FROM BILINGUAL TO MONOLINGUAL IGBO LANGUAGE DICTIONARIES: THE TASK AHEAD

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Abstract

Different dictionaries serve different purposes. Bilingual dictionary translates words and phrases from one language to another.Monolingual dictionary is one in which both glosses, notations and explanations are rendered in the same language. A monolingual dictionary is designed to meet the reference need of people learning foreign and native languages. Each kind of dictionary helps students in performing different activities at different stages in distinct ways. Language learners should progress from a bilingual dictionary to a monolingual one as they become more proficient in their target language. It is observed that the few dictionaries available in Igbo language are mostly bilingual in nature and there is urgent need to take Igbo language to the next level of development. On this backdrop,the paper calls on linguists to rise to the challenge of compiling monolingual dictionaries in the language.The paper concludes that for the development of Igbo language, there is need for the training of lexicographers who will devote time to producing monolingual dictionaries purely in the Igbo language.

1. Introduction

Lexicography is an activity which consist in observing, collecting, selecting, analysing and describing in a dictionary a number of items(words, word elements and word combinations) belonging to one or more languages.Dictionaries are produced to meet either the individual need for information, or the need of a community to preserve information for the future.The function and degree of importance of the different information types in a dictionary depend on what language or languages the dictionary is to describe (Svensen, 2009).If there is only one object language in a dictionary, it is a monolingual dictionary which can be either the intended user's native language or a foreign language. A monolingual dictionary describes words and phrases instead of translating them.It renders the meaning of words through other words in the same language. In a monolingual dictionary, both the glosses, notations and explanations are rendered in the same language. When two object languages are involved in a dictionary, it is a bilingual dictionary. One of the languages is in most cases identical with the user's native language.A bilingual dictionary is a unique dictionary used to translate words or phrases from one language to another. In cases where two or more languages are involved simultaneously, the description takes on the nature of a comparison between the items that have been selected from the vocabularies of the languages in question.

Dictionary creation is a part of language revitalization and preservation and a language without different types of dictionaries has a limited time of existence. The more dictionaries in a language, the stronger the language becomes.Different kinds of dictionaries help students in carrying out various activities at different stages in peculiar ways.

The paper appreciates the lexicographic efforts so far in the Igbo language but nevertheless calls for urgent and spiritedendeavour towards the production of monolingual dictionaries. The following sub-headings are handled in the different sections of the paper: the introduction, review of literature, merits and demerits of bilingual dictionaries, Igbo bilingual dictionaries, features and prospects of monolingual dictionaries, need for Igbo monolingual dictionaries and the conclusion.

2. Literature Review

Dictionaries are lexicographic aids needed to improve native language proficiency in order to facilitate the learning of foreign language. It is the basic building block of any language course and the first thing a student should be taught is how to use one. Zugusta (1971:197) suggests a comprehensive definition of the dictionary in his authoritative text on lexicography:
A dictionary is a systematically arranged list of socialized linguistic forms compiled from the speech habits of a given speech community and commented upon in such a way that the qualified reader understands the meaning of each separate form and is informed of the relevant facts concerning the function of that form in its community.

The above definition makes clear the fact that dictionary making is a meticulous arrangement of words and their acceptable interpretations. This is to say that a lexicographer mirrors each lexeme from the perspective of a particular speech community.

In his contribution, Underhill (1984), focusing on dictionary types submits that monolingual dictionaries help students think in the target language and get out of the translation rut, thus promote their confidence in dealing with another language, formulate questions and look for answers on their own.

Atkins (1985) concentrating on monolingual dictionaries, lists certain components of monolingual dictionary as follows: lexemes, spellings, indications of pronunciation, grammatical information (including parts of speech, morphological information and verb patterns), definitions, illustrative examples, idioms, graphic illustrations, cross-reference, etymology and stylistic variations.

Crystal (1987:108) conceives of a dictionary as a reference book that lists words in alphabetical order. He observes that a random collection of words should not be regarded as a dictionary. For anything to be regarded a dictionary, there must be a definite order for identifying words.Crystal also differentiates between two senses of the word “dictionary” as a reference book in a living

room or on a library shelf and inbuilt dictionary, which every speaker of a language carries with him as part of his mental equipment.

Bearing dictionary users in mind, Bejoint andMaulin (1987) argue thatthe more skilled the learner is in using dictionaries in general, the more information he is able to extract from the monolingual dictionary. Unskilled dictionary users may rely on bilingual information. With progress in these skills, the monolingual information will gain relevance and importance – first in comprehension and later in production.Summers (1988),in his contribution, regards a dictionary as a tool to enhance students' tendency to learn individual words when acquiring a second language. This is to say that dictionaries are useful and indispensable instruments in the hands of language learners.

Hartmann (1992),supporting Bejoint and Maulinclaims that the very fact of using a monolingual dictionary is a useful search experience that might yield more learning fruit than the student had originally intended.

Baker and Kaplan (1994:2-3) indicate that dictionaries available to the translator tend to be found at the opposite ends of the spectrum. At the one end, there are bilingual dictionaries, which offer equivalent words and phrases, rather than explain the meanings of headwords. At the other end, there are the monolingual dictionaries which, irrespective of whether they are intended for mother tongue speakers or second language learners, tend to rely on synonyms.Baker and Kaplan see dictionaries as useful instruments only to translators and not to all language learners.

Wright (2001) takes a dictionary to be the repository of final linguistic authority and a bank account of words to be drawn upon in the time of need.Hanks (2010) throws more light to what a dictionary should be to a language; he claims that the dictionary is expected to give rulings on what is correct and what is incorrect in different contexts in matters of usage. However, Hanks posits that such rulings should be based on the empirical analysis of the actual usage of good writers, rather than on the preferences and prejudices of a few journalists, academics and self-appointed pundits.In agreement with the above views, El-Sayed and Siddick (2013) affirm that a dictionary is an authoritative source of language as it can tell the user with every detail about other languages aspects in addition to the meaning.

Denham and Lobeck (2013) listed some of the entries in a dictionary as follows:the alphabetical placing of lexemes, correct spelling, the pronunciation, the usage in grammar, the etymology, the definition, and examples of usage, synonyms and antonyms, alternate construction, like past participle, or common prefixes/suffixes, alternate spellings.

2.1Merits and Demerits of Bilingual Dictionaries

Bilingual dictionaries provide translation or explanation using another language. They have words in language A and then another equivalent word in language B with some details about the word (if it is a noun, adjective, verb etc). Sometimes, you will find a sentence or two to give you an example of how to use the word (Fernandez (n.d)). In line with the above, Manning

(1990:159) indicates that the bilingual dictionary is the translator's basic tool and that it is the bridge that makes inter lingual transfer possible.
Pinchuck (1977:223) warns however, that the bilingual dictionary is an instrument that has to be used with circumspection and discernment and he further cautions that:

The bilingual dictionary has a particular importance for the translator, but it is also a very dangerous tool. In general, when a translator needs to resort to a dictionary to find an equipment, he will do better to consult a good monolingual in the source language and if necessary one in the target language as well. The Bilingual dictionary appears to be a short cut and to save time, but only a perfect bilingual dictionary can really do this and no bilingual dictionary is perfect.

Most times, bilingual dictionaries lack context sentences; it is very hard to know exactly how to use the word translated. They also lack explanations about the suggested words that should be used; and in mostcases present them all as equivalents. The meanings listed in bilingual dictionaries are often imprecise and incomplete, often leading to errors, especially in areas of specific translations Fernandez (n.d).

Swanepoel (1989) states that one major problem associated with bilingual dictionaries is the basic lack of equivalence which exists between languages. Swanepoel claims that it is a misconception to assume that the general bilingual dictionary is sufficiently sophisticated to be an ideal aid for the professional translators. It is merely a useful albeit a limited aid. He argues that the bilingual dictionary is limited for the following reasons:

(a) It does not contain sufficient information for the user.
(b) It cannot be a substitute for the users' competence in the source language and target language. The process of translation involves the users' total communicative competence, which also includes a grasp of the texts' socio-cultural context.

From the discussion so far, it is obvious that bilingual dictionaries tend to be the first lexicographic products in most languages. They serve as a kind of foundation upon which further works in dictionary writing hang on. It is a good start for beginners in second language learning. However, for a good grasp in language learning, bilingual dictionaries have very little to offer.

3. Igbo Bilingual Dictionaries

Emenanjo (1989) declares that apart from Williamson's (1972) Igbo-English dictionary, the rest of the dictionaries in the Igbo language, including Ogbalu'sOkowa-Okwu (English-Igbo Dictionary) and Okafor's Igbo-English Dictionary are more or less wordlists.
Heralding Emenanjo's declaration, Ajunwa (2009) writing on Igbo lexicographic activities observes:

Scanning through book shelves in the university/college libraries or bookstands in bookshops for written materials on Igbo language and culture, one easily discovers that Igbo dictionaries are the

least available. In spite of the indispensable pedagogical role, which dictionaries generally play in the learning process at all levels, there is as of now, only a few published Igbo dictionaries, most of which are rather substandard and scanty in terms of form and content.

Ajunwa captures the state of the Igbo language with regards to dictionary writing. He bemoans the lack of good dictionaries in the language knowing the usefulness of same in language development.

Mbah, Mbah, Ikeokwu, Okeke, Nweze, Ugwuona, Akaeze, Onu, Eze, Prezi &Odii (2013),also observe that apart from Kay Williamson (1972) who earlier made the bold attempt at a visible dictionary, several people attempted at an Igbo dictionary or provided word lists and vocabularies. They listIgwe's (1999) summary of Igbo dictionaries with their own additions as follows:

- 1841: Norris, E. An extensive word list of Igbo
- 1882: Crowther, S.A. vocabulary of the Ibo language. This consists of words collected by Crowther workers at Onitsha.
- 1983: Schon J.C. English-Ibo. This is part 11, to the Crowther's Vocabulary of the Ibo language.
- 1904: Ganot, English, Ibo, and French dictionary. This was written in the Onitsha Dialect.
- 1913-1914: Thomas, Northcote W. The six volume on Anthropological report on the Ibo-speaking peoples of Nigeria included Part 11 (1913) English-Ibo and Ibo-English dictionary. It is based on Awka and Onitsha dialects. Part 111(1913) was entitled, 'Proverbs,' narratives, vocabularies and Grammar are based on Awka, Onitsha, Aboh and two other dialects formed Part V (1914): Addenda to Ibo-English dictionary.
- 1906: Dennis, T.J. (Ed) Ibo-English dictionary resulted from the collection of items made by the workers of C.M.S. at Onitsha. Some words came from Awka, Abo and some other dialects. In 1923, the companion volume appeared: Dictionary of the Ibo language: English-Ibo.
- 1932: Adams, R.F.G. A modern grammar of Igbo. This contained Igbo-English glossary of about a thousand entries.
- 1936: Ward, Ida C. An Introduction to the Ibo language was based on the Onitsha dialect. It contained Ibo-English vocabularies, and some texts from Arochukwu and Ngwa Dialects
- 1962: Swift, Ahaghotu&Ugorji, Igbo Basic Course included an Igbo-English glossary of items in the course. It was based on the Owere (Owerri) dialect.
- 1962: Ogbalu, F.C. Okowaokwu: An extended Igbo-English and English-Igbo vocabulary. The collection was based on the Onitsha dialect.
- 1963: Green, M.M. & G.E. Igwe, A Descriptive Grammar of Igbo. This includes a glossary of Igbo-English vocabularies.
- 1963: Abraham, R.C. Before his death in 1963, Abraham had made a considerable collection of Igbo words of the Bonny dialect which he intended to publish as a dictionary.

- 1967 & 1970: Igwe, G.E. & M.M. Green: Igbo Language Course Book II and Book III. These include extensive Igbo-English vocabularies.
- 1967: Armstrong: Robert G. A comparative wordlist of five Igbo dialects. Over 1,000 English words were translated into five Igbo dialects.
- 1968: Beatrice F. & William E. Welmers, A Learner's Dictionary (for peace corps members). In this Igbo-English and English-Igbo Dictionary, the authors used what they called Compromise Igbo.
- 1972: Williamson, Kay (Ed) Igbo-English Dictionary. This is a 568-page dictionary based on the compilation made by G.W. Pearman from the Onitsha dialect which was revised and enlarged by C.N. Madunagu and E.I. Madunagu and some other assistants.
- 1985: Nnaji, H. A modern English-Igbo dictionary.
- 1999: Igwe G. Egemba: Igbo-English dictionary. This dictionary is borne out of the desire to preserve the gains of the Igbo language over time in its development as well as an encouragement to future writers in Igbo. The entries in this dictionary are drawn from different dialects of Igbo but with special attention to the central dialects.
- 2001: Eke, Julius Ginger: Igbo-English dictionary (Ọkọwaokwu). It contains 10,463 words based on the commonest words and phrases in Standard Igbo with simple definitions and examples of usage.
- 2001: Echeruo, M.J.C. Igbo-English dictionary. It is a 283-page dictionary in two parts: part I: Igbo-English while part II is English-Igbo glosses.

Also in 2011, Akponye, O. came up with Bi-lingual Dictionary of the Igbo and English Languages with Thesauruses (ỌkọwaokwunaỌnụọgụgụ Igbo naBekee (3rd ed.)). This is a 538-page dictionary in five sections: section 1: Pronunciation guide, section 2: Igbo-English. Section 3: English-Igbo, section 4: Ọnụọgụgụ/Numerals and section 5: Some technical vocabularies (Igbo-English).

However, in the process of completing this paper, Mbah B. M. published a monolingual Igbo dictionary (ỌsanyeOkwu Igbo naNkọwaya) in 2021. This 1464-page dictionary is the first monolingual dictionary written in the Igbo language.

The above inventory of Igbo language lexicographic publications speaks volumes of what has been done so far in the language and the enormous task ahead. The above list makes clear the stand of this paper – the dearth of monolingual dictionaries in the Igbo language.

4. Prospects of Monolingual Dictionaries

A monolingual dictionary is a type of dictionary designed to meet the reference needs of people learning a foreign language. Nida (1958:297) asserts that monolingual dictionaries are preferred for users who participate in and understand the culture being described; bilingual dictionaries describe a culture, which differs in various proportions from that of the users.

Monolingual dictionary explains word in the language one is learning. In monolingual dictionaries, words are not translated; rather words are given and explained in the same language.Underhill (1984) believes that "monolingual dictionaries help students think in the target language and get out of the translation rut, thus promoting their confidence in dealing with another language and hence are led to formulate questions and look for answers on their own".

Bejiont and Moulin (1987:104) comparing bilingual and monolingual dictionaries assert that bilingual dictionaries are ideal for quick consultation while monolingual ones, though more difficult to use, have the extra merit of introducing the user right into the lexical system of the second language.Monolingual dictionaries have so much more information details: class of word, etymology, pronunciation, definition, examples, synonyms etc.Hartmann (1992) going a step further, claims that the very fact of using a monolingual dictionary is a useful experience that might yield more learning front than the student had originally intended. Ezikeojiaku (2004) uses the term 'intralingual' to describe monolingual dictionary as all the relevant definitions in it with regard to the lexical items are given in one language.In his view, monolingual dictionary ensures a complete development of the resources of the language and the wealth of information given in monolingual dictionaries has the impact of improving the language especially for the native speaker or those researching into the language and its literature. Another advantage of monolingual dictionaries as reported by Ezikeojiaku is that it captures the exact description of a lexicon since the metalanguage is the same. To him,monolingual dictionary is more profound, it is native speaker-targeted.

Svensen (2009) asserts that in a monolingual dictionary, the descriptive language is usually done in the object language with the understanding that the user's knowledge of that language is to some extent imperfect.In his view, the purpose of this type of dictionary is to fill a gap in that knowledge.

Hanks (2010), writing on the importance of monolingual dictionaries says that a large modern monolingual dictionary of any language has an important role to play in the community and language communities, large and small need their dictionaries. A great monolingual dictionary has a different function: It brings together speakers of a language;it has a social integrative function;making explicit the basis of words and meanings and usage which all users of the language rely on.

Hanks' explanation reveals that monolingual dictionaries are very important for the growth of any language. It is like a well from which the speakers and learners of the language draw.

Winarsih (2012) states that monolingual dictionary is the most helpful vocabulary reference because of the abundant information provided on linguistics and semantics. He reiterates that the monolingual dictionary is particularly useful for polysemous headwords that have many subentries (e.g., the verb 'get' has 38 subentries in one dictionary. In addition to providing more

information and examples than other types of dictionaries, monolingual dictionaries include the translation and sentence samples that learners can utilize directly or paraphrase.

El-Sayed and Siddick (2013) maintain that monolingual dictionary promotes fluency by offering definitions in context; in contrast, bilingual dictionaries tend to channel learners towards single word translation equivalents that may not be appropriate in the discourse in question. They reiterate that a monolingual dictionary with its reliance on target language and capacity for paraphrases of many meanings deliberately provides a wealth of semantic, grammatical and stylistic wealth of information that encourages production language activities. Richter (2018), in line with the foregoing, favours monolingual dictionaries, saying they provide morecomprehensive information about the target language.

4.1 TheNeed for More Igbo Monolingual Dictionaries

Languages can be developed through the creation of dictionaries.Different stages of second language acquisition require different types of dictionaries and they all have their own functions in helping a language learner.

Ezeikeojiaku(2004)asserts that the more descriptive tasks are reserved for the monolingual dictionary to perform particularly if a living language is to be described, however, helaments, “It is regrettable that such a monolingual type of dictionary is still in short supply in African languages including Igbo language”Ezikeojiaku adds that a serious project on the monolingual dictionaries of the demolects – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba have been started by the Nigerian Educational Research Development Council (NERDC) Abuja.The fate and the state of this all-important project is still vague as at the time of writing this paper.

As El-Sayed and Siddick (2013) point out, a dictionary serves the purpose of providing linguisticinformation about language which can be applied to a variety of activities. In addition, they assert that a dictionary can show students the possibilitiesin a language and is capable of providing a wealth of information. This is to say that the importance of dictionaries to language learners and to the language itself can never be over emphasized. The more types of dictionaries in a language, the more the languagelearners’ benefit. English language is almost becoming a global language because of the uncountable number of lexicographic products in the language flooding the market.

5. Conclusion

This paper shows the importance of dictionaries in the revitalization and development of languages. It highlights the merits and demerits of bilingual dictionaries. The potentials of monolingual dictionaries are also emphasized. A list of Igbo bilingual dictionaries forms a major part of this work; this is to justify the paucity of monolingual dictionaries in Igbo language. The paper calls on linguists to come to the aid of the language by compilingmore monolingual

dictionaries purely in the Igbo language; since monolingual dictionaries are designed basically for indigenous and fluent speakers of the language. It is believed that this will raise the status of the language. There is an urgent need to take Igbo language to the next level;hence, the paper concludes that for the development and revitalization of Igbo language, there is need for the training of lexicographers who will devote time to developing monolingual dictionaries purely in Igbo language. The paper suggests team work and division of labour especially in data collection and collation. In our opinion, Igbo linguists and lexicographers may decide to start compiling monolingual Igbo dictionaries in volumes rather than waiting to come up with a complete Igbo monolingual dictionary which may take a long time or may be almost impossible considering language dynamism.

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