

## Effect of Migration on Igbo Language

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### ABSTRACT

The world has been described as a global village due to human migration. Migration can be defined as a platform of movement from an environment to another. The context can also be seen as the movement done through the modern means of communication such as smart phones and other electronic gadgets. Language and culture are not left out in this global migration as there are available means or mechanisms through which new ideas and information are mixed and exchanged. In other way, it can simply be defined as acculturation. This paper, therefore examines new method of communication in Igbo land and some cultural values adopted by Igbo people as a result of migration in early 21<sup>st</sup> century and their impacts. The paper also assesses the influence of acculturation on Igbo children and the society at large including the position and future of Igbo language and culture at the face of this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Careful examination of these contexts reveals some gaps on Igbo language and cultural value system. It is observed that Igbo language is highly endangered and most of the cultural values are acculturated. Primary and secondary sources such as attending some '*igba-nkwu*' Igbo traditional marriage ceremonies, textbooks and journals are used for data collection and analysis.

**Keywords:** Migration, acculturation, 21<sup>st</sup> century, Igbo language and culture.

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### INTRODUCTION

Human migration is the movement of people from one place to another with the aim of settling permanently in the new location. Before migration takes place, the movement is sometimes over-long distances from one country to another [1]. Though it is believed that sometimes there could be an internal migration which could be seen when people migrate as individuals in family units or in large groups to another place within a country [2]. Any temporary movement of people from one place to another either for political, religious or nomadic movements are not regarded as migrations, hence there is no intention of settling in the new place because the movement is seasonal. Other causes for internal migration are for agricultural purpose and shift of population into cities known as urbanization [3]. This study tends to limit the scope to international migration. There are uncountable reasons why immigrants choose to migrate to another country. Firstly, people migrate for

economic purposes. Most migrants are generally from impoverished developing countries such as Nigerian people. The second reason is to search for food, sex, and security outside their usual habitation. [4] is of the view that towns and cities are a creation of human struggle to obtain food, sex, and security. He further avers that to produce food, security and reproduction, human beings must out of necessity, move out of their usual, habitation and enter into indispensable social relationships that are cooperative or antagonistic [5]. In Igbo society before 21<sup>st</sup> century, there was not anything like cell phones that could be taken around for communication from place to place. The upgrading from home table phone led to a new software known as global system of mobile communication (GSM) [6]. Here, the migration process includes making sure the new environment's features are exploited, old settings do not require and current applications continue to work [7].

## METHODOLOGY

The data collection was focused on three major sources; the library method which gave the researcher the insight where many scholars write copiously on migration, language, culture, and acculturation [8]. The data were analyzed using postcolonial criticism theory because of its involvement in discussions about experiences in migration, slavery, suppression, resistance etcetera [9]. The postcolonial theory has been produced in all societies into which the imperial forces of Europeans have intruded [10].

**Igbo Language under distress**

Language is a means by which people communicate to each other. The communication could either be in form of oral or signs. [11] "defines a language as a purely human and non-instructive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols". It is through language, that people living in a social bound area are able to voice out their ideas, communication, express their feelings both with musical instruments and by dramas. Language is what people in an area socially share together. Language is a socially acceptable code or conventional system for delivering concepts. Nothing can unite or bind any society together without language. Language is the highest tool for communication between members of the public in the form of sound produced by humans. Language is a series of sound produced by means of conscious human beings [12]. Most scholars see language as a means of human communication, socially acceptable symbols, tools for shaping the mind and influencing others and also a group of words put together to form speech.

Igbo language is one of three major languages spoken in Nigeria. The Igbo land is a common linguistic and cultural region in southern Nigeria that is characterized by a high degree of cultural and linguistic diversity [13]. The linguistic dominant in Igbo land led to the development of a standard Igbo to help unify the speakers of the different dialects of Igbo language. Igbo language is

classified as one of the languages of Benue- Congo, classified again as sub-families of the Niger-Congo [14]. Igbo language suffered heavy controversial issues before Ọnwụ orthography in the year 1961. Ọnwụ committee resolved the problems arose from linguistic diversity and came out with standard Igbo language.

Nigeria adopted English language as a lingua franca but among more than five hundred languages ethnic groups in Nigeria, no other tribes have allowed the implantation of English language to eat up their ethnic language like Igbo people [15]. These days, many couples don't allow their communication to be done in Igbo language both in their various homes and outside. They penalize their children anytime they communicate in Igbo language. They think that communication in Igbo language is archaic way of life. It is observed that the Igbo people are no longer proud of their language. These days the people have migrated afar off their language to the extent of converting Igbo names to western ways of pronunciation [16]. This ugly phenomenon of converting to Whiteman's ways of life has affected the people to the extent of westernizing their Igbo names forgetting that they have semantically deviated. Examples are names such as Osinachukwu (It comes from God) converted to Sinach which is meaningless; Azubuikem (My people are my strength) to Zubby (meaningless), Ikechukwu (God is my strength) to Iyke (meaningless), Obinna (Father's heart) to Obaino (meaningless), among many others. On the other hand, some Igbo people totally removed their surnames [2]. They answer their father's English names just to make sure the trace of Igbo language is not found on their names so as to be fully westernized [6].

**Migration versus Igbo communalism**

[12] captures the African sense of communication as intrinsic to the Africans when he posits it as: "... a way of life emphatically centered upon human interests and values; a mode of living evidently characterized by empathy and

by consideration and compassion for human beings". The Igbo people being part of Africa are highly involved in communal living, because in Igbo culture no one does it alone. It is believed that *a nyukomamiriŋnu, o gbogofufu; gidigidibuugwuezenakwa, igwebuike*. For [6] this thought structure is evidenced in the Igbo man's sense of community, human relations, hospitality, time, authority and respect for the elders and even in her religious practices. Communalism and community spirit is a very powerful cultural value among the Igbo people. The people are known by their spirit of togetherness. This spirit, normally bring the community together which unites all people as brothers and the welfare of every individual becomes the direct concern of everybody in the community [10]. But these days, individualism has penetrated the people. Most Igbo people are engrossed with the European individualism and so forgot their cultural values [4].

#### **Influence of Media technologies on Igbo socio-culture**

The emergence of new media technologies like smart phones, digital computers and televisions have become an effective channel of socio-cultural change. [1] opines that the contact between digitization, communication and computing technologies have given rise to new information systems, which have the ability to manipulate information rapidly in a number of ways and deliver such information at an incredible speed to global audience. The influences of these new technologies have given rise to the retirement of the Igbo socio-cultural activities in so many angles. Changes in both audio and visual communication technologies have brought new ideas and changes to Igbo socio-cultural life. According to [8], amongst all the age-

#### **CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION**

Till the end of this planet earth, *Ndiigbo* will never claim be the same lineage with the white people. They will forever have black pigment with their unique cultural heritage; therefore parents should first of all stop denying their children from speaking their mother tongue known as

groups and classes of human beings that appear to be affected by the wind of change blown by the new media, the Igbo youths seem to be more prone to it. The advent in advanced communication technologies has seriously affected Igbo culture. Ironically, some youths who claim to have regard for the culture of the land, still celebrate events like the traditional marriage with so called *asoebi* which is a Yoruba borrowed culture [5]. Though, it is now well acceptable in Igbo culture. This is because, some African Culture harmonize with each other. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century the wearing of *asoebi* clothes has gone wider to the extent of ladies wearing trousers and shirts as their mode of dressing in Igbo traditional marriage ceremonies. Observing all these new trends in Igbo society, one begins to look at [17] who notes that the relationship between society and culture is inseparable. Analyzing the above view, the Igbo peoples' case is quite different because, the people are easily influenced with other people's culture and could separate immediately from their identity. Though, [12] asserts that information technology (IT), migrates from one operating environment that in most cases the thought to become better arose. In this case, the analyses shows that the diversion of Igbo socio-cultural life to westernized method is not becoming better but worse. Looking at the above *asoebi* pictures, one has to observe that Igbo people adopting western culture in socio-cultural activities such as traditional marriage ceremony does not turn the people look like White men. It rather places the embargo of ignorance on them. Moreover, it makes them look too awkward because they neither belong to Igbo cultural outlook nor to Whiteman's full culture [3].

Igbo language to the detriment of considering English language. Mother tongue is the major cultural identity that should be transferred to every child from generation to generation. All contemporary Igbo parents suppose to realize that there is no way a child should

live in Igbo society, participate in village meeting, *umunna* and *umuada* meeting with foreign language. Males among them must pray over kolanut in one occasion or their likes upholding the spirit and the dynamics of “*onyeaghananwanneya*” and “*Igwebuike*” which were inherent from our forefathers. Briefly put, *Ndigbo* should stop deceiving themselves hanging on to those superficial mental constructs that are inimical to their God giving autochthonous values. Again the spirit of

adventuring cannot in its entirety be said to be negated, however, caution must be applied in order to see, judge and act adequately and appropriately. *Ndigbo* should consider migration as an essential human phenomenon, more importantly when it appears inevitable, but not as a merely animalistic expression of the instinct of quid novo? It is proper to consider the pro's and con's of every human advancement, before daring into an unnecessary platform [14].

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