

DIALECTAL VARIATION: A CRITICAL STUDY OF UMUNZE IGBO

Eze Patricia

Department of English/Drama, Kaduna State University,
Kaduna, Nigeria

Abstract

Dialects are the different varieties of a particular language. Umunze dialect is a subdivision of the Igbo standard form. Now, the youth and children of Umunze no longer speak the dialect like the older generation; therefore, the dialect is endangered. This study is a modest contribution to preserve the dialect as well as to give insight to Umunze language researchers to do more. The aim of this study is to compare Umunze dialect and the Standard Igbo in order to ascertain the areas of differences and similarities between the two. Also, the dialects are explored based on the vocabulary, grammar and phonology in order to see the areas of converges and differences between both so as to achieve mutual intelligibility between speakers. The researcher is a native speaker thus an intuitive knowledge of the dialect by the researcher is used to collect data and validated by other native speakers. The Wave and the Accommodation Theories are the theoretical basis in which this study hinged on. The findings are Umunze dialect has really changed over time; some words are no longer in use. The back vowel sound /ʊ/ is used in Umunze dialect to replace front vowel sounds /ɔ/, /a/ and/i/ in Standard Igbo. Also, the velar sound /gh/ in Umunze replaces the labio-dental voiced sound /f/ in Standard Igbo. Both dialects have so many other words in common but when two speakers come together, they use the Standard form for mutual intelligibility. Therefore, both dialects are the same language.

Keywords: Umunze, dialect, language, Igbo

Introduction

Human beings cannot do without language; this is because it is the very essence of man. Language is indispensable to humanity; if not our whole existence will become a mirage. The use of language makes living interesting. In other words, when two or more people come together, they use language to interact and entertain themselves. Also, when people use language, the most crucial thing is for them to understand each other, it does not matter the dialect they use as far as communication is achieved. In addition to this, no dialect or language is inferior to the other. We cannot but agree with Finegan (2008) in Talatu (2013:162) that, every language is a dialect, and every dialect is a language.

Therefore, the relationship between languages and their dialects are like the relationship between parents and their children. From the parents come the genes of their children, when you look at the children, you see their parents inside of them, though there may be differences here and there but not to say that they are not their parents. Languages are the parents while dialects are their children, there may be slight differences between the two but not to say that they are different languages, rather varieties of the same language.

Igbo language is one of the major languages spoken in Eastern Nigeria; Anozie (2003) in Igbokwe (2013) explains that the census of (2001/2002) placed the population of the Igbo to about 16million. It belongs to the Niger-Congo family. Igbo language qualified to be called a language with different varieties because it is selected, codified and standardised. The standard form is referred to as the Igbo Izugbe. It is the language of commerce, media, school and politics etc. Umunze is one of such dialects of Igbo language which this study sets out to explore, the differences and similarities with the standard form.

Conceptual Framework

Different people use languages differently in their region. Within a region, there are varieties of the same language which are slightly different from the standard form. A variety may be different from the other varieties in its semantics, phonology, lexical or grammar, yet the varieties are members of the same language. The dialects that are closer understand each other more than those that are further apart. Osuagwu et al (1997:101) have this to say that “among major dialect areas or even within a dialect area, the varieties form a continuum: which means that each variety will resemble its neighbours on either side more closely than it resembles those further away”. Dialect continuum such as languages A and B, C and D and E and F which are closer resemble each other as well as each mutually intelligible with its neighbours while the extremes A and G are not mutually intelligible.

These differences within the same language do not make the varieties separate languages because of the mutual intelligibility that exist among them. It is said that the people speak different dialects of the same language. On the other hand, when members of the same region do not understand each other, they speak different languages. Therefore dialects that are different from each other are considered different languages .However, a language and a dialect can be considered as the same language based on the existence of the standard language or of a written form shared by a set of speakers. Petyt (1980:14) maintains that;

If two or more groups who differ in speech nevertheless regard the same form of speech (which may be different again) as a standard, or if they share a common written form, they tend to be regarded as speaking different dialects rather than different languages, whatever the degree of mutual intelligibility – provided only that the

standard of written form is not totally unrelated to one they speak”

In addition, people that are bound together with their cultural values can be regarded as having the same or different languages. However, language spoken as the standard form digresses as people move away from the central point. The change in language begins like dropping a pebble in water which its waves continues to go farther and farther until it covers the whole area. As it goes further away, it differs from the original form until it becomes totally different that they no longer understand each other. Communities which are closer to each other tend to speak alike with slight differences while those ones adjacent apart have lots of differences.

This study is a case of the same language with different varieties. Estes (2012:311) admits that there are variations within languages. These different types of dialect variation include regional, social class, gender, sex and ethnic etc. Each dialect is slightly different and same with the Standard form which makes it possible for mutual intelligibility to occur between speakers. The standard dialect is the acceptable variety for the region. Fasold (2012:380) refers to it as a ‘minimum standard’. It implies a scale of measurement. Finegan (2008) submits that a standard language is a language variety used by a group of people in their public discourse. However, the standard form has to be reached or exceeded for it to be acceptable. For a language to be used as a standard form, it must be selected, codified and standardised. Igbo Izugbe is the standard Igbo dialect. It is the language of education, government, media and commerce etc. In view of the above, students are expected to acquire the standard form in addition to their regional dialect so as to communicate effectively with others outside their domain. What people do according to Fowler (1974) in Osuagwu et al (1997:103) is “to switch between the two varieties as occasion demands. When they are in school or speaking to

outsiders, they use the standard dialect, whereas their regional dialect is employed within the family circles and among close friends for intimacy and solidarity''. This makes communication easier among members of the different dialects of the same language.

Umunze is one of the dialects of a standard form (Igbo Izugbe) in Igbo language. It is also a town in Anambra State. Umunze is the headquarters of Orumba South Local Government Area in Anambra State of Nigeria. The name was derived from the name of the originator Nze meaning the descendant of Nze. The villages of Umunze are Ugwunano, Lomu, Nsogwu, Ubaha, Ozara, Ururo and Amuda. They are known for their farming and trading. They hold their culture to a high esteem in that they celebrate New Yam Festival, traditional marriages and chieftaincy titles. The kingship is rotational among the villages and every male is eligible to contest. Umunze dialect includes the people of Isulo, Ezira, Eziagu, Ihite, Ogbunka, Owerre-Ezukala, Nawfija, Ajalli, Ufuma, Awa, Amaokpala, Nkerefi and Akpugo etc.

Osuagwu et al (1997:100) see dialect as a "variety that may differ in phonology, grammar and semantics or even in only one of them from other varieties of the same language''. It then implies that within a particular language, there are other varieties; even though they differ in phonology or grammar or semantics, the differences do not affect the mutual intelligibility of the speakers. Akindele and Adegbite agree with Osuagwu et al when they maintain that dialects are "varieties of a language defined in terms of its user''. They advocate that each dialect is set off from others in the language by complex set of features of pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary (McDavid 1968).

Petyt (1980:12) defines dialect as an "abstraction based on some set of features chosen in a way which is essentially arbitrary. Dialect on the other hand is used to describe differences in speech

associated with various social groups''. The regional dialect is geographically based, that is the area one is coming from determines the way one speaks. Regional dialect marks off the residents of one region from those of other regions. Petyt (1980) maintains that the term dialect refers strictly speaking to differences between kinds of languages which are differences of vocabulary and grammar as well as pronunciation. Wales (2001:105) avers that dialect refers "to a variety of language associated with the subsets of users in a geographical area''. A dialect involves different varieties of the same language used by a group of people in a particular region. It can be the rural dialect (umunze dialect, umuahia), the urban dialect that is, varieties of language spoken in town or urban areas (standard Igbo), those associated with a social group (social dialect) and those associated with a particular profession (occupational dialect).

According to Pei in Onah (2014: 156) a dialect is a "specific branch or form of a language spoken in a given geographical area differing sufficiently from the official standard or literary form in one or all levels of the language i.e pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and idiomatic use of words yet not different to be regarded as separate language''. Individuals use the standard dialect when in communion with people from other dialects for the purpose of mutual intelligibility.(Cheshire 1992, Downes 1994, Biber 1988) in Hudson (2001: 45) define dialects as "varieties according to user''. In a simplest form a dialect shows who you are and what you are. That's why we have Indian English, Australian English, South African English, Canadian and American English. Dialectal differences are as a result of geographical mobility, that is people moving from one place to another taking their dialects with them. Other factors include social class, sex and age etc. Speakers tend to use similar language to people who are in the same social group with them. Speakers of the

same sex speak alike; as well individuals of the same age groups relate the same.

It is worthy to note here that the dialectal variation also emanates as a result of the speaker's place of origin. In addition, the place the speaker grew up determines his/her dialectal variation; it may not be the person's place of origin. This accounts for the differences in pronunciation or grammar between speakers from Umunze community and those from the neighbouring villages such as Oko, Ekwulobia, Agulu and Igboukwu etc. Osuagwu et al (1997:101) maintain that where you come from in this context may mean "where you have lived in for a pretty long time and internalised the variety of the language spoken there or where you were born". Therefore, dialectal variations are differences that occur within different dialects of a particular language. There are differences and similarities in grammar, phonology and vocabulary of the people of Umunze and the standard form "Igbo Izugbe". This accounts for an easy identification of Umunze speakers whenever they speak within or outside Igbo region due to their grammar and accent. They make use of close vowel /u/ in place of other vowels, so it affects their tongues.

Egwuonwu (2017) analysed a study on Arondizuogu Dialect of the Igbo Language: A Descriptive Approach. The study aims at finding out the phonology and grammatical features that exist in the dialect variety. The dialect will equally compare with the standard variety in order to ascertain the areas of convergences and differences between them. The findings show that the dialect and the standard variety have few phonological differences, which do not affect mutual intelligibility. The dialect has nine phonetic vowel sounds unlike the standard variety which has eight vowels. The dialect does not have the voiced labia-dental fricative sound (v) and the voiceless palate-alveolar fricative /s/, though it has /h^w/ and /t^h/ sounds which summed the consonants in the dialect to twenty eight.

Onwekwe (2016) analysed a study on Ibeme as a dialect of Igbo: A Lexicostatistic. The study attempts to show that Ibeme is a distinct dialect. The study indicates from the lexicostatistics report, ethnographic description and some phonemic and morphological variations that Ibeme is a separate dialectal area. It is concluded that Ibeme is not a patois of Ngwa as claimed by previous study (Oluikpe). This present study examines a dialectal variation of Umunze people which is different from Egwuonwu and Onwekwe studies in that their works deal on Arondizuogu and Ibeme dialects of Igbo language respectively. This present study investigates the phonology, vocabulary and grammatical variations that occur in umunze dialect in relation to standard forms in order to ascertain the areas of differences and similarities.

Theoretical Framework

Wave and the Accommodation Theories are the theoretical basis in which this study hinged on. Bailey wave theory is a new version of the old theory by Johannes Schmidt in 1872. It accounts for resemblances between separate but geographical adjacent branches of Indo-European family of languages. He says that a linguistic change spread outward from some starting point like waves on a pond into which a pebble has been tossed. The result is that the geographical area is affected by different combination of isoglosses and so ends up with various languages and dialects with varying degrees of similarity. Bailey modern version is that wave of change moves, over a period of time, either through geographical space (as Schmidt has suggested) or through social space or both and may be slowed down by barriers of other kind such as age, sex class as well as physical geographical features. Wardhaugh (2010:222) states that the “wave theory makes claims about how people are affected by change”. Changes are transmitted by individuals at any time, a particular change will have certain speakers it will affect but will not reach others. Speaker C

whom a particular change has not yet reached will differ from speaker A (whom the change has passed) and from B (whom the change is just reaching and who sometimes reduces the same output as A sometimes the same as C. It accounts for interpersonal variation (between A and C) and intrapersonal variation (within B).

Accommodation Theory was developed by Howard Giles, a social psychologist and is based on conversational situation. It is the adjustment of one's speech or other communicative behaviour vis-à-vis the people with whom one is interacting. Trudgill (1986:39) explains Giles accommodation theory thus;

in face-to-face interaction, speakers accommodate each other linguistically by reducing the dissimilarities between their speech patterns and adopting features from each other's speech. If a speaker accommodates frequently enough to a particular accent or dialect, then the accommodation may in time become permanent, particularly if attitudinal factors are favourable.

The two main accommodation processes described by this theory are convergences and divergences. Giles (2001) in Abah (2016:292) explains that convergence refers to the "strategies through which individuals adapt to each other's communicative behaviours in order to reduce social differences while divergence refers to instances in which an interlocutor distances himself from the interlocutor". That is when people from different varieties of the same language come in contact with one another, they adjust their speech to accommodate one another thereby making understanding easier.

The study uses both theories to examine the differences and similarities between Umunze dialect and the standard form. It is seen when an Umunze speaker meets with a non Umunze speaker, they use the standard form, and thus accommodation theory comes into play.

Also, different dialects grow out of the same language like a pebble thrown into a pool of water, thus the origin of Umunze dialect.

Methodology

An introspective method was used in the collection of data because the researcher is a native speaker. The researcher uses her intuitive knowledge in the collection of data. Three elderly men from Umunze between ages 60-70 were interviewed as well as to validate the data because they were seen to preserve the older forms of language under investigation.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Phonology

It is the study of the sound system that occurs in a particular language.

Umunze Dialect	Standard Dialect	Meaning
1 Dụ	di	is
2Vụbụ	carried	
3 Ogheofe	soup	
4 chilekechineke	God	
5 ụhụahu	body	
6 ọkụkammemme	feast	
7) Ụchaọcha	clean	
8) GụnụGini	what	
9) Eketenkata	basket	
10) Ọ shị	Ọ si	he/she said

Umunze people use the close back vowel sound /ʊ / in place of the close front vowel sound /i/ in the word 'dụ/di (is), the voiced labio-dental consonant sound /v/ is used in place of the voiced bilabial consonant sound /b/ in 'vụ/buu' (carry), the velar sound /gh/ represents the labio-dental voiceless consonant sound /f/ in 'oghe/ofe' (soup) in fig 3, the voiced lateral consonant sound /l/ is used to represent thenasal syllable sound /n/ in the word 'chileke/chineke

(God) in fig 4 while the close back vowel sound /u/ takes the position of an open front vowel sound /a/ in the word 'uhu/ahu' (body). In fig 7, lip rounding half-close vowel sound /u/ replaces lip rounding open vowel sound /o/ in 'ucha/ocha, as well the vowel sound /u/ replaces the close lip unrounded vowel sound /i/ in 'gunu/gini. Palato-alveolar consonant sound /sh/ replaces an alveolar voiceless consonant sound /s/ in fig 10.

Morphology

Morphology is the study of the internal structure of words.

Prefixes: They are affixes added at the beginning of a root.

Umunze Dialect	Standard Igbo	Meaning
11) o + gh + e = ogheo + fe = ofe		soup
12) i + gba = igba + se = ose		pepper
13) o + kpa = okpau + kwu = ukwu		leg
14) u + wo = uwo e + fe = efe		dress
15) n + gwa = ngwa o + ku = oku		fire
16) i + kpọ = ikpọ i + kwe = ikwe		mortar

The way prefixes are derived in both dialects are the same, even though they have different names for most words?

Suffix

They are bound morphemes that are added at the end of a root word.

Umunze Dialect	Standard Igbo	English
17) Ka + a +	nu e + be + a	here
18) Le + e +	lele + e	see

In fig. 17, 'kaanu' is used in Umunze dialect in place of 'ebe a' (here), also in fig. 18, 'lee' which means (see) is almost reduplicated in Umunze as 'lee le'.

Prefix and Suffix

It is a process of word formation by which both prefix and suffix are added to the base or root.

Umunze Dialect	Standard Igbo	Meaning
19) o + vu + u = ovuu	o + bu + u = obuu	c arrier
20) i + wu +ghu = iwughu	a + ba + cha = abacha	tapioca
21) e + ke + te = eketen	+ ka + ta = nkata	basket
22) n + di+ i = ndiike	+ du = kedu	how
23) n + ti+ i = ntii	i + kwe = ikwe	mortar

Fig 19, the labio-dental voiced consonant sound /v/ in Umunze is used to replace the bilabial voiced consonant sound /b/ in ovuu /obuu, in fig 22, the standard form has 'ke' as the verb root while 'du' is the suffix, therefore, there is no prefix unlike Umunze dialect which has a prefix, a nasal syllable sound /n/ added to 'di' as well as to a close front vowel /i/ to become 'ndii' (where, how, what).

Reduplication

It is a process of repetition whereby the form of a prefix or suffix reflects certain phonological characteristics of the root.

Umunze Dialect	Standard Dialect	Meaning
24) Uduu uduu	osiso	fast/quickly
25) Ngwangwa	osiso	fast

'Uduu uduu' and 'ngwangwa' in Umunze mean the same thing in Standard Igbo 'osiso' (fast) but they are not reduplicated.

Compounding

It is a process of joining two words together so as to form a whole.

Umunze Dialect	Standard Dialect	Meaning
26) Ibe + nneikwu + nnematernal		home
27) Nne + nnukwunne + ochie		grandmother

Both dialects derive compound words by joining two words together.

Syntax

It is the rule that guides sentence formation.

Umunze Dialect	Standard Dialect	Meaning
28) Nkenuuyuya	Nke a buya	this one is it
29) ivuonui buonu	to observe a fast	

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| 30) Ovuiṣu | obuiṣu | carrier of load |
| 31) Ichetaohuya | ichefuelaya | did not remember it |
| 32) Ma ohu obịara | o bịara | did she/he come? |
| 33) Ọ dūmma | o di mma | is it good? |
| 34) Gūnū mere | Gini mere | what happened? |
| 35) Ndịiibeina-aga | Keduebeina-aga | where are you going? |
| 36) Ndūnaagū m | Egwunaatū m | I am afraid. |

There is an extension of ‘nke a’ (one this) to ‘nkenu’, here ‘nu’ in Umunze dialect (UD) serves as the determiner that replaces an open vowel/a/ (this) in standard Igbo. Then the close vowel sound /u/ is added before ‘yu’ (is) which is ‘bu’ in Standard Igbo henceforth SI. Also, in fig 29 and 30, the voiced bilabial consonant sound /b/ in SI is replaced with labio-dental voiced sound /v/ in UD. Fig 31, ‘ohu’ in UD is used to replace ‘la’ (not) in SI. Fig 33 and 34, close back vowel sound /u/ in UD is used to replace the close front vowel sound /i/ in ‘di’ (is) and ‘gini’ (what) in SI.

Vocabulary

Umunze Dialect	Standard Dialect	Meaning
37) Mmaekwu	mma	knife
38) eku-igwe	ngaji	spoon
39) oki-iburu	nwanyiluru di	married woman
40) ukwuoru	ọka	corn
41) abaka	ogemma	cutlass
42) ogwumabiri	ahia	daily market
43) mgbaduga	akpu	foo foo
44) utu	ọhūike	buttock
45) iwọọ/ mkpukpo	ọhia	bush
46) aguihehe	ikukummiri	wind
47) okwulanti	iyere	earring
48) akwukwa	igweosiite	tripod stand
49) akiekie	akibekee	coconut

50) ilon	noo	welcome
51) ngwa	oku	fire
52)gbuwam	cherem	wait for me
53)akwuchukwu	akwuoru	pineapple
54)nkuegbu	akupe	fan
55)ngwa	oku	fire
56) Abubarishi	ntutu	hair

In Umunze, ‘ekwu’ is added to ‘mma’ (knife) which is common to both of them. Others are completely different, however, when two speakers from different dialects interact, they will use the SI for mutual intelligibility.

Similarities

Vocabulary

Umunze Dialect	Standard Form	Meaning
57) Oche	oche	chair
58) Nne/nna	nne/nna	mother/father
59) Nwata	nwata	child
60) Mmanu	mmanu	oil
61) enyo	enyo	mirrior

Findings

The findings are; the front vowel sounds such as /i/ and /a/ are replaced with back vowel sound /u/ in some words, such as in ‘gụnụ/gini’, ‘dụ//di’ and ‘uhu/ahu’. Labio-dental voiced consonant sound /v/ in Umunze replaces the bilabial voiced consonant sound /b/ in SI, for example, ‘ovuu/obuu’. A lateral voiced consonant sound /l/ replaces the nasal syllable sound /n/ in ‘chileke/chineke’, a velar sound /gh/ in UD replaces the labio-dental voiceless consonant sound /f/ in SI, for example, ‘oghe/ofe’.

Conclusion

Dialectal variations are the subdivisions that occur in a particular language. In other words, they are varieties of the same language. This

study explores those variations in Umunzedialectcompared with the Standard form in order to ascertain the differences and similarities so as to achieve mutual intelligibility between the speakers. There are few differences and more similarities between Umunze dialect and SI. In as much as there are those differences, UD is not a different language, rather a variety of a particular language because there is mutual intelligibility when speakers come together from different dialects. In other words, Umunze dialect is one of the varieties of the Standard Igbo known as the 'Igbo Izugbe'.

References

- Abah, M.N. (2016). "Incongruity in Lecturer-Student Spoken Communication: A Study of Selected Lecturer-Student Discourses in FCE Zaria and ABU", Zaria. In O. Ayodabo, N. U Butari, P. Onah & A. Oreoluwa (Eds.). *Linguistics, Language and Literature: A Festschrift for Gbenga Solomon Ibileye*. (pp289-301). Zaria: Department of English and Literary Studies, Federal University, Lokoja, Kogi State.
- Akindele, F & Adegbite, W. (2005). *The Sociology and Politics of English in Nigeria: An Introduction*. Ile Ife: O.A.U.Press.
- Egwuonwu, C. (2017). Arondizuogu dialect of the Igbo Language: A Descriptive Approach. *Journal of Nigerian Languages and Culture*. Vol 17(1), pp14-33.
- Estes, N.S. (2012). "Dialects Variation". In R. Fasold & C.J. Clinton (Eds.). *An Introduction to Language and Linguistics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Fasold, R. (2012). "The Politics of Language". R. Fasold & C. J. Clinton (Eds.). *An Introduction to Language and Linguistics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Finegan, E. (2008). *Language: Its Structure and use*. Boston: Thomson Higher Education.

- Hudson, R.A. (2003). *Sociolinguistics*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Igbokwe, B. N. (2013). "Language Identity: A Case of Igbo Language, Nigeria. *International Journal of Development and Management Review (INJODEMAR)*, Vol 8 (1) pp144-158.
- McDavid, R. (1968). "Variations in Standard American-English". *Elementary English*. Vol 45 (56), pp1-4.
- Onah, P.E. (2014). A Dialectal Evidence of the Internationality of the English Language. *SAIWA: A Journal of Communications*. Pp142-162.
- Onwekwe, C. (2016). Ibeme as a Dialect of Igbo: A Lexicostatistic. *Journal of Languages and Culture*. Vol 7(5) pp54-61.
- Osuagwu, B. N, Nwaozuzu, G. I, Dike, G.A, Nwaogu, V. N & Okoro, L. C. (1997). *Fundamentals of Linguistics*. Owerri: Colon Concepts.
- Petyt, K.M. (1980). *The Study of Dialect: An Introduction to Dialectology*. London: Andre Deutsch Ltd.
- Talatu, D. A. (2013). "Comparative Study of the Karku and Kudaru Dialects of T'kurmi". In O. Ayodabo & N. Butari (Eds.). *Issues in Language and Linguistics: Perspectives from Nigeria*. (pp160-169). Kaduna: Language Study Group of Nigeria (LSGN).
- Trudgill, P. (1986). *Dialects in Contact*. England: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Wardhaugh, R. (2010). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing.
- Wales, K. (2001). *A Dictionary of Stylistics*. England: Pearson Education Ltd.