

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL CLASS ON THE IGBO LANGUAGE USE

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Abstract

This is an expository research that focuses on social class and the use of the Igbo language. Social class is a group of people within a society having something in common. In most any of the following: socioeconomic status, educational level and even sex could be used to differentiate one social class from the other. Igbo language use has some unwritten rules guiding the usage of some words. There are ways child should speak while addressing an elder and there are some words not expected from an adult. The theory considered suitable for a research of this kind is William Labov's theory of language variation. Labov, (1972) He investigated the relationship between language and society. He has developed a field known as Variationist sociolinguistics. The same applies to men and women, titled men and untitled men. The purpose of this research is to bring to the knowledge of the young ones the way the Igbo language is operated in order to maintain the culture that guides the use of the language. In doing this, the researcher first reviewed some previous researches made on social class and language use. Some articles were consulted. The methodology used was participatory observation hence the researcher is a native speaker of Igbo language. In this research, it is observed that social class influence the Igbo language use among the Igbo native speakers. There are some words that are taboo for some class of people to use while some use them normally. Again the educated tend to speak more of the standard Igbo language while the illiterates speak more of their dialect.

Keywords: Social class, dialect, Igbo, Language, variation

Introduction

Researches have shown that language is affected by social class. It has shown that the lower and working class struggle more frequently in the attainment of standard. People's social identity acts as influencing factor to determine his or her speaking variety. The more heterogeneous a society is, the more heterogeneous its language. Such variations of the same language among the social classes produce sociolects. Every society is stratified in different classes and they are mainly measured through economic conditions. Thus different groups set up in the same society where the members of the each group habitually differ from those of the other groups.

Among the Igbo linguistic community, there are many dialects and even sub- dialects. There is the standardised version of the language. Social class although not on the form of European pattern exists. We have the titled men, the *Nze na Ozo*, the educated, the age differences, the sex differences, the family background all these determine choice of words among the Igbo.

One of the fundamental units of linguistic structure is the word. No word no language. In the human ability to use language creatively, words play an important role. In fact, there is no language without words. According to Adrian, et al (2012:13), "far from being a static repository of memorized information, a human vocabulary is a dynamic system". They further state that we can use words at will. We can even expand their meanings into new domains. At the same time, when speak of language and social class, we refer to the use of words.

According to Adrian and his group, "Our vocabulary has an open endedness that contributes to our creative use of language". According to Pinker (1999:3), "Children just entering school command 13,000 words.... A typical high school graduate knows about 60,000 words; a literate adult, perhaps twice that number".

According to Winkler (2012:260-261), “language change is so slow, it is almost not noticeable, except in the lexicon. New slang words are commonly acquired and lost as each generation makes its contribution to a language”. According to him, some of the changes are permanent, like the addition of the decades-old slang word cool, word ‘cool’ which dates back at least to the 1920s. Change in social class contributes to change in the choice of words.

Collins and Mees (2013:157) state that lexical variation is where the phoneme chosen for a word or a specific set of words is different in one accent as compared with another. This can affect either a very large group of words or a very small group. Lexicons are referred to as the list of words in any language. Language changes and as a result of changes, we have dialects and different language or languages. Elugbe (1990:12) states thus: “Language changes in patterned way overtimes and spaces. One language begets dialects in space and then time makes them divergent that they become separate languages. In this way, one original language can become hundreds”.

He further says that the fact that language changes in systematic manner means that given a number of related languages, their ancestral form can be reconstructed with varying degrees of accuracy, depending on the availability of in-depth synchronic studies of the modern descendants (daughter-language) of that ancestor.

When we talk of language change, we talk of lexical variation.

As we mentioned earlier, words are so important in any language that no language can exist without words. According to Rothfuss (2014:2), “words are pale shadows of forgotten names. As names have power, words have power. Words can light fire in the minds of men. Words can bring tears from the hardest hearts”

However, this paper will only focus on language differentiations of different classes among the Igbo native speakers.

Social Class and Language Choice

People’s social identity acts as influencing factor to determine his/her speaking variety. The more heterogeneous a society is, the more heterogeneous is its language. A person who lies in the higher position of the social hierarchy, talks in appropriate manner and that obviously differ from the person who is at the bottom position of the same hierarchy. Such variations of the same language among the social classes produce “sociolects”.

But it is also notable that any person from particular class may speak differently from others within the same class because of his aspiring tendency to upper like. As Trudgill (2000) mentioned “Many linguists concentrated on the idiolect- the speech of one person at one time in one style- which was thought to be more regular than the speech of the community as a whole. But it is not possible to select individual speakers and to generalize from them to the rest of the speakers in their social class group. The speech of single speaker (their idiolects) may differ considerably from those of others like them”. In Bangladesh context, people who got a good command in standard Bangla and have a good communication skill are usually in an advantaged position in the society especially who lives in city areas. So it becomes very challenging for those who newly migrated in Dhaka cities or shifted their classes as a consequence of social mobility.

A teenage boy from Opi Nsukka, for the sake of getting better job since he did very impressive socially and in his results in secondary level, as he used to speak in Nsukka dialect, he will initially face much difficulty while interacting with city dwellers. A girl from a village after married off by a city dweller will not only encounter with a new environment but will also immerses in new communicative style and registers in spite of speaking the same Igbo Language but different variety. Though initially it will be very hard for them to shift from their regular variety, with the influence of his/her surrounding context that particular speech code will become their permanent variety and



thus their linguistic feature will gradually change as a result of their superior variety which is standardised variety. However, the purpose of this paper is to show the impact of social class on the Igbo language and how these social classes are influencing the language variations and promoting inequalities in the same society.

Igbo People and Their Language

The Igbo language, the mother tongue of the Igbo people is one of the three major national languages in Nigeria. The other two are Hausa and Yoruba; hence Nigeria is operating three national languages. Azuonye (2002) as cited in Egwuonwu (2016:79) states that Igbo as the native language of the Igbo people has over 20million speakers around the world. Igbo is one of the eight major languages in the Benue Congo group of African languages and has been classified as a member of the 'Kwa' subgroup of the Niger-Congo family.

Igbo has several dialects and it is spoken in all the states in Igbo land. They are Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Abia, Ebonyi and some parts of Delta and Rivers states. According to Egwuonwu (2016:79), it is also recognised as a minority language of Equatorial Guinea. It is also written in the Latin script which was introduced by the British colonialist.

Language and Social Class among the Igbo

Language is used to impart social relationship. There are complex links between society and language which may not be palpable to many people. It is however common knowledge that people speak differently according to their background and that it is also possible to relate aspects of a person's speech to his place of origin, education, social group, generation, age, sex, wealth or even occupation. Among the Igbo words like:

O bughị okwu o bula ka nwaanyị na-atụnye ọnyụ.

O bughị okwu o bula ka nwata na-ekwu. (It is not every discussion that a child contributes)

Okwu daa n'ego ogbenye esere ọnyụ. (When discussion comes to money, the poor withdraws).

Among the Igbo, it is forbidden for a woman to address the Ohaneze by saying: '*Ohaneze kwenu*' or *Ohaneze, ọjị abịalanụ*. So common as these statements appear, they are the exclusive reserve for the men.

Apart from the above, we all alter the way we speak according to our intimacy with the person being spoken to or the circumstance we find ourselves in. We also judge people not only on the basis of what they say but also how they sound (feminine voice when women may be the person talking). Besides speakers of Igbo have more than one way of saying the same thing.

Socio-linguistics however is not only concerned with the linguistic indicators of social background mentioned above. Olowofoyekun (2015) points out that it is also interested in the following points:

1. The various conventions we follow in order to organise our speech with each other and one another which are oriented towards social goals. In fact, many conversational and interactional structures have been found to exist as part of telephoning, jokes, narrating stories, classroom talks between student and teachers etc
2. There is a different domain from the structure of communicating language which the study of how social norms and values affect linguistic behaviour. For example, in Britain, one's social class affects one's choice of words.

Taking the above to Igbo example; In Igbo also, sex, age, marriage, affluence or poverty can affect one's choice of words. In other words, social values affect linguistic behaviour both among the Igbo and other linguistic communities. For example, every Nigerian wants his child to speak English, being the official language. In some other cases, norms speaking in a native language can conflict with those for speaking in another. For example, among the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, one has to



listen to an elder before speaking in another, but it is not so among the English people. The basic thing to note is that perfect grammar and pronunciation are barely enough for effective mutual understanding in a non-native language. Communicative appropriateness is also required.

3. The variety and diversity of language related to the social framework of the speaker constitute a central aspect of socio linguistics. There are many linguistic markers providing social information ranging from accent to choice of vocabulary as well as grammatical system.

Olowofoyeku (2015:15) observes that in some multilingual communities such as our in Nigeria, the way English is spoken may provide indications of the social status of the speaker.

At the same time among the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, the way one speaks Igbo may provide indication of the social status of the speaker. Among the Igbo, one who sticks fully to his native dialect even when he addresses another person not belonging to his area indicates one who has not travelled and not mixed with people from other dialect, least he would have adjusted to standardised Igbo.

Eze (2019), using Opi Nsukka as example discovered that educated and those who have travelled tend to shift to standardized Igbo while the illiterate villagers stick to the unadjusted dialects of Igbo. People's linguistic feature and contribution in diversities are greatly influenced due to social class, along with social networks and mobility.

However, the purpose of this paper is to find out how these social classes are influencing the Igbo language variations and promoting inequalities in the same society.

Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted in this research is William Labov's Variationist sociolinguistics theory 1927. William Labov investigated the relationship between language and society. He also developed Variationist socio-linguistics field. The doctrine of this field states that variation is inherent to linguistic structure. The style of speaking and writing language is not the same in all languages and among individuals. It is also not the same across situations by the same individual. Labov argues that such differences are normal and needed for the functioning of a language. This view according to Mathew (2022:1) challenges much of the traditionally dominant thinking and linguistic theory from Ferdinand de Saussure to Noam Chomsky. As Mathew states, main stream theorists do not deny the existence of variation rather they tend to downplay its relevance and treat it as superficial phenomenon obscuring a fundamental uniformity that characterises language. Labov in his research demonstrates that linguistic variation is pervasive and structured. This at the same time reveals regular patterns of co-occurrence between language forms such as pronunciation of a particular vowel and social categories like socio- economic classes. This type of insight comes by looking at language from social perspective and looking into difference speaker's use of the language in every day situation.

Different Variations and Choice of Words in Igbo

This section deals with identifying different varieties and speaking variations among the Igbo and influence of social inequality in terms of creating linguistic inequality in the society. Dialect Variations in Igbo community: In bilingual or multilingual countries, like Nigeria there is usually more diversity in the language varieties than in monolingual countries. However, sometimes the same language can have multiple varieties as can be seen in Igbo. This is the case of one language having varieties. As a result, people of the same country may use different varieties of the same language. Igbo has many dialects. Hudson (1996) has defined the language variety as "a set of linguistics items with similar social distribution." More specific definition has been drawn by Herk (2012) who identifies varieties as "different ways of saying the same thing". However, Varieties and variations are two different concepts in Sociolinguistics field which sometimes use as



synonymic of each other. Variation is recognized as different “ways of speaking” of the same language where Variety is known as a particular “way of speaking” (Rochmawati 2009). Thus variations can be found within the same speech community because of having uttering differences among the individuals. And variety can be identified as a particular code or dialect, variation can refer as different styles and accents of expressing that code or dialect. Igbo language has got several varieties with particular speech communities which are usually known as dialects. However, Igbo has Standard version.

People’s choice of words in speaking the same variety differs from class to class and thus the term variation arise. Gender, social class, regional differences are a few determining factors of a person’s language variation. An adult woman never speaks like a school-going child. A school teacher will speak in more polite and humble manner than a rickshaw puller. Speaking of the standard variety is more pronounced among the educated and those who have travelled and mixed with others. Thus situations have produced linguistic inequalities among the Igbo people of South Eastern Nigeria.

The Igbo and Socio-Economic Class

This is another major notional factor regarding the matter. Though many researchers do not consider these effects straightforward but social class indeed plays a very important role in creating language variations (Milroy and Gordon 2003). By observing their use of language, people can easily be categorized into their respective social classes or regions that they belong to.

Standard language:

In every language of the world there is a standard form which is considered the original variety for that particular speech community. Igbo is not an exception. This variety is more popularly known as the language of educated, noble or elite class’s language. With the preferable decision of socio-economically powerful portion of the society, a variety is considered as the standard and highly prestigious one but to be labelled as standard, it has to be written and go through some degree of regularization such as “Selection”, “Codification”, “Elaboration of function” , and “Acceptance.” (Hudson 1996, Holmes 2008). Igbo has gone through the above stated.

To establish any language in the society as standard one, a well-organized planning is recommended. Linguist Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) think that status planning (undertaken by politicians), corpus planning (undertaken by great linguists of society) and acquisition planning (undertaken by government) are three major systems of planning a standard language in society.

Non-Standard language:

Many people accept standard variety of the society as “good, pure, clear and rule-governed, a real language” where the other varieties of the same society remain as “broken, chaotic, limited or impermanent” (Herk 2012). Non-standard languages are those varieties of language which is less prestigious, mostly spoken in informal situations and usually not accepted by educated native speakers of the language. The non-standard form of language differs from pronunciation or vocabularies from the standard variety of the language. Standard Igbo is not much familiar or spoken by the people of different regions. This is because it was not taken from one dialect rather, it was taken from different dialects. So the same language gets affected by the local people and got several subdivisions.

Dialect:

Igbo language like many other languages of the world has many dialects. However, every language in the world got many or few dialects which differ in terms of vocabulary, accent or pronunciation from the original language. Igbo is counted as one with many dialects. They are less prestigious, shorter than the main language. Sometimes people from one area totally lack in understanding the



dialects of other areas. For example an Onitsha person will find it difficult to understand Abakiliki dialect. At the same time, an Nsukka person will find it difficult to understand Owerri dialect. Linguists believe that regional dialects have very little differences from their immediate next region and have greater differences from far away areas (Spolsky 1998). As a result, understanding difficulties are seen among many peoples. For example, Owerre people will found it easier to understand Aba dialect than an Nsukka person.

However, Morshed (2006) has referred dialects as substandard variety because of its tending to coexist along with the standard language. Igbo has a great number of dialects none say exactly how many they are.

Code switching:

Any particular language of a country or state is known as code.

Wardhaugh (2006) found out that any language and its other varieties will also be considered as code as well. So in this condition, all the sub languages of Bangla such as regional dialects, standard colloquial, nonstandard variety or registers are the codes of Bangladesh. However, due to cultural and globalization effect, English became a dominant foreign code of this country Nigeria. The educated and elite societies are seen to use this English language more frequently than any Igbo. However, code switching means using alternate codes or shifting to other code in same discourse. A person, who has command on more than one variety, is habitually or sometimes intentionally does code switching (Meyerhoff 2006). We also observe code switching within Igbo language (dialect and the standard)

In Igbo society, code switching varies from class to class. People who migrated from rural to urban areas are sometimes seen to switch on their local dialects while talking in their newly adapted standard or superior variety. Moreover, the influence of English on Igbo language has become so intense that they are creating new trendy lexicons especially the young generation has created new "Igbo". Many words are Igbolized. For example *Wetara m nayifu*

Social Stratification and Social Mobility:

Grouping people together according to their status and economic condition is a general notion of social class and produces a stratified society. The sociologists and modern thinkers are trying to identify what makes a particular social class but usually inequalities in power, Wealth and Status of the individuals determine different groups in social hierarchy. From Karl Marx's view on social stratification, each class has been distinguished to the other classes from the mode of production; where one class controls and directs the process of production while another class is, or other classes are, the direct producers and providers of services to the dominant class in the society. A person's class has always been influenced by the class where they were born into but there is a chance of shifting up or down of the classes. After having better education, well-paid job or through some other factors, a person's economic condition can be changed in a better position and he might shift his class to "middle income" or "upper middle income" from the "lower-middle income". Such situation is known as social mobility.

In modern era, the theory of social classes often assume in three general categories which include the upper class, the middle class and the lower class. From Karl Marx's perspective, people of upper class are those who control the mode of production. Khandaker (2004) found all the elite class societies such as political elites, senior civil and military bureaucrats, big-business class and industrialists, retired civil servants and military officers in this category of social class. He also thinks that mostly this class people are not only conscious and respective in society but also the dominant class of Bangladesh in present. Their language is also distinguishable from the other two classes of the society. Among the three divisions of social hierarchy, people from the middle class

are lying in the second position. Comparatively people from this class are more conscious than the other classes. Thus the social mobility occurs in this section most. However Khandaker (2004) has categorized teachers, semi employed, government workers, small time businessmen in this class.

Lastly, people with lowest social rank, who are standing due to low income with, lack of skills or education, are considered as the people of lower class in social hierarchy. In urban areas, workers of industries or garments, rickshapullers and in rural areas peasants, landless agricultural farmers, fishermen are considered as this category people (Khondoker 2004). The unequal opportunities to access state resources have stratified the same society (Rahman 2007). A person's speech variation along with some other non-linguistic features such as dress codes, body language, power etc also gets effected by different social dimensions and social mobility. Social Network and Social Distance: "Social network theory is often used to investigate why people who might share the same social characteristics (such as class or region) nevertheless behave differently linguistically, especially with respect to participation in language change. What the Milroys found was that new language features are much slower to take root in dense and multiple social networks those where a few people interact with each other often (the dense part) and in multiple ways" (Herk 2012 p.18). People of different groups who have interacted with each other over the years, are their social networks.

The frequency of contacts with the surrounding interlocutors reinforces particular sociolinguistic norms. If someone's neighbour and co-workers are also their friends, then their speech codes will influence each other more frequently than their other relatives who may live in distant places. Social distance between the interlocutors is one major effective factor to determine the intelligibility of their discourse. If a person is in office and having chit-chat with one of his/her colleagues, who also belongs to same region, than it is more likely to happen that he is going to carry out the conversation with that colleague in regional dialect by breaking the rule of idle conversation. It is obvious that having a chit-chat in one's regional dialect with a partner who belongs to the same region of the speaker creates a deeper feeling of integrity.

Attitudes:

While giving the explanation of psychological and socio cultural factors of language contact, Weinreich (1968) brought out "attitude toward each language" as an important "extra linguistic" matter upon with a few other issues. Each speaker has their own "idiosyncratic" interest on any particular language. His attitude might get "stereotype" effect as well. Attitudes toward particular culture or community also influence certain language as well.

Education:

In the case of Igbo language, the educated and those that have travelled and mixed with the people from other dialects tend to speak standardised version of Igbo and sometimes mix with English.

Consciousness:

"Labov's (1972) terminology- "careful" versus "casual" styles- reflected the underlying theory that stylistic variation was a consequence of differential degrees of attention of speech. That is, he argue that his speakers became more aware of their own ways of speaking as the interview activities moved along a national scale towards greater formality. They are less attentive to their speech in "casual" style, more attentive in "careful" style (Coupland 2007:36). Language awareness among the social classes is seen to differ in many circumstances. Many linguistics norms had been specified for certain social situations. For example, people from city take non-standard languages or dialects in a formal situation.



Igbo people from different states speak their different dialects as a sign of not enlightened. So, on such situations, there is language consciousness. In this matter Spolsky (1998) found out three domain factors in a communication and these are place, relationship and topic. A person's designated registers and chosen variety in a certain discourse reflect his relationship with the addressee as well. Among the Igbo, one is conscious of his sex to determine his choice of words. For example an Igbo woman will not come to the public and shout '*Igbo kwenu*' rather she can say '*Igbo mma mma nū*'. Even though she does, people will not answer her. A woman cannot bring colanut and announce to men and say *oji abịalanu*. Rather she would pass it through a man to present. The more formal the situation is, the people become more conscious in using the prestigious or standard variety. It is noticeable that middle class people are usually talk in standard language more because they have tendency to be like those people from upper class society. So they prefer standard language more during conversation.

The titled men are regarded high in most Igbo communities; this makes them conscious of their position in the society. They are not to participate in some jokes and careless speeches. However, the language preferences among the social classes can also be characterized by focusing. Fishman's (1972) intra-group and inter-group multilingualism theory." a person's speech shifting occurs less time and most of the time his variety remain unchanged, when he talks with his own community people. That is known as intra-group communication. On the other hand, while talking with the people from other group apart from their own community, they are seen to shift from their regular variety and even use particular registers to make their conversation flow smoother". That is known as inter-group communication. People especially from elites or travelled among the Igbo are associated with these consciousness more. But observed from Igbo community, people from uneducated and not travelled class that are lack of sensing such social norms are usually seen less concerned and unconscious about the matter. However, language consciousness also develops the sense of appropriate languages in right situation. For example, Igbo has few specific taboo words. Language consciousness provokes the idea among the people of using such words in a certain situation.

Profession:

If one speaks like an educated person there is a high chance for him to get a prestigious or well paid job. So the power of holding a good job again becomes dominated by socially classified languages. Since the city areas provide better jobs, people from different regions including the remote areas have tendency to migrate and settled down in city areas. So the varieties of speeches are very common scenario in city areas which gives us a well prove of social statuses (Spolsky 1998). Here standard language speakers are rewarded with prestigious and well paid jobs. So people are seen to avoid their regional languages and the influence of Social Classes on Language Variations use standard varieties more. Sometimes this frequent use of standard variety makes them standard variety users permanently. As a result, their next generation also gets their languages and contributes in a same way. On the other hand, working class people do not find any extra privilege to switch or develop their languages. Sometimes for better livelihood, people from remote areas also come into city areas and because of lack in formal education they get involved in working sectors where formal languages are less important matter. People have a tendency to talk like those people with whom they regularly deal with (Spolsky 1998). In case of Nigeria, one has to be proficient in English to secure a good job. If it should be Igbo it has to be standardised Igbo to work among Igbo people from different Igbo areas. Because of different social class statuses, some involved in standard job and get the opportunity to remove their dialect accents and the other remain as same language speaker even after shifting their place.

Convergence and Divergence in Igbo Land:

Convergence and divergence are two very important processes under language accommodation theory. People from two different regions or have different social backgrounds, use different varieties of a language. But during their conversation we can see that “their percentage of use of some features often converge” (Spolsky 1998). On the other hand, divergence occurs when anyone decides to “move his/her speech away from the other party” (Spolsky 1998). Because of convergence theory, we cannot see the existence of any particular dialect in city areas of Igbo land since people shift to standardised Igbo language there. Different regional peoples come across in city areas for sake of their education or profession. But few people also can be seen holding their regional accents in spite of living in city areas for so long. This happened because of their divergent attitudes. Soon people frequently become accustomed to his speech tendency to those of his interlocutors (Labov 2010). Co-existence of several dialects in a particular area is also the result of people’s divergence attitude.

Linguistic Insecurity and Crossover Effects in Igbo:

Due to the fact that the Europeans who first came to Igbo land settled in Onitsha, development started there and most people tend to speak Onitsha dialect even when they have not lived at Onitsha. Many attempt to speak Onitsha or standardised form of Igbo. The educated and the travellers soon feel insecure speaking their local dialect in the city. On visiting their villages they maintain the mixed dialects. That brings the saying *Onye kpata ego o suwa Onicha*. As Hudson said, “Linguistic insecurity is a term introduced by Labov (1972: 133)”. At least in United States and Britain some people who are socially sub-ordinate think that they speak badly. Linguistic Insecurity, however, is one very common fact for which people are seen producing prestigious variant of language in order to present them in desired way (Ismail 2013). In Bangladesh, it is a very common scenario in middle class educated people. Lower middle class or upper working class people have tendency to “jumps over” the next higher class while speaking for which sometimes this is specified as “lower middle class crossover effect” (Meyerhoff 2006). They often want themselves hearing not like whom they are but as whom they want to be. As a result sometimes they are seen to produce even better vocabularies than their next higher class. People from a particular class may speak differently from others within the same class, because they are aspiring to be in the higher class. This is referred to as “class aspiration”. “Regular and uniform shift towards a prestige norm in “careful speech” can be taken as evidence of a linguistic change in progress” (Coupland 2007). Sometimes crossover effect also occurs because of social mobility. People from urban areas are seen to change their social hierarchy with a better position. Among the Igbo, especially in the city, most people who are ashamed of speaking their undiluted dialects rather move towards speaking standardised Igbo. The other group thinks that using their native dialect language is very important for preserving their regional identity.

Conclusion

Thus it can be concluded that social inequality and linguistic inequality are two interdependent factors of the society. People’s differences regarding their gender, class, culture or other features are divinely created differences which are somehow important to distinguish one individual from another. Diversity of the same language is very common in every society but to keep just standard version of from it can be very tough, especially when the following practice is occurring for so many years. It is very common notion that people are thought more or less intelligent according to the way they speak. People the upper society are associated with standard variety. Lower classes prefer non-standard variety.

People from elite class prefer standard Igbo in formal situation and sometimes choose non-standard too. A speaker uses speech as a source of social distinction. The purpose of his communication is

also to let everyone know about his status and position in the society. Listeners are also very eager to infer or make value judgments of the speakers. People's preference to speak in higher class style comes from their tendency to hold the upper status of the society. Social mobility is causing the change of people's social status and their language is also shifting from one variety to another. People's expectancy to see the society with only standard variety derives from their expectancy to see the society in equal position. So it will never be wrong to say that linguistic inequality and social inequality are closely tied together.

Among the Igbo, one's sex sometimes determines the choice of words to speak. People are adapting their own variations from their surrounding context which is tied with their socio-economic position. Thus social differences are influencing to determine a person's variation and only high aspiration and strong determination of someone can change this traditional practice.

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