A REVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF IGBO LEXICOGRAPHY

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Abstract
The Igbo language is one of the languages of the Benue Congo family spoken predominantly in the south-east part of Nigeria. It is among the three major languages in Nigeria. Following past studies done such as Emenanjo (1978; 2015), Mbah, (2011; 2017; 2018), Mbah and Mbah (2010), Eme, (2008), Uchechukwu (2011), Egenti and Ikegwuonu (2019), Ogbalu, (1981), Nzeako, (1986), and Ubesie, (2010) in the Igbo language for many years, it is observed that syntax, morphology, phonology, semantics, culture and literature have received widespread attention whereas little attention has been paid to Igbo lexicography. It is on this premise that this paper attempts a brief review of the history of Igbo lexicography with the aim of identifying its historical phases, classifying the phases and pointing out the efforts made by scholars so far in field of the Igbo lexicography. The data for this study were drawn from both primary and secondary sources. The findings revealed that the study of Igbo lexicography can be traced as far back as the early time of European missionaries who brought down evangelism and western education in Igbo land. Again, some scholars have made tremendous efforts in the compilation of various Igbo dictionaries. We therefore, recommend that more research works be done in the Igbo lexicography in order to enrich the vocabularies and compile current dictionaries that will take care of the new terminologies which will contribute to the growth and development of the Igbo language.

Keywords: Lexicography, Lexicology, Dictionary, Wordlist, Glossaries

1. Introduction

This paper reviews the history of the Igbo lexicography. Before we discuss that, it is important that we refresh our minds on what lexicography and lexicology mean and also distinguish one from the other.

1.1 What is lexicography?

Lexicography is the process of writing, editing and compiling a dictionary. It is the creation, compilation or writing of dictionaries. It involves the practice of making and editing dictionaries and other reference texts. It also includes the development, description of theories and methods which are to be the basis of dictionary making. According to Agbedo (2015: 45), lexicography is the "writing of the word in some concrete forms i.e in the form of dictionary". The totality of all the words of a language forms the vocabulary or lexical system of a language. Note that words undergo constant change in their form and meaning. Gibbon and Borchardt (2008: 141) take lexicography to be ''the scientific and technological discipline that concerned with the theory

and practice of constructing user-oriented documents such as dictionaries, lexicons, encyclopedias, glossaries, terminology manuals and lexical databases for manuals and computational consultation". To Landau (2001) lexicography is a branch of applied linguistics which consists in observing, collecting, selecting, and describing units from the stock of words and word combination in one or more languages. In addition, Landau admits that in cases where two or more languages are involved simultaneously, the dictionary takes up the nature of the combination between the vocabularies of the two languages in question. In every language of the world, there are over millions of words that exist in it, and it is up to someone to research and record each and every one of them. Every word you can think of has to appear in the dictionary. This implies that dictionary publication is very necessary in the study and growth of any language. In sum, we can say that lexicography is the systematic process of compiling, editing and making dictionary.

A dictionary, according to Landau (2001:6) is "a text that describes the meanings of words and often provides information about their pronunciation, spelling, etymology (word derivation), grammatical status (word-class), usage and sometimes illustrations as well''. In other words, a dictionary can be regarded as a references book that provides readers with different types of information on a particular language for which the dictionary is complied. It is a reference material that provides information about lexical items in a language. It may contain pronunciations, syllabications, etymologies (word origin and histories) and examples of usage. It also provides carefully formulated sentences or selected quotations designed to illustrate contextual and grammatical usage of a given word (Ajunwa, 2009:128). He further adds that the phonetic transcription of each word is shown to depict its pronunciation, although this may not necessary be the case of an Igbo dictionary, since Igbo words are generally pronounced the way they are spelt. Dictionaries do not provide a connected coherent sequence as we find in books, rather, it is divided into thousands of sections which are called dictionary entries (Okeke, 2010:76). These entries according to Wehmier (2001) are normally arranged alphabetically according to the spelling of the entry word. A lexicographic dictionary is therefore, one which provides lexically relevant information. The process of compiling a dictionary for a particular language involves identification, description classification and definition of the words of that language. All these activities require a good basic linguistic analysis.

A dictionary could be monolingual, bilingual or trilingual. A monolingual dictionary refers to a dictionary in which both the wordlist and the meaning(s) are rendered in the same language, whereas a bilingual dictionary is one which gives the meanings of the words a source language through another with the concept written in one and their explanations are given in another. A trilingual dictionary is the type of dictionary in which the words of a language are explained in two other languages so that the three languages will be involved. A trilingual dictionary deals with more than two languages. In this type of dictionary, more explanation of words of the source language (SL) is done through more than two target languages (TL).

Dictionaries are divided thus: general purpose, scholarly, specialized, children and electronic dictionaries. One significant thing about these dictionaries is that each is complied bearing a specific set of users in mind. The primary aim of writing a dictionary for any language is to provide useful information on the vocabulary of that language. Dictionaries vary in size, volume, and price depending on the category of users for which each type is intended (Sanusi, 1994:116-125). Lexicology is a branch of linguistics that concerns itself with the overall study of the language's vocabulary, including its history. It is interesting to note that it is in the larger field of lexicology that one locates lexicology.

This paper has four sections. Section one is introduction. Section two discusses lexicology and lexicology. Section three, traces the history of the Igbo lexicology while section four is the conclusion.

2. Lexicography versus lexicology

The terms "lexicography" and lexicology" are derived from the Greek word lexiko (adjective from lexis meaning speech or *way of speaking* or *word* (Agbedo, 2015:45). Both of them are concerned with "word" or the lexical unit of a language. Lexicography is derived from the Greek word *lexikos* meaning *of words* and *grapho*. This implies that, lexicography is lexico *word* plus graph *writing* i.e, the writing of word meaning to *inscribe* or *to write*. Lexicography is the art or craft of writing, editing and compiling of dictionary. Being a craft, it involves a way of doing something useful. Landau (2001:153) maintains that lexicography "is not a theoretical exercise to increase the sum of human knowledge, but practical work to put together a text that people can understand; a text that is concerned with explaining something that readers will understand". Some scholars have argued that lexicography is an art and not a science. To these scholars

lexicographic work can be done without the use of linguistic principles. They are of the view that lexicography cannot be subjected to the rigid of the scientific principles and methods. Their argument is that in lexicographic field, the analysis of data is not based on objective methodology but on subjective methodology. This implies that in lexicographic analysis, intuitive reasoning is required. Landau (2001:249) posits that lexicography "evaluates the raw facts of use but their evaluation is not critical". Therefore, lexicography is not viewed as an aspect of linguistics, but as a branch of lexicology. This means that it is in the lager field of lexicology that one locates lexicography. Ezikeojiaku (2004:11) affirms that "lexicography is dependent on but not the same as lexicology". Therefore, all the necessary techniques which are involved for dictionary compilation are the concern of lexicography. It also concerned itself with how words are arranged and organized in a dictionary. It studies individual lexical units of a language and defines how to organize them in a dictionary accordingly.

On the other hand, the term "lexicology" is derived from lexico *word* plus *logos* "learning or science that is, the science of words. Lexicography concerns itself with the overall study of the vocabulary of a language. It deals with words and word-forming morphemes (Omego, 2016 : 690). It deals with individual words in a language. It is the science of the study of words while lexicography is the writing of words in form of a dictionary.

From the foregoing, it is observed that lexicography and lexicology are different, but closely related disciplines. They are related in the sense that they both deal with words and their definitions or etymology or meaning, but differ because lexicography deals with dictionary making while lexicology concerns itself with the overall study of the vocabulary of a language which includes etymology and history of words.

3. The History of the Igbo Lexicography

The history of the Igbo Lexicography can be discussed in phases thus:

a. The era of collection of wordlist
b. The era of dictionary compilation and their appearance in forms that were appended to grammar textbooks.
c. The era marked with more serious lexicographic efforts and appending extensive vocabularies and their glossaries in grammar textbooks.
d. The era of dictionary publication as comprehensive textbooks.

3.1. The era of collection of wordlist

A wordlist refers to a list of words collected randomly without any defined order of arranging the words alphabetically which can be used as a stepping stone for developing a new dictionary or for an emergent dictionary.

The history of the Igbo Lexicography can be traced to the era of the early European missionaries who investigated the Igbo language. These foreign early missionaries studied the Igbo language in order to enable them translate religious materials for use in the work of expedition of the Niger, and evangelization as well as westernization. They were non-speakers of the Igbo language.

The Igbo Lexicography began first with the earliest collection of wordlist by Rev. G. C. A. Oldendrop, a German missionary (Pastor of the Moravian Brethren) in 1766, in West Indies. His collections presented the earliest information in print. Oldendrop did not only collect these vocabularies, he also provided two sentences in Igbo. Oldendrop's vocabulary collections could be said to have been motivated by sheer interest since nothing very significant was done with them after publication in German in 1777, but "there was no doubt that they threw little light on the geography of the Delta Region and anthropological information on the Igbo" (Nwadike, 2008:8). From1828, the first wordlist in Igbo appeared in Freetown to 1857, when Igbo studies shifted to Onitsha in Igbo land.

Norris made an extensive collection of the Igbo wordlist which was used in his Niger expedition of 1841. We should bear in mind that the primary aim of these first Lexicography works on the Igbo language by these European missionaries was not to publish an Igbo dictionary but they were meant solely to facilitate the work of evangelism. This resulted in limiting the early Igbo dictionaries, and hence meager production. Omego (2016: 689-690) observes that "the greater parts of these earlier lexicographic works on Igbo were carried out by foreign missionaries (i.e. non-native speaker lexicographers. Supporting her view, Ezikeojiaku (2004:8) affirms that "the earliest dictionaries had a practical aim" According to Crystal (1987), they were often bilingual or polyglot wordlists aimed at the travelers and the missionaries, or glossaries written to help people understand words which were dialectal, technical, or rare.

Rev. J.F Schōn collected the greatest number of wordlist in Igbo- 1600 words which if they were published could have been the first Igbo dictionary by 1840. What made Schōn not to achieve

this was as a result of his humiliation by Obi of Aboh when he was addressing the citizens of Aboh in 1841. This humiliation made Schōn to abandon Igbo studies and turned his full attention to Hausa "a language he gave so much academically" (Nwadike, 2008: 11).

3.2 The era of dictionary compilation and their appearance in forms that was appended in grammar textbooks

This era was the time when Scholars attempted to compile dictionaries and append them to grammar textbooks. This implies that within this period, dictionaries appeared in forms that were appended in grammar textbooks. Igwe (1999: x) notes that:

> The majority of those who have endeavored to produce dictionaries in Igbo have been non-Igbo whose knowledge of the language cannot be expected to have been as deep as that of an Igbo person born and bred in Igbo land.

In 1882, S. A. Crowther's Vocabulary of the Ibo Language Part 1, Ibo-English appeared. Crowther was an Anglican Bishop, and a school teacher. The vocabularies collected consist of words collected by Crowther's workers at Onitsha. This was compiled as an Igbo dictionary (the first serious attempt at compiling Igbo dictionary) to enable Crowther translate religious materials in a form which would be understood by the speakers of Igbo.

In 1883, J.F. Schōn compiled Part II English-Igbo. This is Part II, to Crowthers's vocabulary of Igbo language.

In 1904, A Ganôt compiled a trilingual dictionary: English-Ibo and French dictionary. It was based on the Onitsha dialect.

In 1907, Pire C. Zappa published Essai de dictionaries Francais-Ibo ou Francais-Ika. This is a bilingual dictionary which was based on a Western dialect.

Between 1913 and 1914, Northcote W. Thomas, a government Anthropologist published six-volume anthropologies report entitled Anthropological Report on the Ibo-Speaking Peoples of Nigeria included Part II in 1913,English-Ibo and Ibo-English dictionary. It was based on Awka and Onitsha dialects. Part III (1913) was entitled, 'Proverbs', Narratives, vocabularies and Grammar' are based on Awka, Onitsha, Aboh and two other dialects formed Part V in 1914: Addenda to Ibo-English dictionary.

In 1906, T. J Dennis edited Ibo-English dictionary which came up from the collection of items by Miss Warner and other missionaries and native agents of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) at Onitsha. The collections were based mostly on Onitsha, Awka, Aboh and other dialects (ie. neighborhood dialects). The collections were arranged alphabetically by the Hon. L. E. Portman and Miss Laird (Williamson 1972). In 1923, the companion volume emerged: Dictionary of the Ibo language written by T. J Dennis. It is interesting to note that T.J. Dennis wrote the first Igbo dictionary.

3.3 The era marked with more serious lexicographic efforts and appending extensive vocabularies and their glossaries in published grammar textbooks.

During this era some scholars have embarked on serious lexicographic works by trying to append extensive vocabularies and their glossaries in grammar books or textbooks they published. The glossaries of the vocabularies are also added for clarity as well as to help the reader to understand the vocabularies well.

In 1932, R. F. G. Adams published A modern Grammar of Igbo. This book contained Igbo-English glossary of about a thousand entries.

In 1936, Ida C. Ward published a book titled An Introduction to the Ibo language which was based on the dialect of Onitsha. This book contained Ibo-English vocabularies and some texts from Arochukwu and Ngwa dialects.

In 1962, L. B. S. Swift, A. Ahaghotu and E. Ugorji published Igbo Basic Course which included an Igbo-English glossary items used in the course. It was based on Owerri (Owere) dialect.

In 1962, F. C. Ogbalu published Okowa Okwu: An extended Igbo-English and English-Igbo vocabulary. The collection was based on the Onitsha dialect.

In 1963, M.M Green and G. E Igwe published A descriptive Grammar of Igbo. This book contains a glossary of Igbo-English vocabularies.

In1967 and 1970, G.E Igwe and M.M. Green published Igbo language course Book II and Book III. These two books contained extensive Igbo-English vocabularies. They were based on Ọhụhụ dialect.

In 1967, Robert G. Armstrong compiled a comparative wordlist of five Igbo dialects. This systematic lexical comparison of 1,050 words from five Nigerian Igbo dialects is based on the

list used for the West African Language Survey in 1960. He translated English words into the following five Igbo dialects: Orlu, Owerri, Ọhụhụ Onitsha and Ukwuani. These dialects have in common a considerable vocabulary, systematic sound shifted, and stability of tone.

3.4. The era of dictionary publication as comprehensive textbooks (No longer as appendix in grammar textbooks)

This era witnessed the publication of dictionaries as comprehensive text books, not as appendix in grammar textbooks.

In 1968, Beatrice F. Welmers and William E. Welmers published Igbo: A Learners Dictionary (for peace corps members). This is Igbo-English and English-Igbo Dictionary. According to Mbah, Mbah, Ikeokwu, Okeke, Nweze, Ugwuoria, Akaeze Onu, Eze, Prezi and Odii (2013), the authors used what they called compromise Igbo in the dictionary.

In 1972, Kay Williamson edited Igbo-English Dictionary which is a 568 page dictionary. This dictionary was based on the Manuscript wordlist by G.W Pearman from Onitsha dialect, which was revised and expanded by the work of C. N. Madunagu and E.I Madunagu and some other assistants.

In 1985, H. Nnaji published, A Modern English-Igbo Dictionary with illustrations. It is a three hundred and forty-five (345) page dictionary. He was assisted by G.C. Nnaji of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

In 1999, Igwe G. Egemba Igwe published, Igbo-English Dictionary. It was the desire to sustain the profits of the Igbo language and encouragement for future writers and researchers that made Igwe to publish this dictionary. The entries that are contained in this dictionary were collected from different dialects of Igbo with special regard to the central Igbo dialects.

In 2001, Eke Julius Ginger published, Igbo-English dictionary (Ọkọwa Okwu) which comprises ten thousand four hundred and six three (10, 463) words established on the commonest words and phrases in the standard Igbo (SI) The dictionary also contains simple definitions and examples of usage.

Following Eke's publication in 2001 was M. J. C. Echerou's publication: Igbo-English dictionary which is a two hundred and eight-three (283) page. The dictionary has two parts: Part I is Igbo-English while Part II is English-Igbo glosses. Furthermore, the zeal to produce more Igbo dictionaries to enhance lexicographical development in Igbo language is still bordering

some Igbo scholars. Recently, in 2008, B. M. Mbah of the University of Nigeria Nsukka came up with the idea of compiling a specialized bipartite-bilingual dictionary of linguistics and literary terms. In order to achieve this, he summoned a meeting of some scholars from various areas of linguistics and literary studies based on their classroom experiences over the years. These scholars collated words and expressions in various disciplines to enable them compile the dictionary. They also gone further to consult experts from other disciplines such as communications, publishing and translation studies who furnished them with the information they needed. The dictionary is arranged in sections according to disciplines thus: applied linguistics, broadcasting, dialectology, historical linguistics, lexicography, morphology, oral literature, phonetics, phonology, pragmatics, psycholinguistics, publishing, research method, semantics, sociolinguistics, syntax, culture, translation, writing and written literature. This dictionary by name ÌGBÒ ÀDI Igbo-English English-Igbo Dictionary of Linguistics and Literary Terms was published in 2013, which is the most recent work. It is a three hundred and forty-two (342) page dictionary. Okebalama in ÌGBÒ ÀDI (2013: xi) acknowledges that the dictionary has ‘‘about forty-five thousand (45, 000) technical words with lucid definitions, explanations and translations”. The dictionary has two parts: Part 1 is Igbo-English while Part II is English-Igbo. The uniqueness of this dictionary is that it was written by specialists from different areas of linguistics, language, education and literature unlike the previous dictionaries which were produced single-handedly without collaboration among lexicographers, linguists and others. The dictionary contains some neological works. The authors made effort to include new areas allied to Igbo linguistics which are necessary for the development of the language and its research. The new areas include: translation, publishing, writing, culture, research, lexicography and broadcasting. Furthermore, the authors have gone farther the tradition of glossing Igbo words and defining the same in the English language as obtained in some previous published works. Furthermore, in addition to the above efforts, Mbah (2015) is another work that contributes to the growth of Igbo lexicography,

Conclusion

From the foregoing, we can observe that over the years, different scholars have made very serious lexicographic efforts to produce reliable and extensive dictionaries that will enrich the field of the Igbo studies and enable one to study the language, especially in this technological era

that is witnessing neological works and ideas. Although these scholars have made significant input, there is still need for more dictionaries to be produced because Igbo dictionaries are the least available now if one scans through book shelves in public libraries or bookstands in bookshops to compare with the number of publications made on grammar, linguistics, culture and literary textbooks. Therefore, this study commends all the efforts of the previous native-speaker scholars for the quickening of interest and also urges e present and future researchers not to relent or neglect the writing of Igbo dictionaries for the growth and development of the language.

The history of the Igbo lexicography will be conclusive if the efforts of the Society for Promoting Igbo Language and Culture (SPILC) are not mentioned. In fact Okaasusu Igbo-Igbo metalanguage (1985) is a landmark in the history of the Igbo lexicographic works which has gone a long way to help in enhancing the teaching and learning of the Igbo language till present. This study commends the efforts of the committee.

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