

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This research is a comparative study of Enuani dialect of Igbo and the Igbo language spoken in Imo State by Nkwerre people with the view of capturing the possible similarities and differences found in the sound system of Enuani dialect of Igbo and the Nkwerre dialect of Igbo.

According to Ikekeonwu (1987), there are about 20 Igbo dialects and these dialects include Enuani, Nkwerre, Ngwa, Orlu, Mbaise and so on. The project work focuses on the phonetics and phonology of the Enuani and Nkwerre dialects of Igbo. A comparative study of this nature sets out to identify similarities or differences in the sound systems of these dialects with the aim of determining the relationship between them.

1.1 The Igbo Language and People

Nkamigbo (2010) claims that the Igbo people occupy what is politically known as the South-Eastern part of Nigeria. The Igbo language is spoken in the core Igbo States – Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo – as well as some parts of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States all in the Southern region of Nigeria. “It is a recognized language in Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, United States in the West and West Central Africa.

According to Austin Peter (2008), one thousand languages: living, endangered, and lost page 68; he said that the Igbo language has about “eighteen to twenty-five million speakers”.

Igbo is a native language of the Igbo people, an ethnic group primarily located in South-eastern Nigeria. There are about eighteen (18) to twenty-five (25) million speakers or rather approximately 20 million speakers that are mostly in Nigeria and are primarily of Igbo descent. Igbo is a national language of Nigeria and it is written in Latin script, which was introduced by British colonialists. There are over twenty (20) Igbo dialects. There is apparently a degree of dialect levelling occurring.

Before the 16th century, the Igbo had an ideogram form of writing called “Nsibidi ideograms” (“Nsibidi” is an ancient system of graphic communication indigenous to the “Ejagham people of South-eastern Nigeria and South-western Cameroon in the Cross River region”). This form of writing was also used by other neighbouring people like the Ibibios and the Efik. The form of writing was invented by the Eko people for written communication. This form died out most likely due to the fact that many of its users were members of secret societies such as Ekpe, who then made “Nsibidi” a secret form of communication and did not want to publicly discuss it.

(“Nsibidi”: National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution and Oraka (1983), the foundations of Igbo Studies, pp. 17, 13).

The first book to publish Igbo words was *Geschichte der Mission der Evangelischen Brüder auf den Caribischen* (German: History of the Evangelistic Mission of the Brothers in the Caribbean), published in 1777. Shortly afterwards, in 1789, the interesting *Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, a former slave, featuring 79 Igbo words. The narrative also illustrated various aspects of Igbo life in detail, based on Olaudah Equiano's experiences in his hometown in Essaka (Oraka, 1983:21; Equiano & Olaudah, 1789: 9).

In 1854, a German philologist named Karl Richard Lepsius made a “Standard Alphabet” meant for all languages of the world. In 1882, Britain enacted an educational ordinance to direct the teaching of reading and writing only in English. This temporarily inhibited the development of Igbo, along with other languages of West Africa and this was after the Igbo culture had been comprised by British imperialism in 1807, after slavery was abolished. ‘Central Igbo’, the dialect form gaining widest acceptance, is based on the dialect of two members of the Ezinihitte group of Igbo in Central Owerri Province between the towns of Owerri and Umuahia, Eastern Nigeria. From its proposal as a literary form in 1939 by Dr. Ida C. Ward, it was gradually accepted by missionaries, writers, and publishers across the region. In 1972, the Society for Promoting Igbo Language and Culture (SPILC, a nationalist organization which saw central Igbo as an imperialist exercise, set up a standardization committee to extend central Igbo to be a more inclusive language. Standard Igbo aims to cross-pollinate central Igbo with words from Igbo dialects from outside the “Central” areas, and with the adoption of loan words.

The wide variety of spoken dialects has made agreeing on a standardized orthography and dialect of Igbo difficult. The controversy over Igbo orthography began in 1927 when the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (IILC) published a pamphlet called “Practical Orthography of African Languages”. The consonants /kw/, /gw/ and /nw/ were added to represent Igbo sounds. The pamphlet used some symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), which brought a controversy with the missionary society who had used Lepsius' writing for almost 70 years. In 1929, the Colonial Government Board of Education tried to replace Lepsius' with the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures' Orthography. The Government, along with Roman Catholic and Methodist Missionaries, accepted and adopted the new orthography; however other protestant missionaries opposed it. A standard orthography which is the current Onwu alphabet, a compromise between the older Lepsius alphabet and a newer alphabet advocated by the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (IILC) was

agreed to in 1962.

A standard literary language was developed in 1972 based on the Owerri (Isuama) and Umuahia (such as Ohuhu) dialects, though it omits the nasalization and aspiration of those varieties. Igbo, like many other West African languages, has borrowed words from European languages, mainly English. Example of such loaned words include, the Igbo word for 'blue' [blu] and 'operator' [opareto]. Proverbs and idiomatic expressions are highly valued by the Igbo people and proficiency in the languages means knowing how to intersperse speech with a good dose of proverbs. Igbo is a tonal language with two distinctive tones, high and low. In some cases a third, down-stepped high tone is recognized. The language's tonal system was given by John Goldsmith as an example of suprasegmental phenomena that go beyond the linear model of phonology laid out in 'The sound Pattern English'. Due to this tone system a word in Igbo pronounced with a slightly different tone will result in an entirely different meaning. Igbo language features vowel harmony with two sets of vowels distinguished by pharyngeal cavity size described in terms of retracted tongue root (RTR).

Igbo is classified in the kwa subgroup of the Niger Congo family. Igbo language was consequently spread by enslaved Igbo individuals throughout slave colonies in the Americas which was as a result of the Atlantic slave trade. These colonies include the United States, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Belize, Barbados and the Bahamas among many other colonies.

1.2 Enuani: The Origin, People and Language

According to Monye (1989), he stated that "among the Igbos who live on the West bank of the River Niger are the Enuanis who make up the present Aniocha Local Government Area in Bendel State of Nigeria. The major dialect spoken by this people is the Enuani dialect which is quite intelligible to their Igbo neighbours in Oshimili, Ndokwa and Ika Local Government areas in Bendel State and also across the Niger.

Ikekeonwu (1987) presents a classification of the Igbo dialects into clusters using both the phonological and grammatical criteria. On the basis of these criteria, she grouped Igbo dialects in five clusters namely:

1. The Niger Igbo
2. Inland West Igbo
3. Inland East Igbo
4. Waawa Igbo/Northern Igbo
5. Riverain Igbo

She noted that the Niger Igbo cluster is found in areas on the West of River Niger in what is currently known

as Delta State. She also claims the Niger Igbo has two main dialects namely, Ika Igbo and Aniocha (Enuani) Igbo. Aniocha has Asaba, Ibusa, etc as satellite dialects while Ika has Agbor, Ukwani as satellite dialects”.

According to Wikipedia (the online encyclopedia), Enuani is an Igbo dialect spoken in Nigeria by the Anioma people of Delta State, Onitsha, Obosi, and Ogbaru in Anambra State and Ndoni in Rivers State. This dialect is one of the hundreds of Igbo languages inherited from the Igbo people. Enuani also typifies tonality in sound but like the rest of Igbo dialects in Anioma, peculiarly differs from the standard Igbo pronunciation. This language is sometimes referred to as Delta Igbo (Wikipedia, 2011).

Enuani is a West Niger Igbo sub-group. Nigeria's upland dwelling Igbo-speaking people West of the River Niger, who are found in the present Aniocha (North/South) and Oshimili (North/South) Local Government Areas of Delta State of Nigeria constituted the defunct colonial Asaba Division. Forde and Jones (1950:48) note that they are described as Enuani or highland people by their neighbours. The Enuani are thus made up of two related groups namely, the Aniocha (whiteland) and the Oshimili (riverain) groups, respectively. The Enuani are commonly referred to as the “Ika Igbo”, a term popularized by Talbot (1969:39). In Forde and Jones' classifications, (1950:48), these two groups fall within the larger “Northern Ika Igbo” group. The name Enuani is a topographical construct, which is derived from the physical feature of the area occupied by the people, namely “Enu” (up or high) and “ani” (land). Enuani, an Igbo name, as Henderson (1972:36) rightly observes, thus means “highland” or “upland dwellers”, or those who live on the hill, on higher grounds than their neighbours, the latter inhabiting “the low lying area south” (Nwabua, 1994:40) and east of the Niger. The naming of the area to reflect its geographical features is in keeping with the Igbo pattern of naming their settlements to reflect their geographical peculiarities. For instance, another Igbo-speaking group to the South of Enuani calls themselves “Ukwani”, a term which means lowland dwellers (Okolugbo, 2004:3).

Enuani culture pervades the area between “Ika civilization to the West, and Anambra and Nri civilization to the east and Ndosimili – Ukwani civilization to the south. Like other groups whose habitations are not defined by obvious natural boundaries, they tend to merge into neighbouring boundaries to the west (Ika civilization) and south (Ndosimili-Ukwani civilization), but are separated from their eastern neighbours by the river Niger. With the passage of time, the people of Enuani have come to develop a distinct civilization known as AKWA OCHA (white cloth civilization). The people of Enuani are conscious of their history which is why they internalized their group solidarity in the closing years of the nineteenth century in the famous Ekumeku Movement against British colonialism (Igbafe, 1971).

Four broad groups can be identified in the Enuani area. The first and largest group claims a definite Benin origin. This is the Ezechima group, which makes up over ten communities east and west of the Niger.

Among this group are Obior, Issele-Uku, Onicha-Ugbo, Onicha Olona, Onicha Ukwu, Obomkpa, and Ezi in Enuani area. The second group claims origin from Nri and Nri-related communities or the Igbo groups east of the Niger. They are found in Akwukwu-Igbo, Asaba, Ibusa, Isheagu, parts of Ubulu-Ukwu, Issele-Ukwu, and Illah, among others. A third group claims origin from neighbouring communities but still strives to link its founders to Benin. Notable in this regard is the Ubulu clan of Ubulu-Ukwu, Ubulu-Uno and Ubulu-Okiti, Ashama and Adonta. The fourth group claims origin from Yoruba and Igala areas of the southwest and the Niger-Benue confluence of Nigeria. These are found in Ugbody, Ukwunzu, Ebu and Illah, Ubulubu, Obamkpa, Okpanam, Okwe and Oko.

Enuani today typically refers to the language of the Aniocha/Oshimili people of the Anioma in Delta State of Nigeria. Although, this dialect is hardly written as much as it is spoken but it is adjudged very easy for such adoption since the dialect is spoken close to Igbo dialects and it has been quite standardized.

1.3 **Nkwerre Dialect: The Origin, People and Language**

Nkwerre is a town in Imo State. Imo State is one of the 36 States in Nigeria and it lies to the south of Nigeria with Owerri as its capital and largest city. Imo state came into existence in February 3rd, 1976 along with other new states created under the leadership of the late military ruler of Nigeria, Murtala Muhammad, having been previously part of East-Central State. The state is named after the Imo River. Part of Imo state was split off in 1991 as Abia State, and another part became Ebonyi state. The main cities in Imo state are Owerri, Orlu, Okigwe. The Orashi River has its source in this state. Imo state was created at Ngwoma and the local language is Igbo. Imo state lies within latitude, 4^o45'N and 7^o 15'N and longitude 6^o 50'E and 7^o25'W with an area of around 5,100sq.km. It is bordered by Abia State on the East, by River Niger and Delta State on the West, by Anambra State to the North and Rivers State to the South. Other major towns besides Owerri are Isu, Okigwe, Oguta, Orlu, Mbaise, Mbano, Mbieri, Orodo and Orsu. Imo State is made up of twenty-seven local government areas: Aboh Mbaise, Ahiazu Mbaise, Ehime Mbano, Ezinihitte, Ideato North, Ideato South, Ihitte/Uboma, Ikeduru, Isiala Mbano, Isu, Mbaitoli, Ngor Okpala, Njaba, Nkwerre, Nwangele, Obowo, Oguta, Ohaji/Egbema, Okigwe, Onuimo, Orlu, Orsu, Oru East, Oru West, Owerri Municipal, Owerri North, Owerri West. Imo State is a predominantly Igbo speaking state, with Igbo people constituting a majority of 98%, with an estimated population of 4.8 million and the population density varies from 230 – 1400 people per square kilometer.

Nkwerre is a local government area in Imo State, Nigeria. Its headquarters are in the town of Nkwerre. Simply put, Nkwerre is both a local government area and a town in Imo State. It has an area of 38km² and a population of 50,152 at the 2006 census. Nkwerre is located at the Western part of Imo State. Nkwerre people of Imo State are Igbos and they speak Igbo. Nkwerre has about twenty (20) villages, which include Umunya, Umueze, Umunachi, Alaekwe, Umunubo, Umukabia and so on. Nkwerre is surrounded by other towns like Amaigbo, Ezianya-Obaire, Owerri-Nkwoji and Umudi. Nkwerre is located in Orlu senatorial zone and has existed for about five hundred (500) years.

1.4 Purpose of Study

This research will present sound systems in the two Igbo dialects of interest in the work – Enuani and Nkwerre. It will identify the possible similarities and differences between the sound systems of these dialects with the aim of showing their peculiarities as far as their sound systems are concerned.

1.5 Scope of Study-

This work focuses on the comparative study of the phonology and phonetics of Nkwerre and Enuani dialects of Igbo. We would examine the sounds of these dialects and this will be done by comparing words in these dialects to know the sounds that make one distinct from another.

1.6 Method of Data Collection

This work was gathered from native speakers of the dialect of study using the Ibadan four hundred (400) list.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This work is a contrastive study which would entail comparison. The comparative study of these languages will be done from a linguistic point of view using the “Mass Comparison” approach by Greenberg (1963), brought to fusion in his book titled “Languages of Africa.”¹ Greenberg observed that other scholars had a solid idea of what languages to compare and that idea was based on shared similarities among the languages. Greenberg reasoned that it should be possible to determine the family trees of linguistic groups on the basis of shared resemblances. As a result, he began to employ a method that systematically compared the vocabulary of languages word for word and sound for sound. The “MASS” in “mass comparison” refers both to the number of words in the sample and the number of languages compared.

He said that the more systematic and more frequent those resemblances were, the more closely the languages were related. Since in this work, we are trying to get obtainable similarities and differences in their sound systems, this approach will help this work move better.

COMPERATIVE STUDY OF ENUANI AND NKWERE DIALECT OF IGBO LANGUAGE

The complete project material is available and ready for download. All what you need to do is to order for the complete material. The price for the material is NGN 3,000.00.

Make payment via bank transfer to Bank: Guaranteed Trust Bank, Account name: Emi-Aware technology, Account Number: 0424875728

Bank: Zenith Bank, Account name: Emi-Aware technology, Account Number: 1222004869

or visit the website and pay online. For more info: Visit <https://researchcub.info/payment-instruct.html>

After payment send your depositor's name, amount paid, project topic, email address or your phone number (in which instructions will sent to you to download the material) to +234 70 6329 8784 via text message/ whatsapp or Email address: info@allprojectmaterials.com.

Once payment is confirmed, the material will be sent to you immediately.

It takes 5min to 30min to confirm and send the material to you.

For more project topics and materials visit: <https://researchcub.info/> or For enquiries: info@allprojectmaterials.com or call/whatsapp: +234 70 6329 8784

Regards!!!