

7. FROM TOWNCRIER TO RADIO: EXPLORING THE GROWTH OF RADIO NEWS BROADCAST IN IGBO LANGUAGE

KENNETH EKEZIE OBIORAH

Abstract

Radio is commonly used among the Igbo of South East Nigeria, who live in semi urban and rural areas. Radio Newscasting in Igbo language has existed for more than six decades now and still growing, without adequate attention on its continual growth and development. This study explores the growth of radio newscasting in Igbo language and some issues faced by the Igbo radio newscasters. Data were gathered primarily from unstructured interviews, survey and observation conducted in 6 radio stations that allot, at least, 10 minutes to Igbo radio news broadcast in South East Nigeria. Documentary evidences that corroborated the circumstances mentioned by the interviewees were used to buttress the challenges faced by newscasters in Igbo language. Findings of the study show that Igbo radio newscasting which started in the early 1960s from five minutes broadcast in Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation has now increased to 10 to 30 minutes in many radio stations across the South East Nigeria. The growth of newscasting has produce many veteran Igbo newscasters such as Emeka Okeke, Ebieloonwu Anyanwu, J. C. Mmaduekwe, Emeka Nnaona, Ignatus Ogbu, Nat Obiokpo, Walter Eneore, Tony Ubesie, Okechukwu Ekenze, Ogbonnaya Okenye, Comfort Mmadumere, Chukwuma Ogbonna, Ndubuisi Ede and others. However, there are many issues facing newscasting in Igbo language such as the lack of generally accepted standard pronunciation manual; lack of radio language policy that drives the use of Igbo language in each radio station and lack of standard curriculum for training of news broadcaster in the Language. Working on the issues raised in this paper will improve newscasting and other radio programmes in Igbo language.

Key words: Igbo, News broadcast, Igbo news, Igbo language

1.0 Introduction

Every journey has a starting point. In the Igbo traditional setting, news was carried out face to face before radio was invented. Unlike the period before 1960, radio newscasting in Igbo language is now a daily affair for the Igbo people of Southern Nigeria. A radio is a medium of sending and receiving information through the air to the people. Radio broadcast in indigenous Nigerian languages has been pinpointed as the main domain which can accelerate the development of African languages in the areas of language engineering (Akanbi & Aladesanmi,



2014,) language vitality, language standardisation, language maximisation (Nnaji, 2015; Ezeka 2017) and language development (Okudo & Ifeagwazi, 2014). Radio programme has contributed to the spread of many standard languages across the word. The importance of indigenous language communication for accessing information and participation of masses in democratic development in Africa has also been noted in Salawu (2017). One of the departments in radio programme is newscasting. Newscasting in Igbo language has grown since the advent of radio in Nigeria. This aspect of study in Igbo has not received adequate attention from scholars, which makes this study very essential.

1.1 Research Objective

Most studies in radio broadcast in Igbo language have not paid adequate attention to Igbo radio newscasting. For example, Okudo & Ifeagwazi (2014) considered how Igbo radio programmes in Bond FM Lagos are enhancing the improvement of the knowledge of the Igbo language among students in secondary schools in Lagos. The study discovered that the effectiveness of the Igbo language in broadcasting will enhance the development and sustenance of the language. Nnaji (2015) studied appropriateness in Igbo news bulletin translated from the English language and discovered that the translator of Igbo news (from English) were not well equipped, which results in inappropriate semantic and grammatical representation of words as well as inaccurate writing of Igbo language. Okpoko & Chukwuka (2016) studied the promotion of Igbo language on National Television Authority (NTA) Enugu, and discovered that, inadequate time and irregular airing of most programmes in the station are some of the problems facing the Igbo programme in NTA Enugu. Other study such as Agbo & Chukwuma (2017) examined the influence of Federal Radio Corporation of Nigerian (FRCN) Igbo programmes on the promotion of the Igbo language in South-East Nigeria. Findings show that respondents are aware of the Igbo programmes on FRCN. However, respondents did not feel that the content and the number of programmes are not enough. To establish whether the BBC Igbo news contributes to the knowledge and use of Igbo language, Nwammuo & Salawu (2019) examined the scholar's perception of the effective use of Igbo language in BBC Igbo news on the internet and their findings show that scholars believed that the BBC programme will contribute to the development and survival of the language. Ikenna & Obiorah (2022) examined the use of Igbo accents in various radio stations in Lagos, and discovered that various accents are used across broadcasting stations Lagos. All these studies have made a valuable contribution to the study of Igbo language in the broadcast media. However serious attention to the best of my knowledge has been paid to the

origins and growth of Igbo language radio broadcast. The objective of this study is to explore the growth and some issues in Igbo radio newscasting.

1.2 Literature Review

Before the advent of radio news in Igbo land, information dissemination was systematically and structurally carried out by the traditional chief newscaster carrier known as *Otiokwe* who is also referred to as the town crier. According to Obiora, (2011):

The town crier: a popular misnomer for the traditional emissary newsman, is perhaps the most ubiquitous and electric in terms of role in the traditional society and the so called urban society which will become tomorrow's 'primitive' or traditional society. The person who functions under this umbrella term performs various other mutually dependent and self-defining roles. They are reporters, correspondents, news agents, messengers (emissaries), spokesmen (or women), envoys (ambassador), contact men, couriers, postmen, heralds also perform other related roles (p. 28).

Apart from *Otiokwe*, other personalities such as chief priests disseminate information especially when the information is considered spiritual, sacred and important. Newscasting was also carried out in Igbo land using idiophones, aero phone, signals, signs, colour schemes, music, extra-mundane communication, symbols, and symbolic displays. The traditional communication methods in Igbo land was the main channel of communication in existent up until the late 1950s and early 1960s when the use of radio stations began in some urban cities in Eastern Nigeria as it was known then (Obiora, 2011). Even now, a lot of people in rural Igbo communities still rely on the town crier for basic information on the activities in and around the communities while news about local government, state, federal and world news are communicated via radio channels.

General radio broadcasting commenced around December 1901 by the use of dots and dashes of wireless telegraphy used to transmit sound waves to receivers. The feat of wireless telegraphy across the Atlantic, a distance of about 2000 nautical miles was first accomplished by Guglielmo Marconi and patented in early 1896 by the British (Akpede, 2021). The main problem encountered with the wireless radio then was that it could only reach few persons. However, there have been a lot of changes in radio broadcast since then as radio now reaches a lot of audience, transmitting, music, and news. According to Akpede,



(2021), radio broadcasting in Nigeria started in form of rediffusion: a term used for the distribution of radio line with the help of amplification to those who can afford it. The rediffusion centres, affiliated to British Broadcasting Corporation in Lagos, started in 1933 for the purpose of political and economic relationship between the colonial government and her colonies. Later in December 1935, radio broadcasting system was inaugurated in Lagos, with media packages from British Broadcasting Corporation played between 11:30 am to 1:00 pm and 5 pm to 11:15 pm daily (Adejunmobi, 1974). From 1939, radio distribution service centres in Lagos began to feature Nigerian contents in some of its programmes. The local content continued to improve as radio distribution service centres in Nigeria transited into Nigeria Broadcasting System in 1951. The Nigeria Broadcasting System transmits to other stations in Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna and Enugu (Akpede, 2021). The period of 1935 and 1950 were used to develop the radio distribution service centres into extensive radio distribution service (Olalekan, et al. 2013). The radio stations, through enabling legislation, were reorganised and renamed Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) in April 1957. The NBC oversaw all broadcasting activities in Nigeria. Currently, there are many radio stations both public and private owned that broadcast in the indigenous languages in Nigeria. Among these stations (in Nigeria), none has been authorised to broadcast in only the Igbo language or any other indigenous Nigerian language (Adedeji, 2015).

1.3 Methodology

The study adopted qualitative research method. Data were gathered primarily from unstructured interviews, survey and observations. Two male retired Igbo news broadcasters (Mr A and Mr B) were interviewed in Enugu and Onitsha in South East, Nigeria in December 2021. They were interviewed on the how Igbo radio news started and grew in their time. How broadcasting was done then, and how Igbo radio news spread and started in other radio stations. After conducting the interviews with the retired broadcasters, a survey of radio stations that dedicated more than 10 minutes to reading of Igbo news was carried out. Experienced broadcasters working in six radio stations in South-Eastern Nigeria were interviewed after that. However, only data from four of the interviews were used in this research and they are code named: Mr C, Mr D, Mr U and Mrs AK.

Table 1: List of Informants

s/n	Name	Age	Sex	Origin	Occupation
1	Mr A	68	Male	Anambra	Retired Newscaster
2	Mr B	65	Male	Enugu	Retired Newscaster
3	Mr C	58	Male	Imo	Newscaster
4	Mrs D	50	Female	Ebonyi	Newscaster
5	Mr AK	55	Male	Abia	Newscaster
6	Mr U	50	Male	Enugu	Newscaster

The six radio stations where broadcasters were interviewed are Anambra Broadcasting Service Radio, Enugu State Broadcasting Service Radio, Radio Nigeria Enugu, Ebonyi State Broadcasting Corporation Radio, Orient FM Owerri, and Broadcasting Station of Abia State Radio. These stations were chosen because they allotted more than 10 minutes to Igbo news daily. The current Igbo radio newscasters were asked questions about the state of Igbo radio news broadcasting and the challenges they face reading news in Igbo language in their respective radio stations. The actual act of radio news broadcasting in these stations were observed to corroborate some of the points made by those interviewed. Documentary evidences that corroborated the circumstances mentioned by the interviewee were used to buttress the challenges by newscasters in Igbo language. Issues like lack of curriculum were investigated and departments' handbooks of many Nigerian University programmes that relate to broadcasting in Igbo (mass communication departments and Igbo departments) were examined to know if courses in these departments were designed to learn and facilitate Igbo radio news broadcasting. The reference materials available for the Igbo newscasters such as dictionaries and Igbo news script were examined. The accent used for Igbo radio news were observed and also compared with what is used in other radio stations. Questions were also asked about the radio station language policy in each station as well as strength and structure of Igbo news department in all radio stations visited.

1.4 Findings

1.4.1 Igbo Radio News Started in the 1960s

According to one of the retired Igbo radio news presenter interviewed, Igbo radio newscasting started in the early 60s with Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Emerging after was Radio Biafra owned by the Biafra government during the Biafra-Nigeria civil war in the late 60s. During the Biafran war, when Ojukwu declared the Republic of Biafra, his government renamed the Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation



to Radio Biafra. As narrate by Mr A. further that:

Some people that were working for radio Biafra could not continue because of the heat of Nigeria- Biafra civil war. Some Radio Biafra broadcasters actually left the government radio station which is Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation, so the Nigeria-Biafra war expanded the number of radio carrying Igbo news but Radio Biafra newscaster have temporary station then. They were mobile because of the way.

Following the capture of Radio Biafra by the Nigerian government, the newscasters that swore allegiance to the Biafran government ran away to begin broadcasting Igbo news from an unknown location. The Nigerian government had to employ Igbo newscasters to replace those who left the station. Igbo news was thus carried by both radio stations between 1960 to 1967 i.e., the Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation in Enugu and Radio Biafra from an unknown location around Enugu. The hiding Biafran Igbo newscasters were captured by the Nigerian army in Emene, Enugu state in 1969 leaving only Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Service Enugu as the only Igbo news radio station.

The end of Radio Biafra reduced the number of stations that broadcast Igbo news. However, the addition of Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria network stations expanded the Igbo news stations in 1978. Also, the creation of four Igbo speaking states of Anambra, Enugu, Imo and Abia in 1991 with their own broadcast stations increased the number of stations that broadcast Igbo radio news. It further increased in 1996 with the establishment of EBBC by Ebonyi State government. One basic fact is that the history of Igbo news cannot be separated from political developments in Nigeria. Every major Igbo speaking state have a station that broadcast Igbo news. However, the exact day Igbo radio news started in Nigeria is unknown, but many speculate that Igbo radio news started with the establishment of the radio stations. This story corroborated with Adejunmobi, (1974). According to Adejunmobi, (1974), radio broadcast in Nigerian indigenous languages (Igbo inclusive) in Eastern Nigeria started around late 50s. Broadcasting in Igbo language was made possible through the promulgation of the 1954 McPherson constitutional provision that guaranteed autonomy to Eastern Nigeria and other geo-political groups in Nigeria broadcasting right. The provision led to the establishment of Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Service in Enugu. The nature of news broadcasts in languages in Nigeria in the late 1950s was summarised by Adejunmobi, (1974) as follows:

News powers broadcast in Nigeria began in English, the language of the colonial but it was eventually realised that there was a definite need for vernacular broadcasts. By 1960, news was broadcast in a total of seventeen languages every day. Today, (in 1974) news is broadcast every three hours, first in English, then in three native languages, a different set of native language each time ...(p. 89)

According to Mr B, one of the earliest Igbo broadcasters who started Igbo radio newscasting around 1960 at Nigeria Broadcasting Service Lagos, Igbo news was read alongside Hausa and Yoruba news, although Yoruba news started much earlier than Igbo news. The Igbo news then was mainly a translation from English to Igbo. All types of news broadcast such as main news, news commentaries and special public broadcasts were translated into Igbo; even a presidential broadcast which may be up to 30 minutes was translated and broadcast separately from the news. Typical Igbo news initially took about three minutes and later extended to ten minutes. Mr B further narrates that:

The war affected the time of news because we do not spend (much) time on the news like before. After the war, Igbo news went back to normal thirty minutes. And it was Nigerian languages news which Igbo is one of them that we had.

The effect of the Nigeria-Biafra war reduced the Igbo news to just five minutes. However, Igbo news was changed to thirty minutes after the civil war when the stations recovered from the war. In the Nigeria Broadcasting Service, the newscasters read the daily news bulletin in English first followed by the major Nigerian languages in an alphabetical order. It is important to state that in the early days of Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation, Igbo news was packaged in Lagos and sent to Enugu. This was because, at the formative stage of the Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Service, majority of programmes were in English. The Igbo news at the earliest period started on top of the hour with Igbo news signature, greeting, headlines and main news, (commentary) and closure. Advertisement and special announcements appeared occasionally in between or after the news. Only one newscaster read the news bulletin. The news were mostly read twice daily- morning and evening; mainly at 9am and 5pm. This daily routine continued as newly created states established their own radio stations.



1.4.2 The Earliest Igbo Newscasters

Since Igbo news started in Nigeria, many Igbo newscasters have emerged. According to Mr A, Emeka Okeke is regarded as the foremost Igbo language newscaster. He worked with other newscasters such as Ebieloonwu Anyanwu and J. C. Mmaduekwe before the civil war. Emeka Okeke retired from broadcasting Igbo news after the Nigeria Biafra Civil war. Others are Emeka Nnaona, Ignatus Ogbu and Nat Obiokpo. Those that came after them include Walter Eneore, Tony Ubesie, Okechukwu Ekenze, Ogbonnaya Okenye, Comfort Mmadumere, Chukwuma Ogbonna, and Ndubuisi Ede. According to Mr B:

I would say that many of us that were broadcasting news in the language were Igbo teachers, as far as you can read Igbo, you are qualified. They just listed some criteria which some of us have. We are the one that train news broadcasters. You can only come to air if and after a superior is satisfied about your competence.

The dialect of Igbo used in broadcasting news as at that time, according to Mr A and Mr B. was what was to write Igbo Bible which suggests that it was either Central Igbo or Union Igbo. Anytime new states in Nigeria established their own stations, indigenes of these new stations that were senior news broadcasters in the Federal radio stations were called to head the Igbo news in these stations. For example, Walter Eneore, Tony Ubesie, Okechukwu Ekenze, Ogbonnaya Okenye, Comfort Mmadumere, Chukwuma Ogbonna, and Ndubuisi Ede all left Radio Nigeria Enugu when their state established her own broadcasting station. Specifically, when Imo State Broadcasting Service was established Comfort Mmadumere and Okechukwu Ekenze left radio Nigeria Enugu to pioneer and continue with the Igbo news in the new station. These experienced ones helped train the new Igbo radio broadcasters recruited in the newest broadcasting stations. All the Igbo speaking state and a few non-Igbo speaking states broadcast Igbo news in their radio stations.

1.4.3 Various Stations in South East Nigeria that broadcast in Igbo language

Through survey and observation, it was noted that, there are many radio stations in Nigeria that currently broadcast news in Igbo; a number of them allot more than ten minutes to Igbo radio newscasting in each news session. One of such federal owned radio station that broadcast Igbo radio news is Radio Nigeria Enugu which dedicates fifteen minutes to broadcast news in Igbo daily. The station was established in 1933 and later renamed Nigeria broadcasting service in 1950 and later Federal radio corporation of Nigeria in 1978. The headquarters

of Radio Nigeria Southeast Zone is located in Enugu state. It has branch stations in all five South east states in Nigeria.

Another radio station that allots thirty minutes to broadcasting news in Igbo language in the morning and the evening, every day of the week is Anambra Broadcasting Service radio, simply known as ABS Radio Awka. The radio station is owned by Anambra State government. The station started on October 1, 1960, in Enugu as Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation and later became Radio Biafra during the civil war but now ABS. The station frequency is 88.9. The radio station operates online at www.abs.com and broadcasts in Igbo, Ibaji, Igala, pidgin, and English. ABS as a radio official started in 1976.

Orient FM Owerri, also known as the Imo state Broadcasting Corporation radio (IBC Radio) which was established in 1976, is owned by the Imo state government. The radio station allots between fifteen to thirty minutes to each session of reading Igbo news daily. It transmitted on medium wave on channel 72 kilohertz before switching over to 94.4 megahertz in 1994. The BCA radio station which is owned by Abia state government is another radio station that dedicates thirty minutes to each news session of Igbo newscasting daily. The radio station is affiliated to the Broadcasting Corporation of Abia State. The station was founded in August 1991 but started broadcasting on 16th November 1992 on the frequency 88.1 FM.

Ebonyi Broadcasting Corporation radio also known EBBC radio allots thirty minutes to broadcasting Igbo radio news twice, in a day. The station was established on February 3rd, 1997, with an initial 200 feet mast which was later increased beyond 250 feet. It transmits on the 98.10 frequencies. Enugu State Broadcasting Service (ESBS) also broadcast Igbo news twice a day but for just fifteen minutes in every news session. The AM station had over the past years collapsed and is no longer in use, while the FM radio station transmits on 96.11 frequencies

As of today different governments own and use radio to disseminate important information in Igbo language to their citizens, especially about government activities. Government also use these radios to promote the Igbo language. This can be seen from the ways different state government through their agencies such as the ministry of education award scholarship to students who intend to study the language. For example, the Abia State University, in 2014, made Igbo a compulsory course for two hundred level students in the school. During her 52nd inaugural lectures, the university offered scholarships to five newly admitted Igbo students. Also, in 2009, a bill was sponsored in Anambra State House of assembly to enforce the use of Igbo in most of the social activities in the state,



although the bill was not signed into law. Later, the former governor of Anambra state expressed his intention to establish a radio station that broadcasts only in the Igbo language. These efforts show some passion for the promotion of the language; an attribute that has in some way translated to the use of Igbo in the government owned media, especially in radio news broadcast.

1.4.4 Some Issue in Igbo Radio Newscasting

There are several issues which Igbo radio news broadcasters encounter daily. These issues were revealed on the course of the interview with experienced news broadcasters in some of the radio stations sampled. They are as follows:

i. Issue of Pronunciation based on Various Accent

In the light of the evolving spoken standard Igbo, questions were asked about the accent used in the radio stations. Mrs AK answered:

We make sure that we pronounce words using standard Igbo but you know in standard Igbo, there are variations. But even with the variations, people still understand, just that in your head, you be like, should I use this or that. You are also worried about using two variants in one broadcast.

As stated above, one of the issues observed in Igbo radio newscasting is pronunciation variation. Pronunciation variation is very common among newscasters due to the fact that Igbo language is a multidialectal language. Igbo radio newscasters especially those in Anambra Broadcasting Service, Enugu State Broadcasting Service, and Radio Nigeria Enugu experience intra-pronunciation variation and inter-pronunciation variation. This occurs as a result of uncertainty in the choice of standard variable in the language. Currently Igbo language does not have general accepted standard spoken form. Like in most languages, a well-developed standard variety has both written and spoken forms. The standardisation of written Igbo has been facilitated and attested by the availability of numerous publications of Igbo texts; different subjects, courses, terminologies, the curriculum for Igbo have all been designed and developed using the written standard, but the spoken standard has not been fully developed. This is evidential by the lack of Igbo pronunciation dictionary and careless insertion of tone in Igbo bilingual dictionaries. Usually, a well-developed spoken standard is developed and enforced in radio station by the pronunciation unit of the station. This was evident in the early days of BBC, but there is no regulatory agency in Igbo radio newscasting that minimises variation.

The challenge of having many Igbo accents has been acknowledged by Onyeocha, (2014). Although, it might be impossible to have a spoken standard with no variation at all, however, minimal variation which is an attribute of a developed spoken standard will improve Igbo in newscasting and show the direction of the spoken standard, and also what constitutes standard pronunciation and non-standard pronunciation. As Coupland (2007, p. 42) put it, a standard dialect is not just a dialect with “a completed history of linguistic standardisation” rather it shows the stance of policy makers and language users. It also reveals the status of the main dialect among the pole of other sub-dialects. Having different pronunciation standards according to various stations is never new. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) had been trying to minimise variation since its inception. As recorded by Fromkin, et al. (2017):

SAE was once represented by the language used by national news broadcasters, but today many of them speak a regional dialect or a style of English that is not universally accepted as “standard.” For example, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) once used mostly speakers of RP English, but today speakers of Irish, Welsh, Scottish, and other regional dialects of English are commonly heard on BBC programs. The BBC describes its English as “the speech of educated professionals (p. 278)

ii. No Standard Dictionary of Pronunciation for Igbo newscasters.

A Standard pronunciation dictionary which will serve as a reference material for newscasters is very important to minimise pronunciation variation. A good reference material such as dictionary should be provided for Nigerian broadcasters (Bamgbose, 2017). Igbo neither has a pronunciation manual for the spoken variety nor a generally accepted standard monolingual dictionary. The few bilingual dictionaries in Igbo and English language which should serve as pronunciation guide contains free variants within and among themselves.

For example, there is an alternation in the use of /r/ and /l/ in the words *ọrụ/ọlụ* (work), /r/ and /h/ in the words *iru/ihu* (work) and /l/ and /n/ in the word *ụnq/ ụlq* (house) in most Igbo dictionaries (Obiroah, 2022). In Eke (2001, p.150), /l/ and /r/ sound alternate in variants *sọpuru* and *sọpulu* (respect). In other words, such as *ula* and *ura* (sorry), *ọgaranya* and *ọgalanya* (wealthy person), *usoro* and *usolo* (method) also alternate. /y/ and /r/ also alternate in the variants *oyia* and *oria*. In Eke (2001) also, there is an alternation of /h/ and /r/ in the word *nhọpụta* (p.108) and *nrọpụta* (p.112) (selection), /h/ and /f/ in *ahuhu* (p.7) and



afufu (p.13) (sufferings), /l/ and /n/ sound alternate in *abali* (p.3) and *abani* (p.4) (night), *alaka* (p.23) and *anaka* (p.23) (branches), *elu* (p.48) and *enu* (p.49) (up), *kene* (p.81) and *kele* (p.81) (greetings). In Igwe (1995), there are also /h/ and /f/ alternation in the *hu* (p.236) and *fu* (p.236) (see), *afa* (p.13) and *aha* (p.13) (name). Several other alternations abound in Igbo dictionaries. Instances like the above do not facilitate one spoken standard, but it is not very strange. It is simply an indication of the current stage of the development in the language. Most languages of the world have experienced such before getting to where they are today. Raihan and Deterding (2017, p.205) cited example with the English language when they report that:

in 1755, Samuel Johnson published a Dictionary of the English Language, and though it promoted a more stable spelling system than had previously existed, Johnson did not try to fix pronunciation. Accordingly, even though spelling, the lexicon and grammar were becoming standardized, pronunciation continued to be variable... However, not long after, Thomas Sheridan included pronunciation in his General Dictionary of the English Language, published in 1780, and in 1791 John Walker published his Critical Pronouncing Dictionary... The work of these two writers reflects increasing efforts to promote a standardized English pronunciation in the late eighteenth century. These two dictionaries offered a reference model for pronunciation which enabled people to avoid sounding 'ridiculous',

The foregoing passage shows that what is happening in the Igbo dictionaries is not new but a process. However, the experience may be a hindrance or a catalyst to the development of a standard pronunciation of a language depending on the particularity of the speech community and policy makers. Developing the standard variety is a continuous process that requires suppressing differences among the local accent which will eventually lead to a specialisation or unification of variables; this is often referred to as dialect levelling. In developing a standard variety, the speech community where the variety is used is directly or indirectly involved in the developmental process, and this happens when language users begin to be aware of the vitality and the utility of one variable over another. In this case, the people begin to notice that one variable is preferably used in one platform over another. The consciousness of this notion makes people to be more careful whenever they are speaking because the variable carries power and social acceptance. Igbo dictionaries represent a good avenue for scholars

and stakeholders to project one spoken standard Igbo that will be acceptable to all in the long run. This will help pronunciation of newscasters that consult Igbo dictionary to sound the same.

iii. Lack of Radio Language Policy and Pronunciation Advisory Committee

According to Mr U:

There is no official document that says we must use one dialect or the other when casting news. We try to read news with what (the language) people can understand. We don't really talk how to pronounce a word. So far the pronunciation is not too deep into my local dialect and people use it in urban area.

The above quotation implies that, local accent are also used in Igbo radio newscasting in the place of currently evolving spoken standardised Igbo. In a well-developed news station, there is always a radio language policy, pronunciation advisory committee and standard pronunciation material such as a pronouncing dictionary that guide the nature of language and pronunciation variety used in broadcasting. Schwyter (2008, p. 202) reported that in the early days of BBC,

John Reith, the BBC's first managing director, and his contemporaries were aware of pronunciation variation among educated speakers of English. For this reason, they set up the BBC Advisory Committee on Spoken English: to fix what had hitherto only been focused – that is nothing less than to create a 'standard pronunciation'.

The advisory committee in different radio stations that broadcast Igbo is lacking, and without good pronunciation dictionaries, the newscasters tend to use Igbo accent that will align with their various perceived audience. By virtue of the locations and variations in the accent of their audience, there is bound to be variation in the speech of the newscasters in response and in solidarity with their different class of audience. Another aspect of pronunciation that defiles logic is the wrong pronunciation of non-Igbo names. Majority of non-Igbo names are wrongly pronounced. This includes names in other Nigerian languages and languages spoken outside Nigeria.



iv. Standard Curriculum for Broadcasting in Igbo Language

Another issue that came up during the interview with current Igbo newscasters is the lack of standard curriculum for broadcasting in Igbo language. According Mr C, who read mass communication and broadcast Igbo news:

The challenge I am having is that I copy the way I read news from the English newscasters that work on radio and televisions. You know, when I was doing my degree, we did not learn broadcasting in Igbo. I just learnt it here with experience. It is not easy but our people do not mind, just read for them what they will understand

Further inquiry in the stations studied shows that majority of Igbo newscasters acquire their act of broadcasting in English, and as a result, draft their news in English language. The importance of being able to read very well by anyone employed to read news in any Nigerian language has been acknowledged by Ndukwe, (2012). Unfortunately, the courses taken by mass communication graduates who end up becoming Igbo news readers centre outside the Igbo language, as well other Nigerian indigenous language in general. This has not been the concern of mass communication teachers in Nigeria as Salawu (2009, p. 84) puts it;

The language question in Nigeria media studies is not an issue that many people want to focus on. It appears that, to Nigeria communication scholars, it does not really matter if the communicators that we train are not able to communicate in the indigenous language of the people they serve. The utmost emphasis is on the language of the nation's former colonial masters. Currently, the study of indigenous languages and indigenous language media is not part of the core communication curriculum in Nigeria. A credit pass in any of the indigenous languages is not part of the admission requirements into the core programmes. The only exceptions are found in programmes where communication studies are combined with the study of indigenous languages.

The idea of broadcasting in Nigerian indigenous languages by those who didn't study the language has also been vigorously challenged in recent years by Salawu (2017). This is so despite that mastery of language of broadcasting plays an important role in broadcasting (Ape, 2014). It's very unlikely that most Igbo news readers who did not read Igbo to higher institution will know much about various standardisation projects and proposals devised in the language especially in the area of phonology. Conversely, the situation where people who did not study Igbo, and a few Igbo graduates who know little or nothing about mass communication in Igbo, participate in Igbo radio newscasting creates a lacuna between language practices and language competence in broadcast media. Take for example, the contents of Igbo language courses at the undergraduate level in many universities in Nigeria were designed to study Igbo sounds in general, with emphasis on phonological analysis and processes. There is no emphasis on speech performance unlike the English courses in Nigerian universities where such courses were designed for both those who broadcast on radio and those who do not. Courses in practical phonetics exist in English departments in the Nigerian Universities under the heading Spoken English Practice I & II, Practical phonetics, Oral communication skills. In the French unit in Nigerian universities, it is subsumed under audio-visual practice I & II, and Practical French. It appears that broadcasting curriculum is not designed with the Igbo language newscasters in mind. A look at the courses for Igbo and mass communications students shows that the closest course on broadcasting in Igbo is 'translation' which is domiciled in Igbo department. In mass communication department, the students are taught news writing in English but nothing on pronunciation and editing in Igbo language. For now, Igbo news largely involves translation (Nnaji 2012). Pronunciation in Igbo radio news will continue to vary in as much as the right courses in Igbo language are not incorporated into broadcasting curriculum in Nigeria tertiary institutions.

1.5 Conclusion And Recommendations

Igbo radio newscasting has grown from all indications; however, it is mostly government owned radio stations that give adequate time to newscasting in Igbo language. Most private radio stations are broadcasting in the language in call-in programmes and reading news headlines. This is a sign that one day, Igbo radio newscasting in these private radio stations may become a reality, however, the issues highlighted in this paper need to be tackled. In view of the above, this study recommends that spoken standard Igbo with no or minimal variations should be adopted by producing a generally accepted standard Igbo pronunciation dictionary which is lacking in the language. Also, the curriculum for broadcasting in the language needs a review to accommodate the current



trends in the language. Having a standard reference material, as well as a good curriculum for broadcasting news in the language will improve Igbo newscasters. Every radio station that broadcast news in Igbo language needs to articulate a good radio language policy that will properly guide broadcasters on time sharing formula for all languages used in a radio stations. With the population of Igbo speakers across Nigeria, and the globe, establishing monolingual radio stations that broadcast in Igbo will enhance the promotion and effective use of the language.

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