

International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies
(LALIGENS), Bahir Dar- Ethiopia

Vol. 9 (1), Serial No 19, February, 2020: 95-107
ISSN: 2225-8604(Print) ISSN 2227-5460 (Online)
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/laligens.v9i1.9>

**IGBO DIALECTS AND THE CITATION-FORM: THE
POSSIBILITY OF A STANDARD IGBO DICTIONARY**

OWELEKE, ESTHER N., PhD

Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies
University of Port Harcourt
esther.oweleke@uniport.edu.ng

Abstract

It is the norm in lexicography to have dictionary headwords in the standard variety of the language. But up to date, no Igbo dictionary exists in this variety. Most Igbo lexicographers have adopted the dialectal or multidialectal approach in their choice of a citation-form. The multiplicity of Igbo dialects accounts for this situation. This paper examines both sound and lexical variations in the language; describes the lexicographic problems of choice and arrangement of headwords, and discusses the suitability of the Igbo dictionary as a tool for standardizing the language. Two major sources of data were employed: the modified Ibadan 400 wordlist of basic items - used for a survey of the seven dialect zones identified by Manfredi (1989), and the dictionaries of Welmers and Welmers (1968), Williamson (1972), Igwe (1999) and Echeruo (2001). The paper demonstrated that sound and lexical variants in Igbo can be harnessed by Igbo lexicographers to produce an Igbo dictionary in the standard variety. Considering the optimal benefits derivable from a standard dictionary, the following suggestions for future Igbo lexicographers are proffered: words from different dialects of the language should be included in the dictionary; the standard forms be selected and consistently entered as headwords. Words with sound variation should be treated as sub-entries and lexical variants be cited as main-entries in their right alphabetical positions. The paper argued that, for the Igbo dictionary to fulfil its indispensable role as a language standardizing tool, the production of a Standard Igbo dictionary is imperative in Igbo lexicography and Igbo language studies.

Introduction

The term, dialect can be defined as the variation in the speech forms of a people signalled by regional or social differences in phonological, syntactic and lexical patterns. There are conflicting views in sociolinguistic discourse as to what speech forms should be referred to as dialects or which form as language. Delimiting these terms has been one of the major challenges in sociolinguistics. Wardhaugh (2006) notes that both terms are ambiguous. He describes language as a single linguistic norm or group of related norms. A dialect is therefore the speech

characterization of a region (regional dialect) or of a group of people defined by social occupation (social dialect).

As a means of solving this problem of definition and identification of language and dialect, linguists agree that when two interlocutors can communicate without an interpreter, they are using the same language. But sociolinguists have warned that mutual intelligibility and lexicostatistics are not adequate parameters for distinguishing language and dialect. They argue that some political and cultural factors, other than linguistics play vital roles. Fromkin, et al (2007) reported that German and Dutch, Norwegian and Swedish, are regarded politically as different languages even though they are mutually intelligible. In Nigeria also, speakers of Efik, Annang and Ibibio consider their varieties as separate languages even though they are also mutually intelligible. Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese spoken in the same country, China, are regarded as same languages though mutually unintelligible. Native speakers of Ikwere, Ukwuanji and Ika varieties since the end of the Nigeria-Biafra Civil war have argued that their speech forms are independent languages, rather than dialects of Igbo even though they share high degree of mutual intelligibility with other Igbo varieties. These cultural and political interferences have made the definition and identification of language and dialect difficult. Be that as it may, our concern in this paper is not to deepen or contribute to the controversy or determine what constitutes a dialect or language but rather to identify what problems the existence of these dialects pose to dictionary compilation in Igbo.

Multiplicity of Igbo Regional Dialects

Language studies such as, Armstrong (1975), Manfredi (1989), Williamson (1968, 2000) Emenanjo (1989), and Alerechi (2008) among others have shown that language variation exists across the Igbo varieties. The existence of numerous and divergent dialects of Igbo is an undisputable fact. This situation can be attributable to such facts as historical divergence, interference from other languages or the geographical spread of the language over a very vast area, spanning through seven states in the south eastern part of Nigeria. Manfredi (1989) has identified seven major dialect zones in Igbo based on the lexical, morphological and phonetic variations of the speech forms exhibited in these zones. The seven zones are: Delta, Enyom, Central, Plains, Oshimili, Omambala, and the Savana. These dialects, though exhibit a great deal of lexical and phonological variations, they share a high degree of mutual intelligibility. Within the Plains and Oshimili zones in Delta State, three major dialect clusters namely Enuani, Ukwuani and Ika have been identified. Ikekeonwu (1986) has also identified some dialect clusters of Igbo especially the Northern Igbo dialects. The following varieties have been chosen for this study: Emohua from Delta Zone, Igbere and Aruchukwu from Enyom, Orlu from Central, Agbo and Utagba-Uno from Plains, Igbuzo and Ubulu-Ukwu from Oshimili, Onicha from Omambala, and Nsuka from the Savanna zone. Below is a table showing dialectal variations in the language:

The data as displayed above show that considerable differences, both segmental and supra-segmental exist among the varieties. Consonant variations abound in the language in initial and medial word/syllable position. Phonological alternations exist between plosives, affricates, fricatives, nasals, and approximants in the different dialects. A few examples of consonant variation and sound correspondence are given below: and in the appendix:

1 a)	[b]~[f]	<	[ɔ̀bàrà], [ɔ̀fàrà]	'blood'
b)	[p]~[kp]	<	[àpàpa], [àkpàpa]	'groundnut'
c)	[s]~[ʃ]	<	[ɔ̀tɔ̀˧sɪ], [ɔ̀tɔ̀˧ʃɪ]	'bamboo'
d)	[j]~[f]~[v]~[h]	<	[a]ɪ[ɪ]a], [afɪfɪa], [avɪvɪa],	

e)	[d ₃ ~[z]~[g]~[ʒ]	<	[ahɪhɪa]	'grass'
			[ijɪɪ], [izizɪ], [agizhɪ], [iɜ]	'house fly'

Vowel variation in initial, medial and final word positions have also been attested in the language: [ɛ]~[a] as in [ɛka] and [aka] “hand, [ɛkwa] and [akwa] “cry”; [u]~[ɪ] in [aku] and [akɪ] “palm kernel”; and [e] and [ɛ] in [awele] and [ewɛre] “good luck”, among others. The data show that most of the sound variants exhibit similar tonal patterns as illustrated in the variants for the following words: ‘grass’, ‘body’, ‘house’, ‘breast’, ‘afternoon’, etc. The data also show that lexical variants abound in the language, as evident in these words: ‘crayfish’, ‘prostitute’, ‘ostracise’, ‘groundnut’, ‘woman’, ‘blood’, ‘beat’, and among others. It is also observed that some lexical items exhibit both sound and lexical alternations. While some words exhibit considerable differences in pronunciation, others show very slight variations.

It is noted that, while some varieties exhibit features of aspiration, labialisation, palatalisation, and nasalization, others do not. In addition, while these features may be phonetic in some varieties, they are phonemic in others. The features, retroflex flap [ɾ] and the alveolar trill [r] exist in Ika and Ụkwuàṅ varieties but they are allophones of the phoneme [l]. Similarly, in Nsuka variety, the labial-velar plosive [kp] [gb] and the bilabial implosives [ɓ] [ɓ] are attested. Despite these differences, a high degree of mutual intelligibility still exists among speakers.

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The Standard Variety/Dialect

A standard variety of a language is the codified variety that is generally accepted as the means of communication usually for literary purposes in the mass media, education, public examinations and publications. According to Trudgill (1999) a standard variety is that variety of a language which has gone through the processes of selection, codification and stabilization. A standard dialect can evolve naturally from an existing dialect of a locality or it can be a conscious creation from a combination of some closely related ones. The English language is one language whose standard variety has evolved from one of the existing dialects. Perera (1994, p. 79) points out that, “It was an accident of geography that selected East Midland dialect as a standard not any inherent superiority”. This selection was made possible by Chaucer in the late 14th century who chose his own East Midland dialect for his literary works. The introduction of the printing press in 1476 greatly influenced the spread of this variety as a written form among the educated. Considering the enormous value of the standard form to the literary, economic, or political advancement of a people, many languages of the world now have a standard form, in addition to other social and regional varieties.

Regarding Igbo, several attempts were made by Igbo language enthusiasts, especially early missionaries to establish a literary standard for Igbo. These included the introduction of Isuama Igbo developed in Sierraleone for Igbo freed slaves, between 1852 and 1900. The Isuama attempt failed and gave way to Union Igbo (1901-1929) an “esperanto” variety created from a combination of different dialects namely: Owere, Onitsha, Arochukwu, Uwana and Bonny. According to Emenanjo (1989) this variety is best described as “a still-born Esperanto which lived only in the Protestant Bible”. The third attempt was Ida Ward’s investigation and recommendation in 1941 for Central Igbo as a standard variety. Central Igbo also did not

survive first, because the Onwu orthography which was later established could not capture and represent accurately all the distinct phonological features of the language. In addition, the orthography does not reflect the features of nasalization, aspiration, palatalization, among others, which are distinctive in the Central Igbo. Armstrong (1975, p. 4) in his comparative analysis of five Igbo dialects observes that the “official and much simplified orthography amounts in practice to writing Central Igbo in the Onitsha sound system. The study shows that Central Igbo has as many as sixty-four consonant phonemes as opposed to the twenty-eight of Onitsha. Emenanjo (1985) also draws attention to the existence of up to ninety-six phonemes of Igbo. Monye (1989) and Williamson (1968), among others have shown that / ɛ / is distinctive in Enuani, Ika and Ukwuani varieties.

The Igbo Archival Dictionary Project team has also identified a good number of distinctive phonemes not represented in the Onwu orthography. The team identified ten distinctive vowels and ninety-six consonant phonemes, and also proposed both phonetic and orthographic symbols for representing them. Many Igbo scholars and linguists, have acknowledged the gross inadequacies of the Onwu orthography in representing the contrastive sound segments of the language, and are therefore of the opinion that the Onwu orthography should be modified to accommodate other distinctive sounds in the language. Other reasons why Central Igbo did not survive include the unhealthy rivalry among Igbo scholars and the negative attitude of the Igbo people in general to their language.

What is Standard Igbo Variety?

From the general literature available, Standard Igbo can be defined as the variety that makes use of the morpho-syntax of Central Igbo, the sound system of Onitsha Igbo. It is the form used in the mass media, for education, commerce, and publications. Standard Igbo enriches itself through inter dialectal and external borrowing especially from the Igbo planned metalanguage project. According to Emenanjo (1989, p. 222), Standard Igbo is “a-dialectal and draws strength and vibrancy from all Igbo dialects. It is distinct from any and all of the live Igbo dialects. It has the richest lexical inventory among all other dialects. It is the only variety that makes use of Igbo metalanguage”. Ikekeonwu (2005) also sees the standard variety as the “melting-pot of various Igbo dialects, a fusion in many respects of the erst-while Central Igbo and General Onitsha Igbo”.

The question now is: “Is there a Standard Igbo variety generally accepted by all native Igbo speakers and Igbo language learners?” Some literate Igbo believe that Standard Igbo exists and that it is the variety used in the mass media, in schools, for advertisements and for official purposes. This variety exists but, according to Nwaozuzu (2006), it does not enjoy general acceptance by Igbo scholars and the general public. The variety has been identified; it is only logical that it should be documented in a dictionary. Majority of people, both native speakers and learners assume that Standard Igbo is synonymous with Central Igbo. But this is far from the truth.

The Issue of Citation-form in Igbo Dictionaries

In lexicography, a citation refers to the headword or lemma. The headword is the entry word in a dictionary usually written in bold type-face, that is, the form in which a lexical item is identified. The citation form serves as the root from which other inflected forms are generated and the base to derive other new words. The citation form of a lexical item is easily identified in isolation by the speakers of that language. In many dictionaries of the world, citation forms have been established and dictionary users know exactly what forms to look up. The French look up words in the infinitive (e.g. *donner* ‘to give’, *parler* ‘to speak’, *fumer* ‘to smoke’, etc.)

For Sanskrit verbs the root is the entry, and Hindi uses the infinitive. In English, verbs are entered in plain present or bare infinitive. In Igbo, no citation-form has been fixed.

Most Igbo lexicographers have therefore randomly chosen different citation forms as seen in the extant Igbo dictionaries. Welmers and Welmers (1968) cited verbs in the infinitive form, Echeruo (2001) used the imperative form and Igwe (1999) used both the basic and the infinitive forms in the same dictionary- the basic to indicate verbs in isolation and the infinitive for all the other verbs in the group. Williamson (1972) cited verbs in the infinitive but omitted the prefix *i/i* and explained that the verbs should be read off by adding the infinitive prefix.

A major problem relating to citation form in Igbo dictionaries is that of the arrangement of lexical items, especially of verbal entries. This problem is seen in the different methods employed by Igbo dictionary-compilers. In Welmers and Welmers (1968), words are cited beginning with a syllabic, that is, either a vowel or a syllabic nasal. In this dictionary, alphabetizing is based not on the initial syllabic but on the first syllable-initial consonant. For instance, nouns like *akị* ‘palm kernel’, *ùde* ‘ointment’ and *ego* ‘money’ would be looked up under the letters: ‘k’, ‘d’ and ‘g’, respectively not under ‘a’, ‘u’ or ‘e’. Verbs are also not entered in their roots or bases, but with some prefixes. By this arrangement, all entries begin with a vowel sound and these vowels do not determine the position of the word. This arrangement is unnatural and gives the erroneous impression that every Igbo word begins with a syllabic. The method disrupts the morphological structure of Igbo lexical items. Igbo native speakers are intuitively aware that most nouns in their natural form begin with a syllabic and verbs in its basic form begin with a consonant.

Williamson (1972) and Igwe (1999) arranged entries according to some sort of semantic groupings instead of using strict alphabetization. This method as observed by Oweleke (2007b, 2008) has its limitations as search for words become tedious and sometimes fruitless. Another problem of this arrangement is that the Igbo dictionary user (whether native speaker or language learner) must decide which group a word belongs before he can find its meaning. This negates the principle of dictionary compilation.

Lexicographic Problems Created by the Multiplicity of Igbo Dialects

The existence of many Igbo dialects has very serious implications for Igbo dictionary compilation. Some lexicographers (and critics) including Welmers and Welmers (1968), Williamson (1972), Emenanjo (1973), Igwe (1991) among others have noted that the presence of a considerable number of Igbo dialects accounts for the few lexicographic works available. The major challenge faced by the Igbo lexicographer is choosing the dialect for the headword. To tackle this problem, most Igbo lexicographers in the front-matter of their works give explanations for the choice of dialects employed. Welmers and Welmers (1969, p. ii) used what they term “Comparative Igbo” which they believe reflects an effort to record forms and usage of Igbo spoken in Owerre and Umuahia Provinces. Williamson (1972) gives justification for her choice of Onitsha dialect. She reasons that while there are some good studies of Central Igbo dialects, there is no modern linguistic study of Onitsha”. Crowther (1882), Dennis (1993), Thomas (1913) and Williamson (1972) all published their dictionaries in Onitsha dialect. Igwe (1991) affirms that entries in his dictionaries are drawn from different dialects of Igbo but with special attention to Central Igbo. Echeruo (2001) uses a multi-dialectal approach. Up to date, there is no dictionary of Igbo that is written in the standard variety.

While some critics on Igbo lexicography object to a dialect-based dictionary, others see it as a blessing. Ogbalu (1973, quoted in Emenanjo 1973, p. 93) while criticizing Williamson for publishing her dictionary in the Onitsha dialect states that he doubts the wisdom of publishing

in different dialects. He, therefore, suggests that, “the publication of dictionaries should be geared towards evolving a standard Igbo that would transcend dialect boundaries”. On the other hand, Igwe sees a dialect-based publication as an asset rather than a liability. This view is valid in that, while dictionaries are compiled in different dialects the entire corpus of Igbo vocabulary will be preserved and this will forestall language or dialect extinction. Thomas (1914) *Addenda to Ibo-English Dictionary* is very useful in this direction in that, a great deal of lexical items has been documented in Enuàni-Igbo dialects. A good number of words that have become obsolete are found in this dictionary.

Sound Variation and the Lexicographic Problem of Citation-form

It is a well-established fact that the speech forms of Igbo communities vary extensively based on pronunciation. All existing Igbo dictionaries have entries either from one dialect or from a number of dialects. As stated above, most Igbo lexicographers justify their choice for selecting words from one dialect or more. A multi-dialectal approach to lexicography has the advantage of putting together the word stock of Igbo. On the other hand, the major disadvantage is that a multi-dialectal approach possess the problem of choice of headwords, that is, which dialect should be chosen for headwords and which as the variants and which method of arrangement should be adopted while keeping to the lexicographic principle of lemmatization (that is, arrangement of headwords). A look at the variants for the words for ‘body’, ‘house’ ‘anus’ and ‘grass’ portrays the problem faced by Igbo lexicographers:

2. body’ àshụ [aʃu] ~ èhụ [ɛhu] ~ èsụ [ɛsu] ~ àrụ [aru]; àhụ [ahu]; èshụ [ɛʃu] ùhụ [uhu] [f~h~s~r]
 house’ ụnò [unò] ụlò ; [ulò] uyò [ujo]; ulò [ulo]; [n~l~j ~u~u]
 grass ashìshia [aʃiʃia]; ẹfifia [ɛfifia]; afifia [afifia]; avivia [avivia], ahìhia [ahihia] [f~h~v]
 anus àtùlù [atulo]; òtùnè [otune] òchùlà [otfula; òtùlà [otula]; òtùlè [otule] òtèlè [otele]
 face ihu [ihu] ihu [ihu] ishu [ishu] iru [iru] ifu [ifu] isu [isu], ivu [ivu] isu [isu]

Such sound variants abound in the Igbo language, (cf. Appendix A). In a multi-dialectal dictionary, which of these variants should be treated as headwords and which as sub-entries? Should all the different variants be entered as main entries in the dictionary? The word “body” in the data has ten varieties. Should there be ten or more entries in different alphabetical positions for these varieties? These are some of the questions this paper attempts to find answers for. Appendix A is a table of sound correspondence showing vowel and consonant variations in the first and second syllable positions of simple basic words found among these varieties under study.

Lexical Variation and the Lexicographic Problem of Citation-Form

Apart from sound alternants attested in the language, lexical variants also exist. How should these variants be handled in a standard dictionary? Our data show that different words exist for the following words listed below:

3. ‘snail’ ikèkèle ~ ejùnà ~ òkpàtu ~ òjèlè ~ òjìlà ~ ejùnà ~ iko
 ‘plantain’ ògèdè jioko ~ jì àrà ~ ògbaraka ~ ụkam ~ òkìnìmà
 ‘loin cloth’ mpe ~ owo
 ‘prostitute’ ajadu ~ àkwùnà ~ òkpara
 ‘hair’ ẹjụ ishi ~ agbịsì ~ rikiri izē ~ ntutu
 ‘bamboo’ ọtọsị ~ otoshi ~ àchàrà ~ ùkètè ~ òkòrò
 ‘spider’ àkpàmkpà ~ àkpùkpà ~ ùgudé ~ ngugurudē ~ wọkàni nwèrè ~ ùdidē

'crayfish'	ḡisha ~ ize ~ nwaide ~ ayiya ~ ọbụ ~ nfriiya ~ idamàfū
'groundnut'	àpàpa ~ àhuekere ~ ìsaèwè ~ asiboko
'witch'	amòsu ~ ògbòmà ~ mgbàshi
'cassava'	akpụ ~ agburụ ~ ì□□bu□ru□ ~ m̀blàkà ~ ì□m̀nakà
'woman'	nwaànyị ~ onyinè ~ òkpòho ~ nwaamị

The data above show that the Igbo language is lexically rich. The dialects contribute to the the abundance of the total word stock of the language. But ironically, extant Igbo dictionaries do not corroborate this fact as most dictionaries are dialect based.

The Issues of Dialectal Variations in Igbo Extant Dictionaries

This section examines the treatment of dialectal variations in some Igbo dictionaries. Igwe (1999) and Echeruo (2001) adopted the multi-dialectal approach to dictionary compilation. This means that words are selected from many dialects. In this dictionary, both sound and lexical variants are treated as Headwords or Main-entries. In Echeruo's dictionary, dialectal variants such as: abali~abani "night"; agha~aya~aha "war"; akpana~akpala "bird droppings"; ebili~ebule~ebulu~ebunu~evule "ram" are all treated as separate headwords, as shown below:

akpana	[LHH] bird droppings	var. akpala
akpala	[LHH] bird droppings	var. akpana
agbishì	<i>n</i> [HHL] stinging blackant.	var. abisi, agbisi

Fig 1: Extract from Echeruo 2001:

ebili	<i>n</i> [LLL] ram, uncastrated male sheep
ebule	<i>n</i> [LLL] ram, uncastrated male sheep
ebulu	<i>n</i> [LLL] ram, uncastrated male sheep
ebunu	<i>n</i> [LLL] ram, uncastrated male sheep
evulu	<i>n</i> [LLL] ram, uncastrated male sheep

Fig 2: Extract from Echeruo, 2001

àbànà	<i>n.</i> water yam (<i>Dioscorea alata</i>) (Ont.): = m̀bàlà, m̀vùlà
abuba	<i>n.</i> (a) feathers; (b) scales; (c) wings of insects; (cf. abuba, ugbene (Ont.) cf also mbù'arā)
èbùlè	<i>n.</i> a ram (= èbùnù (Ont.), èvùlè)
agbìṣì	<i>n.</i> a very black ant having a sharp sting (usually found with uncemented floors). One who deals ruthlessly with others.

Fig 3: Extract from Igwe: 1999

Williamson's focus is on the Onitsha variety. Both main-entries and sub-entries are given in the dialect. While Echeruo consistently enters dialectal variants as headwords (main entry), Igwe cites them as sub-entries. Igwe also consistently enters words from the Central Igbo dialect as main entries in contrast to Echeruo. Echeruo's method is also not in conformity with standard lexicographic practice and principles because the treatment of headwords is repetitious and is not space economical. Since it does not consistently enter a dialect as the headword, it cannot be used to standardize spelling.

Establishing Citation-form for Standard Igbo Dictionary

As already pointed out in section 2.2.1, the Standard Igbo variety does not enjoy general acceptance and this has given rise to dialect-based Igbo lexicography. Since there is no dictionary in the standard variety, it means that there is no dictionary of Igbo that can be appreciated by all Igbo speakers and learners. We are of the opinion that the time is ripe in Igbo studies to stabilize the spelling, pronunciation, and lexicon of the literary standard, and the dictionary is one tool to achieve this purpose. Samuel Johnson in 1755 in his publication: *A Dictionary of the English Language* started the process of standardizing spelling, pronunciation, and grammar of English. In 1828, Noah Webster's dictionary: *An American Dictionary of the English Language* also became the first major attempt at standardizing the American English spelling, pronunciation and lexicon, and this effort has given the America variety of English a clear identity and status. Lexicographers such as Al-Kasimi (1977), Kiango (2000), and Landau (2001) believe that before a dictionary can be written for a language, that the language must have a preferred, favoured or standard variety. Such a standard has already been identified for Igbo. It is the Igbo variety that is "a-dialectal, the only one that draws synonyms from all Igbo dialects and the only dialect that has a metalanguage. It is a distinct variety of its own. But there is yet no dictionary in this variety.

To compile a dictionary in the Standard Igbo dialect therefore, we make some suggestions for its lexical coverage, citation-form and arrangement of lexical items.

1. Lexical Coverage for a Standard Igbo Dictionary

The paper suggested that words from many dialects of the Igbo language should be included in the dictionary (that is, both standard and non-standard). If Standard Igbo is the "melting- pot of various Igbo dialects" and "draws strength and vibrancy from all Igbo dialects", then a Standard Igbo dictionary should include varieties from all the dialects. The task though enormous is worth the effort. Lexical variants should therefore be entered and treated as synonyms. Words from the Standard dialect should be consistently chosen as citation-form. By this method, the Igbo dictionary will become a viable instrument for the Igbo language documentation and standardization.

Many new lexemes that have entered the Igbo lexicon through lexical enrichment programmes should be collected and documented in this dictionary. A lot of achievements have been recorded by Igbo language agencies of modernization such as the Society for Promoting Igbo language and Culture (SPILC) now replaced by the Igbo Language Association (ILA), the Igbo Standardization Committee (ISC) and the Nigerian Educational and Development Council (NERDC). According to Emananjo (1989, p. 222) "the Igbo metalanguage projects have brought in not fewer than 20,000 words to the modern lexicon of Standard Igbo". Ironically, these words are not found in any of the Igbo dictionaries. We observe that Igwe's (1999) and Echeruo's (2001) dictionaries published many years after the release of these terms by SPILC - (Igbo Metalanguage: Okasusu vol 1) do not have record of such words as *mkpòàhà`* "noun", *nnòchiàhà* "pronoun", "mgbakwunye" affix(es) and *m̀b̀unaob̀i* "aim" among others. The paper also suggests that these new words be included in the Standard Igbo dictionary. This inclusion will give the dictionary the identity and pan-acceptance that it lacks.

2. Citation-form in the Standard Igbo dictionary

Words in the dictionary should be cited in their basic form. Both the derived and non-derived nouns should be cited in their right alphabetical positions. The basic form of verbs should be entered as headwords not the imperative or the infinitive as revealed in the extant dictionaries.

The imperative form of the verb is inadequate for citation in Igbo dictionary in that not all verbs have the imperative form. Stative verbs have been identified in Igbo studies by Williamson (1972), Emenanjo (1973) among others as verbs that cannot be used in the imperative. The tone of the suffix is high for all verbs. The imperative form is also highly dialectal; the suffixes vary across dialects. While Igbuzo-Igbo uses only the suffixes *e=* and *=a*; Onitsha Igbo makes use of five, *=e*, *=o*, *=o*, *=o*, *=e*; Central Igbo uses *=e*, *=a*, *o* and *o*. For this reason, also, the imperative is not a good form for citation in Igbo dictionaries. The imperative is also not a natural form of the verb that speakers of Igbo can easily identify words with, and as such, not the form that users would readily look up in the dictionaries.

The infinitive form is equally an unsuitable citation-form for the entry of Igbo verbs. Infinitives are formed by prefixing a harmonizing high tone vowel (**i-i**) to the verb root. Using the infinitive as citation form for dictionary entries means that alphabetizing verbs in the dictionary will be problematic as all verbs will be entered under the letters *i* and *i*. This will create an imbalance in the macrostructure of the dictionary. Secondly, the tones of the basic forms of the verbs are distorted when used with the infinitive. The result is that all high tone verbs in the basic form will become down step tones, when preceded by the high tone infinitive prefix. There is still no consensus in Igbo lexicography as to the citation form of verbs.

Considering the problems associated with the imperative and the infinitive forms of the Igbo verb as citation form in Igbo dictionaries, the paper the use of the basic form the basic form, with a prefix hyphen be used as the citation form for verbs. This form is the natural form in which native speakers can easily identify verbs. The form also does not obscure the tonal facts about the verb root as does the infinitive. While treating Inherent Complement Verbs in Igbo, both the CV root and the nominal should be entered as a separate headword, e.g. ‘*run*’, ‘*dance*’ or ‘*shoot*’ should be entered as **-gba osō**, **-gba egwū** or **-gba egbè** respectively, and not **-gba** in isolation as done by most Igbo lexicographers, (Oweleke 2007). Oweleke (2008, 2011) has also argued for a new lexicographic approach to handling verb roots and their derivatives. Both derived and non-derived nouns should also be treated as separate headwords. By so doing the dictionary will become useful and easily accessible to all Igbo dictionary users. The palpable benefits to be derived from such a dictionary will far outweigh the challenges.

3. Arrangement of Headwords in the Standard Igbo Dictionary

Headwords in this dictionary should be cited in the standard variety. So, examining the list of words in Appendix B, the words in the Standard Igbo column should be consistently entered as headwords. This has the advantage of standardising the spelling in this variety. For example, the word for ‘insect’ is “ariri in the standard variety but has other variants as ‘*ashushu*’, ‘*esusu*’, ‘*aruru*’, ‘*ahuhu*’, ‘*ndanda*’, ‘*ndida*’ and ‘*ntukwu*’: These varieties should also be entered. While ariri (the standard form) is chosen as headword, the other sound alternants e.g. ‘*ashushu*’, ‘*esusu*’, ‘*aruru*’, should also be entered but as regular derivatives enclosed in parentheses beside the headwords. By current lexicographic practice, regular derivatives (that is, words whose meaning can be guessed from the headwords) are treated as sub-entries. In a Standard Igbo dictionary, these derivatives should be entered in bold-type and in parentheses beside the headwords and need not be co-referenced. Some examples proposed headwords are shown below:

4. **arū** /arɔ/ **(arū, alɔ, aɔ,)**
 àhɔ / àhɔ/ **(àhɔ, èshɔ àrɔ, àzi, èhɔ, èsɔ, èshi, ùhɔ, èhi)**
 agū /agō:/ **(agū, agwūrɔ, agūrɔ, aguwīri, egū)**

ariri	/ariri/	(ashushu, esusu, aruru, ahuhu)
ehihie	/ehihie/	(ehifie, ehiehie, eshuhue, eshishie)
efi	/efi/	(efi, ehi, eshi, eshu, evi)
iji	/idʒidʒ/	(iji, igi, izi, nzhi, izi)
ulo	/ulo/	(ulo, ulu, unu, uy, uyo, uru)
otula	/otula/	(ochula, otuna, otune, otelu, otula)

In this wise, the form of the standard variety is consistently chosen and entered as headword. This method is highly economical as it avoids repetition of entries.

Alternatively, the phonetic transcriptions of the variant forms can be given in parentheses, e.g. [al̄, ar̄, ar̄, ar̄]. This will allow the correct pronunciation of these words in their different dialects. This method recognizes the existence of many dialects in the language and show how these dialects can be harnessed to move Igbo dictionary writing forward. The method also has the advantage of saving space since the variant forms will not be entered in their different alphabetical positions as done in some extant Igbo dictionaries.

Since lexical variants have also been attested in the language, we also suggest that these alternants be treated as irregular derivatives. In standard lexicographic practice, lexemes whose meanings are divergent are treated as irregular derivatives. By this method all the lexically variant forms, (that is, both the forms in the Standard dialect and in other varieties) should be entered as separate headwords in their right alphabetical positions. In the data, we have two varieties for the word “anthill”, “mpku” and “ozu”. These varieties should be entered as headwords. All the Igbo words in the list below (both in the Standard and other varieties) should be cited as separate headwords.

5. English	Standard Igbo	Other Igbo variants
bamboo	àchàrà	ot̄osi, uk̄ut̄e, ok̄or̄o
groundnut	àhuekere	isaew̄e, as̄ibok̄o, ap̄apa
cassava	akpu	im̄anak̄a, agburu, m̄blak̄a
bottle	karama,	ul̄u, oḡo, ekpem, ololo

So, all the words for groundnut in the language, for example: **àhuekere**, **isaew̄e**, **as̄ibok̄o**, and **ap̄apa** should be treated as lexemes in their own rights and entered as separate headwords in their different alphabetical positions. The variants should therefore be co-referenced in the dictionary. This method has the advantage of treating these variants from the different dialects as synonyms. Dialectal variations have been identified as sources of synonyms.

Conclusion

The existence of dialect variation in Igbo has been largely responsible for the few Igbo dictionaries. It has also encouraged dialect-based dictionary compilation. This paper, has examined the lexicographic problems of the citation-form and arrangement of headwords created by the dialect facts of the language. It has also examined the possibility of harnessing both the sound and lexical variations of the language in creating a Standard Igbo dictionary. For the Igbo dictionary to fulfill its pedagogical as well as the standardization role, the production of a standard dictionary that will transcend all Igbo dialects has become imperative. Though the task is enormous, it is realizable and the benefits would outweigh the challenges. The paper argues that a dictionary in the standard variety will definitely create the much-needed pan-acceptance and thus advance literacy in Igbo.

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	Symbols	Igbuzo	Ubulu Ukwu	Utagba Uno	Agbo	Onicha	Olu	Nsuka	Igbere	Arochukwu	Emohua	Standard Igbo	
1a.	a~ε	a	a	ε	ε	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	arm, bag, beard
1b.	a~ε	a	a	ε	ε	a	a	a	a	a	ε	a	boil (of body)
1c.	a~ε	a	a	ε	ε	a	a	ε	a	a	a/ε	a	body, penis, eye, chewing stick, egg, smoke, name, hunger, saliva, frog
1d.	a~ε	a	a	a	ε	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	dog, chin
2.	a~ε~ε	a	ε	ε	ε	a	a	e	-	-	-	a	orange
3a.	a~o	a	a	o	o	o	o	o	-	-	-	-	duck
3b.	a~o	o	a	a	-	o	-	o	-	-	-	-	groundnut
4a.	e~ε	e	e	e	e	ε	e	e	e	e	e	e	king
4b.	e~ε	e	e	e	ε	ε	e	e	ε	e	e	e	monkey
4c.	e~n	n	n	e	-	n	e	-	n	n	-	-	basket
5	o~o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	harmattan
6.	o~o~u	o	o	o	o	o	u	o	u	o	o	o	house
7.	o~o~ε~n	o	n	ε	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	cockroach
8	o~I	o	o	o	o	o	I	I	I	I	o	I	palm-kernel
9	o~u	o	o	u	u	o	o	u	o	o	u	o	mushroom
10.	b~d	b	b	d	d	b	d	-	b	-	b	-	duck
11.	b~f	b	b	-	-	-	b	-	b	b	f	b	blood
12.	b~m~w	b	b	m	m		w	b	b	b	-	b	navel
13.	p~f	p	p	f	f	p	p	-	-	-	-	p	ostracise
14.	d~d3~z	d	d	d	-	d	d	d	d3	d	z	d	husband
15.	d~g	d3	d3	d3	g	d3	kola-nut, yam						
16.	d3~z~g~3	d3	z	-	3	d3	z	g	d3	d3	-	d3	house- fly
17a.	g~g ^w	g	g ^w	g	g	g	g	g	g	g	g	g	huger
17b.	g~g ^w	g ^w	g ^w	g	g	g ^w	medicine, palm-frond						
18.	k~k ^w	k ^w	k ^w	-	-	k ^w	k	k ^w	okra, palm-kernel, palm-tree				
19.	k~h	k	k	k	h	k	k	k	k	k	k	k	dry- season
20.	tj~h	tj	tj	tj	h	tj	darkness						
21.	f~h	f	-	f	h	f	h	h	h	h	h	h	thing, see
22a.	f~h~f	f	f	f	f	f	-	f		f	h	f	cow
22b.	f~h~f	f	f	f	f	f	h	h	f	h	h	h	afternoon
23.	f~h~f~v	f	f	f	f	v	h	f	f	v	h	h	market, bush
24.	f~h~h ^w ~v	f	f	f	f	f	f	h	h ^w	v	h ^w	f	stomach
25.	s~f	s	s	f	f	s	f	f	s	s	f	s	head, cook, smell
26.	s~f~h~r~z	f	f	s	h	r	h	f	h	h	h	h	body
27.	l~r~r	l	l	r	r	l	r	r	r	r	r	r	abomination, orange, sleep