ISSUES IN IGBO LEXICOGRAPHY – AN OVERVIEW[1]

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PREAMBLE

- Lexicology and lexicography: Features and objectives
- Evolution of Igbo dictionaries: Hair (1967), Williamson (1975) Uchechukwu (2006; 2011) Oweleke (2007) Igwe (1999)
- Early dictionaries from amateurish collections of word lists, glossaries, vocabularies.

Foreign Culture Lexicography Vs Native Culture Lexicography (Uchechukwu 2006)

Foreign Culture	**Native Culture**
Pre- Independence	*Post – Independence*
Koellelle .W. (1854), Schon (1861), Zappa, Carlo (1907), Thomas, N.W (1913)	Ogbalu, F. C (1959), Welmers and Wilmers (1968), Williamson, Kay (1972), Nnaji, H (1985), Echeruo (1998), Dennis T.J. (1923), Abraham, R.C (1962), Adams, R.F.G (1932), Igwe G.E (1999), Eke, J, (2001), Emenako (2005), NERDC (to appear)
Euro- centric	Igbo -, Afro- centric
Missionaries, explorers traders, colonial administrators	
External, generalized / undifferentiated generalized audience	Internal, indigenous audience including EL speakers
Amateurish	Greater sophistication

Selected specialized Igbo Dictionaries

1. **Igbo place names**
   Anoka, Gaius (1979) A Pronouncing Dictionary of Igbo Place Names
2. **Personal names**
   - Arinze (1967) ***Igbo Christian Names***
   - Ubahakwe (1981) **Igbo names:** ***Their meanings and their structures***

[1] This paper is a historical document on *Igbo Lexicography*. It served as the skeleton of the lead paper that the late Prof. Nolue Emenanjo presented at the 6th **Igbo Language Symposium** titled *Aspects of Igbo Lexicography* and held at *Chike Okoli Centre,* Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, from 23rd to 24th November 2015, The paper was received on Friday 20th November, 2015 at 3:04 PM.
Prof. Emenanjo passed on almost a year after the symposium. Two days before his death, he intended to come down from his village, Igbo Uzo, for a meeting on this paper and other works we were to undertake together. Unfortunately, he passed on the day before the meetimg. His paper is therefore reproduced here without any modifications, bearing in mind that Prof. Emenanjo's lively and rich presentation of this paper during the 2015 symposium cannot be reproduced through any form of modification of the paper. Therefore, let the reader take from it what he/she can.
-Prof. Chinedu Uchechukwu (2024)

- Iwundu (1994) ***Igbo Anthroponyms: A Socio- Semantic Analysis***
- Uwalaka (1990) A Semantico – Syntactic Analysis of Igbo Personal Names
- Ezeanya (1969) ***A Handbook of Igbo Christian Names***

3. **ICT Resources**
   - Microsoft Nig (2008) ***Language Interface Pack Glossaries in Hausa Igbo and Yoruba***
   - Microsoft Nig. (2009) ***Language Interface Pack for Windows Vista in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba***

FEATURES OF A GOOD DICTIONARY

- The dictionary is: essentially a reference book / material with prescriptive roles in all area of usage in speech and / in writing for a specified audience
- A standardizing document
- **Structure** See Emenanjo (2010): 8 – 21
- **Macrostructure**
  a. The introduction
  b. The Headword/main entry
  c. Run – on/ Sub-entries
  d. Arrangement of entries
  - Alphabetical Ordering and Root arrangement
  - Homonymous/Polysemous/ Homograph entries
  e. Pronunciation
  f. Part of speech label
  g. Definition
  h. Etymology
- **Microstructure:** This handles the technis and mechanics of the lexicographic information in terms of:
  - Typefaces
  - Type sizes
  - Spelling conventions
    - Punctuation marks
    - Capitalization
    - Spelling rules
  - Product of a multi disciplinary team of lexicographers, linguistics, artists, editors/ publishers, consultants, reviewers, special contributors, field workers etc.
  - Product of many critical writing and review workshops

Ezikeojiaku (2004: 69-73) contains a good summary of what is expected of a good lexicographer, Eleven features are highlighted for the lexicographer who is the leader of the team. Essentially he must be / have:

- a scientist of language
- familiar with the serious demands of the science, art and craft of lexicography (Landau) Hartmann: etc

THE FUTURE IGBO DICTIONARY

Input from lexicography as a

- serious academic undertaking by professionals with the right training, competence, experience and skills
- not for amateurs no matter their zealousness or seriousness or sense of patriotism

Scope / Coverage

- Comprehensive, encyclopedic or specialized
- Monolingual, bilingual, tri,-multi-, lingual
- Pan – Igbo, pan – dialectal
- Historical, archival

Team Work

People with a multiplicity of very enlightened backgrounds and interests in:

- **Igbo Intra – disciplinary Igbo studies**
  - Phono – semantics
  - Socio – semantics
  - Dialectology
  - Historical linguistics
  - Transdisciplinary / interdisciplinary
  - Anthropological linguistics
  - Onomastics
    - Place names (troponyms)
    - Surnames / Personal names (anthroponyms)
    - Praise names
    - Nick names
    - Rites – of – passage names

Glosses

- Authentically and patently Igbo untainted by Franco–Anglo-Irish anthropology, Christianity, Pentecostalism esp, in the theophoric domains within Igbo anthroponyms. See, for example: Chineke is not (ChnaEke) or Nna Pater, Father, familiar in Igbo personal names (Chukwu) Nna

God the Father (na Nwa na Muonso) see: Okafor, R.C. et. al (2008) ***Igbo Personal and Title Names,*** among others.

Resources

Human and non-human

Human

Persons/professionals with the right mix of specialized training and skills in all the relevant areas including:

the various arts

- Painting
- Simple/complex line drawings
- Drama
- Multi-media

Non-Human

- Multi – media and engines of ICT for:
- Recording, documenting, retrieval, re-play transcribing, alphabetization x ooo, date
- Appropriate soft wares for alphabetization and type-setting of entries and other lexicographic data
- Consuming expertise in the science, art, and craft of lexicography
- Thorough competence, in among of other things, phono-semantics, Semantics, socio-semantics and socio - pragmatics of Igbo
- Familiarity with the old and new realities of all Igbo sub cultures from the pristine pre-Christian and colonial era to contemporary times

Some Failed / Moribund Igbo Dictionary Projects

Many well intentioned Igbo dictionary projects have failed. These include:

1. The SPILC Dictionary of Standard Igbo with Prof. M.J.C. Echeruo as editor.
2. That spear – headed by Ambassador G.M.C Anoka under the aegis of the Imo State Ministry of Information and Culture.
3. That of the Dept of African Languages and Literatures, University of Lagos.
4. That of the Centre of Igbo Studies, Imo State University Owerri, (an archival one)
5. The NERDC dictionaries which have continued to be in press
6. The Ike-Achebe Archival Pan-Igbo Dictionary Project

Some Recent Texts Worth Noting

1. Mbah, B.M et. al (2013) ***Igbo Adi: Igbo – English, English Igbo Dictionary of Linguistics and Literary Terms***
2. Akponye, Oilver (2014) (A) ***Bi – Lingual Dictionary of the Igbo and English Languages with Thesauruses. Okowaokwu na Onuogugu Igbo na Bekee 3rd edn.*** Owerri: Totan
3. Osondu, Ike S. (2013) ***Ntoala Irighiriomumundu (Fundamental Microbiology), 2nd.*** edn Enugu: Fidgina Global Books
4. Uchechukwu, C (2006) ***Grammatiktheorie und Lexikographie…*** Munich: LINCOMM Verlag.
5. Oweleke, EN (2007) ***Some Issues in Lexicography: Problems of ICVS, Affixation and Selectional Restrictrictions in Igbo Dictionaries*** Unpublished PhD Dissertation University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt.
6. Nwanjoku, A.C. Igbo Football Terminology. In: Anyaehie, G O. and U. E Chukwu ***Studies in Terminologies.***
7. Nnayereugo, A.C (41 – 52) (2000) ***A Glossary of Legal Terms: Their Analysis and Translation into the Igbo Language*** Professional Diploma Project in Translation and Interpreting, NINLAN, Aba (mimeo)
8. Cookey, Schola .A. (2012) Igbo Health Terminology Research: Gynecology/Obstertrics Nigerian ***Linguistics Festschrift*** 9: 129-135
9. Ohaike Nkechi (2010) Translating Medical Terms into Igbo Language: Problems and Prospect Nsukka: 23rd CLAN paper (mimeo)
10. Ajunwa, Enoch (n.d) Igbo Technical Dictionary Compilation: A Stimulating Experience (mimeo)
11. Asadu, F.O (2009) Igbo Political Terminology ***Awka JLL*** 5: 10-17
12. Asonye, Emman (2007) Towards the development of Igbo Expressions for Communicating and Disseminating Information about HIV / AIDS ***Nigerian Linguistics Festschrift*** 5: 131-137
13. Okwudishu, A (2007) An Analysis of Fish Names in Oguta Culture: Implications for the Millenium Development Goals ***Nigerian Linguistics Festschrift*** 6: 353 - 366
14. Iwunze, E.I (2008) The promotion of Reproductive Health among the Grassroots in Nigeria: A HIV /AIDS – Focused English – Igbo Translation JOLAN 11: 113 – 120
15. Chukwukere, F.N. Igbo Feminist Metalanguage (mimeo)
16. Oil, J.M et. al. (2013) ***English – Igbo Medical Dictionary*** Nsukka. UNP
17. Ezeoke, Romanus. Numerous Unpublished Mimeos and Mss in terminologies of various fields.

CONCLUSION

The Igbo language is a linguistic paradise, the Igbo verb a linguistic nightmare, and Igbo anthropology, socio – political organization, philosophy and theology, the social scientist's quagmire and minefield. A good modern Igbo dictionary should be able to make good lexicographic sense out of the multifarious challenges posed by these realities as well as the Igbo dialects, the Igbo verbal system, the complex non aristocratic yet non-acephalous political system as well as the very complex Igbo mindset.

The future Igbo Dictionary must be

> on the disc (or micro clip) in the form of vast lexical databases, continuously updated that can generate a dictionary of any given size and scope in a fraction of the time it used to take (Ezikeojiaku: 2004 23).

All the volumes of the OED are now available in one disc. The Collins Birmingham University International Language Database (COBUILD) has some has 500 millions words, in its archives. And from this staggering data base, grammars and dictionaries of all types, sizes, needs and specializations have been generated and will continue to be generated. The double award-winning Macmillan. ***English Dictionary for Advanced Students,*** with free Online Access, and with 7,500 essential words, drawn from a 200 million – word corpus is available in one disc.

With the right competencies, transparency, patriotism, right and adequate funding administered with sincerity and openness, the Igbo and their language need not invent any wheel in putting together materials as vast as COBUILD's to inform serious dictionaries of any shape, type, size, or specializations. Locally and internationally (EURALEX, the American Dictionary Association, etc, etc) all the cogs in the wheel of lexicography are now available for serious and sustained work to begin.