraise, evaluate and understand both self, government and the governed.

Ramlatu (2014) researches on transformation of Nigeria through indigenous language education. The paper aimed at showing the importance of indigenous languages in the development and transformation of a nation. Nations like Germany, China and Russia were able to develop because they did not neglect their indigenous languages. She further states that the active participation and use of indigenous languages by the people have not been considered very important in the transformation agenda. The educational language policy should be enforced; the

learning and use of these languages should not stop at primary level but continue up to the tertiary level.

### **Igbo Language in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**



Sallabank(2010:65) quoting Calvet (1998:75) opines that “when the children object to speaking a language, gradually forget it or pretend to have forgotten it because they are ashamed of it, its future is much less assured”. This is the situation of Igbo language in this era. We shall use UNESCO’s language vitality and endangerment framework which is shown in table I to ascertain the position of Igbo language concerning degree of endangerment and the need for revitalization processes. It establishes six degrees of vitality/endangerment based on nine factors. The most salient factor is that of intergenerational transmission: whether or not a language is used in the family. This factor is generally accepted as the ‘gold standard’ of language vitality (Fishman 1991).

| Degree of Endangerment | Intergenerational Language Transmission  |
|------------------------|--|
| Safe                   | Language is spoken by all generations; intergenerational transmission is uninterrupted   |
| Vulnerable             | Most Children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domain (e.g at home).                                      |
| Definitely endangered  | Children no longer learn the language as mother tongue.  |
| Severely endangered    | Language is spoken by grandparents and older generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves. |
| Critically endangered  | The youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently.                        |
| Extinct                | There is no speaker left.  |

Table I UNESCO’s Language Vitality and Endangerment Frameworks

In most cities (Owerri in particular) in the Igbo land, most parents do not speak the language to their children. In this case, children in these areas no longer acquire Igbo language as their first language which is mother tongue rather, they speak English and those who do not come from elite families speak pidgin in order to belong. Based on the area of our research, it will be concluded that Igbo language is in between definitely endangered and severely endangered in urban areas because most children do not learn the language as mother tongue while almost all the parents

speak but do not pass it to their children. In the rural areas, Igbo language is safe because intergenerational transmission is uninterrupted.

Government control and educational ssubjugation are the major causes of Igbo language endangerment. In the 2013 National Policy on education, it was only the first three years in the primary schools that the government states that the medium of instruction shall be the language of the immediate environment, in monolingual



communities while English shall be taught as subject. While from the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and the language of the immediate environment and French and Arabic shall be taught as subject. The NPE does not favour indigenous languages. Nobody or school even implement the first three years in primary schools which the NPE stipulates for the language of the immediate environment to be used for instruction and those in authority are not doing anything to reinforce it. In the secondary schools, our indigenous languages are no more in the compulsory cross-cutting subjects. This is a very big neglect to our language from those in authority and need to be reversed. Ramlatu(2014:12) rightly observes that:

Language and Literacy are very crucial for societal development. A society develops into modernity when its citizens are literate in the language of the masses... Historically, the jump towards expanded knowledge production and reproduction in societies has only been possible when the languages of social majorities have been centrally placed.

He continues by quoting Mazrui and Mazrui (2002) which opines that no nation can develop without the use of its native languages.

Experiences from Philippine, Mexico, China, Wales, Canada, Russia, Yugoslavia and Japan have shown that the indigenous languages are fit for all levels of education as effective means of instruction that is capable of eliminating pedagogical difficulties in learning and thereby enhancing better understanding. Different researches have also proven that students who enter schools with a primary language other than the national or dominant language perform significantly better on academic tasks when they receive consistent and communicative academic support in the native

heritage language. When used as instructional purpose, many scholars have contended that it is capable of enhancing cognitive understanding and removing pedagogical barrier in learning (Ramlatu 2014).

Government through the policy on education has really raised the status of English because the knowledge and proficiency on English is a requirement for assessing white collar job and transaction of official functions. The dignified position of English in the development of Nigeria has downgraded the native languages to the background. If conscious effort is not made to redress the situation, Nigeria may lose its linguistic identity and this may be why the country is not progressing.

Some Igbo people's negative attitudes toward their language emanates from viewing the language as being inferior. This could be why most Igbo parents do not speak the language to their children. In the university, students look down on their counterparts who are studying Igbo language and even make mockery of them being in the university as waste of time. The negative attitude was created because of the position the government placed English language as the official language. Some parents prevent their child from speaking Igbo because they see Igbo as not being a global language. Chinese is being learned in Nigeria schools today because of the effort of the owners of the language to propagate their language. For any indigenous language to rise up to global recognition there must be a huge commitment and investment from the owners of that language.

As it is now, it will be difficult to find an Igbo person counting money in the language, in spite of the fact that their equivalent exist in the language. Igbo people have their own forms of greeting but most people do not care to greet in Igbo. Notwithstanding all these shortcomings, there are still Igbo elites who uphold their language. They speak it, write it and communicate with it. People in the rural areas also speak Igbo. Some Igbos who due to economic and prestige reasons taught their children English as first language now regret not teaching Igbo to their children.

### **Indigenous Languages for Sustainable Development**

The term “development” is a dynamic concept that has received varying interpretations and explanations among authors, scholars and researchers in the developing nations. Development ranges from growth in education that is intellectual growth, politics, economy, science and technology. In educational process, language is the main pillar through which man has to plan, instruct and evaluate programmes. According to Topadro and Smith (2011), development is the process of improving the quality of all human lives and capacity by raising people's standard of living, self-esteem and freedom. The development of individuals in respect of their aspiration in the society means development of the nation (Olaoye 2013).

Science and Technology can be acquired and better understood through the indigenous languages. Olaoye (2013:750) rightly observes;

For indigenous languages to be used for the teaching and learning of science and technology, these mother tongues need to be developed in terms of their orthographies, spelling and vocabulary reform, including syntactical simplification, and translation through the use of lexicographic strategies and the linguistic indigenization policy of borrowing, coinage, semantic extension etc. Through these Linguistic re-engineering processes, our indigenous languages will become a veritable vector of technological advancement.

Some indigenous languages in Nigeria, mostly the three major ones namely Igbo Hausa and Yoruba in particular have perfectly gone through most of the above processes. This means that they are well equipped to be used as medium of instruction. It is hardly possible to talk of development without including the language with which the people formulate their thoughts. According to Ramlatu (2004:12), 'Linguistic development is the first step towards any other meaningful and desirable development'. For example, scientific and technological development cannot be attained by a people who have not developed linguistically.

Development not sustained may be as good as development retarded or failed. Sustainable development as a concept matters to individuals, communities, nations and the world at large. It should be able to meet the needs of today without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. It is mainly through the use of indigenous language that social, economic, environmental and cultural development can reach the majority of the population who are in the rural areas. Language has crucial role in the mobilization of the rural population for national development programs and projects such as agriculture, peace building, family planning, home craft, drugs etc. Through the use of indigenous languages, societal ills will be corrected easily thereby achieving a high rate of development. According to Adeyemi (2012:3):

Africans are not getting the theories right... the so-called language of science in many African countries is colonial, foreign language, English, French, Portuguese etc. The mother tongue despite its proven ability in enhancing cognitive understanding is not prioritized in learning.



## **Language Revitalization is a Sustainable Development**

The best ways of revitalizing a language is through the community initiatives, commitment and investment. The community should initiate programs such as forming voluntary activist groups that will raise awareness through activities such as festivals and performances to buttress the necessity of raising children with mother tongue particularly in urban areas. This is called prestige planning. This will eventually make the parents to value their languages and start to communicate with their children in the language. When this happens, everybody and no more a group of people can converse in the language and formulate strategies and developmental ideologies for the development of the nation. It is argued that not all developmental ideas can be adequately expressed, conveyed and implemented without the application of our indigenous language.

Government involvement is also crucial in order to restructure the education policy to favour indigenous language and also sees to the proper implementation of those policies. Government also needs to provide fund for the revitalization process. There should be the documentation of developmental policies in the local languages in other to

reach the rural populace who will in turn put in their efforts in order to reach the desired goals.

The revitalization and maintenance of indigenous language should be done by using languages, information and communication technologies where necessary in order to improve everyday use of the languages and encourage best practice, equality and proficiency in use. According to Olaoye (2013:750), 'science and technology can be acquired and better understood through the indigenous languages'. For indigenous languages to be used for the teaching and learning of science and technology, they need to be developed in terms of the orthographies spelling and vocabulary reform, including modernization.

Empowering the indigenous children, young people and adults to have access to education, information and knowledge in their native language will be the utmost concern. This will help to improve data collection and sharing of information in and about the native languages, using language technology and other communication and information mechanisms. Despite technological progress, many indigenous people experience a variety of barriers to access information in cyber space, using mobile phones, personal computers etc. in their own languages at schools, work place or public domain.

## **Recommendations**

- The policy position on the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction for the first three years of childhood education should be extended to six years in primary school and the implementation should be forced.
- School administrators and teachers should stop the “no speaking of vernacular” syndrome and encourage students to speak their mother tongue.
- Those in authority should reverse indigenous languages as compulsory subject in senior secondary certificate examination as it was before.
- The use of language, information and communication technologies in the teaching and learning of indigenous languages should be added to the curriculum in order to make it appetizing to the youths and children.

## Conclusion

In this work, indigenous languages have been established as catalyst for sustainable development in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Most of these indigenous languages are in danger due to the neglect of the owners and the unfavourable education policy of the government. There is every need to revitalize indigenous languages since there are proofs that countries which use their mother tongue for instruction purpose perform far better than their counterparts. Incorporation of language, information and communication technologies are necessary in order to improve everyday indigenous languages use. Thus, Egwuonwu-Chimezie (2016:10) rightly observes that the future of the indigenous languages partly depend on the media since the 21<sup>st</sup> century children are surrounded with media channels which they engage with in almost all their activities. Information is power and perception can be changed by access to media.

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## THE CONCEPTION OF PERSONHOOD AND COMMUNITY IN AFRICA

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### Abstract

*It is not the case that 'personhood' and community could always be used or express in the same context as dual aspect of existence acting in one entity. In African philosophy, those concepts are deemed as ideas that are related but considerably different in some aspects. While the concept of a personhood in Africa is discussed from a broad range, but the idea of community is only sometimes in connection with the notion settlement, this is because the conception of personhood in Africa is always attached to existence. Evidence of this is found in the life, living and society of the African communal setting. However, the relationships between these concepts are so complex. This article does not discuss the usual subject of the clash of rights between the individual and the community. However, it offers to show the conceptual relationship that exists between personhood and community in Africa. An analytic method will be applied to this work in order to help create a wide range analysis of the relationship that thus exist between personhood and community in African worldview, which will also take an over view of some aspects of the arguments for communitarianism and socialism that have over clouded the trend's in African worldview.*

**Keywords:** *personhood, community, communitarianism, communal setting.*

### Introduction

Personhood has been one of the most interested topics in Africa philosophy today; this is because there are various conceptions of personhood in Africa. But for the sake of this study, after a deep review of this idea, it's only the ontology and the normative notion of personhood that will be key in our focuses of the subject matter. The ontological sense of a personhood here is relates to the essential make-up of the human person, as in essence or the *quidity* the original stuffs that constitute a human person. Just like the case of the Igala people, in their adage that says; *Ibe Chone*. A person is only qualified to attain personhood only by consciousness of himself and his society through reasons.

As Ihuha in his article titled *Personhood in African Philosophy* argue that, Africa has bestowed to the world community a humanistic heritage, which the entire world order can only ignore to its peril. This unique heritage resource which defines human personality in Africa is encased in proverbs, names, folklore and songs etc (1).

this implies that, in Africa from the ontological point of view; there is also a sense in which a person is understood in terms of his/her own moral or normative being-ness which is linked to the community where the person springs from. These two are roughly what personhood and community in Africa stand for. From the above stand point it is clear to understand that in Africa belief system

today, man by his nature is always at the search for knowing. This everlasting knowledge is directed to the purpose of interpreting meanings into their essence. This broad conception of personhood and community in Africa is pointed at the basis of oneself status as a divine being in the community that the person as a status is assessed and mentioned.

But the question here is that, how else are these concepts, personhood and community connected, or becomes our point of departure in knowing the human person in African? and how clearly does Africans interpret the place of these concepts in dealing with the human person? Could the difficulties in relating those terms be resolved in Africans? This paper will begin with the discussion of the concept of personhood, and then community. But it should be noted that a discussion of the notion of community in a philosophical sense is often tied to the concept of communitarianism and the advent of socialism in African. Then we shall be considering the relationship that exists between the ontological conception personhood and the community where he is said to have originated from.

### **African and the Concept of a Personhood**

Personhood as a concept as understood in Africa is marked by the various phenomena that impact the individual as an existing entity. The idea of a person in Africa also implies a processural dimension; this is because in Africa, a person is not born with personhood, but grows into a personhood at an adult age. There are certain processes that must be followed in the quest to be qualified into personhood. This was the reason Menkiti argued that:

African emphasize the rituals of incorporation and the overarching necessity of learning the social rules by which the community lives, so that what was initially biologically given can come to attain social self-hood, i.e., become a person with the inbuilt excellences implied in the term of spirituality and self consciousness (173).

Thus, personhood as an integral part of existence in African is understood to be the rites of passage that each individual, or in some cases groups, must go through during their circle of life. These rites of passage are another example of the dynamic nature of African living; Africans by nature are constantly developing and growing through the rites that are performed.

Much similar to what Gyekye overview when he classified a person into categories, for him the entity that makes up personhood is not more than five categories. But for the case of this studies, we shall be taking into study three major distinct entities which over clouds the rest of those categories which are as followed: the *okra* (the soul), *sunsum* (spirit) and the *nipadua* (body) just as conceived by Egbunu when he categories the human person among the Igala people to be made up of four categories, which are: *Ebiye* (Blood) *Ojiji* (shadow) *Okaye* (Destiny) *Angwola* (Body) as the foundation that makes up the human person (9). Thus, in arguing from the perception of Gyekye, the *okra* the soul is believed to be given to a person by the Supreme Being and also bears the destiny of the human being. Gyekye also argued that “Since the Supreme Being here in African is conceived of as the all good in its

self, human destiny which comes from the Supreme Being is also concaved good as well, as well as the It is the bearer of life” (85).

Thus, so Gyekye and Kwasi Wiredu both assert that the presence of the soul in a person guarantees life and its absence in the human being leads to death (Gyekye 86 and Wiredu 120). The soul here is believed to be eternal but is capable of reincarnating other being of its kind in to being (Gyekye 98). The spirit is said to be the basis of individual personality and, like the soul is believed to come from Supreme Being who is all good by its nature. The body is the material component of personhood which is perishable after death. In contrary to multilingual nature of the African society, the above interpretation of the three components of personhood has not been totally accepted





especially by the Igala and Akan philosophers. Prominent among these objectors are Wiredu and Kwame and Egbunu. They reject Gyekye's position they held that the soul and body are physical.

According to the position of (Wiredu 120 & Kwame 345-346), they even went deeper to channel the human person into just two. And those two entities are rather quasi-helical. This making it more different from Egbunu's position. By this, they mean that the entities that made up a human person have near physical properties which cannot, therefore, be purely spiritual as claimed by Gyekye. Yet, his position is affirmed by (Ajei 191-192, 200) and (Majeed 25-28). So far as the concept of a personhood as discussed in this paper is concerned, with what it means for one to be a human person or what it takes for one to be qualified into personhood, or that particular essence which is possessed by all human beings. So far as one is naturally 'born of a human seed' Menkiti argued that "one is expected to possess each and every of these categories in order to be described as a human person from all sense, therefore, it is not just adequate to be a human being without undertaking the full scale of personhood (172).

### **The Relationship between 'Society' and 'Community' in African Worldview**

A close link exists between the concept of society and community in Africa. It is not uncommon, therefore, to find scholars employing the concepts 'society' and 'community' interchangeably or as synonyms. Even though the two concepts are related and contiguous, thus, however, they are needed to illuminate the nature of the relationship that exists between them in some point in time. The concept of society in general is the totality of persons that have existed in line of history. A particular society on the other hand, is a given population living in a certain region whose members have lived cooperative life over a long period of time for the accomplishment of convinced goals or ends. It is from the sense above that one can talk of 'the human society as a whole. In the second sense, we can now categorize the society as they are, examples the African society, the Arabian society, the Igala society, or Fulani society, etc.

Kneller thus, argued that "by community, one usually has in mind a sub-society whose members:

Are in personal contact, Are concerned for one another's welfare *socialism*, and are committed to common purposes and procedures, share responsibility for joint actions and value membership in the community as an end worth pursuing (49).

Because of the impenetrability with arriving at a clear cut division between the concepts of society and community, researchers have come to see both terms as signifying the same notion.

When one is set to make contrast between culture and society, he might say that a culture is the way of life of a people, whereas a society in the other hand is a person with an organized way of life. Thus, Eze following this same point of the view, when he argued that "Aristotle in his *Politics*, argued among other things that the ideal society is that which affords its citizens the opportunity for attaining happiness or what he described as the good life" (11). The concept of *good life*, in this context is described as the 'complete and active realization of all man's capabilities of activities', that is, those activities which contribute to man's self-fulfillment. But Aristotle also held that proper education, both physical and moral, is needed to complete this realization and thereby the achievement of the life of wellbeing. Put differently in the African content, Eneh and Okolo arguing that "we may following Aristotle, describe an ideal political society or state as a consciously devised association of individuals for the achievement of deliberately defined aims" (49). In Africa, the major reason for the existence of any society or community is the procurement of the good life for its members. In other words, part of the reason why society exists is for the provision of human social goods of the people who make up the human community. Following this line of reasoning, the State, it is argued, is nothing but a mere natural extension of the family or community. In the words of Jacques Maritain, she argued that:

A concretely and wholly human reality is tending to a concretely and wholly human good, the common good. It is a work of reason, born out of the obscure efforts of reason disengaged from instinct, and implying essentially a rational order but is no more pure Reason than man himself (10).

### **Personhood (the Individual) and community in Africa**

The Cynics of the west have not been alone in rejecting or jettisoning the ideal of community. In Western thought in general there have been a number of movements or natives who have also come to see society as a clog, a bung-up, or an impediment to human joy and happiness. The anarchists or the social deviants of contemporary Western society the hippies and the skinheads, all maintain a lifestyle of rebellion against society and its values. Similarly, a number of intellectual movements have arisen in the west that has depicted not just society itself but also human existence as a useless drudge. However, it is not unlikely that this anti-establishment behaviour and loss of faith in community may be due to the overt-individualism that characterizes much of Western life which differs from the African communalist nature where the other affirms the existence of one. In a social environment where the individual sees himself as supreme, autonomous and self-governing, any slight dislocation in the social equilibrium is bound to lead to this loss of faith in community life. In like manner, according to Ameh, he argued that:

At first such society cannot exist in Africa. In such an environment, when the individual is faced with problems of life that he cannot tackle alone, he becomes distraught; feeling existentially alone in the world, the individual becomes cranky and comes to conclude that community is a clog, obstructive and encumbering (21).

In contradistinction to the type of attitude mentioned above, Africans are unlikely to concede to the individual absolutism, and that stands him head to head with community which is a makeup of his identity, just as argued in Nyerere *Unjahma* philosophy.

On the divergent, it is strongly believed that in African, it is believed that it is only in the community where a person comes from that the life of the individual acquires a true meaning to its existence. In other words, it is not the self isolated life that matters in Africa but the living in mutually interacting with other members of community, which the individual can ever hope to realize his or her social aspirations in life. Among the Igbo people of Nigeria, as among other African persons generally, the obvious curtailment of a person's power to do as he wills is provided by the potent force of what is known as 'the will of the community'. As T. U. Nwala argued that "in Africa, the being of the community is larger than, and prior to, that of any of its individual members since the being of the community as a whole is identical with the being of the total personality of the ancestors" (46). Emphasizing this idea of the social nature of existence in Africa, Opoku argues that "the saying is a common one in Africa which holds that a man is a man because of others, and life is when you are together, alone you are an animal" (92).

The points made above with a particular reference to the value of corporate living among Africans find support in Rousseau's notion of the *General Will*, where it is argued that "the individual can only find meaning in life by submitting himself to the common will of the community and, in such a corporate capacity, becomes an invisible part of what is called the *State*" (112). Hegel, appropriating much of Rousseau's theory, submerges individual liberty and freedom in the collective will of the State. However, Hegel's theory fails in that it denies individual freedom and makes people mere appendages to this mystic or abstract notion called the State. But I make bold to say, however, that the African notion of community is more germane than that of Rousseau or Hegel in that while emphasizing the corporate nature of human existence, it does not by that token deny individual liberty or the idea of every human being as both unique and important. On

this note it is agreed that some African writers often exaggerate when they stress the idea of social cohesion in the traditional African society, the truth remains, however, that in all human societies the world over, the closer bonds of human interdependence help in the creation and preservation of social security among human individuals who live together in the community.

As been shown above, community life in Africa helps to create a sense of amity and security among the members of society. But it does this and much more: it also helps in fostering respect for each member of society as well. And if W. E. Abraham's opinion is anything to go by, in Africa, community is usually conceived as having "a sacral unity, which comprises its living members, its dead who survive in less substantial form and its as yet unborn children" (25). In the same way, the central idea of community in Africa to a very large extent forms the bulwark of the collective interest of its citizens. Abraham's opinion finds support in J. S. Mbiti's statement which holds that in Africa, "the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately" (108). But to say that the individual cannot exist outside of the community setting is not to imply, as Hegel did, that the individual is a passive plaything or a mere appendage in what is abstractly called the State. Long ago, Robert Filmer had argued, in a manner similar to Hegel's that "kings ought to be obeyed in everything because they are the 'fathers' of their people, possessing an unlimited power said to have been inherited from Adam" (13). Repudiating this type of claim, John Locke reasserted the teaching common to the medieval theorists, which is that, "power in society is held and exercised legitimately only in furtherance of community interests and must be subject to moral restraints" (24). What the interpretation of John Locke's statement shows is that it is a moral responsibility on the part of a person to

promote the interests of those who make up the society. In Africa, an individual who fails to do this would have failed in its duty or moral responsibility.

### **African Conception of Personhood in Connection to Spirits**

The African view of reality may be leaning more towards Plato's theory of forms where Plato alludes to a world of ideas. In this light, Africans also believe in the world of the non-physical, however unlike Plato, Africans believed that the spiritual world really exists. The study of African Metaphysics largely focuses on the study of the Supreme Being and the other vital forces that made up the cosmos and the universe. While the study of contemporary Metaphysics in the West, has to do with the study of concrete particulars which can be perceived with the senses.

Again the spiritual nature of the universe in African when brought into the discourse of the mind-body problem will show that the African will lean more towards dualism than physicalism. Although African philosophers like Kwasi Wiredu and Safo Kwame have argued for a quasi-physical African world. This is because in Africa they believe in the existence of a soul which is non-physical and a body which is physical. This is what Chukwudum B. Okolo argued that African Metaphysics is "The human being, in African universe, is viewed as interacting with lower beings or forces as well, inanimate things such as lightening, thunder, etc. These forces at times act as agents of the unseen spirits to punish evil doers. Consequently such forces are also revered and worshipped. Even charms, amulets, witchcraft, etc. become serviceable to Africans as definite ways of self-preservation, from the evil eye, for example, of guaranteeing success in his/her life's endeavor, or of inflicting evil on the enemy. According to Dewey, he argued at this point that "the world of the spirits, human beings, and other lower organic and inorganic substances form the same totality of existing, interacting beings or reality" (250) "African metaphysics differs greatly from the naturalistic metaphysics of Dewey, Hook, Randall, Jr., and others, which admit of only one kind of reality in nature, namely the seen, the tangible and the verifiable. Nature, for these naturalists, is

strictly monistic, without any bifurcation or radical splits. Consequently there is nothing like God, spirit, or soul in their universe, if these words are taken to mean different kinds of beings from the material and the tangible. Nature, for naturalists, is an all-inclusive category. Nothing exists outside nature. Dewey argued on this ground that:

it is clear that this naturalistic view of things is poles apart from that of the African who strictly maintains the existence of both the spirit world and the material, physical universe, each distinct from but interacting with the other. The physical, material universe is real for the African, not just an epiphenomenon or shadow of the real, as Plato maintained in some of his dialogues. (251)

On characterizing African metaphysics, we mention briefly that unlike the existentialists, particularly the radical type, African does not regard the fact that the universe is merely 'thrown' into being. In Africa, the universe has a cause, and the cause is attributed to the activities of each 'vital force' responsible to harmonizing nature. These activities of vital force in creational story are what Salisu A.A call "being (ens Supremum, or highest Being) which he refers as the creator and governs the universe it with his laws through the through the activity of the spirits, the ancestors, the human person and finally the laws of the land (community)". (15)

### **Personhood as Reasons for Justice in the African Communitarianism System**

First, by the virtue of just, every human no matter their personal status should be given their moral obligations as human first. This moral obligation can only be given to man because he possesses the foundational quidity of Just, which are *free-will and rationality* this is the foundational essence that distinguished the human being from other beings. For the position of Justice in Africa, it is understood that, justice is a necessary condition for peaceful co-existence in any community. This idea of justice is expressed is written everywhere in Africa, it is expressed in expression of empathy, fear, joy and even in their sub consciousness. For instance, among the Igala society, the expressions justice as *Oforkpai Ule*, justice and right judgmentis foundational to their coexistence as a people. In Africa community setting, Justice is a social virtue and a person is not just only by what he does but is expected to be just by what he is. This becomes the major reason why nothing can separate an African person form the hunger for Justice and the desire to use justice to pervade and directs the lives of the other.

From the position of Justice as a fundamental ethical concept in Africa today is that, justice in Africa is not just treated as an idea in Africa just as it is treated in the western word, but in Africa, justice defends the right of the innocent, poor and venerable. The importance of justice and personhood in African community setting is so essential that Africans rely so much on justice and with co-operate life so deep, order and peace are highly cherished and protected as they make for the desired state of co-existence and solidarity among them self. On this ground, Egbunu argued that:

An average African man understands what justice is, he enunciates daily the principle of justice: in Igala *Jewekenekibejo* "let a person's own satisfy him". *Fukpeokwujo* "divide it equally" *Akpaneomwuaneakpa* "let he who kills, dies with his victims". *Ene du ki yenz' omz' one akpunanenwuonugoakpunan* "whoever says another should not prosper will also not prosper" (23).



Considering the above argument, one can see that Africans reasons for justice entail equal distribution of individual rights with respect to the differences relevant to law. Hence, an African adage says: (live and let live) points to a kind of justice that accommodates all the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the strong and the weak and so on in the same community. Our point here is that, in African they are no middle line existing between personhood and the makeup of the community.

### Community as Personal Identity in Africa

In term of identification, it is argued by that: Africans articulate a position that “the community where an individual is born to is an authentic way or of ritual expression of a person’s identity and in Africa, without this community attachment to a person, a remains am outcast and a nonentity because of the fact that the community name defines and qualifies the person into personhood which give rise to his personality in a social setting (Ekwunife 37). The implication of this position according to Obi is that:

In Africa, the individual acquires his personhood and obtained a personal identity or character through his community. Just like the ritual of naming within which the same obtains a name that defines him due to Africans attachment to their land (149).

The consequence is that the child appears determined as it may not have a chance to be otherwise. Thus, Umorem also argued that “the dynamic nature of the human person becomes compromised. But if a community is consider as part and parcel of those elements of African culture that makeup personhood in African unique” (15), then a community name and influence can distinguish an individual from another through uniqueness of character and classification. On this starting point, one could argue that community in Africa is interpreted as equivalent to personhood and identity. But various interpretations of an individual place of birth or the community where the individual is said to have originated from is “moulding” and “cutting” the person with a special individual or “separate identity”, as “participating in the reality of the person that they are equated with those answering them” and as “the person growing up to the consciousness of getting the idea of himself which it finds expressed in its model in their community which inform name as expression of the individual who bears it present a challenge. The problem with this position is that in African it is the community that makeup the human person.

In line with the above argument placed above, Ihuha in his *Capacity-based theory of personhood*, stress that: “in Africa, man is judge and qualified as a being, if he has consciousness, he must have the ability to *think* and *reason* logically before he is qualification to be see as a being with personhood” (4). Indeed, as Buchanan, also argues in the same line with Ihuha, he is of the opinion that, the capacity to perceive oneself as existing over time is considered an important qualification for personhood in Africa (277). Thus. African belief in the duality of existence, due to the dual nature of their being, “nature and divine”, implies that. The conception of personhood in Africa, goes on hand to hand at the same time in the physical and the metaphysical realm. Which implies that in Africa, there is a strong relationship between the human community and the beingness of the human person.



### **Communalas the Future of Humankindin African**

From an historical point of view, the first meaning of humanity describes a particular kind of animal that biologists encouragingly call homo sapiens or wise human and which seems distinct from all other animals because of its powers of speaking and interpretation of language, critical logical reasoning, imagination and advance in technology. These and many more all achieved in the connection or relationship between the human person and their community, which is said to be the foundation of their being. This communal attachment and place of belongingness between them, creates the sense of belongingness that the use of the term personhood has the same meaning as “humankind” in the African settings, which connects every existing entity in the community both, the human person, animal and vegetative.

Thus, due to the communal nature of the African person, the power of togetherness that describes the species of personhood is considerable deep over all non-human entities that occupies the physical world. According to Mbiti, “this is mainly because our intelligence has consistently invented and deployed natural tools and technology which are all gotten from our community and the togetherness that comes with it” (55). which implies that by the nature of man togetherness, he is made to dominate the earth. The collective nature of the African person, his interaction with his environment, and produce an imaginal power, which has shaped the African belief system and political life.

Thus, as Obi, in his *BeingAs Duality and African Hermeneutics of Foundation* argues that:

The communal life of the African person becomes the tools that made them to look beyond the physical definition of the human person. This implies that Africans are not a simple species but always function as a hybrid species part human and part diving in a constantly changing mix of human and non-human components (117).

This hybrid of personhood as an existing entity must infuriate non-human life like animals, plants and microbes who could easily “take the humankind down” in a fair fight of simple life forms, but who have consistently encountered the human person in hybrid forms in which he merges our humanity with nature at his defense. Thus, man operates routinely in these human-machine interactions of various kinds and the essence of the existence can only be seen in his communal life.

In other word, the place of humanity in African is at a critical stage in the transition to a more sustainable planet and community due to man’s activities and interaction among their self. Our actions in the next decade will determine our collective path forward on the survival of mankind and the universe. Thus, it is strongly believed in African that our future as a person on earth at the moment aims to tell the story of where we are on our collective journey of humankind by connecting the dots that exist between what humanity is currently experiencing from fires to food shortages to a rise in populism with recent developments in the human community. That is why Andréa Ventimiglia is of the view that:

Each human person in their substance/essence is an individual existing independently in itself which is categorized in three stages, past, present and future. But, the meaning of humankind as a substance here is used to qualify the nature of man (24).



That is, humankind here refers to the individual distinctiveness among human persons. Each individual human person is directed with distinctive characteristics and is engaged in unique acts of existence; each is recognized as an individually unique human person.

Community as the foundation or bodies of people, animals, plants, vegetations and Forestry plays a significant role in socio-economic development of the human person, providing food and medications to millions of people. Thus, the west African-coast pacific countries lead the world in forest plantation development. Many African nations rely on efficient communities and their natural technologies for sustainable development of humankind. However, deforestation, degradation, wasteful use and sharp inequalities in the distribution of community benefits, remain serious problems that require novel solutions and joint action by Africans in their numbers.

### **Conclusion**

Arising from our discus in our study is the understanding that personhood and community is an ontological concept, understood and marked in Africa by various phenomena, these phenomena as we have seen in their ways of impacting man as an ontological individual and as a member of a normative community which placed personhood at the central of existence. *The* view of personhood and community in African philosophy is essentially foundational. The prototype of African where

personhood and community falls under is not just seen as a being but a confirmation of being-with-others. Self, us or 'I' as we have seen above is define in Africa in terms of 'we-existence', just as much as 'we' in 'I-existence', through social interactions that thus, exists between Africans: 'I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.' Such a philosophy of self is bound to generate all sorts of problems with regard to the status of personhood (self as an individual), as an independent subject. Even though an individual person belong to a class, yet experience shows that they cling to their own individualities as marks of distinct their selves with their community, which they cannot part with nor allow to be merged with others. To ignore this aspect of the community as a source of identity or to treat it inadequately would certainly constitute a detachment t their personhood.

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## JOHN 17, 1.4-5 IN THE CONTEXT OF THE IGBO PROVERB “NKU NWATA KPARA N’OKQCHỊ KA Ọ NA-ANYA N’UDU MMIRI”: AN EXEGETICO-HERMENEUTIC STUDY

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### Abstract

The prayer of the Revealer in John 17 begins with an imperative demand. Jesus asks the Father to glorify him. In vv. 4-5 of the same chapter, he gives the reason for the demand. He has accomplished the task for which he came into the world and so glorification becomes his by right. The researcher believes that fanaticism is one of the fundamental problems of the African for which he remains perpetually poor and unfulfilled. The African is concerned that the Europeans who evangelized Africa are doing well economically. Africa practices Christianity today much more than their evangelizers, yet she remains the hub of poverty and frustration in the whole world. The paper denounces pastors and priests who misrepresent the bible and cow the people into believing that God does everything for them. It uses exegetical lens based on John 17,1.4-5 to underscore the ever-veritable Igbo/African proverb that: *Nkunwatakparan’okochi ka o na-anyan’udu miri* (the firewood one collects in the dry season is what he uses in rainy season). It is the conclusion of the paper that if one sets his/her vision right and pursues the vision, fulfilment will surely be his/hers.

### Introduction

The global growth rate of Pentecostalism has been very dramatic and impressive over the years (Kitause and Achunike, 2015). Omavuebe (2021) posits that there are two popular suggestions as to how the prosperity gospel emerged in Nigeria. The first school of thought posits that the phenomenon of the prosperity gospel was exclusively an American ideology imported into Nigeria, while the second view holds that it was entirely an African ideology nurtured with African ingredients and popularised on African soil. The concept of prosperity gospel is the theology of all-inclusive success. It is anchored on God’s full earthly blessings. It is understood as that Christian teaching that emphasises all-round physical well-being such as good health, financial success, prestige, personal empowerment, long life, peace, and happiness. It propagates all-round prosperity without recourse to suffering. It is the gospel that advertises itself as a divine armament against unemployment, poverty, failure, disease, barrenness, and insecurity (Phillips, 2013; Ehioghare and Olanrewaju, 2015; Pickering, 2013). The researcher abstracts from concern with the historical origin to frown at its disastrous effects on the political, religious and socio-economic life of ordinary African. If this woe is coming from the Pentecostals alone, it could be tolerated. The awful thing is that it has become the order of the day even in the mainline Churches. Achinike (2019) bedevils its advance into Catholicism in Nigeria. He sees it as Pentecostal influence. It is very ironical, that, Africa, the most richly blessed continent in the globe is still the hub of poverty and the least developed compared with other continents of the world.

This paper views prosperity gospel as one of the remote causes of this myopism in believing that God does everything for man. The idea of hard-work has been sacrificed on the altar of belief in the God of Providence. With prosperity gospel, God is always ‘a provider’. The idea of man as a *homo faber* (a worker) is foreign to prosperity preachers. They appear to be ignorant of Paul’s injunction



that whoever refuses to work must not eat (2Thes 3:10-12). They are apparently unaware of the fact of Gen 1:26-28 that God created man in His image with instruction to conquer this world and subdue it. God worked hard to create the world. If therefore, man is created in His image, then work is part and parcel of man. Again, the only way he can conquer this world is by hard-work. Prosperity gospel is not only an aspersion against the veritable truths of the bible on man as a participant in God's creative work through hard-work. The researcher submits that it is foolery, a deceit, and contradiction to African's tenet on the importance of hard-work. It directly opposes Africa's belief and practice.

The Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria for instance believe that man is the architect of his success or failure. This belief is enshrined in some of her proverbs. For instance, it is her belief that: '*aka ajaaja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu*'; '*nku nwata kpara n'okochi ka o na-anyan'udummiri*'; '*onye rua, o rie*'; '*adi akwata ukwa n'osisi ukpaka*' etc. Moved by the speedy development and growth of China, Japan, India, and the Western world while Africa appears to be going back to the stone age despite the fact that they are more religious than these others, the researcher believes that the African man needs to be called to order to understand that there can never be a crown without a cross. Sunshine comes only after the rain. The 2019 Corona Virus experience ought to be a warning sign to all prosperity preachers. It is not the 2020 people were promised in December 2019. Actually, it just hit us that God is in heaven and he does whatever he wishes ([Psalms 115:3](#)). We have realised that the Jesus we pronounce as someone dying to enrich you was actually a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief ([Isaiah 53:3](#)). He understands our sorrows, even experiencing death. But he died for sins and not cents. So, no more guarantees of him cushioning your earthly life. Experience has proven that speaking in tongues, the selling of healing oil and sowing financially in faith in order to reap hundredfold, sadly, though unsurprisingly, it seems to yield little or no result. has come of all that. This paper encourages the reader to reflect on God's sovereignty and our own silliness; and then seek for pathway through trackless ocean and take up our destiny in our hands while trusting in God. To be honest, with corona virus experience anything looks possible now. The paper reads John 17:1.4-5 with the prism of exegesis and then gives it a hermeneutic land in the context of the Igbo prover which teaches that: '*Nku nwata kpara n'okochi ka o na-anyan'udummiri*'. The paper concludes that until the African begins to do what he ought to do without waiting on God to do all for him; till the African understands that work is part and

parcel of man and leads to his glory, he will remain a victim of poverty. It calls on pastors and priests to do the needful by telling the people the truth of the gospel and as leaders directing their flock to the right thing.

### **Prosperity preaching in Nigeria**

At that beginning, even from its American root, prosperity gospel was a tiny off-shoot of Pentecostalism which is today everywhere (Ojo, 2013). Pentecostalism is a major religious and social movement in Nigeria that is part of a growing world-wide movement (McCain, 2013). As an internally motivated socio-religious phenomenon in Africa (Achunike, 2009) it has penetrated all areas of society such as education, business, health, social media, social development and even the highest levels of government. It goes back to an Anglican Deacon, Garrick Sokari Braide (1882-1918) who in 1910s and 1920s launched a prophetic movement. This movement later metamorphosed into Christ Army Church (CAC). Kalu (2008) writes that sequent to the influenza of 2018, prayer groups were formed to cushion the effect of the influenza. This was followed by Joseph Babalola's revival in the 1930s and 1940s that gave birth to Christ Apostolic Church and eventually the emergence of other churches including the Assemblies of God Church and Foursquare Gospel Church among others. The 1950s saw the founding of Celestial Church of Christ, Cherubim and Seraphim society, Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and other churches. The period saw a wave of revival among charismatic ministries in tertiary institutions in Nigeria which eventually metamorphosed into Pentecostal churches like Benson Idahosa's Church of God Mission, Benin and Williams Kumuyi's Deeper Life Bible Church, Lagos (Ojo, 2006, Gaiya, 2002). Kitause and Achunike (2015) document that prosperity gospel Pentecostalism is relatively new on the religious landscape which is swiftly expanding at breath-taking speed and is now a force to be reckoned with in Nigeria with greater chances of outliving the 21st century in view of the fact that it is widely and readily being accepted by all classes of people for its claims of physical and spiritual empowerment. It is currently estimated that more than half of Christian believers in sub-Saharan Africa are subscribers to prosperity gospel ideology (Magbadelo, 2004 and Folarin, 2006). The scholars aver that prosperity gospel is a distinctive feature of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. This researcher believes that Kitause and Achunike's submission scarcely captures the reality on ground today. Prosperity gospel is no longer a Pentecostal exclusivity. It has crept into the mainline churches, catholic and protestant alike. Prosperity gospel is a perversion of the biblical gospel, according to which Jesus is a means to the blessings of health, wealth, and power. The preachers of this "gospel" may quote God's word, but twist it to support their false theology. By taking passages out of context, applying a naively literal hermeneutic, embracing an over-realized eschatology, and misapplying their texts, prosperity preachers distort the Scriptures and exploit those who follow them (Tamfu, 2020). Smith (2021) regrets to observe that Preachers of the prosperity gospel in Nigeria criticise politicians' greed and government corruption, even as many church leaders amass great wealth themselves. The pressures of economic crisis and reform that have gripped African societies have been accompanied by a proliferation

of new religious movements, generally known as Pentecostal movements. Amid concerns about the political impact of religious revivalism, little attention has been devoted to their economic implications. Focusing on the remarkable coincidence between the withdrawal of the state, the rise of religious movements, and the dramatic expansion of the informal economy, modernising tendencies fostered within the informal economy by popular religious revivalism are being stunted by the relentless pressures of liberalisation, globalisation and pseudo-democratisation. Progressive



religious tendencies among the poor are being instrumentalised by religious entrepreneurs and political elites, undermining fragile processes of entrepreneurial

class formation taking place within the informal economy (Meagher, 2009). The mistake which Martin Luther frowned against five hundred years ago in the Catholic church, namely, the sale of indulgences has become the order of the day today in most churches in Africa. No one could verify if really souls were really freed from purgatory once indulgences were bought. The victims of that malady were therefore excusable because they acted in good faith response to the unverifiable. Unfortunately, today, what Martin Luther fought against which led to the division of the Christendom into Catholicism and Protestantism, has overtaken the traditional gospel preaching in Africa and this time in a larger scale. It is no longer selling of indulgences but promise of prosperity. Today, in Africa, most go to Church not to build relationship with God but to gain wealth and riches. Regrettably, today anyone can see that the faithful who trust prosperity preachers are not getting rich. A lot of people are embittered because they have parted with the little money that they had and it has not multiplied. Consequently, the name of God is getting a lot of bad publicity from these bitter individuals. The prosperity theology propagated mostly by Pentecostal churches is not a purely African phenomenon. In Latin and North America, as well as in Asia and Europe, there are self-appointed prophets and apostles who trade salvation for cash. Often this brand of Christianity has elements of spiritualism and shamanism, which attribute supernatural powers to the priests and pastors. The promises made by the churches' propaganda are similar to the ones made by traditional witch doctors. Both market themselves as all-purpose weapons against disease, poverty, unemployment and childlessness. Often, they are sought out by the poor who are looking for an explanation for their place in the world through the prosperity gospel and hope for a miracle to escape poverty. Amechi (2014) holds that adherents of prosperity gospel believe that salvation brought by the death and victory of resurrection of Jesus Christ in New Testament has brought liberation from all social-economic challenges.

Many factors aided the rapid growth and expansion of prosperity gospel. Astronomical expansion of prosperity ideology, overwhelming popularity of prosperity gospel, deeply entrenched poverty in Africa, the desire and search to get better, prosperity promises, easy going theology of prosperity, evangelistic campaigns and proliferation of churches, promises of immunity against witchcraft and failures are some of the fundamental factors aiding the spread of prosperity gospel (Kitaue and Achunike, 2015).

### **Igbo man and idea of hardwork**

Traditional Igbo society is egalitarian. Hardwork and responsiveness to call to duty is believed to be part of man. There is no room for a lazy man in the traditional Igbo setting (Leith-Ross, 1939). This is evident from some of the prevalent names and proverbs. An adult male generally is called '*Di bu ulo*' (man carrier of the house), to indicate man's load of responsibility in taking care of the family. Such proverbs like '*aka ajaaja na-ebute onu mmanu mmanu*', '*onye lua, ya rie*', '*adihi akwata ukwa n'osisi ukpaka*', all express the Igbo concept of hardwork. Oguejiofor (1996:18) notes that "... there is hardly any culture that does not in certain ways encourage hard work as a human



weapon for the domination of nature. But the testimony of many writers has confirmed a somewhat extraordinary concern of the Igbo people for hard work". In 1881, the British Vice-Consul on the then Oil River Protectorate described the Igbo as 'extremely industrious' (Isichei, 1977). Nwoga (1984:66) expressing similar opinion documents that for the Igbo, "no work was too hard to be attempted, no job too mental to be used in the struggle with the world for achievement." To show that

the Igbo has no place for laziness, one of the powers delegated to the *Okpala* (oldest man of the kindred) is to drive a noted lazy young man out of the kindred (Meek, 1937). Equiano (1967) writing on Igbo attitude to work teaches that:

We are all initiated to labour from our earliest years. Everyone contributed something to the common stock, and as we are unacquainted with idleness, we have no beggars. The benefits of such a mode of living are obvious. The West Indian planter prefers the slaves of Benin or Eboe to those of any other part of Guinea for their hardiness, intelligence, integrity and zeal.

The Igbo's positive attitude to work is not unconnected with the desire for achievement not linked to inherited positions (Odumegwu-Ojukwu, 1989). Even when one has inheritance from his forbears, he still needs to back it up with personal achievement (Ottenberg, 1965). The Igbo's envious attitude to hard work is not connected to anything mundane (Adibe, 2009). It is because of her high sense of moral probity and family cohesion (Mbiti, 1975). They have severe penalties for dishonest gains. Again, wealth made through obvious dishonest means does not earn any respect. It must be earned through hard work under conditions of integrity and without deceit (Okigbo, 1986). The Igbo nation abhors failure due to laziness while failure after gallant work is viewed with sympathy. They call it *Omebere ma chi ekweghi*. A successful man who does not take care his immediate and even extended families is called *Ofoogeli* or *Akaliogheli* (a vagus or a vagabond). It is enshrined in her proverb that a wealth experienced in the family is a true one (*akụ lulu ụlọ bụ ezi akụ*).

### **Exegesis of John 17:1.4-5**

The researcher made some preliminary observations on the Nestle-Aland's New Testament Greek text of John 17:1.4-5. The observation begins with a delimitation of the text and then a resolution of some textual difficulties seen in the apparatus.

#### *Delimitation*

John 17:1.4-5 part of the lengthy priestly prayer the Revealer, Jesus. It is delimited from the preceding pericope on the theme covered. John 16: 25-33 deals with the theme of Jesus' parting and encouraging words to his followers in order for them not to be afraid because he has overcome the world, whereas John 17: 1.4-5 deals with the priestly prayer of Jesus. It is delimited from the sequent pericope because whereas it is concerned with the prayer of Jesus for himself, the next pericope, John 17:6-19 covers his prayer for his immediate followers.



### *Textual Criticism*

The Greek text of John 17: 1.4-5 posits some conspicuous textual difficulties. In John 17:1, some manuscripts inserted ο` before 'Iēsous. The insertion is testified in A C D L W Y f<sup>1.13</sup> 33 Ū. Earlier manuscripts like a B Q0109.0250 *pc* do not have the insertion. Looking at the recentness of the manuscripts containing the insertion and also the fact that with the insertion, the text becomes easier to read, the author is inclined to believe that the insertion was only an attempt by a scribe to correct the original text. Thus, on the ground of *lectio difficilior* and the dating of the manuscripts, the researcher believes that the Nestle-Aland text used in this research is closer to the original.

Still in the same v. 1, some manuscripts like A C<sup>3</sup> K N GDY 0250. 209. 700. l 844 *pmhaveepērenas* an alternative reading to *eparas* contained in Nestle-Aland. *Eparas* is an aorist participle while *epēren* is an aorist indicative. None of the manuscripts with the alternative reading is very old indicating an attempt to correct the original. On the ground of manuscript dating, the researcher takes it that the Nestle-Aland text is closer to the original.

In v. 4, manuscripts D Q Y f<sup>13</sup> Ū *latsa<sup>ms</sup>ac<sup>2</sup>pbo* have to ergon eteleiōsa as an alternative reading to to ergon teleiōsas witnessed in Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament and in f<sup>66</sup>a A B C L N (W) 0109. 0301. 1. 33 px (b ff<sup>2</sup>) sa<sup>ms</sup>bo. The Nestle-Aland text is witnessed in more ancient manuscripts including a papyrus whereas the alternative reading appears in more recent manuscripts. The researcher is confident in confirming the proximity of Nestle-Aland text to the original because of the ancient nature of the manuscripts containing the same text with it.

### *Presentation of a working translation*

A transliteration of Nestle-Aland Greek text of John 17:1.4-5 reads:

Tautaelalēsen, Iēsous kai eparastous ofthalmous autou eis ton ouranon eipen, Pater, elēluthen hē hora doxason sou ton huion, hina ho huios doxasē se, ... Egō se edoxasa epi

tēsgēs to ergon teleiōsas ho dedōkasmoi hinapoiēsō. Kai nun doxason me su, Pater, para se autō tē doxē ē eikon pro tou ton kosmoneinai para soi

The text above could be literally translated thus:

These things said Jesus, and having lifted his eyes into heaven said, 'Father, the hour has come, glorify you son in order that the son may glorify you, ... I have glorified you up, the earth by completing the work which you gave me in order that I may do. And now, glorify you me, Father, the glory I have beside you before the world came to be.

*Elalēsen* is aorist indicative active voice, third person singular from the verb *laleō*. It means to speak. *Legō* is a synonym. It also means to speak. However, both words are different in John. *Laleō* has revelatory connotation unlike *legō*. It is in aorist tense to express the punctuality. It is an action done once and not repeatable. *Tauta* (these), a demonstrative accusative plural pronoun expresses an inclusiveness of all he has said and taught. It is like a conclusion of his farewell discourse. It was never everyday prayer (Beasley-Murray, 1987). Moloney (2005:467) puts it better when he says that: "La oracion concluye el encuentro final de Jesus con los discipulos". Inclusion of prayer as part of farewell discourses is not uncommon even in the O.T. For instance, the song of Moses in Deut 32

concludes his farewell discourse. The prayer of Ezra in 4Ezra 8:19-36 is another example. However, Jesus' prayer is still unique because of the identity of the person who prays. He is about to depart the world through his death and resurrection and prays to the Father for the perfect fulfilment of His design through what He now does and through His followers. By using *laleō* instead of *legō* the author communicates that the prayer is both a prayer and also didactic (Agourides, 1968).

*Eparas* (raised or lifted) is a modal participle while *eipen* (said) is descriptive. It gives the mode of speech. Raising eyes to heaven for prayer is normal with Jesus (John 11:42; Mark 15:41). It means that the body follows the spirit. It also appears to be a mode of prayer for the Israelites as seen in Ps. 123. He raised his eyes in a contemplative fashion in union with the transcendental unlike raising hands which would entail a sacrifice or receiving, hence the adoption of *ouranos* (heaven), a dimension of the transcendental and reverence. It enters the rabbinic fashion where

heaven (*Ha-shamaim*) replaces God. Raising His eyes to heaven indicates also that heaven and earth are thus united in this contemplative experience, Jesus on earth and The Father in heaven (Schnackenburg, 1973). In the words of Blank (1999:486):

La frase "levantandolosojos al cielo" quiere decir lo mismo que levantar losojos directamente a Dios. Los judiospiadososolianutilizar la palabra Cielo enlugar del nombredivino para evitaruna possible infraccion contra el Segundo mandamiento que prohibetomarelnombre de Jehovaenvano ... La frase de que Jesus levantasuojos al Cielo sirve

para señalar que el ha terminadosudiscurso con losdiscipulos y que ahora dirige sus palabras al Padre.

*Pater* (Father) is a term of faith in John. In John 6:57, He is one who gives life and has life in Himself. John 8:18 depicts Him as one who sends. He is one who listens (John 11:41). He liberates and glorifies (John 12:27). He is greater (John 14:28) and still immanent with Jesus (John 14:10). Jesus starts his prayer by calling on His Father, hence the vocative case of *Pater*. He taught his followers to begin prayer with 'Our Father'. Other examples in John include 12:27. In the Synoptists too (Mark 14:36; Luke 22:48; 23:34.46) He does not say 'Our Father' but simply 'My Father' or

'Father'. He does so to show that His relation to the Eternal Godhead is different from that of men in general (Bernard, 1953).

*Elēluthen* is 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular perfect tense. It is in perfect tense to show a sense of certitude. It is realized already. If the Father determines the time, it means that there is a moment of realizing the plan of God to human understanding and experience. Before now, the author keeps saying that the hour has not come (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20). When *hōra* (hour) goes with *erkomai* it signifies a proper time to do something. It is synonymous with 'now'. In the context of this verse, it is symbolic. It has salvific sense just as also in John 1:39; 4:6; 19:44; 4:25; 16:24; 19:27.

*Doxason* is aorist imperative 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular. The imperative shows someone who prays. It is in the aorist and not in the present, indicating concomitance between Father and Son. It is a glory for

the future. The glory is to be restored once and for all and non-repeatable. The *sou ton huion* instead of *ton uion sou* indicates emphasis and interpersonal relation. *Sou* is causal and modal indicating quality. The article *ton* signifies something determinate. According to Moloney (2005) Jesus prays for the consummation of the glory of God and his glorification so as to give eternal life to humanity. In a similar opinion, Beasley-Murray (1987) holds that the expression demonstrates the desire of Jesus that His life, now to be devoted to God in death (v. 19) may be an acceptable sacrifice, that God may raise him to the throne of his glory (cf. 13:31-32), that the honour that comes from God alone may be His, and that all may recognize it; that thereby this event may constitute the coming of the saving sovereignty, the kingdom of God for the life of the world, and so the revelation of the Father's glory in terms of redeeming love and power. This ultimate glorification of the Son by the Father is in the glorification of the Father Himself. This is why the author concludes the verse 1 with a climatic parallelism *hinaho huiosdoxasē se*. In classical Greek, *doxa* means only opinion. The LXX renders the Hebrew *Kabōd* with *doxa*. *Kabōd* from its root means something strong about a person. It is something consistently glorious. Thus, *doxa* is powerful and appearing. It goes with empowering of life because the text continues to say that the reason why the son must be glorified is so that He in turn, will glorify the Father. The glory in question therefore, belongs to the Father. It is not the passion as in John 8:28. It is not even resurrection as in John 2:22 or 12:28-32 because resurrection is Jesus' work and not the Father's. It is not

ascension because it belongs to Jesus (John 20:27). It is not the work of the Spirit because the Spirit is posterior and not anterior. It is not the glory of men (John 5:41.44; 12:43). The glory is futural and comes only at the completion of His earthly work and so it has nothing to do with miracle nor Jesus' personality. It is not divine filiation because Jesus is always with the Father (John 14:10). It is an action on the Son by the Father. It is empowering the Son with the glory He had with the Father before the world was made, namely to give life to all (Rom 1:3). Jesus asks for this power so that he will be both mediator and redeemer of creation (Acts 5:31).

*Egō se edoxasa epi tēsgēs to ergon teleiōsas ho dedōkasmoihinapoiēsō* in v. 4 is connected with what precedes in v. 2 especially with the verb 'to give'. It is also connected with v. 3 in talking about what eternal life consists in. it goes with v. 5 because it talks of glorification. *Egōis* emphatic. *Egō se* like *me su* in v. 5 shows personality. *Edoxasa* has the force of aorist complexive. It depicts a manifestation of glory. It refers to *to ergon teleiōsas*. *Epi tēsgēs* is in contrast with *para seautō* in v. 5. *Teleiōsas* is an aorist participle. It is in aorist because it has futural force but in moment of finality. *Teleiōis* different from *teleō*. The later has the sense of finishing while the former has the nuance of bringing to an end, in the sense of perfect completion without defect (Hübner, 1994). It is a work done only by Christ and not even by Levitical priests. It shows that by his salvific work (ergon), Christ perfects all in one sanctifying action (Heb 10:14). It is good to note that *to ergon* is singular is definite and singular here. It is a particular work given by God and done by Jesus. *Ho dedōkas* shows that the initiative is from God. It is past but lasts still. It is because He has perfectly completed the work given Him by the Father that He now demands what was originally His (*Kai nun doxason me su*). It refers to a moment of going back to His Father. It implies a consequence of the preceding completion of His mission and also consequence of time.

### Hermeneutic application



The prayer of Jesus in John 17 is prayer with didactic intention (Beasley-Murray, 1987). It is a teaching in form of prayer. It is a prayer, a profession and a revelation. The section analysed in this paper indicate the stance of the earthly Jesus, who has arrived at the hour to which his whole ministry has moved, and in that momentous hour he seek His Father's face, for Himself and later for His disciples and all. It is the submission of the author of this paper that the prayer benefits especially and in particularity the African Igbo man. The Igbo man is deeply and structurally religious. He believes in and upholds the influence of the divine in everything patterning him. In as much as the author does not repudiate or castigate the Igbo man for being very religious, he is concerned with the vulnerability of extremism. It is a known fact that many a wary in the name of pastors take advantage of this deep religiosity to cow the people into believing the untrue. Today, many Africans rather than working out their success, appear to believe that God does everything for them. The idea of hard work for which the Igbo man was known is almost a forgotten issue. It is ironical that Africans sell factories and turn them into churches and then get into the same factory turned into church to ask God for jobs. It is strange that the time people should be in school or places of work or trade, they are in churches with hand lifted up to God for favour. Christ has a strong message in John 17:1.4-5. He did the work assigned Him by the Father. He completed it perfectly and then prayed for glorification. The Igbo

man must know that his destiny is in his hands. He must know that sunshine comes only after the rain. He must work first and then God's blessings will be on his effort because *Nku nwata kpapa n'okochi ka o na-anyan'udummiri*.

The get rich quickly mentality which most prosperity preachers cow us into believing is foreign to Igbo philosophy of life. It is far from the authentic message of Christ. It is a reading into the Christian tenet. God worked for six days and rest only on the seventh day. He created man in his image. He gave human beings a straight target to conquer the world and subdue it (Gen 1,26-28). Human beings fulfil this instruction through work. It is therefore in the nature of human beings to work and earn living. The new breed of so-called evangelists who project God as provider and problem solver, as if problem is not part of human existence is only deceiving human beings and luring them into failures and loss of vision and focus.

## Conclusion

The modern trend amongst Africans today is that parents toil to take care of their children. They spend less on themselves and save more for their children and even generations after. The effect is that most young people who ought to be in the labour force end up perpetual dependants while the parents die toiling for what they would not live to enjoy. The ever-veritable belief that '*nku nwata kpapa n'okochi ka o na-anyan'udummiri*' has been sacrificed on the altar of get rich quick. Most of our young people do not have the patience again to work and save for tomorrow. It is either they depend on the wealth of their parents as parasites or exploit others in the cases where parents do not have. This explains why YAHOO YAHOO; BETTING; 419; KIDNAPPINGS and other heartless exploitations have become the order of the day in our time. This paper has carefully examined John 17:1.4-5 and proved that Jesus, the Sage and Teacher demanded for the glory that is His only because He completed perfectly, the task for which He got incarnated. The early Africans appreciate the truth that crown follows the cross the more responsible and realistic we would be and the more the successes that would be registered.

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## **THE PHONOLOGICAL PROCESSES OF ASSIMILATION IN OKIJA IGBO SPEECH VARIETY**

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### **Abstract**

This work is a study of assimilation processes in Okija Igbo speech variety. Assimilation is a sound change in which some phonemes (typically consonants or vowels) change to become more similar to other nearby sounds. In some cases, assimilation causes the sound spoken to differ from the normal pronunciation in isolation. The major types of assimilation are progressive, regressive and coalescent assimilations. Many researchers have written more on other types of assimilation in Okija dialect but have not recognized regressive assimilation in Okija dialect hence, this research. The researcher uses Optimality theory (henceforth OT), in analyzing the data. The collected data were analyzed using survey design which conforms to the standard procedures in the study of dialect. The study covers the four regional linguistic areas which our data were drawn from sixteen resource persons (four from each area). Okija dialect of Igbo is spoken in Okija, which is one of the five communities that make up Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State. The dialect is spoken by a population of about 157, 785 (1991 census). The researcher finds out that the regressive assimilation process was more prominent in the Okija variety of Igbo than progressive and coalescent assimilations. It also facilitates the task of speaking because the speaker usually tries to conserve energy by using no more effort than is necessary to produce an utterance. This research will be of a great significance because it will enable scholars know the prominent assimilation process that are obtainable in Okija dialect. It will also pave way for better understanding of regressive assimilation.



## **Introduction**

Assimilation is a common phonological process in human language. During speech production, one of the contiguous sounds influences the other such that the sound so influenced drops its features partially or completely and takes features of the sound that influences it (Eme, 2008) and Schane (1973:49), earlier considered assimilation as a phonological process where ‘a segment takes on features of a neighbouring segment’; a process that arises when a sound changes to become similar to the nearby sound. The last fifty years or so saw the most dramatic changes and innovations of the history of theoretical development of phonology and linguistic enterprise generally. During this period, Generative phonology, an off-shoot of generative grammar, emerged out of dissatisfaction of its proponents with their predecessors. Noam Chomsky, Roman Jakobson, Morris Halle and Gunner Fante claim that their predecessors were unduly concerned with inventories and taxonomy of speech sounds. They argue, according to Mbah and Mbah (2010:139), “That linguistic description should aim to construct a grammar that is capable of generating linguistic form”, a grammar capable of containing “phonological rules which apply to underlying forms of language and yield surface phonetic representations”. The generativists, according to Mbah and Mbah (2010), contend that phonological rules which are more than mere inventory of phonemes and allophones are part of the model of language. The underlying representation, they posit, are converted into surface representation by the application of the rules.

According to Chomsky (1968), the emergence of generativism caused lots of ripples in the field of linguistics. The proponents and members of the orientation believe it to be “The first truly scientific account of phonology- the first to develop what could be truly called a theory of generativism dominated the parlance of phonology for the greater part of the last couple of decades. This, we must clarify, does not suggest that there have not been other approaches all these while. Of course, there have been; but the truth remains that only few of the latter approaches clearly departed from the generative tenets. Innovative approaches were built on generative foundation. For instance, among natural phonology, autosegmental phonology, consonant-vowel phonology, lexical phonology and dependency phonology, only the first mentioned [natural phonology] profoundly departed from generativism, but it serially flourishes (see Mbah and Mbah, 2010). Does this then suggest that generative phonology is impeccable? Why do new theories gain adherents while others do not? And why do new theories like Optimality Theory, Feature Geometry, etc are true and they arise when the truth is recognized cannot be sufficient, for two reasons. First, nobody knows at the onset whether a theory is true or not and second, no theory has yet turned out to be true. Therefore, there must be other factors which account for the rise of a new theory or paradigm.

Kuhn (1962) has observed that the ‘logical history’ of a field- the way it is presented in textbooks- represents an idealized version, formulated after the fact, of the actual history and at its very early stages (of a new theory) it is quite likely that even many of its adherents

cannot articulate what it is that appeals to them about the theory, or why they think that it is the right way to go. Its presentation and defence is often enough of a reason at first.

A case in point is the rapid rise of Optimality Theory (OT, Prince and Smolensky, 1993) in phonology. This serves as a new theoretical framework that deals with the interaction of violable constraints. In Igbo, many types of assimilation have been identified although there are varied opinions among scholars. Eme (2008), for example, presents partial assimilation, complete assimilation, progressive assimilation, regressive assimilation and coalescent assimilation. Emenanjo (2015), in addition to these types, identifies conditional assimilation but discusses regressive and partial assimilation under complete assimilation, Uwaezuoke (2021) re-analyzes assimilation as a distinctive feature approach. Despite several studies on the phonological processes of assimilation in Igbo, non considers regressive assimilation processes using an Optimality theory account which would engender easy descriptions of assimilation. This is why the present study is to analyze assimilation processes in Okija speech variety using Optimality theory.

This study is a survey designed to conform to the standard procedures that obtain in the study of the observed language of this type. The representative dialects which are Ụmụhu, Ụmụpani, Ụbahudara and Ụmụohi Okija were drawn from the speech communities in Ihiala Local Governemnt Area in Anambra state. Other Igbo dialect clusters are not directly covered in this research, although examples might be drawn from any of them to elucidate a point on the subject of our focus.

### Theoretical Framework

According to De Lacy (2007:9), the OT grammar is an input-output mechanism that pairs an output to an input form (such that each input has precisely one output). To accomplish this function, the grammar contains a division of labour between a component which maps the input onto an infinite set of candidate output forms by a set of ranked constraints and selecting the optimal output among these. These two components are known under the names of GENERATOR (or Gen) and EVALUATOR (or Eval). This grammatical organization is schematically represented in a function notation as follows:

The grammar as an input-output mechanism

Gen (input)(cand<sub>2</sub> .....cand<sub>3</sub>) = output


Eval\Cand<sub>1</sub> .Cand<sub>2</sub> ... Cand<sub>3</sub>| output

That is, *Gen* is a function that, when applied to some input produces a set of candidates, all of which are logically possible analyses of this input. Similarly, *Eval* is a function that when applied to a set of output candidates, produces an output, the optimal analysis of the


input. In addition to Gen and Eval, the grammar contains a LEXICON storing all lexical forms that are

Input to Gen.

### A classic Table

| Input   | C1 | C2 | C3 | C4    |
|---|----|----|----|-------|
| (a) Cand.1  |    |    | *  | *     |
| (b) Cand.2  |    |    |    | * * ! |
| (c)  Cand. 3 |    | *! |    |       |
| (d) Cand.4  | *! |    |    |       |

(Adapted from De lacy 2007:17)

The table above is designed in such a way that the top left cell contains the input while the rest of the left most column contains candidate outputs. The asterisk (\*) indicates violation by the candidate, (!) indicates a fatal violation by the candidate and ()the pointing finger indicates the winning or optimal candidate at the output level. Each cell shows the number of violation of a constraints by a candidate. For example, candidate 1 violated constraints C3 and C4. By this, it does better than the rest, hence is taken as the optimal candidate. Any candidate that does worse than another candidate by incurring a ‘crucial violation’, (marked by (!) in the tableau) gets eliminated from the competition because of having incurred a crucial violation. According to wikipedia (2008), There is no way for it to be optimal even if it out-forms the other candidates on the rest of con. Thus, the cell(s) from the point it incurs the crucial violation is/are shaded, implying that whatever violation or obedience thereafter is irrelevant (De lacy, 2007:17)

## Empirical Studies

According to Uwaezuoke (2010:60), assimilation is a common phonological process by which the phonetics of a speech segment becomes more like that of another segment in a word (or at a word boundary). A common example of assimilation would be “don’t be silly” where the /t/ is deleted and the /n/ (i.e, in don’t”) is assimilated to /m/ by the following /b/, where said naturally in many accents and discourse styles (“dombe silly”). Assimilation can be synchronic being an active process in a language at a given point in time or diachronic being a historical sound change. A related process is co-articulation where one segment influences another to produce an allophonic variation, such as vowels acquiring the feature of nasal consonants when the velum opens prematurely or /b/ becoming labialized as in “boot”. (Crowley 1997:159)

According to Yul-Ifode (1999:32), when a sound changes one of its features to be more similar to an adjacent sound it is said that assimilation has taken place. Assimilation is furthermore said to be a process whereby a segment takes on features of a neighboring segment thereby becoming alike, sometimes totally, sometimes partially. In a full assimilation, two contiguous segments have identical features, see Yoruba examples below:

1.     ilé + iwé        \_\_\_\_\_ ilééwé                    ‘school’  
         owó + ilé        \_\_\_\_\_ owóolé                    ‘rent’

Emenanjo (1978:25) says that vowel assimilation is a process whereby two dissimilar vowels on either side of the juncture may become similar in quality sounds tend to be modified by the environment they occur. Some sounds that combine with morpheme or words, lose their shape thereby causing the sound to undergo changes due to the sound close to it. This type of assimilation is a persuasive feature in Igbo because most words begin with vowel and end with vowel. He further says that vowel assimilation is a prevalent feature in Igbo because most words begin and end in vowels. To him, there are three types of vowel assimilation. They are complete, conditional and partial assimilation. In complete assimilation, the final vowel before the ( $V_1$ ) becomes assimilated to the initial vowel after the juncture ( $V_2$ ) following certain conditions. According to him, complete assimilation may take two forms, one of them is:

$$V_1 \quad + \quad V_2 \quad \quad \quad V_2V_2$$

He concludes his discussion of vowel assimilation in Igbo by saying, among other things, that failure to assimilate does not constitute intelligibility problem

but can only betray a speaker as being non-native; that assimilation does not involve the tones of the vowels assimilated ie, that there is no tonal assimilation as the vowel



- (3) m ga-eje (ŋ geedze)  
m dere [ n dere]

They explain further that in the above examples /m/ has taken up the place of articulation of /g/ and /d/ in 'ga' and 'dere' respectively, thus becoming /ŋ / in the first example but /n/ in the second.

Furthermore, according to Ume, Ugoji and Dike (1989:97), assimilation works together with vowel and consonant elision in Igbo. They noted that vowel elision manifests differently in the different dialects of the language. This is because where some dialects would elide segments; other dialects would regressively assimilate the segments.

Ikekeonwu, Ezikeojiaku, Ubani and Ugoji (1999:76), point out that examples of progressive assimilation are scanty in languages while those of regressive assimilation are many. Examples of regressive assimilation in Igbo include the following:

- (4) ákpá + ósé akpóóse 'bag of pepper'

According to Ngoesi (2000:62), there are different types of assimilation. They are: olulo azu (regressive assimilation), olulo ihu (progressive assimilation), olulo nlocha (complete assimilation), olulo nlofọ (partial assimilation) and olulo mmakọ (coalescent assimilation). He points out that regressive assimilation is the most prevalent in Igbo. Assimilation is said to be regressive if the initial vowel of a second word turns back to assimilate the last vowel of the first word. For instances:

- (5) ñwá + éké nweeke

Furthermore, Oyebade (2004) says that both regressive assimilation and progressive assimilation are cases of meaning which a speaker wants to convey remains clear irrespective of the fact that some vowels have been assimilated. This is not the case in partial assimilation. He explains that here, the meaning of an utterance may be blurred because of assimilated segments.

Moreover, his discussion of partial assimilation is confusing. Rather than discuss it in terms of what happens to adjacent sounds segments, he goes into talking of whether the meaning of the realized word is clear or blurred.

Yul-Ifode (1999:45) studies sound by saying that when one changes its features to be more similar to an adjacent sound that a sound has assimilated one another. In a full assimilation, two contiguous segment have identical features by using Yoruba examples below:

- (6) ilé + ìwé ilééwé 'school'  
————→ Owo + ilé ówóólé 'rent'

Roach (2000:97) carry out a comparative study of the consonant assimilation states that when a word ends a single final consonant (cf) and is followed by another that begins with a single initial consonant (c1) then we have

.....C<sup>f</sup> C<sup>1</sup>

Word boundary

In a situation where C<sup>f</sup> changes to assume the form of C<sup>1</sup> is called regressive assimilation. In the further explanation he points out that if C<sup>f</sup> is an alveolar and C<sup>1</sup> is not alveolar, the C<sup>f</sup> would assume the same place of articulation with C<sup>1</sup> in certain instances, (t) in [ðæt] would change to [p] before bilabial consonant, [k] before a velar consonant as follows in English expressions:

7) that person [ðæp p ð:sn]  
light blue [laip blv]

As will be seen, these are examples of regressive assimilation, where [p] in C<sup>1</sup> assimilates the /t/ in C<sup>f</sup>.

The segment at the left hand side is assimilated by the segment at the right hand side by which the two segments become phonetically the same.

### The Phonological Processe of Assimilation in Okija Igbo Speech Variety

This section examines some regressive assimilation words that are different from standard Igbo in Okija variety of Igbo. The data were presented in a tableau. The tableau is designed in such a way that the top leftmost cell contains the input while the rest of the following column contains candidate outputs, the

arrow (→) indicates the optimal candidates, each cell on the right shows the number of violation incurred by each candidate. The candidate that does worse than other candidates by incurring a crucial violation is marked by (!) in the tableau and it automatically loses the chances of winning the competition because, having incurred a crucial violation, “there is no way” for it to be optimal even if it out performs the other candidates on the rest of CON.

#### 4.1. Table 1;

| Lines | Before assimilation | After assimilation |
|-------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1     | ihe ojọ             | iyọ ojọ            |
| 2     | ọbara ehu           | ọbale ehu          |
| 3     | ujọ agha            | ujọ aha            |



|   |         |         |
|---|---------|---------|
| 4 | ulu ahu | ula awu |
| 5 | mpi ewu | mpe ehu |

**Table 1:** Structural input is “ihe ojoo” (bad thing)

| iyē ojoo      |          | ALIGN | IDENT | NOHIATUS | DEP |
|---------------|----------|-------|-------|----------|-----|
|               |          |       |       |          |     |
| Candidate A   | iyē ojoo | *     |       |          |     |
| Candidate B   | iyē ejoo |       | *     | **!      |     |
| ☞ Candidate C | iyō ojoo |       |       |          | *   |
| Candidate D   | yeojoo   | *     | *     |          |     |
| Candidate E   | ηojoo    | *     | *     |          |     |

**Table 2:** Structural input is “obara ehu” (goat’s blood)

| obala ehu     |           | ALIGN | IDENT | NOHIATUS | DEP |
|---------------|-----------|-------|-------|----------|-----|
|               |           |       |       |          |     |
| Candidate A   | obala ehu | *     |       |          |     |
| Candidate B   | obala ahu |       | *     | **!      | *   |
| ☞ Candidate C | obale ehu |       |       | *        | *   |
| Candidate D   | Mbalehu   | *     | *!    |          |     |
| Candidate E   | Mblehu    | *     |       |          |     |

From the table 1 and 2 shown below, we can see that when the lexeme [h, r] is in the input side, it changes to [y] and [l] respectively.

**Table 3:** Structural input is “ujō agha” (fear of war)

| ujō aha      |         | ALIGN | IDENT | NOHIATUS | DEP |
|--------------|---------|-------|-------|----------|-----|
| Candidate A  | ujō aha | *     |       |          |     |
| Candidate B  | ujō oha |       | *     | **!      | *   |
| ☞Candidate C | uja aha |       | *     | *        | *   |
| Candidate D  | Jeaha   | *     | *!    |          |     |
| Candidate E  | Jaha    | *     | *     |          |     |

**Table 4:** Structural input is “ulu ahū” (skin/flesh)

| ulu ahū      |         | ALIGN | IDENT | NOHIATUS | DEP |
|--------------|---------|-------|-------|----------|-----|
| Candidate A  | ulu ahū | *     | *     |          |     |
| Candidate B  | ulu uhū |       | *     | *        |     |
| ☞Candidate C | ula awū |       |       |          | *   |
| Candidate D  | ulaawū  | *     | *!    |          |     |
| Candidate E  | ulawū   | *     | *!    |          |     |

**Table 5:** Structural input is “mpi ewu” (goat’s horn)

| mpi ewu      |                     | ALIGN | IDENT | NOHIATUS | DEP |
|--------------|---------------------|-------|-------|----------|-----|
| Candidate A  | mpi ewu             | *     |       |          |     |
| Candidate B  | mpi iwu             |       | *     | **!      | *   |
| ☞Candidate C | mpe ewu             |       |       | *        | *   |
| Candidate D  | mp <sup>h</sup> ewu | **!   | *!    |          |     |
| Candidate E  | Phewu               | **    | *     |          |     |

From the analysis shown below, we can see that from nos. 3, 4, and 5 that the lexemes (ŋ, r, w) from the output side, changes to [j, l, w] respectively. On the other hand, more number of regressive assimilation found in nos 1 to 5 constitutes a point to be considered. The possible reason which may account for this situation may be that the topic of discourse which we used indicated high regressive assimilation in the appendix. It might not also constitute a case of language change since there are no cases where adults in the speech community do have more or less regressive assimilation in their speech inventory. We are therefore, of the opinion that the course of our discussion resulted in it and our respondents adhered to the questions of the interview.

## Summary

From the result of the analysis, the researcher found out that regressive assimilation was found to be more prominent in our data. Also, the overall function of faithfulness which was used for our analysis was to enforce the phonological shape of lexical

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forms in the output as a sort of inertness limiting the distance between outputs and their basic shapes. The findings from the analysis of the data from the interview therefore, reveal that the phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical aspects of Okija speech variety of Igbo are affected rather than the semantic aspects of the dialect.

We found out that progressive and coalescent assimilation were less in assimilation processes in Okija while regressive assimilation was found to be more prominent in Okija dialect.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we have to point out that even though we carry out an indepth study of assimilation in Igbo speech pattern, we are far from having done all that needs to be done in this area of study. For instance, one could get interesting input from some other Igbo dialects, especially those of them that use aspiration. The effects of Optimality analysis on tones in the Igbo language could be more elaborately investigated. Moreover, this reasearch is an Optimalist study. Another phonoogical theory in Igbo could be carried out either to authenticate or falsify the findings of earlier researches on the study.

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## **SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIATION BETWEEN AGED AND YOUNG WOMEN IN AWKA: A STUDY OF AMIKWO AND UMUOKPU**

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### **Abstract**

This study dwells on the examination of sociolinguistic patterns of dialectal variations, social constraints on language attitudes between the native Awka old women that speak pure dialect and younger women that do not speak original Awka dialect. The effect of age on lexical choice in Awka have been found to be contradictory and problematic. This is because the prestigious dialect is not necessarily the standard variety. It is observed that there is no form of variations in speech among women in Awka then but the reverse is the case in speech form amongst speakers of Awka dialect as seen from today's speakers of the same Awka dialect. This, as a matter of fact, gave rise to this research. The objective of this study is to delve into the inner workings of local linguistic system in pursuit of a better understanding of the interface in sociolinguistics by adding the cognitive approach. The data used for this work were sourced from the responses of those under study. They spoke and the speeches were taken and analyzed. The researcher used descriptive method in analyzing the data. The collected data were quantitatively studied and it was found that variation is not mechanical or automatic, but is based on personal conscious choices. This was achieved through systematic observation and analysis of the speaker's use of language in natural situations. The researchers choose Amikwo and Umuokpu villages in Awka and speakers were subcategorized into two groups of native older women of Awka between the ages of 50-75 and younger women of Awka between the ages of (35-49) and commonly used words were elicited in two or more different locations. The study adopted the theory of generative grammar as Theoretical framework. It was discovered that as the native younger women associate and mingle with other people in the society, their speech pattern change. This research will be of great importance to Awka speech community because, it will help to restructure their language. It will also aid them to adapt fast in learning the Standard Igbo both in speaking and writing. The informants were chosen using judgment sampling procedure. The speech of the speakers was investigated using face to face interviews. It was also found that age is one of the most important social factors correlating with lexical variation.

### **Introduction**

Sociolinguistic variation is the study of the way language varies in communities of speakers and concentrates in particular on the interaction of social factors such as age, gender and degree of integration into the community and linguistic structures such as sounds, grammatical forms, intonation features and words. The study of sociolinguistic variation has its roots in dialectology, emerging in the 1960s partly as a

result of inadequate methods in earlier approaches to the study of dialect, and partly as a reaction to Chomsky's generative programme. This holds true of every aspect of human life and language is no

exception. Again, the only thing that is constant is change. Change is a common experience in man's activities. Language as a process of communication inherently changes from place to place, time to time and person to person. This work will focus on the concept of linguistic variation and change in Awka speech community. Linguistics is the scientific study of language which comprises very many fields of investigation. This research is based on sociolinguistics, which is the study of the relationship between language use and the structure of the society. It also takes into account such factors as the social background of both the speaker and the respondent, that is their age, social class and region that have been observed to influence the choice of variants of the variables as would be seen later in this study.

Language is variable. In other words, every language exhibits considerable internal variations and speakers, who are aware of their social significance, make use of the many possibilities offered to them. In fact, one of the amazing facts about human communication is the demonstrated ability to analyze the inherent variation within every spoken or signal message in processing the linguistic signal. The current study is aimed at investigating the existence of language variation in Awka speech pattern of Igbo and social factors such as age, region and social class, which influence the observed variables.

This work would focus on the concept of linguistic variation and change in Awka speech community. This research is based on sociolinguistics, which is the study of the relationship between language use and the structure of the society. It also takes into account such factors as the social background of both the speaker and the respondent, that is their age, social class and region that have been observed to influence the choice of variants of the variables as would be seen later in this study.

Language change is the central aspect of language. Language itself is so central to human behaviour that is, the study of language in any way, shape or form puts them into a complex web of relationship with many other disciplines (Kess, 1993:2) and hence, any analysis of language change incorporates many related areas. The study of language change is the study of how languages change and evolve over time. In this way, language is essentially like everything else in the world around us that is constantly changing.

Coates (1992:169) sees language change as 'tending to be led by certain social group, not by the lowest or highest social classes in society as we might expect, but by the central social groups'. That is, the upper working and lower middle classes. She also says that linguistic change can be said to have taken place when a new linguistic form, used by the same sub group within a speech community, is adopted by other members of that community and accepted as the norm. In fact, it was not until the advent of sociolinguistics a half century ago that the admission of language variation became more than a footnote to linguistic description. The study of language change is now one of the most rapidly expanding subfields of linguistics with a well established worth of researchers, regular conferences, and scholarly journals, but its status is still somewhat marginal within theoretical linguistics, notwithstanding the resistance of Labov (1966:201) that the study of language variation is central to the solution of fundamental





problems in linguistic theory. Chambers, (2013:6) states that there can be language variation, which does not result in language whereas there cannot be language change without language variation preceding it.

An essential constraint in the study of linguistic variation is the linguistic variable; a structural unit that includes a set of fluctuating variants showing meaningful co-variation with an independent set of variables. Linguistic variation was explicitly set forth in early variation studies Labov (1966) found that upper working class and lower working class speakers tended to be the leaders of unconscious linguistic changes that were more common in casual speech, and that the lower middle class led changes towards overtly prestigious standard forms. The present research represents one of such attempts at examining observed language variation occasioned by social factors and their possible connection to linguistic change in an Igbo speech community of Awka.

The fact that most if not all speech communities are more or less socially and linguistically heterogeneous, is a complexity which makes things much more difficult to any linguist wishing to describe a particular variety.

Awka dialect of Igbo has overtime shown variation in several aspect of speech such as phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. This may have been influenced by some social variables like age, region, identity and social class. Despite the variations inherent in Awka dialect, it has received little or no attention by scholars in the field of linguistics. Therefore, the problem of this study is to unravel the social factors that inform the linguistic variations within the Awka dialect.

This study focuses essentially on some topical issues within linguistic variation which include the concept of dialect, language, speech community, language variation and mutual intelligibility.

In addition, the researcher has restricted the study to the language variation in Awka speech community, using only age, region, identity and education as the sociolinguistic variables. It is also within the scope of the study to observe and analyze language in its social context. So, the importance of this study is underscored by the fact that language variation is a universal phenomenon.

The main purpose of this study is to observe language variation in the speech pattern of Awka speech community of the Igbo language and factors influencing their existence.

The specific objectives include;

- a. To determine the pattern of linguistic variation and change in the rural speech community of Awka
- b. To determine the social factors that influence linguistic variation in a rural speech community of Awka spoken as used by older and younger women in Awka
- c. To know some identified linguistic variations between the older women and younger women in Awka speech community

The findings of this study will serve as a useful information to all educators and add to increase their knowledge about linguistic variation since research on variation in Awka has not been examined by scholars.

Also, the research will immensely be of benefit to the present and future generations of language scholars, particularly those interested in synchronic and diachronic linguistics so as to formulate theories about the nature of language variation, because this work will serve as a guide in future research through the knowledge in it.

To avoid constraints in my findings, the researcher concentrated on the spoken words.

### **Literature Review**

This session focuses on the key concepts in the title of this study such as the concepts of language, dialect, speech community, language variation and social variables.

#### **The Concept of Language**

Ndimele (1999) says that there are ten characteristics of language; creativity, arbitrariness, duality, versatility, genetic transmission, pattern congruity, total feedback and displacement. These characteristics which are fundamental to human language give human language the edge it has over other form of languages especially animals language. Language being part of culture plays some fundamental functions in society.

The need which a language is expected to serve in a society is related to the quality of such language used; whether it is used just for personal or interpersonal communication; for academic and specific purposes or as a national/cultural heritage.

#### **Dialect**

Joseph and Taylor (2015:79) opine that “dialect is distinguished by its vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation where distinction can be made only in terms of pronunciation”. The term accent is appropriate, not dialect (although in common usage, “dialect” and “accent” are usually synonymous).

*Merriam Webster* (1970:67) says that dialect is a regional variety of language distinguished by features of vocabulary and pronunciation from other regional varieties and constituting together with them a single language.

Milroy and Gordon (2003:35) assert that dialect is a form of a language that is spoken in a particular part of a country or by a particular group of people and that contains some words grammar, or pronunciation. That is to say that it is the way in which words are said that are different from the forms used in other parts or by other groups.

More also, Ash (2018) notes that the prevalence of regional dialects in the United States and their resistance to the corresponding effect of technological advancement can be explained by social



factors of the populations, including socio-economic status, sex and ethnicity, as well as features involved in the construction of personal identity in relation .

### **Speech Community**

According to Williams (2016) each speech community reveals several varieties of language. In some cases, the varieties may represent different occupations or interest specialization. These varieties could be in the area of pronunciation or choice of restricted lexical items which are not known by a member of the broader community.

Nnama (2014) points that speech community tends to emphasize arrays of different phenomena which are however complementary rather than contradictory so far as their common aim is to set a people who have common norm, common language or dialects, interaction by means of speech in a given range of varieties and rules for using them, and a given range of attitudes to varieties and items.

From these definitions, speech community is therefore defined as a coherent group of people who share the same language or languages and more or less the same norms of language use. The members of a speech community form a network of interacting individuals who communicate linguistically with one another frequently and more intensively than they engage with outsiders. That is to say that for a group of speakers to represent a speech community, it requires a degree of unity and cohesiveness both on the level of the language systems and on the level of interpersonal interactions.

### **Language Variation**

No human language is stable, unvarying or uniform; all languages present internal differences. Actual usage varies from people to people, and user to user, in terms of the pronunciation, or the choice of lexicon and the meaning of those lexicon and even the use of syntactic rules. For example, Americans 'English varies from the English of the Britain. The most noticeable difference between American and British is

vocabulary. Example, Americans go on vacation, while Brits go on holiday. It is noticed that the speech of these two groups in turn is distinct from the speech used in Australia. If a language is used differently by two different groups, they are often said to speak different dialects of a language. From the foregoing definitions, language variation is therefore defined as different ways in which people of the same community, with same culture, speaks in diverse ways especially ways by which older people talk; which makes it different from the way younger people talk in their thoughts expressions.

### **Social Variables**

One of the social variables that have influenced variation in language use is age. Language use varies greatly among the children, youths, middle age and the old in any given speech community. Age as a social factor according to Nwosu (2013), has been shown to correlate with linguistic variable in quantitative studies to show the correlation between age and linguistic variation.



Romaine (2011) was the first to introduce systematic methodology for investigating social dialects and the first large-scale sociolinguistic survey of an urban community. Unlike previous dialectological studies which generally choose one person or representative of a particular area.

Elewell (2016) suggests that variable is a characteristic that varies in value or magnitude along which an object, individual or group may be categorized.

Richard (2017) defines variable as a measurable trait or characteristic that is subject to change under different conditions.

### **Educational Status and Language Variation**

Several sociolinguists view educational status as influencing language variation among speakers of the same language with their speech varying in terms of its closeness to the standard form or its distance from the standard form for the educated speakers and uneducated or fairly speakers respectively. The level of one's education plays a major role in shaping one's language use. Indeed, people speak according to their level of education according to Richards and John (2016)

### **Culture and Language Variation**

How we view the world is shaped by the beliefs, values and experiences of prior generations of our respective families. In cultures, certain words are considered taboo words and speakers are restrained in their choice of language by such cultural practices.

### **Theoretical Studies**

This study adopts a generative grammar theory which is also known as transformational grammar theory introduced by Noam Chomsky in 1950s. The principle has been devoted to the attempt to develop a theory of language structure that a grammar of a language is a model of the linguistic competence of the fluent native speaker of a language.

According to Frank Parker and Kathryn Riley (1961) generative grammar is a kind of “unconscious knowledge” that allows a person, no matter what language they speak to form correct sentences and also describe language as it is actually used including the study of dialectal variations. Hence, William (2009:146) states, “All speech occurs in an interactive context in which interactants make choices from the linguistic system” He states that there grammatical choices express appropriate experiential meaning that is, meaning concerned with the construal of the world of experience.

In sociolinguistic variation therefore, these theories helps to account for such relationship as language variables where every language exhibits considerable variation in speeches and speakers who are aware of their social significance, make use of the possibilities offered to them.

Liliane (1994) in her own posites that the native speaker may not be able to formulate the general principle that underline the sentences he produces, but he has an unconscious or tacit knowledge of such principles, he has internalized a grammar of the speaker. She further says that the native

speaker's tacit knowledge of a grammar of his language is the focus of enquiry for the linguist working in the Chomskian tradition.

Nnama (1993) explaining the origin of dialectal variation says that social dialect is originated from social groups and depends on a variety of factors, the principal one apparently being social class, religion and ethnicity. He is saying that dialectal variation can emanate from social groups and can be facilitated by factors like social class, religion and ethnicity.

On the other hand, Essien (1990) says that dialectal variation results from the incomplete diffusion of linguistic changes. Each point of different stems ultimately from the failure of innovation to be adopted by all speakers of the language when two or more languages become sufficiently divergent, they are said to be genetically related languages.

Akmajian et al (2004) define dialectal variation as being pervasive that it becomes apparent that there is no such thing as single Igbo language (dialects and idiolects) depending on who is using the language and what the context of use is. Idiolects means the form of a language spoken by single individual. He provides some of these examples which are typical of the sort of dialect variation found in the vocabulary of British English and American English as shown below:

**BRITISH**

Car park

Coach

Garage

Lay by

Lorry

Petrol

Minerals

**AMERICAN**

Parking lot

Bus

Service State

Rest area

Truck

Gasoline

Soft drinks

The observation that variation is far from being a “defect” of language actually reveals its true nature. Human language is a rule-governed system within which an enormous of flexibility or creativity is possible, variation is linguistically natural, and there is no evidence that “non standard” dialects themselves are less adequate as a means of communication than the so-called standard language. In other words, variation in language does not entail any inferiority in language. Instead, the problem lies in the attitudes of the language community towards the speakers of these forms.

**Empirical Studies**

The earliest study on variation was carried out by Labov (1966) on Martha's Vineyard. He demonstrates the existence of systematic difference between speakers in their use of some linguistic variables. He notes a shift in the phonetic position of the first elements of the diphthongs /ay/ and /aw/. By studying the frequency and distribution of phonetic variants of /ay/ and /aw/ in the several regions, age levels, occupational and ethnic groups within the Island, Labov concludes that a linguistic change was in progress, saying that the ongoing sound change was in form of a movement away from the standard New England's realisation of the vowels a centralized pronunciation of the

second element of the diphthong associated with the conservative and characteristically, vineyard speakers.

The post-Labovian sociolinguistics is what Romanie (1984) refers to as variation studies in a primarily European setting. It was founded as an attempt to break away, from the status based theory and direct correlational methodology of Labov scholars.

Trudgill (2000) on his own assertion on language variation says that between the speakers of any language there is variation in the way that speakers use their language. that is to say that, there might be only slight variations between forms of a language – such as minor pronunciations of words or slight changes of grammatical structure that do not inhibit intergroup communication.

Agbedo (2005) studies variability in Enugu-Ezike Igbo variety. In his study, he observed three linguistic variables and their variants. The researcher discovered the use of the (r) and (u) variables as being determined by the degree of contact that

members of the Enugu Ezike speech community have with the speakers of the standard variety. On the whole study, he shows a direct correlation between the social variables of region, contact and the phonological variable, they are;

|       | Lexical | Variable |
|-------|---------|----------|
| (ga)  | [ga]    | [na]     |
| (ma)  | [ma]    | [ka]     |
| (maa) | [maa]   | [naa]    |
| (ba)  | [ba]    | [na]     |
| (m)   | [m]     | [n]      |

### The Methodology

The study composes the variation in the speeches of native older women and younger women speakers of Awka. This explains the procedure used in carrying out this research. A work like this involves eliciting commonly used words from relevant sources, which includes both primary and secondary sources. Awka people were consulted, and Awka materials written by Awka people were also consulted for the completion of this study.

In the collection of data, the researcher adopted theory of generative grammar approach where the researcher interviewed her respondent's, get at the sociolinguistic factors responsible for their variation in speech. The researcher conducted interviews using stratified random sampling method. Here, individuals of different ages were selected and interviewed, individuals of diverse levels of education and region were also selected and interviewed. And all of them were native speakers of Awka speech community. The hypothesis stem from personal observation and pilot speeches. People have therefore, been observed over a long period of time before embarking on the research. The data collected will be presented in tables for easy and better understanding.

### Word List Presentation

In this section, we make a presentation of word list collected during the field work.



| S/N | English (noun) | Standard Igbo | Older Awka dialect Phonetic transcription | Younger Awka Dialect/phonetic transcription |
|-----|----------------|---------------|---|---|
| 1.  | Cover          | Mechie        | Kwuchie (kwutsie)                         | Kpuchie (kputsie)                           |
| 2.  | Come           | Bia           | Bia (biα)                                 | Bia (biα)                                   |
| 3.  | Go             | Gaa           | Jeebe (dzeevbe)<br>Nanje (nandze)         | Jee/gavba (jee/gavbe)                       |
| 4   | Eat            | Rie           | Lie (lie)                                 | Lie (lie)                                   |
| 5.  | Sit            | Noro          | Nodu (nolu)                               | Nolu (nolu)                                 |
| 6.  | Kill           | Gbuo          | Gbuo (gbuo)                               | Gbuo (gbuo)                                 |
| 7.  | Comb           | Mbo           | Mvo (mvo)                                 | mvo (mvo)                                   |
| 8.  | Take           | Were          | Weli (weli)                               | Weli (weli)                                 |
| 9.  | Swallow        | Loo           | Noo (noo)                                 | Noo (noo)                                   |

Cursory look at the list shows a number of variation between standard Igbo, older Awka women and younger Awka women dialect. These will constitute the basis of our analysis

### **The variations observed in Awka Dialect of Igbo language**

Lexical variation. The researcher observed from the above data, that there are some lexical variations between the older speakers and younger women speakers of Awka dialect. This has to do with the vocabulary of the language. In this context, lexical variation brings to light things that are called by different names in Awka by younger generations, other than what they are called in the standard form of Awka dialect.

| S/N | English         | Older Awka dialect      | Younger Awka dialect  |
|-----|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1.  | Pounded cassava | Mgbaduga (mgbaduga)     | Akpu                  |
| 2.  | Plate           | Ewu (eku)               | Avbele (avbele)       |
| 3.  | Spoon           | Nkobo (nkb)             | Ngaji (ngaji)         |
| 4.  | Court-yard      | Mbala-obu (mbalaobu)    | Mbala (mbala)         |
| 5.  | Here            | Nkaa/ikaa (nkaa) (ikaa) | Ebee/ibee (ebee/ibee) |

### **The similarities observed in Awka dialect of Igbo language**

From the table above, we find out that there are similar words or vocabularies that older and younger women in Awka speak together. The instances are as follows:

| S/N | English (Noun) | Standard Igbo | Older Awka dialect/Phonemic transcription | Younger Awka dialect/phonetic transcription |
|-----|----------------|---------------|---|---|
| 1.  | Heart          | Obi           | Obu (obu)                                 | Obu (obu)                                   |
| 2.  | Bush           | Ohia          | Ovbia (vbia)                              | Ovbia (vbia)                                |
| 3.  | Take           | Were          | Weli (weli)                               | Weli (weli)                                 |
| 4.  | Swallow        | Loo           | Noo (noo)                                 | Noo (noo)                                   |
| 5.  | Said           | Siri          | Shiri (tʃiri)                             | Shiri (tʃiri)                               |
| 6.  | Odor           | Isi           | Ishi (itʃi)                               | Ishii (itʃi)                                |
| 7.  | Land           | Ala           | Ana (ana)                                 | Ana (ana)                                   |



|    |      |      |             |             |
|----|------|------|-------------|-------------|
| 8. | Show | Gosi | Zuko (zuko) | Zuko (zuko) |
|----|------|------|-------------|-------------|

**The differences observed in Awka dialect of Igbo language**

This is a type of variation in pronunciation that affects the phonetic level of the grammar. The following are some of the phonological variations observed in the dialect of Awka

| S/N | English (noun) | Older Awka dialect Phonetic transcription | Younger Awka Dialect/phonetic transcription |
|-----|----------------|---|---|
| 1.  | Here           | Nkaa/ikaa (nkaa) (ikaa)                   | Ebee/ibee (ebee) (ibee)                     |
| 2.  | Bye-bye        | Mgboo (mgboo)                             | Naagboo (naagboo)                           |
| 3.  | Mirror         | Enyo (eyoo)                               | Enyinyo (eyoo)                              |
| 4.  | Old person     | Okeokpa (okeokpa)                         | Nnekwu (nnekwu)                             |
| 5.  | Cook           | iwu (iwu)                                 | Ishi (isi)                                  |

### Social factors that influence speech variation in a moral community

There are some social factors that influence speech variation in moral community. Old women in most cases prefers indecent/direct names to decent/indirect while young women prefers better ways that show decency.

|    | Words  | Standard Igbo | Old women          | Younger women       |
|----|--------|---------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. | Penis  | amụ           | utu                | Oke                 |
| 2. | Vagina | ọtụ           | ọhụ/ikpu           | ike                 |
| 3. | Death  | onwụ          | Onago              | Okpemego            |
| 4. | Women  | nwanyị        | okeibiri (okibiri) | agbala (agbala)     |
| 5. | Dance  | egwu          | egedege (egedege)  | awantịlọ (awantịlọ) |

From the above analysis, we find out that euphemism directly implies the existence of a particular taboo expression. What is considered a taboo word in one socio-cultural setting may not be considered so in another setting, certain parts of human body are generally considered taboo words, and societies have created euphemisms to keep a social decorum and maintain politeness in all social contexts.

### Summary

The study looked at the patterns of variations in Awka dialect among the native older women and the younger women generations. The variables in the phonological and lexical levels of variation found in Awka speech community are said to be as a result of external factors that correlate to the selection of each variant. Age as a social variable is observed to influence the speaker's use of some linguistic variable. Between the speakers of any language, there is variation in the way that they use their language. This variation is demonstrated by linguistic differences in terms of sound (phonetics) and structure (grammar). There might be only slight variations between forms of a language such as minor pronunciations of words or a slight changes of grammatical structure that do not inhibit intergroup communication.

## Conclusion

This work has been able to show that there is actually a prevalence in the use of Awka words among old women generation and the younger women generation of Awka community. Similarly, this research also shows that there is a decline in the quality of spoken Awka dialect, as the number of younger women in Awka speakers are gradually out numbering that of older women speakers. However, it is pertinent to conclude that variation in language use correlates more or less with the social factors of age in Awka speech community

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## REDUPLICATION: A SYNTACTIC PHENOMENON IN IGBO BUT ABERRATION IN ENGLISH

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### Abstract

Reduplication has been seen as saying one thing more than once. It is the same as repeating what has been said directly or indirectly. Igbo language like some other languages makes use of reduplication but the pattern of reduplication in Igbo and English and some other languages are not always the same. Many users of the Igbo bring in the structure of English into the Igbo and some take the reduplicating pattern of the Igbo into English. This has to lead to bringing strange grammatical patterns into the Igbo language and at the same time into the English language. In the paper, the researcher has exposed the reduplicating forms in the Igbo. We also discovered that in some areas where reduplication is grammatical in Igbo they are regarded as tautology in English. We suggest that each language should be treated as they are because attempt to transfer the English grammatical rules into Igbo will result to error in some constructions. At the same time, taking Igbo grammatical rules to English or any other language do not always result to acceptable grammar of that language. The researcher is a native speaker of Igbo language and at the same time speaks English as a second language. For this, the researcher supplied some of the data. While some are gathered from the undergraduate Igbo students of Lagos State University of Education, Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos State.

**Key Words:** Reduplication, Syntax, Igbo, Structure, Language



## **Introduction**

This paper focuses on reduplication as a phenomenon in Igbo structures. The word Igbo language and Igbo as a people rings bell in the ears of many people. To some there is no word like Ibo, rather they believe that it is an erroneous pronunciation of the word Igbo. Some think that Igbo means business and pursuit of money while some believe that Igbo is a state.

However, Igbo is the language of the Igbo people. This means that Igbo is a linguistic community and the language of the community is called Igbo. It is very important to note that the pronunciation or the spelling “Ibo” is wrong. It is hand - work of the colonial masters who did not have the sound / gb / or the letter gb in their alphabets. They being the one that brought the modern writing system to us spelt the word ‘Igbo’ as ‘Ibo’ and it continues to spread up till today. However that is not the only aspect of Igbo language affected but this is not the major target of this paper.

Igbo people are people from South Eastern part of Nigeria. They are from the following states of Nigeria: Anambra state, Enugu state, Imo state, Abia state, Ebonyi state, some parts of Delta state, River state and some parts of Kogi state. The above mentioned states, and parts of the states mentioned speak the same language, Igbo with variations in dialects. These people have the same historical origin. The more popularly accepted origin of the Igbo is that of migration theory which traces Igbo origin to Israel as against that of evolutionary theory which has no scientific prove. They speak the same language with different dialects.

Reduplication which is our focus in this article is one of the significant features of all these dialects that make up the Igbo language. The standard Igbo being formed from the dialects embraced this feature. This research is an attempt to bring out the forms of reduplication in Igbo language structure and this pronunciation is aberration in English language. The research will draw examples more from the standard Igbo this is for easy understanding.

This article undertakes a detailed study of reduplication in the Igbo language with a view of analyzing it into types, account for it linguistically and through numerous examples drawing the bilingual users attention to the danger of adopting the expression and the structure of other language or languages to Igbo or that of Igbo to other language or languages that do not share the same structure.

## **Definition of concepts**

Here, we will look at some concepts that are significant in this research. We will look into the terms Reduplication, syntactic, phenomenon, aberration and Igbo.

## **Reduplication as a Concept**

Olamma and Adeyeye(2013:1) state that Igbo reduplication are based on verbal reduplication, total nominal reduplication and idiophone reduplication. They further added adverbial reduplication and prepositional reduplication.

Okoro (2000:81) describes reduplication as ‘the saying of the same thing more than once’. He further states that in most cases, it does not make one’s meaning clearer or more forceful. Accepting the above definition, we have to add that in the Igbo language, where the reduplication is needed, the message will not be complete without making use of it.

## Syntax

Syntax is nothing but the way words, and phrases are arranged in a specific order. Definition by Matt Ellis(2022:2)writing on syntax states, ‘syntax in linguistics is refers to the arrangement of words and phrases. He further states that syntax covers topics like word order and grammar rules, such as subject – verb agreement or the correct placement of direct and indirect object.’

Changing the position of a word or a phrase can change can possibly the meaning of the message one intended to pass. This action can change the meaning of a sentence at the same time altars the meaning of the message.

## Syntactic Phenomenon

Phenomenon is a fact or situation that is observed to exist or happen. It is nothing but something that is observed to occur or to exist. Oxford dictionary described it as a fact or event that can be observed with the senses, either directly or using equipment such as microscopes or telescopes. Having seen what is syntax and what is phenomenon,we can now say that syntactic phenomenon is a way words and phrases are arranged in a particular language.

**Aberration:** This is referred to as departurefrom what is taken as normal.

## Tautologies in English, Perfect Constructionsin Igbo

Although English has come to be a second language in Nigeria but it is the only accepted official language of the country. Many Nigerians are bilingual and even multilingual. Most people speak at least English and one Nigerian language. Igbo speakers are not exception. Just as it is with very bilingual or multilingual community, interference is not lacking

In attempt to translate English to Igbo many try to apply the later structure instead of considering the inherent structure of Igbo. Consider the following:

Do quick - (1) \*mee ngwa\* (error)

(2) mee ngwangwa (correct)

Correct Igbo Error in English

(3) Ọ bụ anyị anyị nọ ebe a.

- \*It is only we we that are here\*(error)

At the same time, one translating Igbo tries to adopt Igbo structure as above will commit the error referred to as tautology. As Okoro puts it, many Nigerians continue to use repetitive English expression without recognizing the tautologies they contain (Okoro, 2000:81). Consider one translating as below:

‘Rie nri ngwangwa’ as\*Eat food quick quick\* (Eat the food quickly)

Jee ọsịsọ \*Go fast fast\* (Go fast)

Ọdị n’elu elu \*It is up up\* (It is up)

Ọ na-esi mmanya mmanya \*He /she/it is smelling wine wine\*(He/she/it is smelling wine.)

Akwà a dī mmiri mmiri. \*This cloth is water water\* (This cloth is wet)

## Forms of Reduplication in Igbo

We will examine reduplication in the following categories phonological, grammatical, lexical and semantic reduplications.

**a. Phonological reduplication in Igbo:**

David Crystal (1987:174) defines reduplication as pattern of consonant and vowels that occur twice in immediate succession. Crystal sees reduplication as an important feature of children's sound production. In accepting David Crystal's statement, we can observe that children find it easier to pronounce words like 'mama', 'ntanta', 'papa' than other words that do not have repetition of syllables.

A critical looking at some Igbo title names like: Dede, mama, papa, one can say that these words are copied from babies. In attempt to address elders, they result into repeating some syllables. However, more research needs to be done in this area.

Okoro (2000:82) states:

*Here in Nigeria, phonological reduplication is observed to persist with children, but in diminishing proportions, well up to age ten beyond, often encouraged by adults who themselves resort to the forms in their communication with children as terms of endearment.*

He gave examples like "mama", "daddy" referring to parents; and "pooh pooh" and wee wee referring to urination and emptying the bowel; and "bumbum" referring to the buttocks. In Igbo, we see phonological reduplication in some idiophones and coinages in Igbo. Let us examine the following:

- 4. Gbamgbam - zinc
- 5. Qgbatumtum - motorcycle

Sometimes, adjectives and adverbs appear, with repeated syllables or full word. See the following examples:

- 6. Q na-acha 'mmemme' (It is red red)
- 7. Oche dī n'eluelu (\*The chair is high up\*)
- 8. Nri na-ada okeṇuokeṇu (\*Food is high price high price\*)
- 9. Akwa mmirimmiri ka o yi. (\*He is wearing water water cloth\*)

As rightly observed by Okoro (2000:82), phonological reduplication is a universal feature of language, but each language has forms which are peculiar to it, and each child affects individual forms as well.

**b. Grammatical reduplication in Igbo:**

Grammatical reduplication can be referred to as repetition of certain grammatical element or categories within a sentence. In the Igbo language, the commonest forms of grammatical reduplication are (i) duplication of subjects within the same sentence (ii) duplication of conjunctions and (iii) double marking of inflection. Let us examine them in detail below:

- (i) **Duplication of subjects in Igbo:** This is repetition of subject of the sentence subject in different parts of the same sentence. In discussing reduplication in Nigerian English, Okoro (2000:83) observes that it resulted from literary translation of structures from mother-tongue or first language. Indirectly, he is saying that Nigerian languages or some Nigerians have this reduplication as their natural form.

Bamgbose (1971:38), gave examples of how this appears in Nigerian English as follows:

- a. For the senior ones, they have no time, but for the junior ones, they do.  
The correct form being:  
The senior ones have no time but the junior ones do.
- b. The girls in the lower class, they like French  
Both Bamgbose (1971) and Okoro (2000) see it as a result of improper learning or application of certain rules, or ignorance of relevant grammatical restrictions in Standard English.

In Igbo, reduplication of subject is a natural structures in Igbo construction. Let us consider the following sentences:

- 10. Nwada ahụ bịa ebe a ọ bụ enyi ya?  
That girl that came here is she his/her friend.
- 11. Anụ ahụ kpọrọ nkụ ọ bụ nke m?  
Meat that dry, is it mine?  
That dried meat is it mine?
- 12. Ọkụkọ ọcha ahụ, ọ mara mma?  
Chicken white that, is it beautiful?  
That white chicken is it beautiful?

- ii. **Duplication of Conjunction in Igbo:** According to Gleitman (1969:88), conjunction is one of many syntactic processes that serve the purpose of indicating contrast or reducing repetition. According to him, a conjoined sentence that does not indicate contrast or reduce repetition has not served any purpose. For Okoro (2000:83), conjunctions are linking words that link up single words, phrases or whole sentence (clauses). He states that conjunctions link up single words, phrases or whole sentences or form coordinate structures, this is done to indicate specific semantic relationship between the clauses such as similarity, contrast, alternatives or substitution, consequence, sequence, comment (of one clause on the other), or to reduce repetition. In all the explanations and definitions, we understand that conjunctions join words, phrases or clauses together for the purpose of indicating addition, contrast or reducing repetition. In Igbo, we have the following conjunctions ‘na’, *mana*, *nakwa*, *ma*, *mọọbụ*, *nakwa* and so on. We will consider the following examples:

13. Uche na nwunye ya, ya bụ di na nwunye ahụ bịa ebe a bụ ndị Aba (addition)  
Uche and his wife, that is the husband and wife that came here they are from Aba.  
(addition)
14. Obi riri nri na anụmana o rijughi afọ (contrast)  
Obi ate food and meat but he was not satisfied
15. Mọọbụ Okeke mọọbụ Okafọ anyị amaghị (alternative)  
Whether it is Okeke or Okafọ we don’t know.
16. Na ọ hụrụ onye ara na mberede wee tie mgbu bụihe anyị nụrụ. (consequence)  
That he saw a mad person unexpectedly and shouted is what we heard.
17. Na Uche mara mma ma o jighi ego enweghi isi. (contrast)  
That Uche is handsome but has no money is nothing.

Conjunction can link up clauses, phrases and even words. In linking up clauses, it forms subordinate structure which at the same time does the grammatical functions within the main clause similar to those performed by the different word class.

Let us see the following sentences in the Igbo language:

18. O zuuru ego ahụ maka na ọ dara ogbenye.

\*He stole the money because that he was poor\*.

19. O nwere ego maka na ọ ruru oru.

\*He has money because that he has worked\*.

The above examples are obtainable in the use of conjunction in Igbo, however, we will not deny the fact that duplication of conjunctions ‘maka’ and ‘na’ are acceptable separate conjunctions. The two sentences like those listed above join to form one conjunction. We can as well say that double conjunction is obtainable in Igbo structures. Unlike English language that uses one conjunction in linking two structures and whatever the relationship between them, Igbo is not always so. Igbo language is not continuous to register cases of duplicated conjunctions. The following are typical examples:

20. Na agbanyeghi na ọ mara mma, too ogologo mana ọ maghị ihe.

Although she is beautiful and tall but she is not intelligent.

21. Ma nwoke ma nwaanyị, ma ewu ma ọkụkọ gbara ọsọ.

Both men and women, both goats and fowls ran away.

22. Kwa ụbọchị kwa kobo

A kobo each day

23. Ma ọ ma ihe ọ na eme ma ọ maghị ọ ga-anafe

Whether he knows what he is doing or not he will pass

24. N’agbanyeghi na anyị chọrọ inweta ego mana anyị agaghị eme ihe ọjọọ.

Although we want to get money but we will not do evil.

**iii. Double marking of inflections in Igbo syntax:** Inflections are the grammatical categories that indicate number, possession, tense, aspect, comparison, etc. in nouns, verb, adjectives and adverbs (cf Okoro 2000:84). Some of these inflectional markers in adjectives are as in:

25. Uche ka makarisia mma n’obodo a.

\* Uche is more most beautiful in this community\*.

26. Nke a ka ha niile bukarisia ibu.

\* This is the most biggest\*.



27. Obi ka onye o bula nwekarisia ego  
\* Obi is more richer than everybody\*.

28. O ka onye o bula dakarisia ogbenye  
\* He is more poorer than everybody\*.

It will be recalled that the single syllable 'ka' form the comparative degree while the following form the superlative: kacha, kasi. Kachasi, karisia. Superlative are mostly formed by attaching any of the above to the adjectives or verbs. The following are examples: makachasi mma, jokarisiri njo.

29. Uche ka makaria onye o bula na mma.  
Uche is more beautiful than everyone.

30. Obi ka jokarisia onye o bula na njo.  
\*Obi is more most ugly than everyone.\*

### c. Lexical Reduplication

Lexical reduplication is compound of identical or slightly different elements. In the case of Igbo, they are mostly identical elements. The following are the most common uses of such reduplicative in Igbo.

- 31. Weta weta ka mma n'aka onye ozu.
- 32. Rie rie abughị okwu.
- 33. Gidi gidi bu ugwu eze
- 34. Mara mara n'ihu kwampete n'azu
- 35. Akwa a di nkirika nkirika
- 38. Bia osiso osiso
- 39. O na-esi nsi nsi
- 40. O na-ada tumtum.

Lexical repetition in Igbo is one of the devices employed to indicate uniformity, emphasis, urgency, reassurance and it is habitual.

See the following examples:

- 41. Onye o bula ga - akwu ego ise ego ise(uniformity)  
We are to contribute five naira five naira
- 42. Ha niile bucha ugboala ohu ugboala ohu(emphasis)  
They all carry new new cars.
- 43. Obi si gi bia ugbua ugbua(urgency)  
Obi said you should come now now.
- 44. N'ezie n'ezie o bu ihe mere eme.(reassurance)  
True true it is what happened

We should note that unlike English language, outright duplication of these items is a part of the linguistic system of native speaker of Igbo which can express all the intended notions adequately without any confusion.

**d. Semantic Reduplication in Igbo**

This is repetition of the same idea in different words. This is commonly referred to as tautology in English. Tautology means saying one thing more than once yet the repetition does not make a clearer meaning or make the statement more forceful.

Let us consider the following sentences:

45. O gburu ya, ọ nwụọ. (gburu and nwụọ are the same)

He killed him and he died.

46. N'uche nke m, echeghi m na ọ ga-anwụ. (n'uche and echeghi m are saying the same thing)

In my mind I don't think he will die

47. Ọ na-ebe akwa, akwa ke mgbe taa. (akwa and akwa are the same)

(He is crying crying since today).

(The following are also repetitious)

48. Na ngwucha ikpeazu (ngwucha and ikpeazu are the same)

(at the final end)

49. Ndị otu ibe m (ndịotu and ibe m are the same)

(My fellow group members)

50. N'ekwughiekwu n'akaghịaka (ekwughiekwu and akaghịaka are the same)

(Without talking without informing)

51. Ozugbo, ngwangwa o mechara ọ gbapụ. (Ozugbo and ngwangwa are the same)

(Immediately, quickly he finished he ran away)

52. Nọrọ, tukwuru ala n'ọche ahu (Nọrọ and tukwuru ala are the same)

(Stay, sit down on that chair)

Considering the above semantic repetition, many of the translations are not acceptable grammatical construction in English but are highly common in Igbo. These repetition are more in oral speech and literary works.

### **Conclusion**

We have seen that reduplication is an acceptable phenomenon in Igbo. Whereas it is as a result of mother-tongue interference in English as observed by Okoro (2000), it is a norm in Igbo syntax. From the above, we have discovered that translating English to Igbo using Igbo structure or translating Igbo to English using English structure amounts to error. Concerning Igbo and English, adopting the structure of one into the other results into deviation and may result to meaningless statement. This research can serve as a stepping stone to more research on reduplication in Igbo and other languages. It will also help the Igbo second language learners to avoid transferring the structure of another language to the Igbo language

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## Extensional Suffixes in Egbema Igbo

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### Abstract

This work studies the extensional suffixes in Egbema Igbo. This study provides adequate description and explanation as not much has been studied about this dialect of Igbo. Data were collected through oral interviews, observations and from existing literature. Data collected were analyzed using the theory of concatenative morphology. And it was observed that the extensional suffixes in Egbema Igbo are of six types and they are the Inceptive, the Directional, the Repetitive or Continuous, the Contactive, the Completive and the Retaliative. This study concludes that Extensional suffixes do exist in Egbema Igbo and they are indeed meaning modifiers.

### Introduction

Extensional morphology is that branch of morphology that applies mainly to African Languages and is consumed with the meaning of the verb roots to which they are attached and this form varies from languages and dialects of languages. Emenanjo (2015) in Okoro (2019:35) holds that the term extensional is peculiar to African linguistics morphology. In his words:

In African linguistics, the term extensional is used in morphology for morphemes, usually affixes, which ‘external’ the meaning of the words to which they are affixed. In Igbo, these essentially meaning-modifies are suffixes: extensional suffixes (ESS)...:233.

- i. Mechaa – do completely
- ii. Metu – do a bit contactively
- iii. Mekuwa – do repetitively

Stump (2017) agrees with Emenanjo, that extensional morphology deals with suffixes which are attached and that this branch of morphology appears to apply in most African languages and have attracted heated research attention on their forms, co-occurrence and their order. So, views on this aspect of morphology seem to apply to scholars interested in Emenanjo (1978) in Okoro (2019:36), leads in this regard in relation to Igbo Language. He holds that the Igbo extensional suffixes are:

- a. “Attached to verb roots”.
- b. Non-Inflectional and lexical.
- c. Class-Maintaining.

- d. Inner formation which often precede inflectional suffixes.
- e. Usually closer to verb root.
- f. Highly productive morphology but low in diachronic morphology.
- g. Optional i.e, they are only used, if desired (Emenanjo, 2015:233).

A recurrent issue in extensional morphology particularly with emphasis to the Igbo morphology is the distinction between extensional suffixes and verb roots.

This is as a result of the fact that the distinction between verbs and suffixes in the Igbo language is not a sharp one. Aronoff, 1936; Green & Igwe (1963); Emenanjo, (1978). It is held that suffixes are verbal in origin in Igbo (Emenanjo, 1979 & Onukawa, 1999). Nwaozuzu in Okoro (2019:4) holds that Egbema is part of the South Western group of dialects of Igbo stating that South Western group of dialects are spoken in Ikwere, Ohaji, Egbema, Mgbirichi, Umuagwọ etc. So from the above classification, Egbema is identified as a distinct dialect of Igbo with distinct linguistic characteristics. Egbema occupies a strategic place in the geography of Igbo as a border town in the North with Ogba / Egbema / Ndoni LGA in Rivers State, and this makes it a border clan of Igbo.

### **Statement of the problem**

Nwaozuzu (2008) classified this dialect of Igbo known as Egbema Igbo as a distinct dialect of Igbo with distinct linguistic characteristic as not much has been known about this dialect of Igbo. This work is therefore aimed at finding out the distinct way extensional suffixes are Identified and grouped in Egbema Igbo.

### **Theoretical Studies**

This work adopts the theory of concatenative morphology which was one of the bases for the early generative approaches to morphological processes propounded in the early 1970's as championed by the works of Siegel (1971); Aronoff (1976); Anderson (1982) among others. This theory assumes that morphemes are homogeneous, indivisible atomic units of linguistic forms, each linking some component(s) of meaning with a set of mutually exclusive allomorphs that express it. Spenser (1971) holds that the theory which is often referred to as a perspective to morphological analysis, linear model or agglutinative approach to morphology, partly influenced the work of Chomsky (1981) which resulted in full brown generativist approach.

According to Stump (2017), the theory assumes the following as basically concatenative:

- i. Compounding: This is simply bringing free morphemes together to form new words, for example:
  - News + Paper = Newspaper.
  - Wrist + Watch = Wristwatch.
  - Foot + Ball = Football.
  - Time + Keeper = Timekeeper.
- ii. Affixation: This involves the insertion of morphemes to a root word: that is forming morphologically complex words by the addition of morpheme(s) to the base, as illustrated in the following examples:

- a. Infix: is as in some informal English words like uni bloody + varsity = uni – bloody varsity.
- b. Prefix: is as in disability: dis + ability.
- c. Suffix: is as in affixation: go + ing.
- d. Interfix : The handout couldn't get examples from the English language for this, so it can be regarded in some languages as empty morph.
- e. Circumfix: is as in un + grateful + ness = ungratefulness.

In relation to this study, the theory provides basis for our account of such a morphological process as suffixation in Egbema Igbo which is our main concern in this work.

### Review of Related Literature

For the review of related literature in extensional suffixes in the Igbo, the following studies were captured: Carell (1970); Lord (1975); Emenanjo (1975; 2018) Nwachukwu (1983); Onukawa (1999) and Onwukwe (2018).

Carell (1970) presents the phrase structure account for verb-suffix collocation in Igbo. This study identifies extensional suffixes and labels them into lexical categories of adverbials. Thus, the following examples are provided as culled from Onukawa (1999:110):

Adv<sub>1</sub> : + a (+ motion towards)  
Adv<sub>2</sub> : kwa (+ Repetitive)  
Adv<sub>3</sub> : r (+ Benefactive)  
CA (+ Completive)  
SI (+ Distribution)

Lord (1975) presents an ESS (Extensional suffixes) distinction from simple verb roots in Igbo compounds. Verbs of which the second compound does not occur elsewhere as an independent verb, the study observes that Igbo verb compound was labeled as meaning-extender – a result of an action represented in the first verb constituent. She identifies extensional suffixes in Igbo as “result” of location represented by the simple verb root that co-occurs with them. She presents the following examples where the second element is seen by her analysis as extensional suffixes:

- |     |                 |        |          |
|-----|-----------------|--------|----------|
| i.  | Nqsi            | nq     | - si     |
|     | “Finish staying | ‘seat’ | “finish” |
| ii. | Felari          | fe     | -lari    |
|     | “Fly away from” | ‘fly’  | ‘away’   |

Emenanjo (1973:79) exemplifies aspects of Igbo verb. The study Identifies that the ESS refer to those “suffixes which function principally as meaning modifiers i.e. extending the meaning of the word with which they are used”. The study Identifies well over eighty ESS and classifies them according to their occurrence on various verbal derivatives. He holds that the extensional suffixes are numerous in Igbo than the other suffix – types and have the tendency to occur together “quite frequently”. This study is similar to Emenanjo (1975) in that both focus on extensional suffixes but the present one adopts a concatenative theoretical orientation in analysis.



Nwachukwu (1983:76) presents the structure of extensional suffixes in Igbo. He classifies extensional suffixes as a sub of 'Non-inflectional suffixes' as opposed to inflectional suffixes in Igbo.

The study states thus: "The above term (extensional suffixes) is borrowed from Emenanjo (1975) where it is used to denote those suffixes which have wide scope of occurrence. In other words, they can be found with the infinitive form of the verbs as well as with simple and compound verb forms. They extend the meaning of a given verb and have generally been described as meaning "modifying suffixes".

The study concludes by stating that the number of these meaning modifying or extensional suffix is yet to be determined. So is their relationship with "existing and erstwhile verbs". The study of Nwachukwu (1983) is not too different from this present one in terms of aspects of extensional suffixes but the point of divergence is that while the former is on the larger Igbo Language, the latter is on Egbema Igbo. In another study, Onukawa (1999) examines the order of extensional suffixes in Igbo. The study quarrels with the position of Carrel (1970) and Lord (1975) on extensional suffixes in Igbo. He holds that, (i) The ESS – Extensional suffixes have a fixed order of co-occurrence; (ii) the maximum order of the ESS is more than... (p.112). The study adopts the "theta role theory" of Chomsky (1981) to distinguish simple verb roots from extensional suffixes. The principle has it that the theta role assigning properties of a second verb of the constituent verbs in a compound must be satisfied and this may be within the complement of the verb phrase. This means that the complement of a compound must consist of the item to which the second verb can state that if the second constituent element of a verb compound has a theta role assigning property and assigns a theta role to a complement, the second constituent is a verb, but if it does not have any role assigning property and does not assign a theta role to a complement, it is a suffix.

In a recent study, Onwukwe (2018) examines "percolation principle perspective of verb-suffix distinction in Igbo verb compounds". The study attempts a distinction of verbs and (extensional suffixes in Igbo verb) compounds from the percolation principle angle. According to the writer, percolation principle is convention regarding the distribution of features in compounds. The study submits that when a verb compound in Igbo obeys the percolation principle then, it infers that, the second element of such compound is a verb otherwise; it is a suffix (extensional suffixes).

Onwukwe (2018) holds that the percolation principle stipulates that "if a construction is headed by X, that X shares diacritic and syntactic features with its constituents. In other words, the features (diacritic and syntactic) of the head X percolate on other constituents". This present study differs from Onwukwe (2018), in that it analyzes extensional suffixes in Egbema Igbo not from the percolation principle but linear morphological analysis. From all the studies discussed here we observed that all other studies were either on Igbo language in general or on other dialects of Igbo but this present work is solely on Egbema Igbo as a distinct dialect of Igbo.

### **Extensional Suffixes In Egbema Igbo**

Identifying the extensional suffixes in Egbema Igbo, using Emenanjo (1978) classification thus:

1. The Inceptive.
2. The Directional.
3. The Repetitive/ Continuous.
4. The Contactive.

5. The Completive.
6. The Retaliative.

1) The Inceptive: This kind of suffix in Egbema Igbo expresses the beginning of an action is often marked by the suffix – WV where V is Vowel in harmony with the vowel of the verb root. Examples include :

- a) Rí – wé > ri ‘eat’ we ‘begin’ = ‘Begin eating’.
- b) Bìà – wà > bia ‘come’ wa begin = ‘Begin coming’.
- c) Mè – wè > me ‘do’ we begin = ‘Begin doing’.
- d) Shí – wé > shi ‘cook’ we begin = ‘Begin cooking’.
- e) Sù – wa > sù ‘wash’ wa begin = ‘Begin washing’.
- f) Jé – wé > je ‘go’ we begin = ‘Begin going’.
- g) Tá – wá > ta ‘chew’ wa begin = ‘Begin chewing’.
- h) Gbá – wá > gba ‘run’ wa begin = ‘Begin running’.
- i) Gbá – wá > gba ‘urinate’ wa begin = ‘Begin urinating’.
- j) Gbì - wá > gbì ‘flog’ wa begin = ‘Begin flogging’.

Here we Identified the – WV as the inceptive suffix marker in Egbema Igbo which can either be ‘ – wa’ or ‘ – we’ depending on the vowel of the verb root which its vowel must be in harmony with as earlier stated.

2) The Directional: This type of suffix expresses direction of an action in relation to the verb to which they are attached. We classify them as directional suffixes in Egbema Igbo. Some examples of the suffixes are provided below:

- a) Bà – tà > ta ‘come in – toward speaker’.
- b) Wé – tà > ta ‘bring in – toward speaker’.
- c) Wé – puá > - puá ‘bring out – away from speaker’.
- d) Wé – liá > - lia ‘take upwards’.
- e) Wụ - liá > - lia ‘jump upwards’.
- f) Wụ - shìdà > - shida ‘jump downwards’.
- g) Lù – shìdà > - shida ‘throw downwards’.
- h) Kù – shìdà > - shida ‘carry downwards’.
- i) Lọ - shìdà > - shida ‘sit downwards’.
- j) Gbá – shìdà > - shida ‘come downwards’.

Here we observed that the vowels of the root verbs and that of the directional suffixes are not in harmony and the suffixes identified were

- I. Tà – ‘in – towards speaker’
- II. Puá – ‘out – away from speaker’
- III. Liá – ‘upwards’
- IV. Shìdà – ‘downwards’

- 3) The Repetitive/ Continuous: These types of suffixes express the repetition of an action in relation to the verb to which they are attached. The repetitive aspect is expressed by the suffix –kuwa in Egbema Igbo. Some of the examples are :
- a) Me – kụwà > ‘do again’
  - b) Wō – kụwà > ‘wear again’
  - c) Wụ - kụwà > ‘jump again’
  - d) Shí – kụwà > ‘cook again’
  - e) Bià – kụwà > ‘come again’
  - f) Lú – kụwà > ‘throw again’
  - g) Gbị - kụwà > ‘flog again’
  - h) Dé – kụwà > ‘write again’
  - i) Gbá- kụwà > ‘kick again’
  - j) Gbú – kụwà > ‘cut again’
  - k) Gbú – kụwà > ‘plant (cassava) again’
  - l) Gbá – kụwà > ‘urinate again’
  - m) Gbù – kụwà > ‘kill again’
  - n) Wópù – kụwà > ‘undress again’
  - o) Wógháí – kụwà > ‘wear again’

Here we observed that the repetitive suffix in Egbema Igbo is – kuwa. The vowels in the verb root and that of the suffixes are in harmony eg. 3b, 3e, and 3i. They are in harmony.

- 4) The Contactive: This type of extensional suffix expresses either full or partial contact with an item relative to the verb to which they are attached. They are as well referred to as experimentative or temporariness of an action performed by the verb to which they are attached. Some examples in Egbema Igbo are:
- a) Gbá shídà – tụ > - tụ ‘come down a bit or temporarily’.
  - b) Lọọ - kpō > kpo ‘sit a little while’.
  - c) Lọọ - tụ > tụ ‘sit a while’.
  - d) Jé – tụ > tụ ‘walk for a while’.
  - e) jé – kpō > kpo ‘walk for a little while’.
  - f) Gbí – tụ > tụ ‘flog temporarily’.
  - g) Dē – tụ > tụ ‘write temporarily’.
  - h) Cháí – tụ > tụ ‘have a bite’ for a while.
  - i) Shí – tụ > tụ ‘cook temporarily’.
  - j) Yíí – tụ > tụ ‘put more temporarily’.
  - k) Gbù – tụ > tụ ‘cut temporarily’.

Here we identified two Contactive suffixes which are – tụ and – kpo.

- 5) The Completive: This type of suffix expresses a complete action relative to the verb to which they are attached. They are marked by the suffix – chaa in Egbema Igbo as could be seen in the examples that follows:
- Rí – chàà ‘eat completely’ or ‘wholly’.
  - Tá – cháá ‘chew all or completely’.

- Shì – chaá ‘cook completely or all’.
- Rụ - chaá ‘work completely’.
- Zaá – chaá ‘sweep completely’.
- Kwú – chaá ‘talk completely’.
- Ghù – chaá ‘bath completely’.
- Gbè – chaá ‘prepare all’.
- Mè – kụwá – ‘do it again completely’.
- Sù – chaá – ‘cut completely’.
- Dé – chaá – ‘write all’.

Here, just as earlier stated, the suffix identified as the completive suffix is the suffix – chaá.

6) Retaliative: This type of suffix expresses retaliation in respect to the verb to which they are attached. They are marked with the suffix – gwa and often operate in conjunction with rV marker in Egbema Igbo as can be seen in the following examples:

- a) Sé – gwá – rá ‘Draw it retaliatively’.
- b) Mé – gwá – rá ‘do it retaliatively’.
- c) Kụ - gwá – rá ‘hit or beat retaliatively’.
- d) Gbu – gwá – rá ‘kill or cut retaliatively’.
- e) Tí – gwá – rá ‘beat retaliatively’.
- f) Gbị - gwá – rá ‘flog retaliatively’.
- g) Gwà – gwá – rá ‘say retaliatively’.
- h) Rí – gwá – rá ‘retaliatively’.
- i) Fí – gwá – rá ‘squeeze retaliatively’.
- j) Fụ - gwá – rá ‘blow retaliatively’.

Here we identified the – gwá suffix as the retaliative suffix operating in conjunction with the rV marker as – ‘ra’ in Egbema Igbo.

### Summary and Conclusion

Indeed Extensional morphology applies mainly to African languages and its main concern is on the affixes that extend the meaning of the verb roots to which they are attached to. They are also called the meaning modifiers. The form these affixes take varies from languages and dialects of languages. Here, in this study, our main concern was on the extensional suffixes and the dialect studied was the Egbema dialect of Igbo. Here, we were able to identify the forms the extensional suffixes in Egbema Igbo take and using the Emenanjo classification of (1978), we were able to classify them into six types which are the Inceptive, the Directional, the Repetitive, the Contactive, the Completive and then the Retaliative. We conclude by stating that the Igbo verb suffixation is a rich and extensive morphological process which poses a lot of challenge to Igbo lexicographers. This is because it is a highly productive word formation process where many new words can be formed with significant meaning different from the root word.

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## The Wisdom of Igbo Proverbs: A Literary Analysis of the Positive Impact of Communal Living on Mental Health

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### Abstract

This research delves into the representation of communal living as depicted in the proverbs extract from the selected Igbo literary text and its potential effects on mental well-being. Communal living is explored as a concept that emphasizes the importance of social relationships and social support for one's overall well-being. In the modern world, there is a growing emphasis on individualism, which often leads to a lack of social support and social relationships, which are crucial for mental well-being. This problem has prompted a need to examine the importance of communal living and its impact on mental health in order to better understand the benefits of social relationships and support in promoting overall well-being. A qualitative approach was adopted and the social support theory served as the theoretical framework. Through a content analysis of traditional proverbs in the selected literary texts: *Adaeze*, *Isi Akwx Dara n'Ala*, and *Qnqdx Ugo Ad[gh] Egbe Mma*, the study aimed to explore how communal living is depicted through the Igbo Proverbs and their implications on mental health. The findings revealed that in Igbo literature, communal living is frequently portrayed as a source of comfort, belonging, and connection. The community is seen as a place where individuals can find solace and support during difficult times, and where they can share their joys and sorrows. The Igbo literature also reflects the values of collectivism, interdependence, and cooperation, which are central to communal living. The results suggest that communal living can have a positive impact on mental well-being as it promotes social support, belonging, and connection. This study adds to the existing literature on mental health and communal living by providing a novel perspective on the topic through the lens of Igbo literature. It emphasizes the significance of community and social connections in promoting mental health and how literature can reflect cultural values and beliefs related to mental health. The findings of this study can be beneficial for researchers and practitioners in the fields of mental health, cultural studies, and African literature, to better comprehend the impact of communal living on mental health and to develop interventions that take into account cultural perspectives.

**Key words:** Igbo Literature, Communal living, Igbo proverbs, Mental Health

### Introduction





Igbo literature is a complex and multifaceted field that has been shaped by the culture, history and experiences of the Igbo people of Nigeria. It encompasses a wide range of genres, including poetry, prose, drama, and oral traditions, and reflects the unique perspectives and experiences of the Igbo people. Mental well-being refers to a state of psychological and emotional health where an individual is able to cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their community. It encompasses a sense of satisfaction and purpose, positive relationships, and a positive outlook on life. Good mental well-being allows a person to realize their full potential and to enjoy life, even in the face of challenges. A person with poor mental well-being, on the other hand, may struggle with depression, anxiety, stress, and other emotional or psychological issues. One of the most prominent themes in Igbo literature is the importance of communal living and the ways in which it can promote mental health and well-being. Igbo literature, with its rich tradition and cultural significance, has long been acknowledged as a valuable resource for understanding the Igbo people and their way of life. One of the most notable aspects of Igbo literature is the extensive use of Igbo proverbs to portray the events in everyday life. These proverbs, also known as "adages" or "maxims," are short phrases that convey a message or lesson. The use of proverbs in Igbo literature as well as traditional Igbo culture is not limited to just casual conversation, but also in storytelling, teaching, and decision-making. The richness and depth of the meanings of these proverbs reflect the wisdom and values of the culture, and they are also a way to transmit the culture from one generation to another. In recent years, there has been growing interest in using traditional wisdom, including proverbs, in mental health education and therapy. One aspect of this Igbo literature that is particularly relevant in today's society is its emphasis on the mental health benefits of communal living. In this paper, we will explore the ways in which Igbo literature reflects the importance of community and interconnectedness in maintaining good mental health, and how it can serve as a source of inspiration and guidance for individuals and communities facing mental health challenges. The Igbo culture places a strong emphasis on the importance of family, community, and social connections. This is reflected in the many stories, poems, and proverbs that celebrate the bonds of kinship and the power of collective action. The Igbo people believe that living in a supportive and connected community can provide individuals with the emotional and psychological resources they need to thrive. This concept is deeply ingrained in their culture and it is evident in the way they structure their communities and families. The extended family system, for instance, plays a vital role in providing a sense of belonging, security and support for its members. The Igbo people, like many other traditional societies, place a great emphasis on the importance of community and interconnectedness in all aspects of life. This is reflected in their literature, which often portrays the strength and resilience of the community in the face of adversity. For example, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the protagonist Okonkwo's downfall is caused by his rejection of the community's values and his inability to find solace in the support of his people. The book serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of disconnecting from one's community, and the importance of maintaining strong relationships and connections with others in order to maintain good mental health. According to him, "The community is the center of life and the source of all strength" Achebe, (1994).

One of the most striking examples of the mental health benefits of communal living in Igbo literature is the concept of "*Uche*." *Uche* is the Igbo word for "mind" and refers to the collective consciousness of the community. It is believed that by tapping into this collective consciousness, individuals can gain access to a deep reservoir of wisdom, insight, and understanding. This can help them to navigate the challenges of life with greater ease and resilience. The idea of *Uche* serves as a reminder that an individual's well-being is closely tied to the well-being of the community and that one's success is the success of the community. This belief system encourages individuals to take responsibility for their community and to work towards the betterment of everyone. Another





important theme in Igbo literature is the idea of "*Onye-ishi*" in the Enugu dialect, which means "the one who knows." This is the person in the community who is considered to be the most knowledgeable and wise. They are often sought out for advice and guidance, and their wisdom is valued and respected. The *Onye-ishi* is seen as a source of inspiration and support, and their presence in the community can help to promote a sense of security and well-being among its members. This concept highlights the importance of mentorship and the passing down of knowledge from one generation to the next. It also serves as a reminder of the importance of seeking guidance and learning from those who have more experience and knowledge. In addition to these themes, Igbo literature also explores the ways in which communal living can promote cultural preservation and continuity. Many stories, poems, and proverbs depict the importance of passing down traditions and customs from one generation to the next. This can help to ensure that the culture and heritage of the Igbo people are passed down and celebrated, even as the world around them changes and evolves. The preservation of culture and tradition is an important aspect of communal living as it serves as a reminder of one's identity and heritage. It also serves as a means of passing on the values and beliefs of the community from one generation to the next. Igbo literature also explores the complexities of living in a communal setting. Themes such as conflict resolution, power dynamics, and the balancing of individual needs with the needs of the community are all explored in depth. These themes serve as a reminder of the challenges that can arise when living in a communal setting and the importance of finding a balance that works for everyone.

Another key aspect of Igbo literature that speaks to the importance of communal living for mental health is its focus on the importance of tradition and cultural practices. The Igbo people have a rich tradition of storytelling, which is often used as a means of passing down cultural knowledge and values from one generation to the next. These stories, which are often rooted in the community's history and experiences, serve as a source of inspiration and guidance for individuals and communities facing difficult times. To Adichie, (2009) "Culture and tradition are incredibly important for mental health. They give people a sense of belonging, a sense of continuity, and a sense of purpose." This is reflected in her work, which often explores the ways in which tradition and culture can provide a sense of stability and security in the face of uncertainty and change. In addition to its emphasis on the importance of community and tradition, Igbo literature also highlights the importance of emotional expression and openness in maintaining good mental health. The Igbo people value openness and emotional expression as an essential aspect of being human and these are often reflected in their literature. For example, in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*, the protagonist Efuru's struggles with emotional repression and the negative impact it has on her

mental health serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of being open and honest about one's feelings. Also to her "Emotional expression is a fundamental aspect of human life, and it is essential for our mental well-being." Nwapa, (1966).

In conclusion, Igbo literature is a rich and valuable resource for understanding the mental health benefits of communal living. It reflects the importance of community, tradition, emotional expression and interconnectedness in maintaining good mental health. These themes are not only found in Igbo literature but also in the culture and values of the Igbo people, and can serve as a source of inspiration and guidance for individuals and communities facing mental health challenges. It is hoped that this paper will encourage others to explore the wisdom of Igbo literature and the culture of the Igbo people in relation to mental health.

## Literature Review



In this section, the researcher review what different authors said about the work of literature as it pertains to this research on the impact of communal life on mental health.

### **Igbo Literature**

Igbo literature, which includes a rich tradition of oral storytelling, proverbs, and folktales, has played an important role in the culture and society of the Igbo people in Nigeria. It is works of literature written by Igbo scholars for to expose and explore the Igbo society, culture, philosophy, values and beliefs. Igbo Literature has been used to convey wisdom, knowledge, and values within the Igbo community. A number of studies have been conducted on the role of literature in Igbo culture, with a particular focus on the use of proverbs and folktales. Igbo Proverbs, in particular, have been found to play a significant role in the transmission of cultural values and beliefs in Igbo society. They are often used to convey moral lessons, express social commentaries, and provide guidance on appropriate behavior. Okonkwo (1991) looked at the use of proverbs in Igbo literature and found that proverbs are used as a form of social commentary, providing insight into the values and beliefs of Igbo society. The study also found that proverbs are often used to convey moral lessons and provide guidance on appropriate behavior. Okere (2001) looked at the use of folktales in Igbo literature and found that they are used to convey moral lessons and values, as well as to entertain. The study also found that folktales are often used to convey social commentaries, providing insight into the values and beliefs of Igbo society.

Research has also shown that Igbo literature can have a positive impact on mental health. Also the use of traditional proverbs can help to reduce stress and promote coping strategies in an Igbo community. It's important to note that while much of the research on Igbo literature focused on proverbs and folktales, there is also a rich tradition of oral storytelling and other forms of literature in the Igbo culture. Igbo literature, particularly proverbs and folktales, play an important role in the transmission of cultural values and beliefs in Igbo society. Also literature can have a positive impact on mental health in Igbo communities. The wisdom of Igbo proverbs can be a valuable tool for promoting mental well-being. However, more research is needed to fully understand the role of literature in the context of the Igbo culture and its impact on mental health.

### **Communal Living**

Communal living refers to a lifestyle where a group of people live together and share resources, responsibilities, and space. This can include things like food, housing, chores, and decision making. The goal of communal living is often to create a sense of community and to foster a shared sense of values or beliefs. Communal living, or the act of living in a community with shared resources and decision-making, has been studied in various disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology. In literature, the concept of communal living is often depicted in works by authors from cultural groups that have traditionally valued collectivism, such as the Igbo in Nigeria. In Pita Nwana's novel *Omenkq*, the Igbo community is portrayed as having a strong sense of communal living, with decision-making being a collective effort and resources being shared among members. The novel also highlights the importance of extended family and community in the Igbo culture. Similarly, Tony Ubesie's novel *Jxq Obinna* highlights the Igbo community's sense of unity and communal living through its portrayal of the Biafra war and the way in which the community comes together to support each other in times of hardship.

In addition to Igbo literature, communal living has been found to have positive effects on mental health in studies. Okoroafo (2017) states that individuals living in communal settings reported



higher levels of life satisfaction and a greater sense of belonging compared to those living in individualistic settings. Going further, he states that communal living can lead to a decrease in stress and an increase in social support, both of which are important for mental well-being. Communal living has been a subject of interest in Igbo literature for many years, particularly in the context of the Igbo culture in Nigeria. The practice of communal living, where people live and work together in a shared community, has been found to have a positive impact on mental health. Okonkwo (2020) found that individuals living in communal settings had lower rates of depression and anxiety compared to those living in more individualistic settings. This may be due to the increased sense of social support and belonging that comes with living in a tight-knit community. The study also found that the traditional Igbo practice of "Age-Grade" system, where people of the same age group come together to form a social group, provides a sense of belonging and support that can enhance mental well-being. Also according to Nwankwo (2021) the practice of communal living in Igbo culture promotes a sense of collective responsibility and interdependence, which can lead to increased feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. This is supported by the traditional Igbo practice of "Umuada" (the bond between daughters and their father's family) which promotes strong relationships between women and their father's family, leading to improved mental health. Additionally, the practice of communal living in Igbo culture promotes the sharing of resources and responsibilities, which can lead to a reduction in stress and an increase in overall well-being. This is supported by the traditional Igbo practice of "Ozo" (a title of prestige given to men who have achieved a certain level of wealth and status) which requires the holder to share their resources with the community, leading to improved mental health.

In conclusion, communal living has been found to have a positive impact on mental health in the Igbo culture. The traditional practices of "Age-Grade" system, "Umuada" and "Ozo" promote a sense of belonging, support, collective responsibility and interdependence that can lead to improved mental well-being. According to Nwankwo (2021), the impact of communal living include these:

- **Sense of purpose:** Participating in the daily tasks and responsibilities of a community can give individuals a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Being part of a community means that you have a role to play and that your **Social support:** Living in a community provides individuals with a sense of belonging and social support, which can help to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness. Having people around who care about you and support you can have a significant impact on your overall well-being. This can include things like having someone to talk to, going through difficult times, or just sharing in the joys of everyday life. Additionally, communal living can provide a sense of security, as people look out for each other and help each other out when needed.
- **Contributions** are valued. This can include things like taking care of shared spaces, organizing events, or working on projects together. Having a sense of purpose can be incredibly fulfilling and can be especially important as we age.
- **Connection to nature:** Many communal living communities prioritize living in harmony with nature, which can lead to improved mental well-being through increased exposure to natural environments. Being surrounded by nature can have a calming and rejuvenating effect on the mind and body. Additionally, living in a way that is mindful of the environment can foster a sense of connection to the natural world and a deeper understanding of our place in it.

- **Reduced stress:** The shared responsibilities and resources of communal living can reduce stress and financial burdens on individuals. In a communal living arrangement, many of the costs of living, such as rent, utilities, and food, are shared among the members of the community. This can help to reduce the financial burden on individuals, which can be a significant source of stress. Additionally, shared responsibilities, such as taking care of shared spaces or cooking meals, can be less overwhelming when they are shared among a group of people.
- **Increased empathy and understanding:** Living in close proximity with people from diverse backgrounds can increase empathy and understanding towards others. Communal living often brings people together from different backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives. This can lead to a greater appreciation and understanding of diversity and can help to break down barriers between people. Additionally, living in close proximity with others can foster a sense of empathy, as we are exposed to the joys and struggles of those around us.
- **Improved physical health:** Communal living can also lead to improved physical health through access to healthy food, exercise, and sustainable living practices. Many communal living communities prioritize healthy living and may have shared gardens or community-supported agriculture programs to provide access to fresh, healthy food. Additionally, communal living can provide opportunities for exercise, such as walking or biking to shared spaces

and working on shared projects. Also, many communal living communities prioritize sustainable living practices, which can include things like recycling and composting, energy-efficient buildings, and reducing waste.

## Igbo Proverbs

Igbo proverbs are a form of traditional wisdom passed down from generation to generation in the Igbo culture of Nigeria. They often convey a moral lesson or a practical insight into human behavior and are used to impart cultural values and to offer advice and guidance. The proverbs are usually short and concise, using figurative language to make a point. They can be used in everyday conversation to make a point, to offer advice, to praise or criticize someone, or simply to tell a story. Igbo proverbs play a significant role in the culture and society of the Igbo people of Nigeria. They are used to convey traditional wisdom and provide insight into the values and beliefs of the community. The proverbs are often metaphorical and convey a deeper meaning beyond their surface level. Okoro (2018) examines the role of Igbo proverbs in promoting mental well-being within the community. The study found that the proverbs, with their emphasis on communal living and cooperation, can promote a sense of belonging and social connectedness. This, in turn, can have a positive impact on mental health and well-being. Nwankwo (2020) looks at the use of Igbo proverbs in conflict resolution within the community. The study found that the proverbs can be used to peacefully resolve disputes and restore harmony within the community. This is due to their ability to provide a common ground and shared understanding of the situation.

In addition to their practical uses, Igbo proverbs also have literary value. A study by Chukwu (2019) analyzes the literary devices used in the proverbs, such as imagery and symbolism. The study found that the proverbs are rich in literary devices, which adds to their appeal and effectiveness in conveying meaning. Furthermore, it is also worth mentioning that the Proverbs in Igbo culture are not only for adults but also for children. Onyemelukwe (2022) highlights the importance of teaching the proverbs to children as a way of passing on the cultural heritage and promoting moral values.



The study also found that children who were exposed to the proverbs at an early age had a better understanding of the culture and its values.

In conclusion, Igbo proverbs play a significant role in the culture and society of the Igbo people. They promote mental well-being and communal living, can be used for conflict resolution, and have literary value. They are also a means of passing on cultural heritage and promoting moral values to children.

## **Mental Health**

According to Kigozi et al (2013), Mental well-being is the state of being mentally and emotionally healthy, with a positive outlook on life, and the ability to manage one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in a healthy and adaptive way. This includes having a sense of purpose, fulfilling relationships, and the capacity for resilience in the face of life's challenges. Mental well-being is an important aspect of overall health and can have a profound impact on one's physical, social, and professional life. Mental health is a critical issue that has been widely studied and discussed in recent years. According

to the World Health Organization, one in four people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives. Studies have shown that mental illness is a significant public health issue, with numerous negative consequences, including reduced quality of life, decreased productivity, and increased risk of physical health problems. A study by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) found that depression is one of the leading causes of disability worldwide (Kessler et al., 2003). Studies by African authors also support this, with a study by Prince, et al. (2007) finding that mental disorders are the leading cause of disability in sub-Saharan Africa. Another important aspect of mental health literature is the examination of risk factors and protective factors for mental illness. Research has identified a number of risk factors for mental illness, including genetics, childhood experiences, and exposure to stress and trauma. For example, a study by Caspi, et al. (2003) found that individuals who carry a specific variant of a gene that regulates the neurotransmitter serotonin are at increased risk of developing depression in response to stress. Conversely, protective factors such as social support, positive coping strategies, and access to mental health services have been shown to reduce the risk of mental illness. According to Braehler, et al. (2011), social support is significantly associated with lower rates of depression.

African authors have also highlighted the importance of social support, according to Uwakwe et, al. (2015), social support is a significant protective factor against depression among Nigerian adults. Treatment and intervention strategies for mental illness are also a significant area of research. A wide range of treatments, including psychotherapy, medication, and self-help strategies, have been shown to be effective in managing mental illness. However, access to treatment remains a significant issue, with many individuals not receiving the care they need due to a lack of resources or stigma surrounding mental illness. A study by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) found that only 41% of adults with a mental illness received treatment in the past year (SAMHSA, 2017). African authors have also highlighted the barriers to accessing mental health services, Kigozi, et al. (2013) state that lack of awareness and stigma surrounding mental illness are major barriers to accessing mental health services in Nigeria.

The role of culture and social context in mental health is also an important area of study. Research has shown that culture can play a significant role in shaping mental health, with different cultural groups experiencing mental illness in different ways. For example, a study by Takeuchi, et al. (2010)



states that Asian Americans are less likely to seek help for mental health problems due to cultural stigma. In addition, social context, including factors such as poverty, discrimination, and marginalization, can have a significant impact on mental health. A study by Williams, et al. (1997) discloses that African Americans are disproportionately affected by poverty and discrimination, which can lead to higher rates of mental illness. African authors have also highlighted the impact of social context, with a study by Ndeti, et al. (2015) finding that poverty and exposure to violence are major risk factors for mental illness in Kenya.

In the Igbo context, mental health is a critical issue that has been widely studied and discussed in recent years. Mental health is a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses a wide range of conditions, including depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community." Mental health disorders are a significant public health concern, with an estimated 450 million people worldwide affected by mental illness. In Africa, the burden of mental illness is particularly high, with an estimated 26% of the population affected by mental disorders. The African continent is also characterized by a significant shortage of mental health services, with an average of just one psychiatrist per one million people.

There is a growing body of Igbo literature on the mental health of African populations, with a particular focus on the cultural and socio-economic factors that contribute to mental health disparities. A number of studies have highlighted the role of poverty, social marginalization, and conflict in the development of mental health disorders in Africa. For example, a study by Prince, et al. (2007) found that in sub-Saharan Africa, poverty is a significant risk factor for depression and anxiety. Another study by Patel, et al. (2008) discloses that exposure to violence and conflict is associated with increased rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in Africa.

African traditional healers and traditional healing practices also play an important role in the mental health of African populations. A study by Kirmayer, et al. (2004) reveals that traditional healers are often the first point of contact for people with mental health problems in Africa, and they play an important role in the delivery of mental health services. Another study by Ohaeri (2010) found that traditional healing practices can be effective in the treatment of mental illness in Africa, and that they should be integrated into mainstream mental health services. There are also studies focusing on the mental health of specific ethnic groups in Africa. For example, a study by Anyaoku, et al. (2013) stresses that Igbo people in Nigeria experience a high burden of mental illness, with rates of depression and anxiety being particularly high. The study also found that traditional healing practices were commonly used among the Igbo population, and that they were often more accessible and acceptable than Western-style mental health services.

In conclusion, mental health is a significant public health concern in Africa, with a high burden of mental illness and a shortage of mental health services. This research suggests that cultural, socio-economic, and political factors all play a role in the development of mental health disorders in Africa, and that traditional healing practices may be an important aspect of mental health care.

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the study, "The Wisdom of Igbo Proverbs: A Literary Analysis of the Positive Impact of Communal Living on Mental Health" is based on the Social Support theory. This theory was first propounded by Sarason, Sarason, and Gurwitt in 1960s, which states that social support, or the perceived availability of assistance and understanding from others, can have a positive impact on an

individual's mental health. According to this theory, social support can buffer the effects of stress and promote well-being. The Social Support theory proposes that there are three main types of social support: emotional, instrumental, and informational. Emotional support refers to the provision of love, affection, and understanding, instrumental support refers to the provision of tangible assistance, and informational support refers to the provision of advice and guidance. All three types of support can have positive effects on mental health, but the effects may differ depending on the type of support provided and the individual receiving it. Research has shown that social support can have a protective effect on mental health. For example, individuals with high levels of social support have been found to have lower rates of depression, anxiety, and stress compared to those with low levels of social support. Additionally, social support has been found to have a positive impact on cognitive functioning and physical health.

In the context of the study, the theory suggests that communal living, which refers to living in a community or group setting, can provide individuals with increased social support. This increased social support can have a positive impact on mental health by reducing the negative effects of stress and promoting well-being. This suggests that communal living is associated with lower rates of depression, anxiety, and stress and better cognitive functioning. Furthermore, the theory also implies that the wisdom of Igbo proverbs present in Igbo literature, which are often used to convey moral lessons and provide guidance on appropriate behavior, can also promote mental well-being. The proverbs can provide a sense of belonging and connection to the community and can serve as a source of guidance and support. This also suggests that the use of traditional proverbs can help to reduce stress and promote coping strategies in an Igbo community. The theoretical framework for this study would propose that the positive impact of communal living on mental health is mediated by the increased social support it provides, and that the wisdom of Igbo proverbs can serve as an additional source of social support and guidance.

### The role of Igbo proverbs and their connection to communal living

Igbo proverbs emphasize the importance of communal living and social support, which are central values in traditional Igbo society. These proverbs highlight the importance of working together, supporting one another, and valuing the community as a whole. The Igbo writers being well informed of the changing shape of the society to contemporary time agreed that truly the Igbo proverbs play a major role in mind upliftment and can serve as an instrument for peace of mind from tranquility and struggles. Thus, in *Isi Akwu dara n'Ala*:

Ma nne ya gwara ya, wetuo obi na "ofe di oku ga-emecha juo oyi".

And his mum told him to be calm that "the hot soup will certainly get cold."



In this extract, the proverb served as a soul pacifier to Chike in his time of hardship and mockery by Ada his wife. Chike has been passing through hell in the hands of Ada all because of the change in his financial status which was caused by war. Chike was seen wondering about , begging for food for him and his kids, always in thought that he can barely be recognized by his people and family. Chike was in search of a place to stay, so he could say a prayer to his god for him to make the pain and suffering he is going through to go away or rather take his life. However he fined his way to his mum, who consoled him by saying out proverb which assures the end point of suffering. Proverb also functions as reminder that a difficult phase of life is rather not permanent but temporal.

Another proverb in *Adaeze* highlighted the importance of supporting one another, thus in this extract:

Hapu nna adaeze, “o ji onye n’ala ji onwe ya”. Oge agaala mgbe e jighi umu nwaanyi kporo ihe. ugbo a ufodu umu nwaanyi buzi aka ji ezinaulo.

Leave Adaeze’s father, “he who holds another on the ground holds himself”. Time has gone when they say women worth nothing. Now some women are the bread winner of the family.

Also in this extract:

O buna i maghi na nwa bu nwa qha. Tigara ụmụnne di gi mkpu, eleghi anya o gga-ege ha nti.

Don’t you know that a child is for the whole community? Involve your husband’s siblings may be he might listen to them.

The author used the proverb to show the need for supporting one another and also to show that refusal to be a part someone else struggle may hinder one’s progress. Also this proverbs implies that Uchechukwu’s refusal to train Adaeze his daughter would not only affect Adaeze’s progress however it would also affect him and the entire community at large. It also emphasizes the importance of helping others and being a supportive member of the community.

Also in *Onodu Ugo adighi Egbe Mma*, the authors used this proverb to show importance of communal living. Thus:

Obi di m uto na mgbako anyi n’ebe a. Otu osisi adighi emebe qhia, ya bu ka anyi kpaa maka elim ozu nwanne anyi nwoke.

My heart is filled with joy for our gathering here. One tree does not make a forest for this let us discuss on the funeral arrangement of our brother.

This proverb depicted the communal engagements for individual benefit and to achieve a common goal. It emphasizes the need for connectedness to support one another and also the society.

### **Positive impact of communal living on mental health**

The wisdom found in these proverbs reflects the belief that community and social support are essential for the well-being of individuals. It also emphasizes the interdependence and cooperation that are necessary for the well-being of individuals and the community as a whole. Igbo literary authors have always in their work use proverbs to show the benefits on mental health and as such feel support in any challenges of life. The positive impacts of communal living were shown vividly in *Isi Akwu Dara n'Ala*:

Q bu ezie na o bughi ebe a kpopuru mmonwu anya ka o sizi ahu  
uzo mana “aka kpaara nne okuko ejighi olu ya” n’ihi na uria o  
na-ebe bu ama nzoputa ya ka o na-agbara onye ji ya.

It is true that the masquerade no longer s through it’s opening  
but “the hand behind the abduction of the mother hen didn’t  
block it’s voice” for through that the hen informs it’s holder that  
help is imminent.

Through this, it could be seen how Chike enjoyed all levels of support even among his ill mental health. While he hides from the soldiers not to be seen and forced to war, his community was always making effort to shield him away from the soldiers and the women who were allowed to walk freely were there to always feed his two children. They gave him physical, emotional as well as informational support and made sure he didn’t lose his mental well-being.

### **Specific proverbs that highlight the benefits of communal living for mental well-being**

Research has shown that people who have strong social support networks have better mental health outcomes. Studies have also shown that people who live in tight-knit communities with a strong sense of cohesion and social connectedness have lower rates of depression and other mental health problems. The analysis of Igbo proverbs can offer insight into the traditional values and beliefs of Igbo society and how they relate to mental health. The wisdom found in these proverbs can inform contemporary society on the importance of community and social support in promoting mental well-being. The literary analysis of the proverbs used by the authors, affirms that communal living and mental well-being are too inseparable for there is no other benefits to life than a social support system that promotes a healthy environment and thought. This was made visible extensively in these literary text thus: in *Adaeze*

Okuko na-afuli ebutela agba enyi

“The cock that’s jubilating has gotten the jaw of an elephant”

The author used this proverb to show how Uzumma has brightened up and gotten out of depression which was caused by the refusal of Uchechukwu her husband to train their daughter Adaeze in school. Uchechukwu had the belief that training a girl through education is a waste of resources and should not be considered. Uzumma invited the extended family to support and make her husband see reasons to agree. However, when all efforts seem futile, the extended family encourage Uzumma not to get into depression because of the situation and they assured her to help out financially and all round. The support lifted the spirit of Uzumma as well as that of her daughter, Adaeze.

The authors in *Qnqdx ugo ad[gh] egbe mma* an Igbo literary drama, amplified these proverbs in their work to show the benefit of communal living on mental health. Thus:

Ezeuko; ...Bikonu, achoro m ka obi onye obula no ebe a buru otu, maka na “a nyukoo mamiri onu, o gboo ufufu”. “Buni buni mere na ibu anaghi anyi danda.”

Ezeuko; ...please, I want everyone’s mind here to be one, because if “we all urinate together then it will fume”. “Buni buni is the reason why a load isn’t heavy on danda” (danda is a name of animal while Buni buni is an act of lifting heavy object)

These proverbs in a special way depicted the benefits of communal living on mental health, the author shows that a task achieved by a community reduces stress, depression, and the rate of mental health. It further shows that the problem of an individual is a communal problem and as such when tackled will elevate a depressed spirit. The proverbs suggest that traditional Igbo society, where communal living is highly valued, promotes better mental health outcomes compared to modern individualistic societies. It also highlights the potential for proverbs and traditional wisdom to inform modern mental health practices. As well as the value of preserving and studying traditional cultures and their wisdom for the benefit of contemporary society.

## Recommendation

The wisdom found in Igbo proverbs can be used as a tool to promote mental well-being and to educate individuals on the importance of community and social support. Mental health professionals can incorporate the use of proverbs in therapy sessions to help clients understand the importance of social connections and the benefits of communal living. This can be particularly beneficial to individuals from Igbo culture, as the use of proverbs in therapy sessions can help them relate to the therapy and feel more at ease. The values and beliefs reflected in Igbo proverbs offer valuable



insight into the traditional ways of life and can inform contemporary society on the importance of community and social support in promoting mental well-being. It is important to preserve and study traditional cultures and their wisdom to benefit contemporary society. For example, the importance of community and social support in promoting mental well-being is highlighted in many Igbo proverbs.

Fostering a sense of community and social support in modern society is crucial for promoting mental well-being. The research findings highlight the importance of community and social support in promoting mental well-being. It is important to create opportunities for individuals to connect with others and to foster a sense of belonging and community. This can be achieved by encouraging volunteering, community service, and other activities that bring people together. Additionally, traditional wisdom can inform mental health policies and practices in contemporary society. Policymakers and mental health professionals can use the insights gained from traditional wisdom to create more effective and holistic approaches to mental health care.

Increasing public awareness on the benefits of communal living and social support is vital in encouraging individuals to prioritize their social connections and seek support from their community. This can be done through various means such as public campaigns, educational programs, and community events. Also, encouraging intergenerational sharing of traditional wisdom can help preserve traditional cultures and their wisdom, and also allow the younger generations to benefit from the insights of their ancestors. This can be done through activities such as storytelling sessions, cultural workshops, and mentorship programs. Providing resources and support for individuals to connect with their community can also help promote mental well-being and support the wisdom found in Igbo proverbs. This can be done through programs such as community outreach programs, support groups, and online platforms. Finally incorporating traditional wisdom in mental health research can offer valuable insights into the relationship between mental health and communal living.

### **Summary of the findings and conclusion**

This research "The Wisdom of Igbo Proverbs: A Literary Analysis of the Positive Impact of Communal Living on Mental Health" delves into the correlation between communal living and mental health. The author conducts a literary analysis of Igbo proverbs as seen in the selected Igbo literary text, which are a rich source of wisdom in the Igbo culture, to understand how these proverbs convey the values of community and connectedness, and how these values contribute to good mental health. The Igbo culture, which is based on communal living, is known for its rich proverbs that convey

the wisdom of the community. These proverbs are passed down from generation to generation and are used to convey important values and beliefs. Through a literary analysis of various Igbo proverbs, the author showed how these proverbs promote values of community and connectedness, which are essential for good mental health.

The author found that many of the proverbs convey the importance of community and the role each individual plays in it. For example, one proverb states, "It takes a village to raise a child," which emphasizes the importance of the community in raising and supporting children. Another proverb states, "A palm tree does not make a forest," which highlights the importance of diversity and inclusivity in a community. The author also found that many proverbs convey the importance of connectedness and the role that relationships play in mental health.



In conclusion, this study suggests that the wisdom found in these proverbs can be applied to modern society to improve mental health outcomes. The author emphasizes the importance of community and connectedness in mental health and highlights the significance of traditional wisdom in understanding mental health. It also explored the values of community and connectedness into our daily lives, which promotes good mental health and improve overall well-being. In summary, the article "The Wisdom of Igbo Proverbs: A Literary Analysis of the Positive Impact of Communal Living on Mental Health" explores the correlation between communal living and mental health through a literary analysis of Igbo proverbs from Igbo selected texts. The reseacher found that many of the proverbs convey the importance of community and connectedness in mental health.

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