DIALECTAL VARIATIONS OF OGHE

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ABSTRACT

This work is a descriptive survey on the dialectal variations of Oghe, a dialect of Igbo spoken in Ezeagu local government area of Enugu State, Nigeria. The paper aims to establish the difference between Oghe dialect and standard Igbo and also to find out if Oghe dialect has made any contribution to the development of standard Igbo. This sudy is a Sociolinguistic study that takes a look into dialectal variations of Oghe. Oghe dialect is very distinct and interesting. To establish the level of variation in Oghe dialect, this paper first highlights the introduction which took a cursory look at the observations and views of Igbo linguists on dialect. The method of obtaining data is through structured interview. Related literature to the study were reviewed. The paper paid serious attention to the pronunciations of some lexical items and sentences of Oghe dialect in line with the standard Igbo. The differences in Oghe dialect with the standard Igbo are also established and the paper also identified the factors responsible for the differences. Some findings and suggestions are made where it was suggested that though uniformity creates room for standard, the dialect of Oghe should be encouraged to exist side by side with standard Igbo. Also standard Igbo should be drawn from the dialect of the Igbo speakers. As a result, Oghe dialect should form part of the standard Igbo. It is hoped that this will not only be beneficial to Igbo linguists who are faced with enormous task of developing standard Igbo, it will also be of immense help to scholars and researchers undertaking a study in Igbo dialect.

INTRODUCTION

Language and Dialect

Language they say is a vehicle of communication. It is the most powerful tool for interpersonal relations and rightly named machinery for the acquisition of culture and civilization. It is largely through the means of linguistic manipulations that the growth and continuity of man's knowledge in the form of shaping understanding, influencing thought, feeling and reactions of people lie. Language is defined by Anagbogu, Mbah and Eme (2001:1) as "means which human beings have devised for communicating ideas, feelings, emotions, desires etc. through complex vocal or written symbols". This definition shows that language is normally learnt through a system of symbols which every fluent speaker of any language has thoroughly learnt.

In this paper, the word dialect is basically used to refer to the regionally or socially distinct variaties found within a language. It is a sociolinguistic study of dialectal variation of Oghe. Igbo language just like many other ethnic languages in Nigeria has many dialectal variations. This situation in

Igbo land is as old as Igbo land.This situation attracted the attention of many linguists in the past. For example, Ward (1941) stresses on the problem of the extensive multiplicity of dialects in Igbo and its inherent problems. The new orthography was introduced in 1961 after much controversy in order to solve the problems. Still at that, when the controversy was put to rest, the problems of multiplicity of dialects remain.

However, the Society for Promoting Igbo Language and Culture – SPILC in a bid to solve these dialectal problems, established the standard Igbo (Igbo Izugbe) in the mid seventies. Ogbalu (1974) takes a look at the general Igbo dialect variations with special reference to variations in Abagana dialect. In his study, he makes a complete list of Igbo words which are in form, spelling and tone common to all dialects for variations in vowels and consonants. Inge, Meier and Bendor-Samuel (1975) do a fairly study of aspects of Izii phonology and syntax. Oluikpe (1979) focused on Ngwa dialect of Igbo. Though the main thrust of the work is on grammar, there is still an interesting breakdown of the various varieties of Ngwa dialect into groups.

Armstrong (1976) does a study on a group of five Igbo dialects spreading from the West of River to the far east of the corner of the river. In that study, he examines the consonantal and vocalic segments of the five dialects. He equally goes further to compare the word lists of the dialects. Ikekeonwu (1985) also does a comparative analysis of variations of Onitsha and Central Igbo dialects. In her study, a division of Onitsha dialect into two was made. The first she calls Otu Onitsha dialect (OOD) and the other she calls Enu Onitsha dialect (EOD). Labov (1966) makes a vital innovation in the speech variations of New York speakers. He finds out that certain variants are used most frequently by the speakers of upper class while the lower class speakers have their own, different from that of the upper class. Agbedo (2001) recently takes a look at the dialectal situation of Enugwu Ezike speech community. In this study, he brings out the patterns of linguistic variations in the speech community.

The above review is certainly not comprehensive in terms of works that have either wholly or partially described Igbo dialects and its variation. The review however gives an indication of the amount of already shown in the dialects of Igbo, yet the problems of dialect variations are still there. That is the reason why Williamson (1972) said that up till now, there has not been any interest comprehensive study of Igbo dialects. Williamson's declaraction of (1972) is still hanging on, even up till now. This is because so many linguists are still making researches into language variations.

On this therefore, this study in Oghe dialectal variations has been undertaken in order to contribute in filling this yawning gap. In Igbo linguistic environment, the variations in dialect of Igbo language are of such magnitude that it would not be an overstatement to say that there are so many variations in dialect as there are villages in Igbo. The statement above somehow portrays dialectal variations as a natural outcome of language. In this case Ajulo (2000:419) sees variation as "a natural phenomenon in language". According to him, variation in language is not a problem but a natural design. Yule (1966:226) in support of the above, states, "every language will have more than one variety, especially in the way in which it is spoken. Variation in speech is an important and well recognized aspect of our daily lives". Lepage et al (1985:19) see variation as "a means for the active expression or manipulation of a broad range of aspects of social identity".

Oghe community just like other communities in Igbo land has many dialectal variations. Oghe speech patterns depict so many linguistic items. This is in line with Agbedo's (2000:18) declaration that variable use of certain linguistic items are observed in the speech pattern of language users. Oghe dialect structure is in such a way that some items have alternative realizations but their meanings remain constant. Oghe is one of the towns that made up Ezeagu Local Government Area of Enugu State. It is surrounded by many towns that form its neighborhood. In the North, Oghe is surrounded by Imezi Owa, Aguobu Owa, Umana, Umumba and Obinofia. In the South, Nsukka, Okpogho Mbanito, Oghu, Nwabasa and Eduezekwe are its neighbours. In the East, are Eke, Nsude, Udi, Nkanu etc, while in the West, Olo, Akuyi/Amagu Umulokpa and Uzowani form its neighbours

Oghe is made up of ten villages of which three were extinct while seven presently exist.They are in their order of seniority: Owe, Akama, Amankwọ, Amanshiodo, Neke, Oyohwo, Iwollo, Obuagu, Akasa and Ụmụnọm. The last three are in extinction due to certin calamities tha befell them, which time and space may not allow in this paper. Howbeit, this study discusses some of the variations with specific attention to the variations in some pronunciations of sentences and lexical items. The paper equally discusses some of the problems associated with variations as well as the factors responsible for these variations in Oghe dialect.

LEVEL OF DIALECTAL VARIATIONS IN OGHE LEXICAL ITEMS

Here, the researcher looks at some variations in the lexical items of Oghe speech community.

Oghe	**Standard Igbo**	**Gloss**
Ká̀mmá	Kịtaa	now
Ákhwịá	Ákhịá	market
Hábùó	Hápụ̀	leave
Ọkpụà/ọ́hə́	Ìkè	buttocks
Ọgō	Ákwà	bed
Ọʃi	Ọ̄hi	stealing
Nkə́mmá	Ébé à	here
Ọlịà	Ákwá	cry
Ágā	Ntútụ́	Needle
Ilĭliò	Ákhíhịá	weeds/grasses
Édzĭ	Ézĭ	pig
Ụwò	Ụwé	shirt/cloth
Ọfɛ́yi	Ọfé	soup
Ígwúgwù	Ụzúzù	sand
Ọhwịá/èdə	Ọhịá	bush
Nsụ̀kọ̀ʃị	Ákụ̀kụ̀	side/corner
Ụlịọ̄	Ụlọ̄	clay
Mkpə́mè	Okwútē	stone
Ákɤàshị̀	Ábàlị̀	night
Ákhwọ́	Áfọ́	stomach
Ọkpà	Ụ́kwụ́	leg

A look at the

Ɪʃi	Ɪsî	head
Ꭺgáʃííʃi	Ntùtù	hair
Ɛ̀xá	Ɛ́wú	goat
Ʊhwúlúkə	Ʊ́té	mat
Ꭺlị̀lị́	Ꭺgwọ́	snake
Ʊgènè	Ọjà	flute
Ɛ̀jò	Ʊgègbè	mirror
Ꭺgàlị̀igà	Nzúzù	foolishness
Mkpəkpà	Ụ̀kpànà	grasshopper

pronunciation of the above lexical items, one can easily identify the sound or phonemes that make them vary. Here also we look at the varied pronunciation of some sentences in Oghe dialect. It is equally pertinent to note that these varied and alternate pronunciations do not change the meanings.

Oghe	**Standard Igbo**	**Gloss**
Okwu mma eʃikwee ike	Okwu ahụ esiela ike	The matter is tough
Iɸe olili ʃirine	Nri buru ibu	food is plenty
Ọ na-alịa ọlịa	Ọ na-ebe akwa	He is crying
Ọọ gə melee?	Ọ bụ gị mere ya?	Are you the one who did it?
Njeem n'ọhwịa	Ka m gaa nyụọ nsị	Let me go to toilet)
Ọ ghalə ụgha	Ọ sịrị asị	He told lies
Bịakadə nkəmma	Bịa ebe a	come here
Ndee iɸe ọmə?	Kedụ ihe ọ bụ?	What is that?
Habəduom aka	Hapụ m aka	Leave me alone
Kpədzịwa	Nomie	shift or adjust
Kpədzịbaha	Nomikwuo	shift very well
Fatəkadə	Pụtagodu	Give way
Kpaʃịləm oɸeyi	Kunyere m ofe	Put soup for me
Deme/Deje	Ndeewo	welcome
Ndeekọm?	Kedụ?	How is it?)
Ndee iɸe meko?	Gịnị na-ahịọ?	What is happening?
Jewekedə nə nsụkọʃị aja	Gaa n'akụkụ aja	Go to the side/corner of the wall
Kpəchakadụọ/whichee ọkpə	Mechaa ya ike	Clean his buttocks
Tukwuyokedə ọhə	Nọdụ ala	sit down
Ọ nekwe axə ọkpə	Ọ na-eme ngala	He/She is proud
Oye agalịiga	Onye nzuzu	foolish person
Ọọ agbagidi madə	Ọ bụ nnukwu mmadụ	He is a big man
Ọọ oye mkpalụ anə	Ọ bụ onye arụrụ ala	He is a brute
Ntị na-egbuo	Ọ naghị anụ ihe	He is deaf He is deaf
Iɸe olili mma eʃihone	Nri a ebughị ibu	The food is not plenty

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR VARIATIONS IN OGHE DIALECT

According to Wolfram and Fasold (1974: 73) in Agbedo (2001:20) "the correlation of linguistic variables with social variables is at the foundation of the study of social dialects…", and when we

speak of social variable, continue Wolfram and Fasold, we are referring to the behavioural factor(s) that may be isolated to correlate with linguistic diversity. Such factors include religion, social status (class), styles, age, sex, ethnicity, contact and social network.
Some factors are responsible for variation in Oghe dialect. Among them are:

Marriage: Due to quest for survival, many people go out of their places in search of greener pastures. Along the line of this journey, many young men who went out always come back with wives from those places they were residing. These women came in with their own dialects and this in no little measure brought about element of variation in Oghe dialect.

Schools: Many schools in Oghe were built by the missionaries. People from other places outside Oghe attended those schools. Those people came with their dialects which gradually infiltrated into Oghe dialect. Even the children of Oghe who attended those schools with those foreigners tend to imitate who they were speaking with, the notion that Oghe dialect is inferior and timid.

Group: The group one belongs in Oghe tends to determine the variety he/she speaks. For instance, the educated, who see themselves as the elites, when they are together, try to punctuate their own dialect with the standard or central Igbo. Some in many cases, punctuate their own with English to show off. In that process, the Oghe dialect is completely polluted and bastardized.

Religion: With the advent of Christian and Islamic religions came many other dialects outside Oghe. The proponents of these religions came with different varieties of Igbo language and even non Igbo speakers came with their languages like the Yoruba and Hausa languages. These attempts had serious impact on Oghe dialect. For instance the word "awhụwhụ". This is in line with Agbedo (2001)'s view on religion as a linguistic variable. He is of the view that: "As an extra linguistic variable, religion of speakers within a given speech community is of relative significance in accounting for the differences observable in the speech pattern of speakers".

Age: Another factor responsible for variations in Oghe dialect is the age of the speakers of the dialect. The popular notion is that the old people in Oghe speak the language unadulterated. On the other hand, the young ones mix up the dialect with other dialects due to contact and interactions. This to them facilitate communication.

Sex: Certain words in Oghe are exclusive of the men. For instance women are not allowed to call masquerade "mmọnwụ" rather they call it different names like "mana" or "oyewanə or ndịị". In relation to sex, females in Oghe tend to use less stigmatized speech form than the males. For example women call 'mmọnwụ' oyewanə/ndii etc.

OBSERVATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Standard form of any language is drawn from the varieties of such language. Standard Igbo should be drawn from the dialects of the Igbo speakers. As a result, Oghe dialect should form part of the standard Igbo. Oghe dialect is an interesting dialect and very distinct. As at today, when an Oghe indigene speaks, the dialect is always noticed. For instance, the following sounds are dorminant in Oghe dialect: /hw/ as we have in

"ahwụhwụ"	-	suffering
"ahwụọnụ"	-	beard
"ahwịa"	-	market
"ahwa"	-	name

/ʃ/ as in as in àshị́→ body, îshí→ head, éshîshí→ tattoo, shìlà→ cooked
/ma/ as in ǹkə́mmà → here, kə́m̀má→ now, kəmmakəmma→ immediately or now, now

/y/ as in

"oye"	-	person
"yere"	-	give
"na-enye"	-	giving

/w/ as in

"ọwụ"	-	death
"were"	-	have
"owe"	-	self

However, it is essential to note that these observations are mainly noticed among the elderly people. The younger ones do not exhibit speech pattern like the elderly. On the part of the younger ones, these pronunciation patterns are gradually facing extinction. It is acceptable that language is dynamic, subject to change and ecletic but it is not to the extent of allowing the dialect to face extinction. This paper is of the opinion that Oghe dialect should not take the nature of a dodo bird which nobody sees and talks about today as it has faced extinction. The dialect should be encouraged to stay as it is a means through which the culture of Oghe people can be inculcated to the young ones.

Apart from that, it serves as an identity to every person of oghe indigene. This means that apart from linguists from Oghe, others should help in order to see that Oghe dialect is documented for posterity. The existence of the dialect will also help to make standard Igbo to evolve. It is true that Igwe (1977:15) says "dialectal differences in Igbo land have been noted as the main source of dilemma of creating uniform Igbo language attractive and comprehensive to all five states and mid-western Nigeria". It should also be noted that in the two other major languages of Nigeria – Hausa and Yoruba, uniformity has not been achieved. Also in other standard languages of the world like English, French, Latin etc, their dialectal varieties still exist. It is also recommended that Oghe dialect is encouraged to exist as a variety of standard Igbo.

CONCLUSION

While there is a need to have standard Igbo, it is essential to retain the variety components of the language. It is a way of knowing that the standard form of the language has root which it developed from. There is every need to commend the efforts of the Society for Promoting Igbo Language and Culture – SPILC for trying to evolve the standard Igbo language (Igbo Izugbe), it is pertinent to encourage the existence of the other varieties of Igbo language of which Oghe is one.

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