

THE SOUND OF MEANING

*An inaugural lecture delivered
at the University of Ibadan*

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By

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The Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Registrar, Librarian, Provost of the College of Medicine, Dean of Arts, Dean of the Postgraduate School, Deans of other Faculties and of Students, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Preamble

All wisdom is plagiarism; only stupidity is original.
(Hugh Keir)

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I would like to start this presentation on a personal note. I would like to draw some inspiration from President Goodluck Jonathan. Both of us are from the South-South. He is from the geographical South-South; I am from the political South-South. Even though, it is now fashionable to claim origin or association with the Niger-Delta, since the centre has moved to the periphery, my people and I are closer to the Niger than to the Delta. Mr. President is from the Niger-Delta, I am from the Niger plains. That is not really the interesting part. Mr. President had a humble beginning judging by the fact that he had no shoes and had to walk to school. I had shoes, but I walked to school all the same because I wore shoes only at big events, even then, I carried my shoes on my head, most of the time. I remember that as a child living with my maternal grandmother, I walked the village naked like every other kid. I remember also that, years later, when I returned to the village for holidays, I tried to re-enlist in the village culture of "infantile nudism." Although my social status had changed, I did not take notice. My grandmother gave me a lesson that left me a permanent imprint in my subconscious. Even today, I walk naked in my dreams. Just like Mr. President, I have surpassed my expectations in life. I came to the University of Ibadan only to obtain a Masters Degree in Linguistics. Here I am delivering an inaugural lecture as a Professor of Linguistics by the grace of God. In the words of Mr. President, "if I can make it, you can too."

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, I was two years old when the first inaugural lecture in Linguistics at the University of Ibadan was delivered in 1964 by Professor G. Armstrong for the Institute of African Studies. Professor Ayo Bamgbose delivered his in 1972. This was followed by Professor O.O. Olatunji's lecture in 1987. His inaugural entitled, "Beyond the Spoken Word: An African Language Literature Experience," was perhaps my first experience at inaugural, coming less than two years after I was employed as an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages. Professor B.O. Elugbe delivered his lecture in 1992. Elugbe's lecture, like that of Armstrong was in the area of Historical and Comparative Linguistics. It was entitled, *The Scramble for Nigeria: A Linguistic Perspective*. The value of that lecture for me was that it brought the relevance of linguistics and language to the fore at a time when personally, I was questioning my decision to take up a career as a linguist and a university teacher. Also, it was presented at a time of a resurgence of the national question, the struggle for supremacy and resources by various Nigerian nations. In my view, "the Scramble for Nigeria" gave some indications that the Nigerian nations are largely related by blood, and more than that we are *settlers* with respect to ownership of land. The distinction which we make therefore between *indigenes* and *settlers* is a function of convenient history. The real indigenes, the autochthons are swallowed up in a complex narrative of power and privileges that neither leave room for the weak to tell history, nor provide a place for the marginal nor conquered to stand.

At this point, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, I wish to remark that other inaugurals have been presented in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages by my teachers. These are lectures by Professors A.P. Omamor (2003), D.K.O. Owolabi (2006) and A.A. Adeniran (2005). I believe that the present lecture would be the 7th.

Introduction: My Journey through Life into Language and Linguistics

Speed is of no value to a man who has missed his way.

(cf. Dasyuva 2011, *City on the Hill: The Biography of Bishop Gbonigi*)

I believe that my personal circumstances had prepared me for a career in Linguistics and by some act of providence I ended up at the University of Ibadan. My first contact with the University was from an oraclist and my father. I was a sickly but very troublesome child, nicknamed *Ojukwu* during the civil war. After awhile my parents began to doubt my chances of survival. I remember my father taking me to an oraclist around 1968 or 1969. The old wise man told my father that I was going to become a doctor at the University of Ibadan. My thinking and I believe that of my father, was that I was going to become a medical doctor. They were the only doctors around and Ph. D was relatively unknown. In Igarra where we lived, Ibadan was the only university of repute. My father had a Diploma from the University of Ibadan in 1958 or 1959. With the benefit of hindsight, I think that the oraclist was trying to encourage my parents not to give up on me. As my father was to confess later, he and my mother resolved to do their best and never give up.

My father was in Mellanby Hall when he came to read a Diploma in Adult Education. He told me that during their first week in the hall, none of them had bowel movement and so they concluded that they had been afflicted by some kind of illness. They went to the clinic in a group and laid their complaint before the doctor. After a few questions, they were dismissed and told that their body was absorbing all the nutrients since hitherto, they had lived on chaff. This was a time when students were fed three-course meals and buffet style dinners. It was quite an experience for villagers and first-timers in a modern university environment. There is also the story of how he acquired the Yoruba honorific pronouns, and how he got into trouble with an elderly man in my village who said my father was indirectly accusing him of witchcraft.

by using the plural form of the second person pronoun to address him.

As a young student of Literature and Geography, we learnt about the second largest city in West Africa, home to the oldest university in Nigeria, so picturesquely described in John Pepper Clark's poem, "Ibadan". I drove through this behemoth of a city for the first time in 1976 en route Lagos. In 1983, I applied to read a Masters Degree in Phonology on the advice of Dr. Ron P. Schaefer, my teacher, friend, colleague and mentor. We had agreed to collaborate on a project to comprehensively describe my mother tongue, *Emai* and other *Edoid* languages. Dr. Schaefer had his training in syntax and he felt that it was necessary for me to complement him by developing skills in phonetics and phonological analysis. We needed to collect oral narratives, transcribe data, provide a description of the sound system, and develop orthography before we could make significant progress with our ultimate purpose of writing a grammar and dictionary. We noticed early that *Emai* tones were interwoven in complex ways with its grammar. We had also observed that *Emai*, with a population of only 30, 000 speakers and numerous other *Edoid* languages were not being transmitted to new generation of speakers. Thus, we set for ourselves the task of contributing to the documentation, preservation and revitalization of these languages. Elugbe (1973, 1989) had provided for us the platform for the take off of our quest.

I accepted Ron's suggestion and applied to Ibadan because it was the only place to do any meaningful postgraduate work in Linguistics at the time. It was to be a one-year stint, after which I was expected to return to the University of Benin to take up a position. When I did not hear from Ibadan, I visited in July of 1984, discovered that I had been admitted. I returned some weeks later to pick up my letter of admission. I resumed studies in October 1984.

In the course of my undergraduate studies, I had become familiar with such names as Ayo Banjo, Ayo Bamgbose, Ben Elugbe, Kay Williamson, Augusta Omamor, Airen Amayo, among others. I was scared that I was not going to measure

up in their classes. Whereas, my first experience in the city of Ibadan was one of great disappointment, that of the university was of fright and frustration. I was relieved when I found out that Ben Elugbe was on sabbatical leave and that I did not have to take Ayo Bamgbose's *Systemic Grammar*.

Ibadan turned out to be a crappy city, quite unlike Benin in the old Bendel State. It was unplanned and dirty, the streets were windy and narrow. The taxis were scraps and their drivers unkempt. It wasn't the kind of city I wanted to make my life in. It took me two hours before I could bring myself to take a cab from *New Garage* to the University. The physical environment of the University of Ibadan was disappointing compared to the newer University of Benin. There was no glitter or sparkle anywhere. But as regards the intellectual environment, it turned out to be a new and pleasant experience for me. I ended up in Agbowo because I could not secure an accommodation in Balewa Hall. The Agbowo experience was a wake up from innocence and a sheltered life. The religious tension in town and the ethnic divide was visible. Landlords wanted to know your religion and ethnic group before you were accepted as a tenant.

Ibadan was a new cultural and linguistic experience for me, exciting as it was disturbing. It was here I first noticed that moisture level in pounded yam and *eba* varied as one moved from the west to the east of Nigeria. In Aba, in the core east, there is only 10% moisture in *eba*, so they call it *garri*. The food is so hard that you had to shed tears while swallowing in order to compensate for the absence of moisture. There is 70% water in *eba* and pounded yam in Ibadan, to the extent that you cannot make a *bolus* with it. I noticed that meals were generally soft, portion of sauce served in *Burkina Faso* was disproportionately small and one had to buy water. I quarrelled a few times but then realized that people and places were just different. I noticed that different ethnic groups had different technologies for eating with their fingers. Ibadan people scrape through, *Edos* carve and mould, *Igbo* dig and compress, *Hausas* scratch through, *Efik* pinch and rock 'n' roll around their fingers. It took me a while to

understand why a Yoruba lady would turn her back to the camera or me when dancing; what is the point? Why would someone who is ill say that *he is strong or tired*? Someone says that *he has a lot of money in his possession*, yet he cannot pay his debt and is begging you for a loan. From the foregoing, you can imagine how many more scenarios language would permit. You would appreciate the fact that we will all live better lives if we just try a bit to get into one another's cultural mind through language.

I credit Dr. Akin Akinlabi for mentoring me in my first two or three years at the university. He introduced me to phonological theories, he loaded me with books to read and we engaged in unending theoretical debates in and out of class. Dr. D.K.O. Owolabi had to supervise my M.A. Thesis. He taught me to stay with my data until it speaks to me. I was employed by Dr. B.O. Elugbe in 1985, after Nagano Madsen, a Japanese lady, resigned from her position in Phonetics. Elugbe took me on as his Ph.D student, forced me to tone down my flamboyant style of writing (which I acquired from Akinlabi) and to understand the dialectics between data and theory.

I applied for the post of an Assistant Lecturer in Linguistics at the University of Benin following the persistence of Ron Schaefer. My zeal to return to Benin had dampened when I found out that the Head of Department was not interested in me joining the Department because of reasons which I can only speculate about. You can imagine how privileged I considered myself when on December 1, 1985 I joined the staff of Linguistics and African Languages. As the years went by, I "washed my hands" and was invited to eat with elders. This metaphor has a similitude in the ritual which we today describe as an inaugural lecture. I am particularly delighted that in the past 25 years, I have had the honour and privilege to be part of this great University.

The physical environment today speaks for itself. The greater Ibadan City, unfortunately is a contradiction of the University environment, evident of a disconnect. The city has

witnessed progressive decay from that day in 1984, when I set foot on the soil. One day, up in Bower's Tower inserted in melancholy, I received a poetic inspiration and revised J.P. Clark's *Ibadan*:

Ibadan
Oozing splatter of rust and mush
Squashed and scattered among
Hills of human wastes
Like Bodija market in the rain.

The Sound of Meaning

Language is more or less a formalizable system of correlation between sound and meaning (Anderson 1994). Whatever I say here today is sound, whatever you understand is meaning; my meaning, your meaning, our meaning. We share meanings, because we share a common language. How does man package so much extensive meaning, information, knowledge in wave forms and what mechanism does he employ to recover these meanings? The morphemes, word, sentences we utter are wave forms. There is meaning in language beyond what is spoken; there is knowledge in it deeper than the meaning of words and sentences. We tell our story through language but language also tells its own story; it reveals our secrets, things we may never be conscious of. The title of my lecture "The Sound of Meaning," draws from my background as a phonetician and phonologist. But as you would see, the content goes beyond the narrow confines of phonological research and linguistic preoccupations to address cultural, symbolic and metaphysical meanings. The Sound of Meaning addresses some of my core research interests in the last 25 years. It follows my belief that Linguistics must go beyond theoretical abstractions and research for its own sake to address critical issues of development. I believe also that linguists must overcome the temptation to focus on a language without regard for those who speak it. In this pursuit, I follow a trend of popular science in inaugurals at the University of Ibadan, by presenting a lecture that is

accessible to a wide audience. The value of my lecture will not be found in any radical propositions (as I would raise questions which may not be sufficiently addressed) but it will be in causing us to have a fresh look at old information and use ordinary information to elicit new insights. According to Marcel Proust, *“the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”*

In achieving the above stated goals, I draw on some of my personal narratives to set up critical questions in the mind of the listener, in such a way that I become part of the data and content to be interrogated. My primary goal is to put knowledge in the market place and to engage in a transaction of ideas with the listeners. The subject of negotiation is language and the principal actors are the listeners. I see myself as a director in a stage play, a producer in a movie; the audience is the interpreter of a participative discourse and translator of a hyper text. Everything has meaning, even the lack of meaning itself is meaning. The lecture is presented in a multimedia, multimodal, multitextual, multigenre, multi-dimensional format. Everything speaks in a way characteristic of traditional story telling situation.

If we must shift our focus a bit, I believe that we all agreed that we are already in a “new age with new mode of thinking, new concepts of self, new notions of what it means to be a human being.” We are in the knowledge age in which knowledge is interwoven and human interactions are heavily mediated by information technologies. Technology has introduced new dynamics to human interactions, with implications for language and linguistics. To the extent that technology has significantly reduced the limitations of time and space in human interactions, some have referred to the world as a global village.

Let us focus for a while on the ideological question that confronts us. An African dilemma remains, “the inability to reconstruct indigenous knowledge which is very well preserved in indigenous languages”. According to Zeleza P. T. (2001), “the challenge for Africa’s intellectuals, leaders and

assorted friends is to map out modes of interaction into an unfolding global system that will maximize, not further marginalize, the interests of the continent's people and politics, economies, and environments, societies and cultures" (p. 65). Unfortunately however, African [intellectuals] have been caught in the bind of addressing African realities in borrowed languages and paradigms, conversing with each other through publications and media controlled by foreign academic communities, producing prescriptive knowledge..." (p. 65/66). In the area of language, the use of foreign languages "condemn most people, and thus the continent as a whole, to a permanent state of mediocrity since people are unable to be spontaneous, creative and self confident if they cannot use their first language" (Melville Alexander). The ideological issue pertains to what we characterize as knowledge, who determines what constitutes knowledge, and which language we use to access and disseminate knowledge. It is not a trivial issue, hence we are foregrounding it. Take for instance the fact that our mother tongue interferes with other subsequent languages we learn; to the extent that the systems of those languages are reinterpreted through the ones provided by our mother tongue. The corollary of this is that when we access knowledge or carry out a creative process in a foreign language, whether at the level of conceptualization or expression, we are handicapped. First, our world view and logical processes anchored in our culture and experience cannot be captured by a foreign language. Second, we are limited by the level of proficiency which we are able to achieve in the foreign language such that our mental constructs cannot spontaneously find expression in language. We are like an individual with a split personality or one with a personality locked up in a strange body. We can easily relate to this problem when we consider how difficult it is to translate cultural imagery, proverbs, personal names, ideophones and onomatopoeic forms. It is very difficult to access our intuitions through a foreign language or access

indigenous knowledge forms that are grounded in alternative logics.

Every sense that man makes is couched in sound, every code he has devised can be verbalized. The way we speak and what we say tell a lot about us, who we are, our group affiliations, mental health, psychological disposition, mood and attitudes. Speech packs meaning in sound. *The Sound of Meaning* exposes the value of our language so that we can learn to cherish it and live in its consciousness.

The Environment that prepared Me for Linguistics

I grew up in an environment of extreme linguistic and cultural diversity. I lived through times, epochs and milieus with significance for language and linguistics. The northern Edo area where I thrived was a linguistic Babel of sorts. Almost every village has its own language or speech variety, in some places, one language is spoken at one end of the village and another is spoken at the other end. The household in which I grew up, the school which I attended each helped to define my path in life; a bit of which relate to my training and career. I was sensitive to linguistic and cultural diversity from childhood. We noted the peculiarities of pronunciation of every group and we joked about it.

I was born to an Emai father and an Ora mother. I spent the first five years of my life with my maternal grandmother in *Oke n'ute*, an Ora village in Owan West Local Government area of Edo State. There were lots of hostilities between the Ora and Emai. The Ora were well-educated and looked down on the Emai (who embraced western education much later) as dim-witted and heady. They considered the Emai as "bush people" and had all kinds of stereotypes and stories to back up their claims. I first learnt to speak Ora. In fact, I and my siblings would deny being Emai because we were often mocked by grown-ups in my grandmother's house. In 1967, my father arranged for my siblings and I to join him at Igarra (an Epira speaking area in northern Edo). Within a year, he encouraged my mother to go for further training; a three year

grade two teachers training some 100kms away at Ubiaja. A day after my mother left for school, we were banned from ever speaking Ora again in Egbokhare household. By the time my mother completed her training, one had switched. The first three children including me retained both languages because our mother continued to speak Ora to us and she would speak Emai only to mock Emai people.

We acquired English language at school, Yoruba was spoken in the church and market, by 1969, I heard pidgin for the first time and it was to become the primary medium of interaction with our peers as the years progressed. My parents were teachers. We lived in Agenebode (Etsako land), Afuze (Emai and my hometown), Benin, Asaba, Sapele and Igarra. I had my secondary education in a Catholic boarding school at Auchi, a Muslim area. My youth service was in Nsukka area, spent one year and three months in Germany and of course it has been 25years, a wife and two children in Yoruba land. While I don't speak all the languages associated with the various locales I have lived in with equal or even satisfactory facility, being just around them exposed me to enormous and diverse linguistic data; set me up with the right questions about language and the right mindset to explore and understand our language instinct. I have focused predominantly on my mother tongue, Emai, as my window to our linguistic consciousness and as a door to human experience. One question has preoccupied me as a phonologist and this is, trying to understand the connection between sound and meaning.

My students have often asked me how I got into Linguistics. I think Linguistics got into me. I think Linguistics chose me. I was fortunate that my background provided me with great leverage and experience with languages. I enjoyed myself, enjoyed the challenges, and had some great teachers at the undergraduate level. Mr. H.C. Capo (now a Professor) taught me phonological analysis; he taught me to discover regularities in linguistic behaviour. Dr. R.P. Schaefer gave me fieldwork experience, discipline, tenacity of purpose, and how to ask questions. Above these, he helped me to see the

value in my language and culture and to experience the dimensions of relationships between language, culture and life. Schaefer and I started our partnership in 1982, when I started accompanying him to the Emai field to record stories. I spent 1983, my youth service year, transcribing over seventy oral narratives. This was for me a great introduction to postgraduate work. A linguist familiar with *Edoid* languages would understand the challenge; sounds get deleted at the end of words and you need to know the words to transcribe them and assign them with meanings. There was the additional problem of marking the tones and intonations in a highly deformed verbal signal, characterized by complex interplay of tone and grammar. Looking back now I think it may not have been the love of language that propelled me; maybe, I just couldn't walk away from a challenge and the unending puzzles provided by language data. Whatever kept me going, by the time I arrived in Ibadan to start a postgraduate study, I was not only ready to confront Linguistics, I was also equipped to face it squarely. As we shall see later, there can be no better subject of study than human language; there is not a more challenging and satisfying discipline as Linguistics. Linguistics interfaces with Physics, Anatomy, Physiology, Neurology, Cybernetics, Computer Science, Electronic Engineering, Psychology, Sociology, History, and so on. Together with these disciplines, they define sub-branches in the broad area. Linguistics draws on theories, methods and concepts from Mathematics and other Sciences. "Many biologists have capitalized on the close parallel between the principles of grammatical combination and the principles of genetic combination." In technical language, genetic sequences of DNA are said to contain 'letters' and 'punctuation'; may be 'Palindromic', 'meaningless', and are even stored in the 'Libraries' (Pinker 1995: 85). The description of the production of sound is amenable to such laws as Boyle's law, the 'Bernoulli effect'; speech itself is a complex of wave forms so we talk about the Physics of speech; terms such as morphology find use in Geology; like environmentalists,

linguists talk of language ecology and geography provides insight in 'areal Linguistics'. Theoretical Linguistics tries to answer the question, "what form can a human language take?" It incorporates methods and concepts for abstracting and modelling the human language instinct. Descriptive Linguistics describes the pattern of individual languages and phonology discovers the order imposed on sounds of languages in order to communicate meaning. Meaning floats all around, it is sounds that put form to them so that we can communicate, live in communities, and influence behaviour.

Everyday Encounter with Language

We all encounter language everyday in one form or the other and if we are sensitive enough, we all will have one story or the other to tell. Many young parents are fascinated by the babbling of babies and would record the first intelligible word uttered by their child. I remember one case where the child's first word was *dùgbèdùgbè*, a bus conductor shouting out his route to passengers. We are familiar with speech errors due to difficulties of pronunciation arising from anatomical defects such as oversized lips, large tongue, misaligned dentition, inflexible vocal folds and cleft palate. Some speech defects have to do with loss of brain function, motor control, and so on, which affects linguistic functions at various levels of language.

There are more subtle experiences as when a priest in a shrine who is a ventriloquist convinces us that we are in conversation with an idol or gods. The speech is often characteristically invariant and the gods appear only to be monolingual, speaking the language of the priests (Osanyin in Yoruba). In my experience with prophecies in the church, I have sometimes wondered why the prophecy is often in King James' version of English and not in modern English and why the format is rigid and formulaic.

I am curious also about "tongues" which linguists refer to as "glossolalia." I wonder what patterns underlie them and if there are predictable variations across linguistic groups. As we go around and become conscious of the language we use

and how other people speak and use language, we are bound to be fascinated and develop more than a passive interest in our language. My environment provided me with a lot of questions about language and speech which stimulated my interest in linguistics.

An individual once asked me why my people always speak at the top of their voices. He put the question differently so that I can understand. He said, "Why do you people always shout when you are speaking?" I believe that we are all familiar with stereotypes, while we often dismiss them because they lack scientific basis in objectivity and are often derogatory, they may contain some interesting information.

One individual I met claimed that Etsako people (of Edo State, Nigeria) are fond of pronouncing words forcefully because they have thick lips. Another individual put it this way: "if an average Auchi man is talking to you, you would think he is quarrelling with you." "Edo (Bini) people speak through their nose", "the British speak as if they are eating hot yams or gasping for breath", "Americans eat their words or speak fast", are some common observations which I have encountered. An American told me that I speak English with a flat tone.

We notice certain characteristics in an individual or group's speech which we cannot explain technically and sometimes, over generalize a trait observed in a highly restricted occurrence. It was to take me some years of training at the University of Ibadan to find some plausible rationale for some of the observations noted above. The generalizations of course are wrong, but there is a reasonable basis for the conclusion. For instance, in many dialects of Etsako (Yekhee), there is a distinction between fortis (strong) and lenis (weak) consonants. It is possible for an observant person to notice speakers of Etsako use this in their speech or carry over the distinction in their pronunciation of English consonants. In the case of Bini speakers, there is a nasal plosion that affects stops when they occur before nasal vowels. Normally, sounds like p, t, k, are exploded or released orally, but before nasal vowels in Bini, they are

exploded through the nose. American English has a tapping rule that changes t, d, to r-tap between vowels, creating a slurring appearance in speech. When we speak a second language, we carry over the features and patterns of our native language, in what is known as interference. This can affect our pronunciation and show up as an accent. It is quite easy for us to tell what part of Nigeria or the world an individual comes from or which language is his first language by listening to him speak English. I speak Yoruba with the two tones of my language, so, I sound like the popular comedian *Okondo*. I speak *Okondo* variety of Yoruba. *Kabiyesi* Oloja of the Village Headmaster, an old classic TV series, speak English with a distinct Yoruba tonal melody, thus, he sounds as if he “sings, not speaks English.”

We confront different issues with the spelling of Nigerian names. Normally, we neither mark tones nor sub-dot vowels as required in the spelling systems of the languages (*Joke*, *Somefun*, *Dupe*). The emerging trend propelled by popular culture is to *funkify* spellings (*Bolato* is spelt *Bolahteetoh*, *Jide* is spelt *Geedeh*). Our broadcasters go to great length to pronounce foreign names and words correctly. They are trained on English pronunciation, but Nigerian places and personal names are often carelessly pronounced. We can add to this the current practice among some Christians who drop deity roots in their names or change them completely. *Arabized* spelling is gaining ground among some Muslims who now change hitherto *nativized* spellings for *Arabized* ones as a sign of spiritual commitment. The above speak a lot about us and by tracking and analysing them, we can understand a lot about our society.

If we go back to the observations above regarding “Emai and shouting” and “English and gasping”, the linguistic foundation of the latter is in the aspiration of voiceless stops in stressed syllables in English. Emai speakers like Etsako speakers are not different from other people. But it so happens that in Emai, tone has a high grammatical functional load. The distinction between complete and non-complete action, remote and immediate future; habitual and continuous; empathic and non-empathic mood are implemented by

the same tonal parameter which kicks up lexical low tones in subjects of the sentences to high (other things being equal) and raise the entire tonal register to a super high level.

In fact, the entire verb phrase in the first members of the pairs, may incorporate a preponderance of high tones and its sequence (Egbokhare 1990). Similarly, noun phrases are marked by the change of lexical low tones to high to the extent that the statistical occurrence of high sequences over low is so overwhelming. If the grammar of Emai is such that constructions are kept not just high but extra high most of the time, it is easy to see why a keen observer of an individual who has a phonetic ear would be led to believe that speakers of Emai talk at the top of their voices. One is yet not clear how this feature of grammatical tone plays out when Emai speakers use English. It is important for me to stress that I am in no way trying to make a scientific point here. One is only interested in showing how each of us may encounter language and how sometimes, the products of these encounters may be rationalized.

Let us consider the following in a number of Nigerian languages. Efik speakers often substitute [b] for [p] and [r] for [t] in medial position. Consequently, the pair of words *repel; rebel; motto; morrow* are undifferentiated. Hausa speakers substitute [f] and [b] for [p] and [v] respectively. Igbo speakers may delete final vowels in a sequence of names whether or not both names are Igbo or one of the names is English. Thus, Peter Obi is pronounced [pitobi].

In some Yoruba speech, *fan* and *van*; *sip* and *zip*, *ferry* and *very* may be pronounced only as the first pair. In addition [h] is sometimes inserted at the beginning of words before a vowel and the same sound when it begins an English word is deleted. Consequently, *heat; eat* and *hair; air* may be interchanged. [l] and [r] in Tiv are realized as [l] and in Japanese, *election* may be pronounced *erection*.

There are many more examples we can give. For instance, *Eddid* languages must begin and end with a vowel, never a consonant. Apart from the modification of English pronunciation which these may require, depending on the speakers facility with English, such features of speech are important

evidence of group membership. Because of that, they have forensic value.

Why are Our Children failing (English)?

Why are our children failing? Why is every generation complaining about the falling standards of education of the previous one? I am today a professor, my father believed that the standards in my generation was apocalyptic and our use of English disastrous. Today, colleagues invite me to look at the curious spellings and essays written by their students. Are we experiencing some “grammar challenge” or “language directed epidemic?” Let us not make a mistake about it, I believe as many do that there is a crisis in education in Nigeria; but I think we have not properly segmented the issues so that we can address them properly. To begin, let us return to the issue of interference above.

Table1: Summary of Performance of Nigerian Students in English May/June SSCE (1993-2000)

Year	Total SAT	Credit (A1-C6)	Pass (17-P8)	Fail	Absents
1993	496,685	66,176 (13.3%)	145,545 (29.3%)	285,023 (57.4%)	4,833 (1.0%)
1994	524,294	74,557 (14.1%)	159,900 (30.5%)	290,237 (55.4%)	5,713 (1.1)
1995	464,270	57,588 (12.4%)	128,450 (27.7%)	278,202 (59.9%)	2,701 (0.6%)
1996	516,195	58,533 (11.3%)	124,041 (24.0%)	333,614 (64.6%)	3,471 (0.6%)
1997	618,139	40,488 (6.5%)	165,533 (26.8%)	412,188 (66.7%)	4,294 (0.7%)
1998	656,777	53,990 (8.5%)	136,873 (21.5%)	417,312 (65.5%)	3,849 (0.6%)
1999	752,233	73,531 (9.7%)	171,096 (22.6%)	471,593 (64.9%)	3,827 (0.5%)
2000	784,129	84,932 (9.8%)	172,158 (21.4%)	523,117 (65.9%)	3,922 (0.6%)

Source: Department of Statistics, West African Examination Council (WAEC)
Yakubogun C. O. O. Kolawole, 2004. (Pg262)

Beyond the level of pronunciation at the level of grammar, there are also features of interference. To have access to content in English, there must be a high level of competence in the language. Here comes my impression. In a multilingual setting like Nigeria, it is important for us to know the challenges which individuals who are learning English as a second language, and in fact individuals who are learning any of the major languages, are likely to face for the design of teaching materials and content for teaching English as a second language to different language groups. What would be suitable for Ijaw speakers will not be suitable for Hausa speakers. To date, the approach to content development is, "a one size fits all" approach. It is doubtful that we even have a researched data base or mapping that can support any serious effort to custom design content to address the needs of various groups. Thus, an urgent action should be for linguists to attempt a broad contrastive and error analysis of language groups across the country to provide the necessary data bank and resource pool to address the needs of second language learners of English.

It is important to emphasize that the Nigerian national census must now incorporate language data for planning purposes to address the above in addition to providing useful data on linguistic diversity in urban settlements. Part of the problem of mass failure at the basic school level may in fact be ascribable to Low English Proficiency. The poor reading culture and poor performance in arithmetic have their foundation not only in the choice of the language of education but also in Low English Proficiency. "Bring back the book" literacy advocacy project of President Jonathan may not succeed if we do not address the problem of Low English Proficiency.

It is important to mention that the value of a well-planned language data in a census goes beyond simply knowing the size of population which speaks a language as a first or second language. We need to determine the extent to which language plays a role in the mass failure at the basic level and low enrolment in some parts of Nigeria. We need to determine if the enforcement of mother tongue education in Hausa

and Arabic can help raise enrolment and achievement levels in some northern states and educationally disadvantaged areas of Nigeria. We acknowledge that there are other factors that affect standard of education. But those factors do not concern us here. There are two other issues which we will quickly capture.

The collapse of the public school system is leading to the creation of a segregated school system and with it socialization patterns that have linguistic implications. We need to try to understand what impact over 30 years of the collapse of the public school system has had on the society not just in terms of the quality of education but also on the nature of society. For instance, we need to track the social class and locales of those who are falling by the wayside and those who proceed to tertiary institutions, which tertiary institutions? Linguistically speaking, one thing that one can readily observe today is the emergence and growing number of those who claim English as their first language. There are individuals who passed through nursery schools and were taught some form of English and spoke English to their parents at home. They represent the extreme in an environment where Nigerian languages are constantly witnessing shrinking domains due to a number of factors.

The Influence of New Media and Social Networks on Language

There is an even more important issue that we are not giving sufficient attention to. This has to do with the influence of new media, social networks on the use of language. The media of the mobile phones and ICTs are creating new varieties of English language. Bodo (2010) observes that the mobile phone and other ICTs, such as the MSN that is popular worldwide, are changing our language use in profound ways, and making the youth in most parts of the world evolve different ways of using language. New varieties of written English thus seem to be evolving...indeed, these new varieties of written English are finding their way into

school writing and are the source of worry for school teachers” (p 118).

“New ICT tools are introducing new forms of language and literacy and students’ language is varying according to the technological medium they are communicating with.” What is showing up as poor communication skills is the carry over effect of the language patterns and informal style, to the rigidity of formal writing and speaking situations of the school system. We need to determine through research how much influence this new language is having on the English language usage of Nigerians. Below are a few examples of the language of SMS:

Table 2: Language of SMS

Lol	Laughing out loud
Cu	See you
R	Are
u/ur	You/your
Sys	See you soon
OMG	Oh my God
Tmrw/tmr	Tomorrow
IC	I see
BRB	Be right back
B4	Before
2nite/2day	Tonight/today

Source: Bodomo (2010:126)

My Experience of Flying

My experience of flying across the world has revealed that in America especially, airline safety instructions are given in the predominant language of the region. The situation in Nigeria is different. Safety instruction is given in ‘special English’ by cabin crew while the labelling of seats and emergency exits are in Giberish (Spanish, French, Portuguese). A flyer from one of Nigeria’s local airlines is shown in figure 1.



Fig. 1: Aero flyer

The flyer is not a trivial matter. It is based on the unproven and unfortunate assumption that all those who fly in and out of the Nigerian airspace speak only European languages. It is even more troublesome considering the fact that some of the time, safety instructions are prerecorded and cabin crew only have to demonstrate. Even those who are quite good in English language sometimes have a problem comprehending the cabin crew or the prerecorded voice. If foreign airlines can deliver safety instructions to take care of major population of their locality and if they take care always to deliver safety instructions in the dominant languages in their country of origin, whether or not speakers of those languages are confirmed to be onboard, it should be possible for them to address the needs of Nigerians.

One has heard it said that there are too many languages in Nigeria; hence, it will be virtually impractical to meet the needs of every group. This argument is specious because with five languages, English, Nigerian Pidgin, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, the linguistic needs of over 90% of Nigerians can be met. Nigeria must insist that airlines address Nigerians in the languages they understand best and planes flying in our airspace must adhere to language requirements as part of airline safety requirements.

There is an urgent need for a survey of the categories of fliers in Nigerian airspace, their linguistic affiliation, and the extent to which fliers comprehend safety instructions. If you have noticed, one would be disturbed that many Nigerians hardly wait for planes to taxi to a halt before they get up from their seats. Could that be related to the issue of lack of comprehension of safety instructions? Perhaps not! It is now important for Nigerian airports to post signs and flight schedules, and make announcements in Nigerian languages. This should be complemented with street signs in English and local languages as a way of signposting our linguistic heritage and improving the value of local languages.

Safety and Operational Manuals of Equipment and Machinery

The minimum standard for manuals should be compliant with Nigerian English. Associated with the above is the issue of safety and operational manuals for equipments and machinery, electrical and electronic equipments. The English in most household equipment imported from a number of Asian countries is mostly incomprehensible. Even the ones from European countries need to be *nativized* to Nigerian English to make them accessible. It is not too much for Standards Organization of Nigeria to prescribe language standard for machinery, equipment, and household appliances imported to Nigeria. There is now a Nigerian English recognized globally as a variety.



Fig. 2: A typical equipment manual

**CVR-TUB 500C
OPERATION METHOD AND
FUNCTION INSTRUCTIONS
AS FOLLOWS**



Fig. 3: Another typical equipment manual

Stereotypes, Culture and Language Use

When I was leaving for Ibadan, I was told all kinds of things about the Yorubas that were stereotypes; just as I was also prepared for life in Igboland during my youth service year. My feeling here is that cultural and linguistic differences are often misunderstood or misinterpreted as evidence of character, moral, ethical or behavioural dispositions. My first few years in Yoruba land were difficult because I misunderstood things a lot. Yoruba is full of nuances and indirectness. When I asked a workman if he was going to come the following day to fix my fridge and he said "by the grace of God" (translated from Yoruba) I would think that he would come barring any unforeseen circumstances; when actually, it meant that he would not come, except God brought him by the collar. When a guy who is indebted to me says "there is a lot of money in my possession," I wonder why he has refused to pay up. Someone who is obviously ill says "I am strong" and this leaves me wondering. After I got married, my wife will correct me often and will give me interpretations of a statement that was way off my antenna. She would say "that is not what he means". She and I had our fair share of misunderstandings. For instance, I called her once by my mother's pet name "mama lolo", her reply stunned me "na your mama be mama lolo". This was clearly abusive. She meant to say "Na your mama you dey call mama lolo" (It is your mother you normally call "mama lolo"). I learnt fast. I noticed that to succeed, you cannot move around with an erect posture or stand upright to greet. You have to crouch, bow, nod, as the case may be. Prostrating is tantamount to emasculating one in my culture. Since I couldn't work out, who really deserved the bow, I followed the route of addressing everyone as *sir* and *ma* until it got so ridiculous and irritating to my wife that she called me to order. Within a few years, I noticed my teachers moved up from being addressed as Dr/Professor to daddy/mummy to being called mama/baba as if the students and younger colleagues were eager to get rid of them.

I realized at some point how Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu and his Igbo compatriots could have misread the Yoruba

leaders in the Western House of Assembly, Ibadan around April 1967, when they said, "if by any act of omission or commission the Eastern Region Secedes Western Nigeria will opt out [of the Federation of Nigeria]". The Yoruba speak "Yorish" and the Igbo speak "Igbish". There were clearly two world views, two languages, and two interpretations. Just to drive home the point, "if" is a conditional in English, in many Nigerian languages and Nigerian English varieties, it also marks an adverbial time clause (*when). There is also the issue of varying possibility of occurrence of the event and commitment to event predicated on the condition. A statement is a statement, a promise is a promise. Also is the issue of when secession would be believed to have taken place, when Ojukwu declares it or when the Federal Government accepts it. It is the potential for language and cultural differences to lead to conflict and violence that I see at every time I find myself in a new contact situation. It is not often what is said that we understand; it is what we think is said.

Language and Speech

Language is the Pedigree of nations

(Kay Williamson)

Language: From Babel to Pentecost

Two passages from the Bible are instructive. First is the account of the origin of language diversity captured in the accounts of the Tower of Babel in Genesis Chapter 11 verses 1- 9. Humanity was speaking one language and came close to reaching heaven and God became worried. The story however draws attention to the communicative and unifying functions of language. Language makes it possible for people to cooperate, live in communities, document their progress, transmit experiences and influence the behaviour of other people.

Human civilization is virtually impossible without language. Before I elaborate further, let us look at another event in the Bible, with linguistic import. Acts Chapter 2, verses 1 - 12 reports an event on the day of Pentecost when a mighty

rushing wind filled the house where the disciples were gathered. A linguistic phenomenon took place. "They were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance". Galileans began to speak a language that was intelligible to individuals from diverse and possibly unrelated language groups.

The transition from Babel to Pentecost is a radical linguistic statement that defines human possibilities and has implications for the imagination. Babel makes a strong claim that language diversity, at least the first incident, was neither natural, nor gradual. It occurred suddenly as a result of a radical and dramatic intervention of a "speech or language scrambler", which zapped the relevant neural locus of language and thereby altered the language code in systematic ways. We can stretch our imagination further, but whatever happened, the language of Babelians was confounded and the people could no longer understand one another's speech.

The Pentecost experience brings to mind an equally radical intervention. This time, it was a "de-scrambler or decoder" that provided a capacity for universal translation. Automatic translation technology and voice recognition devices give some indication that this is not far-fetched. But since the Holy Spirit and tongues are not yet open to scientific scrutiny and since we cannot locate a community that speaks a language known as tongues or Babel as their native language, we must return to the realm of the observable.

Why Study Language?

Consider it a plausible calculation that – at the rate things are going, the coming century will see either the death or doom of 90% of mankind's language.

(Kraus 1992:7)

A ì f'èlè Ké ibòsí là ì f'èlè jo

I remember that when I was admitted to read Linguistics at the University, my father was initially unhappy because one of his friends whose daughter was to read pharmacy talked disparagingly about the discipline and the Arts generally. The negative attitude towards the Arts generally persists because of a general ignorance of the value of the disciplines in Arts Faculty to contemporary national issues. At the University of Ibadan, I have sometimes been described as a Professor of Emai because some people believe that the value of a language depends on the size of the population who speak it and of course, professors who work on small language groups would necessarily be inferior to those who speak or work on big language groups. I have no point to make here other than showing that languages, all languages are valuable and that there is a great deal of information packed in every language that can benefit mankind.

Language is basic to human society; verbal communication is the universal background against which all other communications take place (Slack, 1984). Language is not just a means of communication; it is a huge resource, a reservoir of knowledge and folk wisdom, an encyclopedia of culture. The argument for the value of language is best made when taken in the context of language endangerment and language death. We may ask ourselves the question, "Why should we care about any language?"

Reflections

We spoke one language

In different voices

Our tongues grew out of the same root

Although they came in varied forms

But you said you heard different peoples

We sang the same songs

But you said that we made diverse music

You gave us mirrors

We saw only your painting of us

*You gave us strange wine
Then our rhythm changed
You fed us with Agama lizard
Now all we can do is nod
Our speech is gone forever
Our voice is sold to foreign accents
We now whisper in monotones
We can no longer gather in the village court together
We cannot celebrate before our ancestors
Our shrines are overgrown with weeds
You have become king over us
Now we are truly indifferent
But you want us to be one
How can we be one?
We have lost our colour
And are bleached to different hues
The cords that held the village is in the sea
Where it was thrown
When you took away our children*

*Why must we be one?
There's a breach between us and our ancestors
We interpret the Ogene of Umuofia in Ohio
We learn the steps of the bata in Bayreuth
The kolanu does not understand Igbo
The language of its origin
Ifa speaks Yorùbá*

*We are no more our own interpreters
Who will tell our stories
Now that we are busy narrating foreign tales
We are children who have lost a taste
For their mother's soup
Dogs who do not recognize their owner's call
We have reincarnated in other lands before we are
dead*

*We are warriors who have taken to orgies
With hostile women
We have gone to play across the river
And forgotten to return home.*

“Why should a linguist worry about a small language like Emai with a negligible population of speakers?” As Kraus (1992) noted, “any language is a supreme achievement of a uniquely human collective genius as divine and endless a mystery as a living organism.” We should care about languages because we can learn a great deal from them. Let us enumerate some reasons given why we should care (Crystal 2000).

Language contains our History

Through the words and idioms it uses, it provides us with clues about the earlier states of mind of its speakers, about the kinds of cultural context they had... words become part of the evidence of social history... everything forgets, but not language (p. 75). Language is the archive of history... it does this most obviously by expressing, through the grammar and lexicon of its texts, the events which form its past” (p. 41). Let us see some evidence of this from titular names and other language-based information in northern Edo.

Table 3: Traditional Titles in Edo

Title	Origin	Communities	LGA	Language Group	Remarks
Ogie-/Oje-	Benin	Emai, Ora, Uzairue	Owan Etsako Akoko-Edo	NCE NCE NEW	Occurs in its different modified forms. In Atte, Ogiawa is a recent development. Form is widespread in Esan and for Benin lords.
Oba	Benin/Yoruba	Agbede	Etsako	NCE	Agbede is an aberration since it is only in Benin that the term is used.
Oni-	Yoruba	Ososo Okpe, Ibillo	Akoko-Edo Akoko-Edo	NWE NWE	
Dezi	Nupe	Ibillo	Akoko-Edo	NWE	A defunct title predating Oni.
Odafe	Local	Enwan, Akuku North Ibie	Akoko-Edo	NEW	Term for head of a household.
Okpashi	Local	Ojah	Akoko-Edo	NWE	Could mean the sypreme one.
Ima	Local	Somorika	Akoko-Edo	NWE	Recent, only after Otaru. Current Ima is second since creation.
Okumagbe	Local	Weppa-wano Iuleha	Etsako Owan	NCE	
Ukor	Local	Warake	Owan	NCE	
Otaru	Ebira	Auchi	Etsako	NCE	Traditional ruler of Etuno (Ebira) is Otaru.

From names and traditional titles we see evidences of the influence if not dominance of Yoruba, Edo, Epira, and Nupe/Igala. We are also able to date these influences relative to one another. We see also from these names and titles evidence of dominance if not subjugation.

From a comparative point of view, the Akoko Edo area shows the greatest variations in traditional titles. This also applies to changes in the name of settlements. If we are able to trace the origin of the names of the settlements, then we may be able to tell which group held sway at which time.

We may divide the titles of Edo north to reflect the influence of three dominant powers: the Benin (Ogie/ Ojie/ Enigie), the Nupe/Igala (Otaru) and various local titles which should in fact be regarded as evidence of the absence of kingship. The titles reflect different periods. The communities which utilize local forms such as Okpasiri, Odafe, Ukori, among others reflect prehistoric situation, where kingship was not part of the Edo experience. This may not necessarily be taken as indication that such communities were older. If we were to consider power relations, it may be an indication of subjugation. In *Edoid* parlance, Odafe is the head of a household or family. Ukori is the court messenger. Consequently, communities with these titles may have invented kingship and adopted the terms as titles. One thing is clear and that is, that before the wars, the older person in a community became the head. A number of communities still maintain this practice. The Oturu title is fading off in the NWE (North West Edoid) areas in Akoko Edo and Etsako. Only in Auchu and Igarra (non Edo) is the Oturu the King. In other communities such as Somorika, Atte, Okpilla, Uneme, they are either important chiefs or priests. Could it be then that the Oturu was a foreign overlord? Could it also be that the demotion of this office in those communities reflects a rebellion against a foreign order? In Somorika, the *Ima* is the head of the community and the current one is the second in succession.

The title of *Oje* in Ora and *Okumagbe* in Iuleha are recent. The current holders are only the second in succession. Ibillo, Okpe and Ososo in Akoko Edo (NWE) have the Yoruba titular prefix *Oni-*. These are adjoining communities. In the case of Ibillo, its relatives in the Okpamheri group do not follow this pattern. We also gather that the leader of the community was once a *Dezi*, suggesting a Nupe influence. The title itself bears formal resemblance with the *Deji* of Akure. We can see that the Akoko Edo area defined a highly variable area of influence by different political and cultural currents.

In terms of place names, Somorika has changed its name from *Amo*, to its present name. It is currently named after *Usomo* perhaps the leader of a migrating band who established himself as overlord. There are reasons to believe that the Somorika hills were occupied by diverse groups, many of whom were forced to leave after *Usomo* established himself as overlord. Ibillo was once known as *Uma*, it is not clear how the present name came about, but we strongly believe that it originated from the Yorubas. The Yorubas had established themselves as a dominant group through wars, Christianity, western education and politics in that area. There was a wide spread practice of changing the names of places in northern Edo, if they were difficult to pronounce or sounded like words with negative reference in Yoruba. Thus, *Ebone* was changed to *Ikiran Oke* and *Ile*, *Osi* to *Aiyegunle*, *Ugboshi Ile* and *Ugboshi Afe*, were changed to *Igbo Ola Oke* and *Igbo Ola Isale* respectively. *Ugboshi* has since reverted to its old name.

Ososo, Okpe and Somorika are clearly mixed communities. Personal names give indications to this. In Ososo, there are traces of Igbira elements. This is confirmed by the fact that a quarter in the village claim origin from Okene. They speak the same NWE dialect. Okpe indigenes bear Yoruba, Bini, Nupe and local names. The Bini connection is not clear, but the Olokpe claimed he derived his royalty from Benin. The Nupe name may have come from the Nupe mercenary camp, which was once hosted by Okpe. The term for this camp is uncomfortably close to the title (*Okpashi*), which is

borne by traditional rulers from some *Edoid* communities. In Afuze (Emai), a whole section of the town was once known as *Alafiaji*. There is *Sabongida Ora*, a Hausa term for new town in the midst of Ora country. All these point to the fact that there is a closer tie between the Nupe and Edo north communities than we have cared to understand.

Language provides a dependable basis for cross-checking oral traditions or origin and migration in groups that have no written history. We can use the methods of historical linguistics to determine the homeland of protolanguage.

"We can rationally assume that the homeland is in the area where the languages show the greatest differentiation, the result of having a long period in which to diversify into different dialects and then into different languages; conversely, areas where the languages are more closely related have been more recently settled and have thus had a shorter period in which to differentiate from each other (Williamson 1987:70).

Elugbe (1973, 1989) show that in spite of claims of Benin origin by groups of *Edoid* speaking peoples, the original location of dispersal (i.e. *Edoid* homeland) is around the Kukuruku hills. Through language, Egbokhare (2003a) contradicts the claim that the name Edo originates from the name of a slave who saved Oba Ewuare (1440-73) from a murder plot. The kingdom was said to have been named after the slave after his death (Ogie 2002). The name originates from an ancient greeting form *doo* meaning *hello* which persists in many *Edoid* areas and the *Edo* are people who greet *doo*.

Linguistic evidence may also be taken to support the plausibility of the derivation of the title of *Ooni* of Ife from *Oghene* as reported in Akinjogbin and Olaniyan (1992:45). Writing on the issue, Akinjogbin and Olaniyan state that:

There is of course the report received in Benin by early Portuguese travellers of a sovereign named "Ogane" or "Hoguane" (Pereira 1937) to whom the Oba of Benin sent a messenger on his ascension to the throne... it has generally been assumed

that this Ogane referred to the Ooni of Ife but Ryder suggests otherwise... . G.R. Grone, translating some early Portuguese travels documents pertaining to West Africa (Codo Motto, 1937: 126 – 127) remarks in a footnote that the Ogane was probably a chief in the Niger-Delta. F.O.C Law also analyses this evidence and explains the difficulties in accepting outright the claim which assumes the Ogane to be the Ooni of Ife (Law 1993: 179 cf. Akinjogbin et al p 45 – 46)

Akinjogbin (1994), in his work, “Yorubaland before Oduduwa”, contains the word Oghene who was supreme ruler of pre-Oduduwa Ife. Words like *Orisanobu Oghene* ‘Supreme God’, *Uko* ‘Policemen’ (royal messenger in some contemporary *Edoid* communities), *Egbengben* ‘highest age grade’ (*ogben/legben* ‘agemate’), *Ukpolo* ‘terraces’, *Uhodo* ‘village headman’, *Otu petele* (*ekpete* ‘stool’; *otu* ‘age group’), *Owiogho* ‘house where money is kept’ (*owa* ‘house’; *ogho* ‘money/cowrie’ in *Edoid*), *Ogho* (old kind of money; cowrie), *Odigbo* ‘means of exchange’, *Ekila* ‘trade fair’ (from Eki market’) are distinctly *Edoid*. In fact some of the past Oghene sound like Edo names.

The point here is not to make a historical claim of origin, or join in the controversy of the Ife- Benin struggle for supremacy, but to suggest that it is phonologically plausible to derive Ooni from Oghene through the following processes:

Table 4: Phonological Derivation of the Title Ooni

Sound	Orthography	
oghēni	oghēni	Underlying form
oni	oni	By consonant deletion
oɔni	oɔni	By V ₂ assimilation to derive the Ife title
oɣene	oɣene	By V ₃ assimilation to derive modern form in South West Edoid

Whereas, to derive *Ooni*, consonant deletion and total assimilation of second vowel is needed, only a total assimilation of the third vowel occurs in the realization of the form in the languages of South West *Edoid*. We need a closer look at linguistic evidence in resolving the Benin-Ife relationship and accounting for origins and migrations generally. *Ihievbe* in North Central *Edoid* has the form *Oghena*. Vowel harmony adds a little more interesting dimension which is not necessary to explicate.

Language contributes to the Sum of Human Knowledge

It is language that unifies everything, linking environmental practice with cultural knowledge, and transmitting everything synchronically among members of a community as well as diachronically between generations (Crystal 2000:47). Insights into the various plant species used by indigenous healers may come from the way they are named and described in ritual practices, formal oratory, or folklore. The network of social relation within a community can most efficiently be understood by examining the rules governing the style of language used, the selection of vocabulary and the choice of one manner of discourse rather than another.

Language expresses Identity

Language is the basis of all cultural activities. It provides the basis of memberships of groups and sub-groups. The loss of a language therefore leads to loss of identity. Every group or sub-group has an associated language or manner of speech which define social, economic, political, professional, geographical or subcultural affiliations. By listening for certain indicators in speech, we can forensically place individuals in the group to which they belong. The issue of identity can also be taken to the level of the individual. We all have our idiosyncracies and peculiarity of pronunciation or writing. Literary critics and discourse analyst can locate the author of a piece through the patterns and structures that are customary to the writer. Individual idiosyncracies underlying voice prints and language systems locate us within language groups. We can assist in checking the problem of cultism and

crime by studying the speech of individuals who belong to the groups and mapping out the regularly occurring patterns which set them apart.

Need for Diversity

“If diversity is a prerequisite for successful humanity, then the preservation of linguistic diversity is essential, for language lies at the heart of what it means to be human. If the development of multiple cultures is so important, then the role of languages becomes critical, for cultures are chiefly transmitted through spoken and written languages. Accordingly, when language transmission breaks down, through language death, there is a serious loss of inherited knowledge. Any reduction of language diversity diminishes the adaptational strength of our species because it lowers the pool of knowledge from which we can draw” (Crystal 2000:33 – 34).

Language Provides Information on how the Human Mind Works

“The aim of linguistics is to define the nature of the human language faculty comprehensively and explicitly. What is the range of possibilities which the human brain allows when it comes to the construction of languages?...each language manifests a fresh coming together of sounds, grammar, and vocabulary to form a system of communication which, while demonstrating certain universal principle of organization and structure, is an unprecedented event and a unique encapsulation of a world view” (p54). Examples from ideophones in this presentation illustrate this point.

Language is Critical for Education and Scientific and Technological Development

There is a deep connection between language and development. This connection is to be found in the provision of education and access to information through the mother tongue. Studies have shown that a child learns better when he or she is taught in the mother tongue and reads better when he or she has access to content in the mother tongue. Prah (1995)

captures the relationship between mother tongue and scientific development. He states that, "If language in general relates us to reality, mother tongue in particular fulfils this function in a special and fundamental way. Mother tongue is the primary code for the perception of reality...it is the mother language which affords room for the creative application of human ingenuity" (p 45 – 46).

What has Languages got to do with Science?

As a young man, I had a problem with mathematics. I learnt addition, subtraction and multiplication in my mother tongue. I had no problems carrying this over to English and I was quite good in arithmetic. In my secondary school, my teacher put a problem on the board:

$$3x + 4y$$

I asked what X and Y are, and I was told that they are variables. Then I wanted to know what variables are and I was told X could be an *orange* and Y a *mango*. I had difficulties understanding what would be the product of mixing oranges and mangoes. The teacher got impatient. There were a few language problems with simultaneous and quadratic equations where I was simply told to memorize formulas—and that was not quite working with me. Years later, when on my own, I understood the language, it struck me that a lot of science and technology was simply a combination of language, methods, and gadgets. This is just being naive, I guess. My problem with physics was different. I had an Indian teacher whose pronunciation of English gave us some comic relief. Then he would say: "vy you are laughing?" meaning "why are you laughing?" We just had fun and of course failed woefully.

Prah (1995) captures the relationship between mother tongue and scientific development succinctly. According to him "concepts, abstract notions and scientific linguistics tools are most accessible and provide greater facility for effective usage if they are grounded in the language which provides the systematic grid for interpreting and intervening in reality. Scientific practice is the mode of this intervention. It is

mother language which affords room for the creative application of human ingenuity. In all developed societies, science and technological development is based on the native language, cultivated as the mother tongue” (p 45 – 46). This will allow elites who have access to European languages innovate and technologically create and provide avenues for the rural masses to participate. The use of mother tongue in technology education will make science and technology part of the cultural universe of the people, it will become part of their thinking and rationalizing process.

According to Prah, knowledge cannot remain a culturally indigested foreign body of ideas. Knowledge must melt into the cultural landscape of the user in order to become an instrument of creativity for the learner and user (p 49).

Language impacts our World View

Language is not only a repository of our world view but also influences how we see the world. Language may not determine the way we think, but there is no doubt that through its cultural content and its cognitive interface and structures, it influences our world view. Sapir (1929) states that “the real world to a large extent is unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached to them. We see and hear and otherwise experience reality largely as we do because the language habits of our community predisposes certain choices of interpretation. Language is not merely a vehicle of communication by which man talks about some objective reality out there...but rather language itself represents an objective reality by means of which man structures and organizes the out there in certain characteristics ways” (p 64 – 65).

Language is Necessary for Effective Healthcare

Provision (Visiting the Hospital and using Medications)

What has language got to do with health and healthcare? Owolabi (2006 excerpt, p 11) has two quotations which give us some indications:

Native language is a key source of information and effective medium of communication. An individual naturally feels more comfortable in his/her mother tongue...We believe that every individual has an equal right of information and access to health services...We do appreciate the positive role of mother tongue teachers...in educating and raising health awareness in the minority communities. (*Minority Ethnic Communities and Health; Department of Health Awareness Project M.C.H.A, Project, UK*)

The success of health services depends on good communication between provider and consumer. Health personnel need to be familiar with the language of their patients... Nigerians are accustomed to regarding health professionals as authority figures. Such authority implies personal interest and barrier to communication detracts markedly from the success of the relationship and therefore the therapy...the health professional therefore needs to communicate with the patient in his (patient's) language to obtain or to give information about disease, investigations, treatments and prognosis, or even give reassurance or counsel...it would be well to begin the task of organized and synchronized translation of the vocabulary of medical and allied sciences to Nigerian languages as soon as possible (Fafowora 1995: 471-2)

It is clear that language has everything to do with health and well-being. Healthcare starts in the interaction between a client and a care giver. Every culture has a defined discourse pattern that characterizes a patient-doctor relationship in traditional medicine environment. This discourse is based on the native not a foreign language.

There are many aspects of healthcare that cannot be ascribed to language, but it is important that healthcare

workers and beneficiaries are able to communicate, understand one another and build trust. The native language assures this. It is doubtful if primary healthcare can succeed without addressing the language component.

It is not enough to recruit local healthcare workers, it is important that linguists and communication experts provide the technical basis and content which will serve the training needs of the health workers. It is critically important for hospitals to have demographic information of their catchment area. One such information is the language use patterns. In urban areas where there is a mix of population, it will help healthcare providers understand which languages are dominant and which are minorities and how to ensure that the needs of clients are met.

Another issue of relevance is the one that relates to access to doctor's prescription and information on drugs. The high level of illiteracy means that a lot of people have no access to information on the medication and dosage which they use. It does not help to simply require materials to be translated to the native languages. New technologies make it possible for voice prompt to be attached to medications in the language of the patient's preference and in fact it should be possible to adopt a more cost effective means that requires sound bytes to be downloaded onto the mobile phones of patients by texting or dialing a code to a mobile number. Hospitals can also provide doctor's prescriptions options in the language of the patient to their mobile phones and provide options for reminders to use medications at appropriate times to be sent.

The very final thing I want to draw attention to here is that language can provide a good basis to access new remedies and cures to diseases. Through language, we can access indigenous medical knowledge. Independent herbal remedies and their functions; plants and their uses are often known from the way they are named. Just as we may gain insight into family medical, social, and psychological history through personal names, we can also know a lot about diseases, epidemics and medical practices through language.

Speech

Pèlè l'áko ó l'ábo

Language exists primarily in the vocal medium. This medium is speech. Speech is the most highly skilled muscular activity that human beings ever achieved, requiring the precise and rapid coordination of more than eighty different muscles, many of them paired (Laver 1994: 1). Lenneberg (1967) states that speech at normal rate is achieved by 1,400 motor commands per second to the muscles of the speech apparatus (cf Laver 1994). Speech is more than just sounds. Linguistic meaning as well as accent, tone of voice and voice quality ride on the stream of speech. Through speech we can locate an individual within a group or sub-group and ascribe certain social and personal information to him.

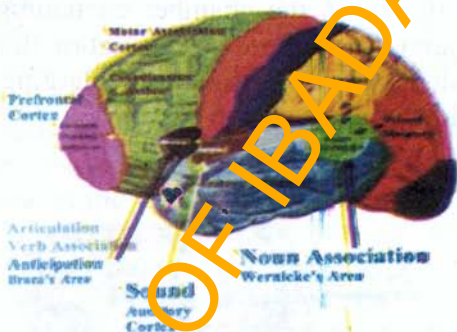


Fig. 4: Location of speech functions in the brain

Speech varies along many parameters such as style (formal vs informal), discourse type, roles and relationships, genre, mood, media among many other things. Although speech is very fundamental to human communications, it does not define all of human experience. Literacy is possible for instance through writing and Braille for the blind, while the deaf can communicate through sign language. Speech is studied by various disciplines because of its pivotal role in human existence. Some of these disciplines are Linguistics, Communication, Philosophy, Neurology, Medicine, Pathology, Acoustics, Physics, Cybernetics, Electronic Engineering, Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence.

Speaking is modified breathing. “When we talk, we depart from our usual rhythmic breathing and take in quick breaths of air, then release them steadily using the muscles of the ribs to counteract the classic recoil force of the lungs... we time our exhalation to the length of the phrase or sentence we intend to utter. This can lead to hyperventilation or hypoxia, which is why public speaking is so exhausting and why it is difficult to carry on a conversation with a jogging partner” (Pinker 1995: 164). The source of air for speaking is the lungs, pharynx or the mouth or their combinations in the production of clicks, ejectives, implosives and labiovelars in some languages.

Fundamentally, we need a body of air to speak. The air has to be set in motion to generate an inflow or outflow by rarefying the air in the chamber containing the body of air (Boyle’s law). It is the pressure variation that is created in the chamber due to the constriction or enlarging of the space that leads to flow of air in or out.

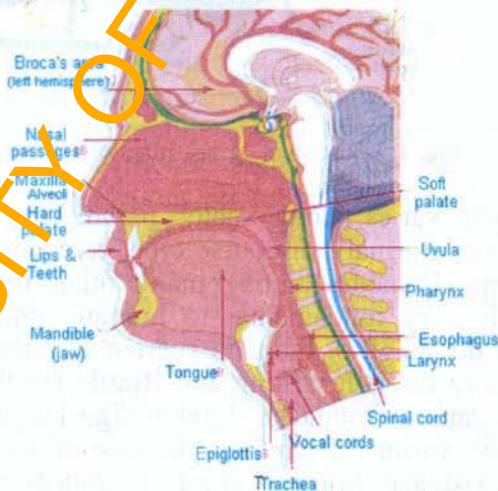


Fig 5: Organs of speech

The air flowing through the glottis may cause the vocal folds to vibrate through the interplay of air pressure, tension and elasticity of vocal folds in what is explained through the myoelastic-aerodynamic theory of voice production.

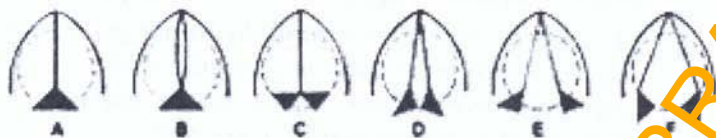


Fig 6: Phonation process

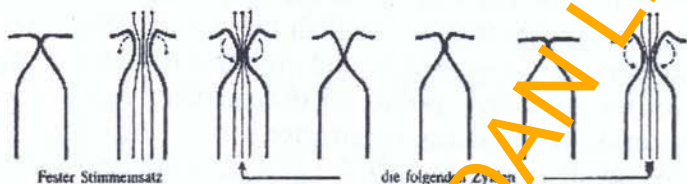


Fig. 7: Myoelastic-aerodynamic processes in voice production

As air flows past the narrowed glottis, the vocal cords are sucked together and blown apart in rapid succession depending on the tension of the vocal folds and rate of airflow. Air is chopped into tiny puffs which we hear as a buzz called voicing. The other extreme is to allow air to flow through unimpeded in what is known as voicelessness. Intermediate situations exist in whisper or breathy voice and laryngealization. The entire activity is discussed under phonation. Pitch of voice is a function of rate of vibration of vocal folds. When pitch change causes a change in the meaning of a word, we have tones (as in Emai examples below):

1. *òkpà* 'cock' *òkpà* 'one': *ékpà* 'vomit' *èkpà* 'punch'
The following examples from Yoruba tongue twisters pun on tones.
2. *enì tó jẹ̀ dòdò kòlèè sọ̀ òdodo*
"the mouth that eats fried plantain cannot speak the truth"
3. *àbòábá dábàá i'ábà bábá baba*
"àbòábá moved a motion at the grandfather's father's hamlet"

4. *obìrin t'ó. fé pon omo[kponmo] kò gbodò je pònmó[kponmo]*
 "a woman who wants to carry a baby on her back should not eat cow skin"
5. *òpòlopò òpòlò l'òròpé olópolo l'òpòlopò èniyàn láì mò wípé òpòlopò èniyàn ni ò lópolo rará.*
 "numerous toads think that a lot of individuals are brilliant not knowing that they are not"

When a similar change affects a phrase, clause or sentence, we have intonation. English utilizes a falling intonation in statements, wh-questions and commands, and a rising one in yes/no questions, polite encouragement, requests, warnings, or to express doubt or surprise.

When air flows through the glottis, it is buzzy, whispery, noisy or turbulent or woozy (buzz + noise); or we just have normal noiseless breathing or stoppage of breathing (for glottal stops). Air from the lungs may go through the mouth channel, the nasal channel (by lowering the velum and blocking the mouth), or the mouth and nasal channel simultaneously. So a sound has an oral, nasal or nasalized quality respectively. It is in the mouth that a lot of variation in sound quality occurs.

Different shapes can be formed with the mouth to create different resonance and thereby different sound qualities. It is achieved by pairing an organ on the floor of the mouth (active articulator) with another one on the roof of the mouth (passive articulator). By combining these parameters in universal and language specific ways, we are able to achieve the sound producing capabilities of man. But as we shall see later sounds are just raw materials. It is by organizing them into functional sets and putting them in highly restricted sequences that we are able to convey meaning.

There is more to speech than what we have discussed above. Let us consider the following paradox. Sounds are wave forms. Although spectrogram and x-ray films show that speech is a continuum with no clear boundaries, we seem to perceive it as a sequence of discrete units. In fact, Pinker

(1995) describes speech as an illusion and phonetic perception as a sixth sense. This is compounded by the fact that:

- i. The sequence of sounds we think we hear within a word is an illusion. If you sliced a word *cat* into its part *k*, *a*, *t* and piece them together in the reverse order, they will be unintelligible, not *tack*.
- ii. We do not hear everything that is pronounced in speech. Repeated pronunciation of the same sound by the same or different individuals yield different sound qualities. Articulation is imprecise.
- iii. Speech is often highly depleted as some sounds occurring in words that are strung together are often not pronounced at all (due to deletion) or take a different form (due to overlapping or neutralization of forms).
- iv. Speech is very rapid. We hear forty-five phonemes per second. Given how the human auditory system works, it is a miracle that we hear and understand speech at all. "When a sound like a click is repeated at a rate of twenty times a second or faster, we no longer hear it as a sequence of separate sounds but as a low buzz" (Pinker 1995: 62).

"If speech signal is continuous, why should we perceive it as discontinuous?" because our hearing is mediated by the logic of language wired into our brains. Schane (1973) puts it differently: "Probably because that is the only way our mind can organize language...in language the perceptual, the subjective, the discrete take precedence over the physical, objective, the continuous." Syntax overrides carbondioxide (Pinker 1995:164).

Chomsky and Halle (1965) sum it up:

The speaker produces a signal with a certain intended meaning; the hearer receives a signal and attempts to determine what was intended; both speaker and hearer share a system of internalized rules that determine sound-meaning connections, which mediates the interaction (p3).

“Language is more or less a formalizable system of correlations between sound and meaning” (Anderson 1974).

The above leads us to a crucial assumption that underlies the notion of a phonological system. That is, that “the pronunciation of a language can be described with the help of a finite set of features/segments/syllables, etc”. The pronunciation of every morpheme consists of a particular configuration of these constituents. These phonological constituents are meaningless, and distinct from meaningful morphemes, words, phrases and sentences’ (Gussenhoven and Jacobs 1998:36 – 37).

The Sound-Meaning Correlation: The Organization of Sounds

My own subject, phonetics, is one which is useless by itself, while at the same time it is the foundation of all study of language, whether theoretical or practical.

(Henry Sweet)

From six organs of speech, languages can generate about twenty distinctive features, which can occur in different configuration to create a few thousand phonemes which can be strung together in various combinational possibilities to express an indefinitely large number of forms and sequences.

Phonetics is the study that deals with how speech sounds are produced, perceived and transmitted through air. Phonology deals with how sounds are organized and patterned in the expression of meaning. Sounds are organized into functional units called phonemes which are psychologically real. We are able to talk about individual segments and sequences of segments, develop an alphabet for writing a language because of phonemes. Phonemes are much fewer than the actual sounds we pronounce because a lot of modification occurs that multiply the sound inventory in speech. These modifications are driven by rules which are stored together with words in the brain. The rules are called phonological rules.

Phonemes are however not the atomic, minimal or ultimate constituents of phonological description; but they dissolve into smaller, properties called distinctive features. If we consider phonemes as atomic units, features are the sub-atomic units. "The apparently vast number of speech sounds in the languages of the world turns out to be surface-level realization of a limited set of features" (Clements 1985:225).

When we capture sounds either with phonetic symbols or letters, it is not obvious that they contain more basic units or features. We write from right to left or left to right in a unilinear sequence. This is supported by the fact that speech itself occurs in time, we say the first word first and the last word last and we capture this in the way we write. When we write, we may have a letter or combination of letters for a sound (as 'th' is for [θ]) or use a diacritic (such as a grave accent ['] for high tones, we assume that phonemes (or segments) occur in a single row, never overlap or one on top of another' (Hockett 1947 cf. Goldsmith 1990).

As I mentioned earlier, there is a sense in which this is real, otherwise, it will not be possible for us to so naturally segment a sequence. Just as we know that distinctive features are more basic than phonemes, underlying the sequences of phonemes, features are organized into a sequential order of higher level units, as proposed in autosegmental and metrical phonology and that of a simultaneous grouping of features into functionally independent sets, as shown by autosegmental and dependency phonology (Clement 1985: 226). Thus, 'phonological representation is expressed as a multitier, multilinear representation in which individual features and groups of features are assigned to separate levels. We imagine a device that is made up of an encasement and components that are independent of one another in terms of sequencing, but related in terms of hierarchy. We can also relate this to the stars (features) bunched together as constellations (defining affinity and relationships); with each star and constellation held together by centrifugal forces from their sun (the skeleton, scaffolding, coordinating tier), kept apart by centripetal forces exerted by their gravitational forces

(featural autonomy, autosegmental properties), all existing in geometric dimensions with one another. The stars are the features, the sun is the CV-skeleton or frame, the segment or phoneme is the galaxy, the morpheme is the universe, the sentence is the multiverse and the discourse is the X-Universe.

Our phonemes provide a scaffolding, timing frame, skeleton for integrating distinctive features which exist in various sequential and hierarchical relationships. The illustrations in figure 8a and b below provide some insight into simultaneous and hierarchical relationship of features.

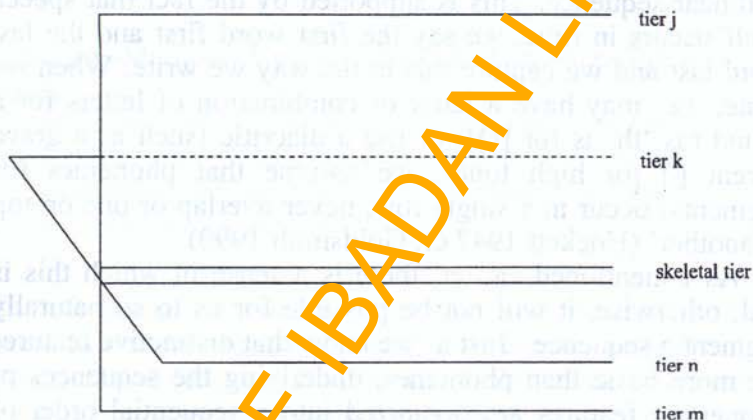


Fig. 8a: Autosegmental representation

Source: Pulleyblank 1983:38

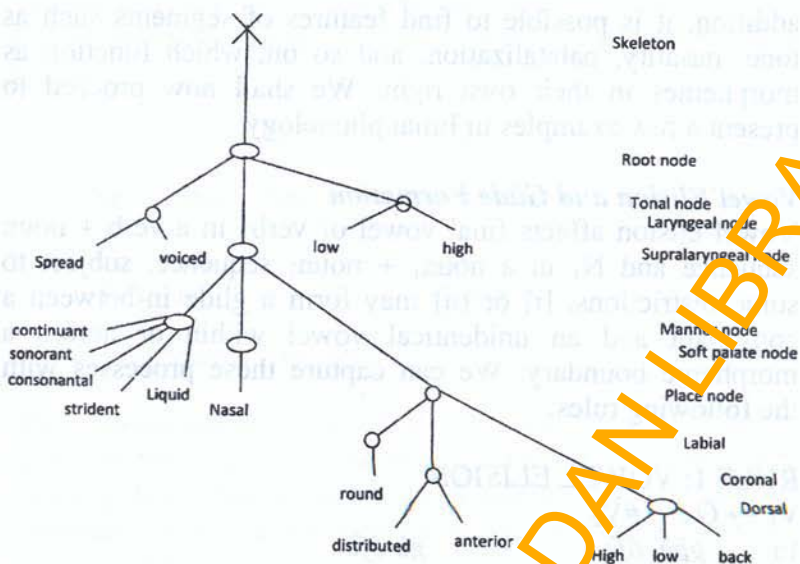


Fig. 8b: Feature hierarchy
(cf. Egbokhar, 1990, 64)

Support for multilinear representation comes from supra-segmental features such as tone, vowel, harmony, stress and nasality that occur over syllables, morphemes, words and phrases. There are features that seem to ride on a segment but when the segment is deleted, they are transferred to other adjacent segments. Examples are tone and nasality in some languages. This phenomenon is known as stability. Certain features behave like a unit with respect to some types of assimilation and resequencing rules, thus providing grounds for extricating them from other features in a segment

The linearity assumption is also extended to morphemes. We see morphemes as sequences of segments bounded on both sides by boundaries. The reality however is that there are discontinuous morphemes in which segments that constitute it are not adjacent but dispersed within an entire unit. There are also composite words, in which we cannot identify a stem to which affixes are attached. But we have a structure in which the sounds are varied to accommodate various meanings. In

addition, it is possible to find features of segments such as tone, nasality, palatalization, and so on, which function as morphemes in their own right. We shall now proceed to present a few examples in Emai phonology.

Vowel Elision and Glide Formation

Vowel elision affects final vowel of verbs in a verb + noun sequence and N_1 in a noun₁ + noun₂ sequence, subject to some restrictions. [i] or [u] may form a glide in-between a consonant and an unidentical vowel within or across a morpheme boundary. We can capture these processes with the following rules:

RULE 1: VOWEL ELISION

$V_1 \rightarrow \emptyset / - \#V_2$

- 1a. *gbè ófè* → *gbófè*
Kill rat kill a rat
- b. *kpà óbi* → *kpóbi*
vomit poison vomit poison

RULE 2 : GLIDE FORMATION

$V_1 \rightarrow [-\text{syllabic}] / _ V_2$

$\left(\begin{array}{l} +\text{high} \\ \alpha \text{ x} \end{array} \right) _ [-\alpha \text{ X}]$

(where α captures identity, c is consonant, v is vowel)

- 2a. *fí* *údò* → *fyúdò*
throw stone throw a stone
- b. *kù* *ǎkà* → *kwǎkà*
pour maize pure maize
- c. *ùdù* *èkò* → *údwèkò*
big cornmeal ball of cornmeal

The interesting thing is that tone and nasality may be retained following the deletion of vowels bearing them as we show below:

- 3a. ð zé èkē → ð zêk ē
 he fetch sand → he fetch sand
- b. k ē ófē → kófē
 Share rat share a rat

([~] represents nasality)

This phenomenon is called stability of features. Consider however that the same features are deleted with the vowels bearing them, that is they are not stable, if the immediately preceding form has an identical value for tone or nasality as the case may be.

Tone

- 4a. ð zé èkē → ð z êk ē $H_1 + L_1 L_2 \rightarrow +\widehat{H}L_{1/1}L_2$ (stability)
 He fetch sand → he fetch sand
- b. ð kpóló èk → ð (kpó) èkē $H_1 H_2 + L_1 L_2 \rightarrow H_1 + L_1 L_2$ (no stability)
 He pack sand he packed sand

Nasality

- 5a. k ē ófē → kófē (stability)
 Share rat share a rat
- b. ē hē ób̄ → ē h ób̄ (no stability)
 make hand place hand properly

Observe also that a high vowel does not form a glide as expected, but is rather deleted if the immediately preceding vowel is identical.

GF & VE

6a.	<i>xu</i>	<i>éwè</i>	→	<i>xwéwè</i> (Glide formation)
	chase	goat		chase a goat
b.	<i>xuxu</i>	<i>éwè</i>	→	<i>xuxéwè</i> (Vowel elision)
	chase repeatedly	goat		chase many goats
c.	<i>ìsì</i>	<i>òg ò</i>	→	<i>ísy ògò</i> (Glide formation)
	pig	bush		bush pig
d.	<i>òìsì</i>	<i>òxumì</i>	→	<i>òisòxumĩ</i> (Vowel elision)
	gun	sky		thunder

Any time a feature is in identity with an immediately preceding one, it is deleted, but it is stable and retained if it is preceded by a different feature value. What does this tell us? If we agree that tones and nasality, notwithstanding how we mark them, like every other feature of a segment represent a composite part of the vowel on which they ride, then it will seem odd that they are retained on adjacent vowels following the deletion of the vowels bearing them. This creates conceptual and analytical problems. If we present features by colour-dots and we find that a red dot is never deleted with others in a segment, it tells us something about the relationship of the red dot to others in the segment. It is an evidence of some level of independence. Although there are other possible solutions, they are not nearly as elegant and simple as assuming a multilinear representation. Observe that glide formation and vowel elision occur in a bleeding order. GF affects a subset of segments affected by vowel elision. Assuming a hierarchical relationship between features will enable us merge VE and GF as a uniform process of elision with GF affecting only root nodes and VE affecting the skeleton. If we assume that consonants, vowels, tones and nasality are listed on independent tiers, we may then have one

to many and many to one association of entities across tiers as shown below:

One-to-many

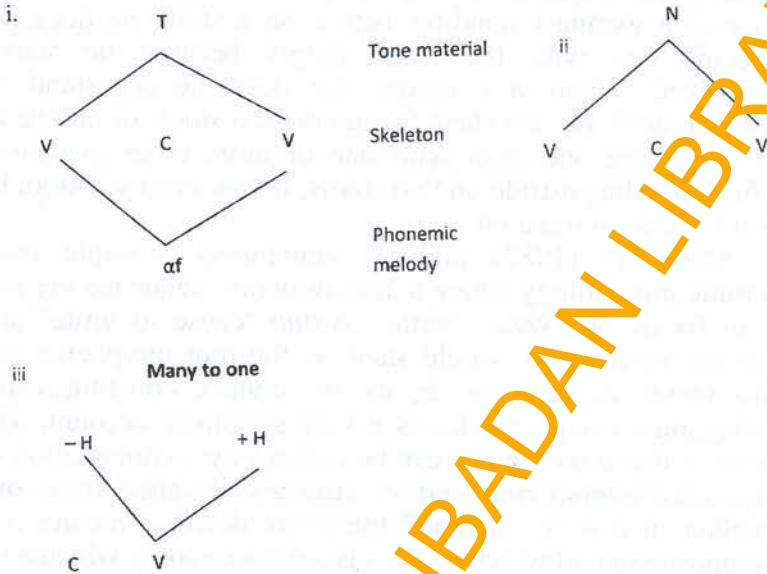


Fig. 9: One to many and many to one association

The fact is that although we mark every vowel for tones, it is not the case that the number of tones in a form corresponds to the number of vowels. The truth is that a sequence of identical tones is simply evidence of one tone associated with as many vowels in sequence as bear tonal identity. The same applies to nasality. In the case of vowels in our data, a similar analogy applies; the only difference is that vowels are interspersed between consonants in the language. What our data is telling us is that vowel sequencing at a level is blind to intervening consonants. Thus, an immediately preceding vowel that is totally identical is really one vowel associated with two or more positions depending on the number in sequence.

Hence, if one tone, one vowel and one nasality feature is linked to one position, there is stability following deletion.

But if they are linked to more than one position, deletion of a vowel only leads to the deletion of a slot, the segment or feature still links to the other slot and so, is unaffected because the condition for the rule has not been met. It is a case of a gymnast standing astride on a stool; he does not become one with the stool simply because he stands transfixed. When you remove the stool, he can stand on another stool. He can stand astride on two stools or on one or he can share one stool with one or more other gymnasts. While standing astride on two stools, if you remove a stool he still has one to stand on.

McCarthy (1982) presents convincing example from semitic morphology where a discontinuous sequence say k-t-b in forms like *katab* 'write', *katib* 'cause to write' and *kaatab* 'correspond' would stand as the root morpheme and the vowel content -a- in its occurrences constitutes the inflectional category. This is a very simplistic account. The point is that a morpheme can be defined by a combination of segments interspersed and at arbitrary distance from one another in a word. In *Emai*, the entire deictic structure is a composite one in which CV_2- is a deictic root in which -C- marks deixis and V_2 reference. V_1 position is occupied by either a noun class of concord or locative or comparative form and V_3 is an optimal proximity marker found in locatives and logophoric pronouns. Variation in reference type (i.e. singular versus plural) and deixis (person) is exercised in terms of variation in the phonemic content of the CV - skeletal.

Deictic categories in *Emai* include personal pronouns, demonstrative pronoun, place and comparative adverbs. All of the above categories are variations of segments within a $V_1CV_2(V_3)$ structure, in which no segment in the structure can occur alone outside the frame as a morpheme.

Below is a schematic representation.

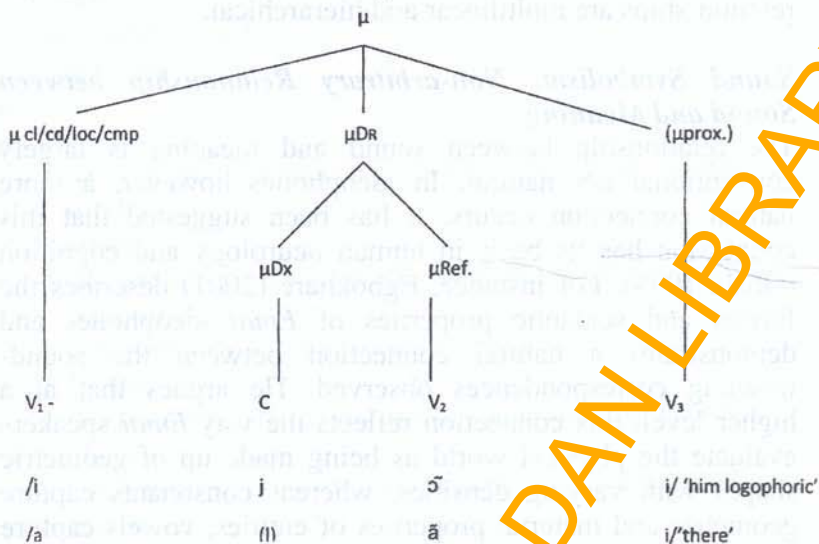


Fig. 10: Representation of deictic structure in Emai

(cf. Egbokhare 1990:10)

Note: (μ = morpheme symbol; Dx = Deixis; Ref: Reference; cl = class marker; cd = concord; loc locative; comp = comparative; prox. proximity marker)

The gerundive marker in Emai is a discontinuous $\acute{u} - m\grave{i}$ and an intervening high tone

$\grave{l}\grave{a}$	$\acute{u}l\grave{a}m\acute{i}$
run	running
$s\grave{e}n\grave{e}$	$\acute{u}s\grave{e}n\acute{e}m\acute{i}$
be ugly	ugliness.

The feature [+round] (labialization) and the features [+high, -back] (palatalization) are morphemes in Chaha, a semitic language.

"Among other categories, labialization marks (with the suffix $-n$) a third person masculine singular object." The feature attaches to the rightmost labializable consonant in the root (McCarthy 1983, cf. Lieber 1987). The example above shows that underlying the sequence of segments that we hear in morphemes and words are a complex relationship and

structure. At a deeper more fundamental level of language, relationships are multilinear and hierarchical.

Sound Symbolism: Non-arbitrary Relationship between Sound and Meaning

The relationship between sound and meaning is largely conventional not natural. In ideophones however, a more natural connection occurs. It has been suggested that this connection has its basis in human neurology and cognition (Ohala 1994). For instance, Egbokhare (2001) describes the formal and semantic properties of *Emai* ideophones and demonstrates a natural connection between the sound-meaning correspondences observed. He argues that at a higher level, this connection reflects the way *Emai* speakers evaluate the physical world as being made up of geometric shapes with varying densities, whereas consonants capture geometric and material properties of entities, vowels capture their densities and molecular properties (p87). We can only cite a few examples below. Egbokhare (2001) contains exhaustive data of minimal pairs of *Emai* ideophones.

- 1a. *shékpé*
(pers.) 'stunted'
- b. *kpéshé*
(sth.) 'stubby'
- c. *gányá*
(pos.) 'gaunt'
- d. *nyágán*
(pos.) 'haggard'
- e. *géné*
(phy.) 'curved'
- f. *négéné*
(phy.) 'wiry'
- g. *kító*
(sb.) 'mushy'
- h. *tókó*
(sb.) 'blobby'

- i. *kédé*
(s.) 'small-sized'
- j. *lógólógó*
- k. 'lanky'
- l. *kpúkú*
(sh.) 'pointed/protruding'; small, compact and round, short.
- m. *kpútú*
(s.) 'stumpy'; small, compact and round, disproportional.
- n. *kpúshú*
(sth.) 'stubby'; small, compact and round, rough.
- o. *kpódó*
(sh.) 'round'; small, circular and supple proportional.
- p. *dúkú*
(sh.) 'horny'; proportional, compact and round, short,
- p. *gbúkú*
(sh.) 'bulging'; big, compact and round, short
- q. *dúgbú*
(sh.) 'pod-like/rotund'; big, compact and round, short.
- r. *féghé*
(tch.) 'Very fine'; fine, thin thread, delicate
- s. *héghé*
(w.) 'very light'; light, fast, delicate.
- t. *yéghé*
(phy.) 'undersized' haggard frame, thin, fragile.
- u. *kpirikpiri*
(sens) 'prickly' small compact, interspersed.
- v. *kpízíkpízí*
(sens) 'creaky'; small, -compact, undulating.

Table 5: Vowel Meanings

Vowels	Meanings
<i>i</i>	Compact dense
<i>u</i>	Compact and round
<i>e</i>	Tight, firm
<i>o</i>	Circular and hollow, fairly muscular
<i>ɛ</i>	Thin, flat
ɔ	Circular and supple, fat
<i>a</i>	Very flat, diffuse

Table 6: Consonant Meanings

Consonant		Meanings	Meaning Class
Stops	<i>p</i>	Narrow	<i>Width</i>
	<i>b</i>	Broad	
	<i>t</i>	Disproportional,	<i>Measure</i>
	<i>d</i>	Proportional	
	<i>k</i>	Short, low	<i>Length</i>
	<i>g</i>	Long, high	
	<i>kp</i>	Small	<i>Size</i>
	<i>gb</i>	Big	
Fricatives	<i>f</i>	Fine	<i>Tactile</i>
	<i>v</i>		
	<i>s</i>		<i>Tactile</i>
	<i>z</i>	Creasy	
	<i>ʃ</i>	Scruffy, rough	<i>Tactile</i>
	<i>ʒ</i>		
	<i>(x)</i>		<i>Tactile</i>
	<i>ɣ</i>	fragile, delicate	
Approximants	<i>v</i>	fused, clumped	<i>Material cohesion</i>
	<i>y</i>	particulate, strung-up	
	<i>w</i>	loose, chunky	
	<i>h</i>	Light	
	<i>l</i>	straight, erect	
	<i>r</i>	intermittent	
Or o-nasal		<i>Nasality: abnormal, crooked pejorative</i>	

Table 7: Phono-semantic Naturalness: Consonants

Sound class	Phonetic property	Natural meaning correlate
Stop	vocal tract shape	<i>Dimensionality</i>
Bibabial	broad vocal tract shape	<i>Width</i>
Alveolar	vocal tract halving	<i>Measure</i>
Velar	high tongue position	<i>length/height</i>
Labial-velar	high tongue position + broad vocal tract shape	<i>Size</i>
Fricatives	Airflow+ friction	<i>tactile sensation</i>
Labio-dental	low friction noise	<i>fineness, smoothness</i>
Velar	dispersed friction/extremely low friction	<i>Delicateness</i>
Alveolar	high friction noise in upper frequencies	<i>Ceasiness</i>
palate alveolar	high friction noise distributed throughout the spectrum	<i>roughness</i>
Approximants	Frictionless airflow	<i>material cohesion</i>
Labio-dental	compressed airflow (over surface of grooved tongue)	<i>Cohesiveness</i>
Palatal	dispersed air over humped front of tongue	<i>particulate, strung up</i>
Labio-velar	uncompressed airflow (in rounded mouth area)	<i>looseness, chunkiness</i>
Glottal	absolute free low, breathiness	<i>etherealness, lightness</i>
Lateral	extended tongue and lateral airflow	<i>straight, erect</i>
r-sound	intermittent interruption	<i>intermittence, discontinuity</i>
Phonation	voice voiceless	<i>intensifier down-toner</i>
Nasal	Nasal air by-pass	<i>Pejorative</i>
Oral	Oral airflow	<i>normative</i>

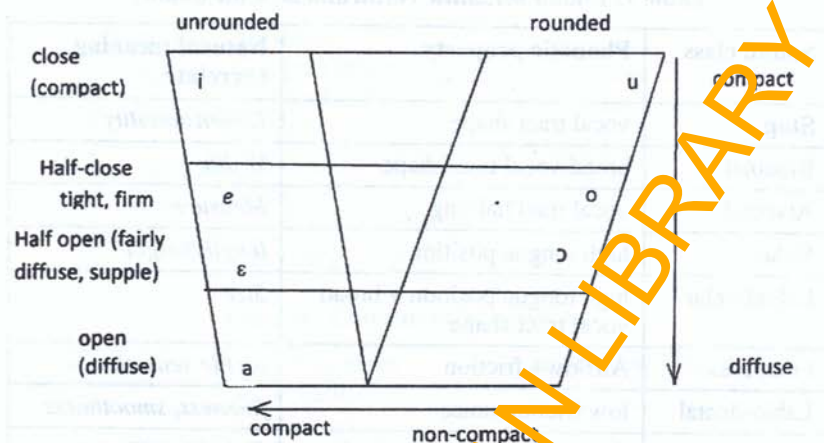


Fig. 11: Compactness scale of vowels

Sound symbolism in *Emai* ideophones will fall under the class of synesthetic sound symbolism. This refers to the acoustic symbolization of non-acoustic phenomenon (Hinton et al. 1994: 4). In physiology, synesthesia refers to a situation where sensation in one part of the body is produced by a stimulus applied to another part. In psychological parlance, it is when the stimulation of one sense produces a mental impression associated with a different sense, such as when hearing certain sounds causes a person to see certain colours (Worldbook Dictionary 1976). Sound-symbolism and other linguistic phenomena that seem to bring to the fore the interpretation of reality through linguistics categories may very well shed light on human cognition and neurology, with particular reference to neuroplasticity. An aspect of sound-symbolism which we are exploring further is in the area of tone in *Emai* grammar. There is a convergence in the use of tones and tonal registers to delineate certain tenses/aspectual/mood categories in *Emai*. There is the need to explain further whether that has a basis in the *Emai* world view on how time, space, action and modality are conceptualized in the real world.

The Emai Language and Northern Edo Project

Over half the world's languages are moribund, i.e. not effectively being passed on to the next generation

(Kraus 1995; 1992)

The Emai and Northern Edo projects were driven by the need to arrest the tide of language endangerment considering the value of languages as a human resource and an instrument of development. Although there are about 30 *Edoid* languages, only Bini had some remarkable level of description, incorporating a grammar, dictionary and texts, at the beginning of the projects. Also, since none of the *Edoid* languages is dominant, Nigerian pidgin spread throughout the region.

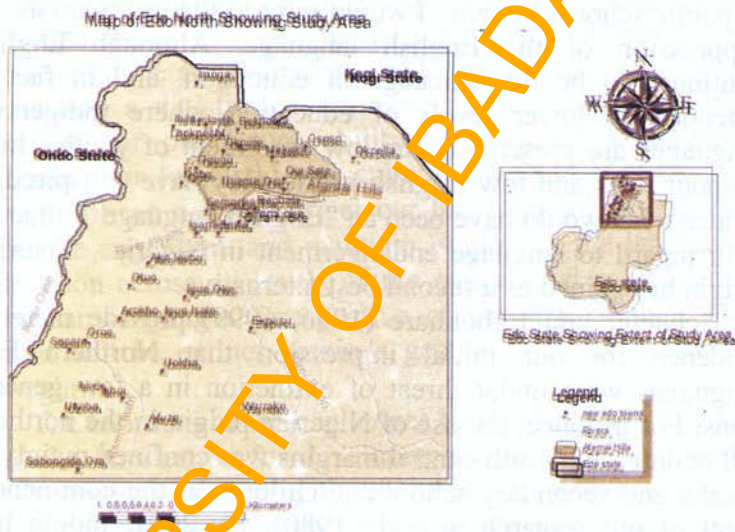


Fig. 12: Map of Edo north Showing study area

Schaefer and Egbokhare (1999) note that two general assumptions underlie the interpretation of language endangerment in Africa: "The first is that minority language use across social linguistic domains has diminished...such that minority

speech varieties are being used in fewer and fewer markets, churches and schools. The claim is that 10% of the rural African population exhibit competence in imported languages like English. Thus, it would then appear that indigenous majority languages are replacing minority vernaculars" (p 381-382). The Emai and Northern Edo situation show that Nigerian Pidgin and English, not indigenous majority languages are responsible for the declining fortunes of the languages. Yoruba which was once extensively used in northern Edo has in fact, receded to the borderline geographical area and witnessed the loss of function since the creation of the Midwest. The ascendancy of Nigerian pidgin is a result of a combination of factors which include; linguistic diversity, creation of new political structures, sports, urbanization, popular culture politics and the collapse of public schools system. I would refer to the last point as the suppression of the English language. Although English continues to be the language of education, and in fact is extended to lower levels of education where indigenous languages are prescribed, the low enrolment of youths, high dropout rates and low English proficiency have conspired to reduce what would have been an "English language Tsunami" with regard to language endangerment in Nigeria. Nigerian pidgin has gained as a second best alternative.

Schaefer and Egbokhare (1996, 1999) provide material evidence for our initial impression that Northern Edo languages were under threat of extinction in a few generations. For instance, the use of Nigerian pidgin in the northern hill country and north central margins was confined mainly to youths and secondary school age children at the commencement of our research in early 1980s. By 2001, pidgin had permeated all generations through natural aging of population and diffusion. Our 1999 study of the language preferences of Emai people revealed a shift in language use profile with age. Adults manifest a rather consistent multi-language profile regardless of place or person indices. Teenagers and children exhibit a distinct trend towards a single language profile, noticeable especially among teenagers. The latter's choice of

single language varies according to place and person, with Emai preferred in home setting with parents and English in non-home, school settings with peers. Children on the other hand, evince a profile which is beginning to merge these indices in the direction of non-home value, leading to increased use of English with parents and even greater use with siblings (p.389). What was striking in the study in spite of the above was that, "regarding evaluation, all age groups expressed a desire to write Emai. Across age groups interest in developing Emai literacy skills was very high or relatively high".

One thing we would like to point out with regard to the dangers faced by Nigerian languages is the effect of the Nigerian demographics. According to Schaefer (ms.), Nigeria's age distribution highlights a telling predicament of our time. Thus, 45% of Nigerians are under 15 years of age, while only 3% are over 65 (World Almanac 2005). Defining more than a statistical trend, these figures identify a serious problem for our future ability to articulate humankind's potential for linguistic and cultural diversity. Let us put it bluntly, if we manage to get our basic school system back, improve enrolment, and maintain English as the language of education across all levels of the educational systems, most Nigerian languages, irrespective of the size of their population will be extinct within a generation. This is food for thought.

The enormity of the challenges before Nigerian languages and the implication for development got to me as a student even though at the time, the realities were not as grim. The choice of Emai and later northern *Edoid* group was a strategic and scientific decision. We wanted to start from the known to the unknown and produce results which we hoped would serve to motivate similar efforts in other parts of the country. It was customary and is still is, for linguists to work with a simple informant using a wordlist in the comfort of their office, write a paper, get published and get promoted. There are linguists who base their articles almost entirely on the data and analysis done by others and draw theoretical

conclusions based on a highly restricted set of data. Early in my career, I was persuaded to get out in the field and describe languages. I think the most important decision I took relevant to my career was to work with Dr. Schaefer on the Emai language project and later the northern Edo project. It has been 29 years of productive collaboration. Let me borrow from Dixon (1997:137) to express the level of my satisfaction.

It is hard to convey the sheer mental exhilaration of fieldwork on a new language. First, one has to recognize the significant analytic problems. Then alternative solutions may tumble around in one's head all night. At the crack of dawn one writes them down, the pros and cons of each. During the day it is possible to assess the alternatives by checking back through texts that have already been gathered and by asking carefully crafted questions of native speakers. One solution is seen to be clearly correct - it is simpler than the others, and has greater explanatory power. Then one realizes that the solution to this problem sheds light on another knotty conundrum that has been causing worry for weeks. And so on.

In the mid 1980s, a compressive documentation effort was initiated with respect to Emai. As part of this, prose narrative samples were collected in naturalistic circumstances from story tellers recognized by their local communities. A total of 70 narratives were collected, their orthographic rendering and interlinear translation leading to 880 pages of Emai text was produced. Of the 70 narratives, 63 were produced by story tellers in their 40s, and 60s, another 7 by a story teller in his 20s.

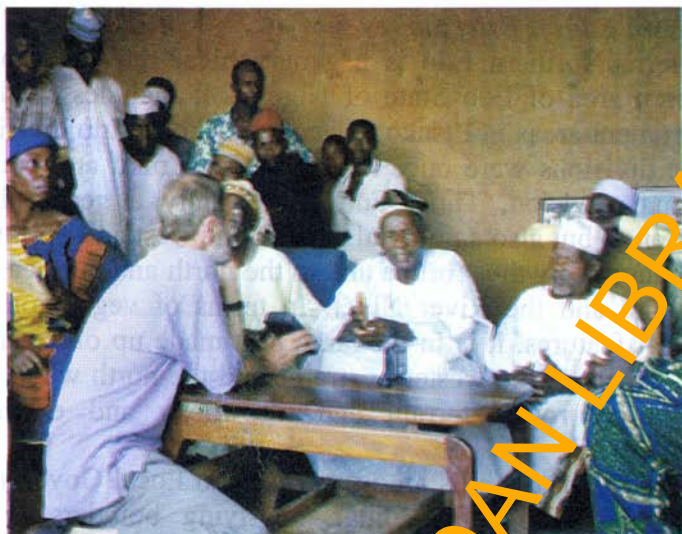


Fig.13: Story telling situation

Emai would today stand out as one of the most compressively documented and described African languages with over 100 publications between Schaefer and I. The language now has a Dictionary (Schaefer & Egbokhare 2007), Oral Tradition narratives (Vol 1 & 2, Schaefer & Egbokhare 1999), a Master and Ph.D theses (Egbokhare 1985, 1990). A grammar of Emai is currently being edited for publication.

The Emai language project received funding support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, National Science Foundation, University of Ibadan Senate Research Grant, various travel grants from the Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung. For me, the most significant contribution of the project was that it keyed into community efforts at teaching Emai in schools, by providing a standard orthography and narrative texts. Today Emai is being taught in local schools.

We shall now look at the linguistic and non-linguistic elements that characterized the Northern Edo habitat.

Northern Edo: A Brief Survey

The term Northern Edo is a geographical reference to the northern area of Edo State of Nigeria. It includes six local government areas in Etsako, Owan and Akoko-Edo divisions. These divisions were once known as Kukuruku and later as Afenmai division. Thus, Edo is not only a geographical description but also a political one. To the west and northwest it is bounded by the Yoruba and to the north and northeast by the Ebira and the River Niger. In terms of vegetation and physical features, it is in the large part made up of savannah bush, except to the western extreme and the north where it is defined by rough terrain and the rocky and extensive Kukuruku hills.

The Kukuruku hills are in Akoko Edo Local Government Area. They fall off to huge low-lying boulders to the northwest end of Owan East Local Government Area and Etsako Central Local Government Area. The Etsako area extends to the River Niger in the North and Esan forest area in the East. Owan area is a plateau between the series of rivers Orle, Edion, Owan, Osse from north to south. The land is extremely fertile for farming.

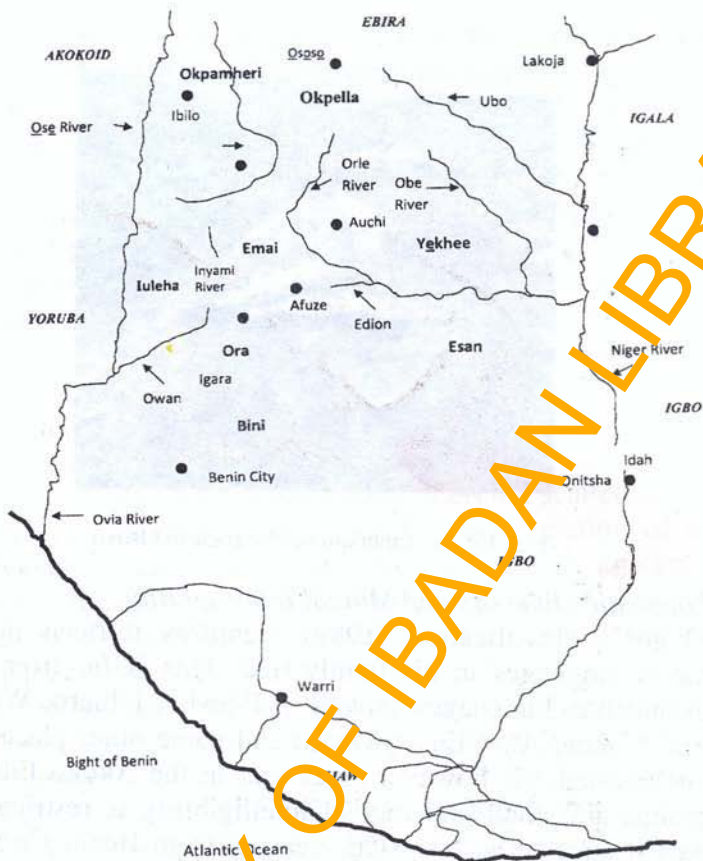


Fig. 14: Map showing location of Edo north region and neighbouring language groups

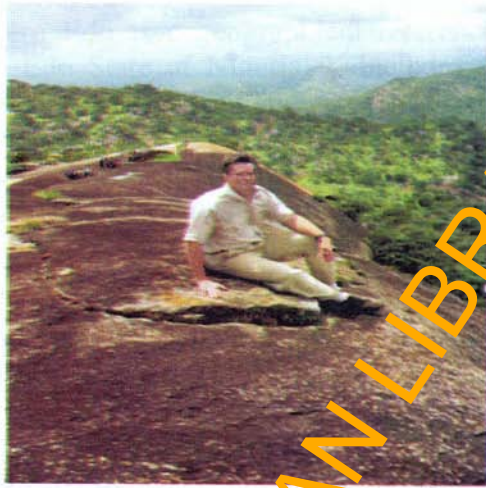


Fig. 15: Dr. Emerson on the rock in Ososo

Linguistic Diversity and Mutual Intelligibility

Elugbe's classification (1989) identifies thirteen northern *Edoid* languages in his family tree. This is far from being exhaustive. Languages spoken in Ihievbe, Ivbiaro, Warrake, Era, Uokha, Atte, Eriwa, Ososo and some other places were unclassified. He however notes that in the Akoko Edo area, groups are small and mutual intelligibility is restricted. He puts it succinctly, "in NCE area i.e. from Benin City up to Afenmai (also called Kukuruku) hills the *Edoid* speaking units are large. However, from Yekhee area, movement from one village to another tends to coincide with a change from one language to another. In this hilly country, North-Central and North-Western *Edoid* peoples live side by side sometimes within the same village! For example, Ghotuo (a NCE language) and Idesa dialect of Okpe (a NWE language) exist side by side at Otuo." (p. 11)

The picture painted above is much more a reflection of the Akoko Edo area where NWE are interspersed with NCE ones. For instance, the Uneme (blacksmiths) and Ososo, both NCE languages intersperse the Okpamheri, Atte, Ikpeshi,

Okpe, Emalhe, Etuno, Akuku groups within relatively short distances. The Okpamheri are by far the largest group. They have about twenty two villages and occupy most of the plain around the hills of the west and northwest. Some of them are found in the hilly environments. Ososo, Okpe, Igara (Etuno), Akuku, Enwan, Atte, Ikpeshi are one- village communities. There are at least six Uneme communities in Akoko Edo, all scattered between the old villages. On the basis of mutual intelligibility one may identify the following groups in Akoko-Edo: Okpe, (NWE), Etuno (Igbira), Uneme (NCE), Ososo (NCE), Okpamheri-Emalhe (NWE), Atte, Ikpeshi-Enwan-Okpilla-North Ibie (NWE), (the latter two are spoken in Etsako), Akuku. The complexity arises from the fact that these communities are not often contiguous but scattered.

There are claims by the Ibillo that a generation of the Ibillo people once spoke Etsako because of their sojourn in Ayogwiri in Etsako land, during their migration. The Akuku also claim that they understand other groups, but all others regard their speech as distant and difficult. There is a high degree of mutual intelligibility between groups in Owan. Oyakhire (1997) confirms this when he defines the following dialect groups:

- A: Emai, Ihievbe, Ora, Iuleha, Ievbu, Uokha, Urore, Ohami, Sobe.
- B: Era, Ozallu
- C: Ivbiaro, Warrake
- D: Arokho, Ikhin
- E: Igwe, Ikao, Otuo

Linguistic Features and Distinction

The primary linguistic features which are characteristic of Edo are breathy voice or murmured consonants, vowel harmony, noun class and concord, lenis consonants, complex liquids and labiodentalized sounds.

From the table above, the NWE area shows the greatest complexity. It retains all the features and shows tonal flux between two-tone systems and three-tone systems. The Osse group of NWE area pattern with NCE linguistically. Yekhee (Etsako) retain lenisness, Uneme retains breathy voice in addition probably due to their location in the NWE area. The NCE of Owan have developed fricatives in place of the lenis consonants. They also have nasal vowels which are absent in others. This is an innovation, following the deletion of nasal consonants in *Edoid*. Again with respect to tone, NWE is more complex, showing potentials for three tones. Ghotuo alone shares this characteristic. Perhaps proximity to Yoruba areas may have informed the retention of mid tone in this area.

Table 8: Linguistic Features of Nce and New

Language	Classification	Nasal Vowels	Vowel Harmony	Noun Class Concord	Lenis Cons.	Breathy Voice	Tones	LGA
Okpamheri	NEW	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	2+DS	A/EDO
Oloma	NEW	NO	YES (Decadent)	YES	YES	YES	2	A/EDO
Emalhe	NEW	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	3	A/EDO
Ehuen	NWE-O	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	3/2+DS	ONDO
Uhami	NWE-O	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	3/2+DS	ONDO
Uhure	NWE-O	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	3/2+DS	ONDO
Ghotuo	NCE	NO	NO	NO cv-Prefix	YES	NO	3+DS	OWAN
Ora	NCE	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	2	OWAN
Iuleha	NCE	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	2	OWAN
Emai	NCE	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	2+DS	OWAN
Yekhee (Auchi)	NCE	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	2+DS	ETSAKO
Uneme	NCE	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	2+DS	ETSAKO

The northern Edo project was conducted within the framework of funding and collaboration provided by the United States Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, under its Colleges and University Affilia-

tions Program (CUAP). The collaboration was between the University of Ibadan and Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. CUAP funding was to enhance curricula and research with minority cultures, and Northern Edo area defined the locale for the minority culture.

The project had four primary goals:

1. Augmenting research capability with respect to American and African letters and to Northern Edo (NE) minority populations.
2. Developing disciplinary and interdisciplinary curricula reflecting this capability.
3. Establishing a faculty exchange between the University of Ibadan and Southern Illinois University.
4. Sharpening American and African studies programme.

Below is a list of collaborating Faculty from both institutions, their expertise and research objectives.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN TEAM

	Department	Objective
Sam Asein	English	American letters
Francis Egbokhare	Linguistics	NE languages
Demola Lewis (Student)	Linguistics	NE languages
Ohioma Pogoson	African Studies	NE cultures
Remi Raji-Oyelade	English	American letters
Remy Oriaku	English	American letters

SIUE TEAM

Anthony Cheeseboro	History	NE history
Mathew Emerson	Anthropology	NE culture
Francis Odemerho	Geography	NE geography
Ronald Schaefer	English	NE language
Monica White	Sociology	NE culture
Laura Strand	Creative Arts	NE Arts
Eugene Redmond	English	African Literature

The CUAP funding lasted for three years (2002-2004) and it involved summer visits by teams from both institutions. There was a fieldwork component where a team made up of Francis Egbokhare, Ohioma Pogoson, Ron Schaefer, Mathew Emerson, Demola Lewis, Francis Odemerho and Bronica White spent some time in the NE area interacting with communities, collecting and analysing data.

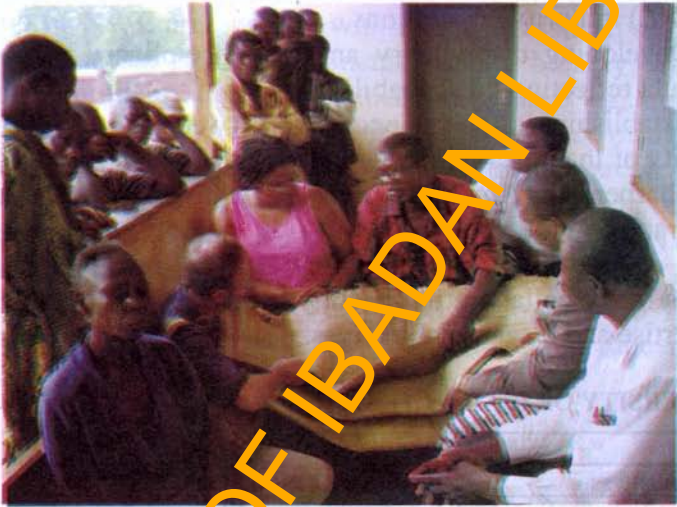


Fig. 16: Some members of CUAP team interacting with host community

The project involved developing an audio and video archive. Oral traditions narrative samples were recorded and videotaped in some cases. One or more 90-minute audio tapes were acquired from Uokha, Akuku, Avbiosi, Atte, Ekpedo, Okpilla, Enwa, Ibillo, Igwe, Ihievbe, Ijaja, Ikhin, Ikpeshi, Ivbiao, Egbe, Ojah, Okpe, Ososo, Uneme Osu, Otuo, Sasaru, Somorika and Warake. Acknowledged story tellers in these villages could be identified and were available. The narratives were collected in outdoor settings, under natural conditions. Male and female story tellers were alternated among a village assembly serving as chorus and providing musical accompaniment. The audio archives are now at various stages of processing. We have developed orthographic and English interlinear representations for the earliest recording, entered

the texts into computer files and thereafter adjusted them as a prelude to idiomatic English translation. To date, twenty three 90-minutes tapes from the northerly villages of Akuku, Uokha, Iuleha, Atte, Ihievbe, Ekpedo, Enwa, Ibillo, Ikpesht, Okpella, Uneme Osu, and Osoyo have been transcribed and translated. Wordlist based on the Ibadan 400 wordlist was collected for all NE communities. This is currently serving as primary data for the Ph.D research of Demola Lewis (cf CUAP report 2002).

The NE project hopes to bolster community efforts aimed at incorporating local languages instruction and evaluation into the school system. Many NE communities access the local language through the Junior Secondary School but have minimal instruction and extremely limited materials. Narrative resources developed through this project will be supplied to local teachers and administrators through workshops and other formats.

The potential of oral narratives to stimulate local artistic talent has been acknowledge by Feyi Osofisan (pc). Beyond this, narratives can become materials for local content for animation and symbolism in the movie industry in Nigeria. We are beginning to see great potentials for literacy training and promotion of reading in the ongoing efforts of Dr. Bola Adedore and Dr. Sola Adedaja who are both working on the talking book project.

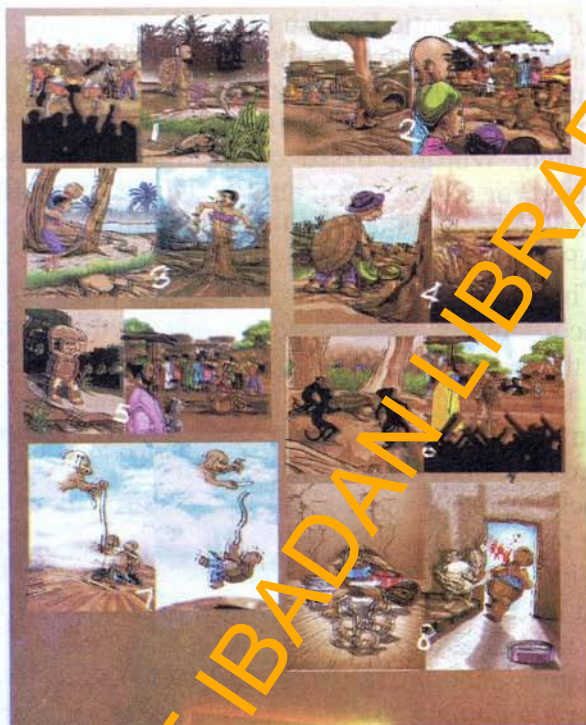


Fig. 17: Cover design of the talking book project
(Courtesy: Bola Adelere)

Transcribed oral texts are proving relevant in the evaluation of how aspects of tone and syntax interact in grammatical constructions, linguistic typology, ethnography, historical evolution of NE, migration among other things. In terms of the linguistic value, the narratives have shown the existence of a class of adverbs and logophoric pronouns which are difficult to elicit with conventional elicitation techniques. The narratives are providing primary data for a study on tone and grammar in *Edoid* by Egbokhare (ongoing).

As part of NE project, Odemerho acquired base maps of Edo and Delta States, as well as contour maps of former Bendel State that cover the area of study. He has produced

georeferenced maps of the area to capture specific geographical features. These maps are proving very useful in analysing and interpreting linguistic and cultural data.

Emerson and Pogoso examined rock shelters, cloth making, staff, and masquerades and took pictures of material culture and daily life. Pogoso took 240 coloured photographs. Emerson took 455 digital photographs and 13 short digital clips (10 – 15 seconds). Results of the research and documentation efforts are in press in a collection of field notes on NE. There are plans to make all materials from the project available at a dedicated website.

At the end of the CUAP project, SIUE and the University of Ibadan signed a memorandum of understanding for institutional collaboration. This has since been extended for another five years. SIUE has been a destination of choice by MacArthur Grant training awardees in the last five or more years. About twenty two staff and students from the University (Registry 3; Bursary1; Library3; Arts 8; Engineering 2; Institute of African Studies 1; Education 2; Science 1; Distance Learning Centre 1) have benefitted from exchange visits to SIUE. This long list of lecturers and students have had an opportunity to have international exposure because of a private collaborative relationship a teacher and his student, which grew into a relationship between academics with converging interests; two Universities with shared goals and two nations across the Atlantic. This is the power of the academia, the way of the intellect.

Language and Politics: Effect of Creation of New Political Structures

Egbokhare (2004) discusses the relationship between language and politics in Nigeria. Although there is now room to update, if not revise some of the claims and data in the paper, the fundamental thesis remains relevant. Related to the above, Egbokhare (2003a, 2003b, 2009) dealt with the dynamics that propel the spread of Nigerian Pidgin. Politics affects languages positively and negatively. It may create an

enabling environment for a language to flourish or lead to its loss of vitality; gain in power, prestige, territory, function, etc.

This can happen through altering or tempering with power relations and prevailing socio-political equilibrium or through naked power, conquest, legislation or policies that confer advantage on a language to the detriment of others. Socio-economic and political policies affect the balance of language usage pattern, even if indirectly, especially where uneven population distribution is the result or where the population affected is unequal. For instance, urbanization may lead to the mixing of diverse linguistic populations with significant advantages given to the bigger population. Migration, whether forced or voluntary, may deplete population of a rural-based linguistic group and cause a forced assimilation of this group. Social mobility, increased communication, religion, technology and the introduction of new functions are some forces which overcome the balance which exists in each sociolinguistic setting. Where politics alters perception, alters power relations, creates classes of people, it often has linguistic concomitants. The prevailing political philosophy or mentality, the political system has linguistic consequence. Where inter-group relationship is characterized by rivalry instead of competition, dominance not cooperation, exploitation instead of collaboration, we end up with linguistic tensions and conflicts. Where a political system is centralized and dictatorial as opposed to being decentralized and democratic, the prevailing mentality is control.

For constraint of space, we may only summarize some linguistic concomitants of politics in Nigeria. The linguistic ecology of any multilingual setting is always in a state of change, even if insignificantly. Where forces of change endure over a period of time, their effect become remarkable enough to warrant investigation. But a significant handicap arises when documentation of linguistic preferences and choices of a people is lacking at any point in time, and where no systematic study exists to expose changing sociolinguistics

parameter as is largely true for Nigeria. Population census presents a unique opportunity for the gathering of linguistic data, yet we ignore the opportunity.

It would be interesting to find out the effect of the religious crises in Kaduna and some northern states on the status of Hausa as a lingua franca among Christian dominated minorities and how these correlate with political choices at elections. One clear area that demonstrates the link between politics and language in Nigeria is the creation of new political structures. The status of Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba increased substantially with the creation of regions by the Richards constitution of 1954.

The institutionalization of regionalism created majorities and minorities in the regions. Each region had a territorial nucleus dominated by an ethnic majority and a periphery inhabited by ethnic minorities (Osaghae 1986:153). For minorities, there was an overwhelming need to acquire and use the dominant language of power and opportunity. Consequently, these languages spread beyond their ethnic domains, acquired new functions and became lingua franca. In the western region for instance, Yoruba was spoken widely. In some parts of the Midwest, Yoruba names were adopted. Yoruba was the language of education, religion and trade. It assumed imperial influence prior to and in the period after independence. Place names in Northern Edo were changed arbitrarily from indigenous names to Yoruba names. People were compelled to take Yoruba baptismal names. In the East, Igbo served similar purposes up to the coast. The creation of new states and local government had several impacts. States were created along ethno-linguistic lines (6 in 1976, 2 in 1989, 9 in 1991, 6 in 1995).

This has led to the loss of status and function of hitherto lingua franca, former minority languages gained ascendancy and became state and local government languages. The term minority acquired a derogatory reference. Some so called minority languages such as Urhobo, Igala, Nupe, Edo, Ijaw, have come to acquire a dominant status. Thus, the distinction is now between the major, main and small group languages

(Bamgbose 1992). The new dominant status of hitherto minority languages meant that they began to perform new functions. They became languages of mass media, several were taught in schools. The point basically is that the creation of new states and local governments gave political administrative and territorial space to hitherto minorities thus eliminating the pressure to assimilate. New linguistic realities arose. A paradox here is that while the Federal Government was busy pulling together a strategy for integration through the official constitutional and policy recognition of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba as national languages, its policies of state creation promoted (linguistic) disintegration.

The creation of the Midwest led to the receding of Yoruba to the border areas where the demands of trade makes its use imperative. Individuals officially changed their Yoruba names to local names, place names reverted to their original ancestral nomenclature, Yoruba street names were replaced by local ones and within a decade Yoruba was almost completely lost from linguistic memory. Amfani (2001) described the loss of official recognition and patronage of Hausa by Hausa states since the demise of the Northern region. He claims that prior to the creation of states and local governments in Nigeria, Hausa enjoyed concerted efforts of the regional governments in the development of the language.

In his words, "Hausa under the state no longer enjoys official status accorded it under the regional government...no state has a special board whose responsibility is solely the development of Hausa..." The demise of the regions has led to the loss of ownership of the major languages and the reassertion of sub-ethnic identities, with non-standard varieties getting attention in various media.

There is a renewal of pride and interest in dialects because of their perception as symbols of identity and historical landmarks. In the face of the diminishing influence of major languages, English and Nigerian Pidgin have continued to gain in profile. It will be interesting to investigate how and if the Niger-Delta's struggle for resource control is affecting the linguistic situation in Nigeria.

Globalization, ICTs and Indigenous Languages

Globalization and some Linguistic Implications

When we hear the word globalization, many of us immediately think about the economy, ICTs, and the concept of the global village. We are all now too familiar with the capital market, and analysis of economic policies and market behaviour are now available at our finger tips, on the internet, via cable. But we forget that polices and markets run on language. We need language for trade and culture underlies human behaviour and human behaviour is at the heart of business. If for instance, a significant population cannot access loans or banking services, cannot open bank accounts, use ATM, because they are not literate, it is obvious that the problem has gone beyond the issue of literacy or language; it has assumed an economic impact. If 60% of a population are illiterate, and over 70% do not use the Banks, but utilize the currency all the same, it means that a large amount of currency will circulate outside the banking sector and thus make nonsense of monetary policies. There are also implications for poverty alleviation. Let us also look at the dichotomy between the formal and informal sector! Is it not a matter of language and literacy? An illiterate population will largely operate outside the formal sector. It will be difficult to track their activities because they cannot operate within the bureaucracy.

So language is very critical to economic activities to the extent that it can also provide access or constitute a barrier. We also need to understand that human needs are diverse but culture provides converging points. To address the needs of a people we have to address their culture. A lot of business is about, transacting cultural goods, knowledge and services as well as negotiating cultural space and experience. Language is the most dependable aspect of culture.

When we talk of ICT generally we think of the latest models of hardware, software solutions, mobile application, the internet, etc. but we hardly pay attention to the language that these applications speak and the languages that drive the internet: whose language? A reference to local content in the

Nigeria media immediately calls to mind the oil and maritime industries. If we hear such reference with regards to IT, it is often that interest groups are fighting for business interest. Local language content in business, in ICT, in the global information infrastructure, in aviation, technology, etc is hardly an issue. Egbokhare (2003) contains some interesting perspectives on making local languages count in ICT, Aviation, and so on.

Globalization refers to the increased interdependence of world communities facilitated by ICTs. Globalization has cultural and linguistic ramifications to the extent that it creates a new networking of relationships, affects settlement patterns and leads to new power structures and configuration. By so doing it affects the vitality of local languages through the values assigned these languages by their speakers.

English is the language of the science and technology and the global information infrastructure. It therefore, is the primary instrument to global knowledge resources. English language is often blamed for the endangerment and diminishing vitality of Nigerian languages. Correspondingly, the television with its associated western culture is held responsible for the growing cultural illiteracy. But the high rate of illiteracy in Nigeria, poverty and the growing unemployment give one some grounds to re-examine this position. To what extent can English be held responsible given the fact that about 54% of Nigerians are illiterate? To what extent would English be responsible across the various states and regions given the varying literacy level? Whose language is really in danger? Which languages are under threat? Which social varieties are threatened? Which demographics are challenged? It would even seem that it is really those who already have English as a second language and states and regions where literacy levels are high that are experiencing a shift or endangerment of their mother tongue. The shift to English appears to be facilitated more by the educational process than by exposure to western media. Is Yoruba for instance really in danger or is it the educated

Yoruba speakers of English and their generation who are in danger of losing Yoruba? This question is very important because if we find that it is only the educated Yoruba speakers of English who are experiencing a shift to newer domains, then we cannot begin to bemoan the loss of Yoruba as if it were a generalized occurrence. If on the other hand we are also witnessing a shift or loss of Yoruba even among the non-English speaking group, then some other factors not English language would be responsible.

ICT and Language

Finnegan (1998) asked the following questions among others: Do the changes in communication technology determine our future or do we have any other choice? Will IT revolutionize current forms of organization and democratic participation or will it merely reinforce existing power divisions?

I believe that the use of social networks in the revolution sweeping through the Middle East and the use of ICTs during the 2011 elections in Nigeria already indicate that ICTs are bringing about fundamental changes to human experience. A set of dependent questions from a linguistic perspective are: how will developments in ICT affect the acquisition, use and transmission of local languages? How can ICTs enable Nigerians access the global information infrastructure through their own languages and how can it help them contribute indigenous knowledge content to the global store of knowledge? Finally, how can ICTs help in achieving the language component of the National Policy on Education?

Bamgbose (1992:8 – 9) outlines some problems associated with the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. These are:

- i. Multiplicity of languages and problem of choice.
- ii. Existence of small group languages in which education is hardly feasible, since there are a few children of school going age who speak the languages.
- iii. Lack of suitable teachers.

- iv. Lack of suitable texts; in fact several languages are yet to be reduced to writing.
- v. Lack of technical terminology for use in teaching mathematics, science and other subjects.
- vi. Lack of political will.
- vii. Negative attitude towards local languages.

The above relate to problems of economies of scale, expertise, leverage and perception. Let me quickly state here that the above sets out the mandate for the Linguistics Association of Nigeria, Departments of Linguistics (and African Languages) and Linguists. To the extent that they are not relevant to providing solutions, they have failed the country and their profession. In the context of (i – vii) above, ICT may become relevant if it is found to provide a means of bridging linguistic diversity, or if it provides an avenue for promoting literacy, documentation, translation and conversion of information from one language to another. It will also prove useful if there are means or instruments for efficient and sustainable publishing in small group languages; if it creates opportunity for cost effective training of teachers; if it provides opportunities for interaction and social networking. The issue of attitude of speakers is incidental on the evaluation of the value of the local languages. The real challenge relates to the strategy and policies that will ensure that the desired results are achieved among the possible outcomes.

Anderson's (2006) book, *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*, gives us insight into how we may approach answers to the issues in (i – vii). There are two fundamental problems; which are economies (of scale) and linguistic. The linguistic problem has to do with expertise and access to content. We can only solve the linguistic problem if we deal with the economies of scale.

Although Anderson's (2006) piece is not exactly about language, there are insights to gain from his submission. The digital environment is characterized by:

- (a) The democratization of tools of production (anyone can make content).
- (b) Democratization of distribution which has led to cut in the cost of production.
- (c) Connecting supply and demand (through search engines, blogs, recommendations lists, etc).

Whereas print and broadcast media are built for mass markets, the internet can reach an individual and can reach millions. Print and broadcast media are a one size-fits-all business; the internet is a market of multitudes, of the mass and niches. The lesson to learn from this is that diversity is no longer a problem and size is no longer a disadvantage in the digital environment.

In the last ten years, Nigeria has witnessed phenomenal upsurge in the use of mobile technology. There are over 80 million active users. There are community radio stations that broadcast only in local languages (Amuludun, FRCN, Ibadan), while other stations have good local language content. Nollywood movies in Nigeria incorporate a vibrant local languages component, to the extent that there are dedicated channels for Yoruba and Hausa on DSTV – cable TV. Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, the impact of Nollywood goes beyond the major languages. There are home video productions in such languages as Edo, Etsako, and Emai. We have drawn attention to the above to show that globalization and ICT can be beneficial if we institute policies that will promote access. Whether or not ICT is catalytic or obstructive is a function of a number of forces outside it. With voice driven media, Nigerian languages and culture have fared well. It is only with the internet that we have witnessed a severe marginalization. The forces at play here are illiteracy, lack of infrastructure and inadequate policy environment. Internet penetration is low, access is expensive, computer literacy is very low, a high percentage of Nigerians cannot read and write and so the internet is still a restricted technology.

Bridges and Dreams

ICT; Eye See T; ☺ ≈ 卐

I-can Team; I_{nfo}-city

W, double you, U U

Dot com(e) and the dots connect

Bullish Billy's barking by the GATE

Yahoo! bow wow! woof woof!

I-Bea Mers, Apples and Dell(ies) in the NET

I can see; ☺ ≈ ☰

Sizzling HOT MAILS

Billions of MICRO SOFT ideas

Like beaded codes on the NET SCAPE

Surf through the nodded web

We are the web

I am dreaming

Dreams are not for the nights only

Facts GOOGLED in from cyberspace

Fiction, myths and tales doodle in virtual real

The present browses the future

The past surfs the time net

Reality no more is so real

Fiction not now so fictitious

Time has warped

The quantum has leaped

Yes, this is the bridge!

Now there's a bridge to every place

A GATE WAY to every mind

This is the bridge we need

To traverse through DESTINE(d) nations

A probe into our E-MERGING nations

AH MAZE IN(g)!

We have a solution to an ancient puzzle

No more tongues to confuse

*No colours to interpret
No time to delay
No distance to traverse
Just SIGH BAR SPACE*

*We are free at last-
If we will
From DISgrace of gridlock
disCHARGE(d) of a weird wireless world
Free from limitations of COMMUNE-ication*

*We've stopped the backslide to SHUT DOWN
re-BOOTING from a psychedelic
HANGUP
We're up from underDEVELOPMENT*

*What can you see?
Where do you stand?
We have the bridge we need
The bridge across the dark
If we dream we'll browse
If we dare
We'll surf this bridge of our dream.*

Francis Egbokhare (December, 2003)

Mobile technology now offers an opportunity for cost effective and accessible training for people even in remote areas. At the University of Ibadan, Dr. Sola Adedaja, Dr. Bola Adedokun and I are in partnership with Educational Advance-ment Center. We are working to deploy the mobile phone as training and learning tool. There is so much to be done with ICT using indogenous language content.



Fig. 18: Mobile phone as a learning tool

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Fig. 19: Jambmobile

Training of local teachers and dissemination of language content can be accomplished through mobile technology to rural communities. They can also use the phone to access local language sites, teaching and learning materials on the internet. Digital printing technology now make the printing of a few copies of materials possible, if and where necessary. Electronic copies of materials may be accessed by rural dwellers in text or audio or multimedia through mobile phones. The television set can also be deployed actively as a teaching platform.

African Languages Technology Initiative (ALT - I)

If Nigeria is going to take full advantage of the new technology environment in the short run, it has to deal with the problem of literacy. To do this we have to first redefine the concept of literacy by providing voice recognition capability to mobile phones, computers and internet operations in local languages.

I stumbled on a programme on BBC, Horizons (www.horizonbusiness.com). It featured a report on some technological innovations and research in India. In the programme, it was stated that IBM in India was working on what they call the "spoken web." It is simply about creating audio search capabilities on mobile phones and the Internet. Thus, the new giant search engine may search for sound in a local language. During the programme, (about eight years ago) Dr. Tunde Adegbola of ALT - I discussed the idea of overcoming Nigeria's illiteracy problem by utilizing voice enabled technologies. In the Postgraduate Interdisciplinary Lecture which I presented in 2003, *Breaking Barriers: ICT, Language Policy and Development*, I suggested the incorporation of voice chips that speak local languages on medications sold in Nigeria market so that people can have access to health information in their languages. ALT - I is an NGO based in Ibadan with which I am associated. I am a member of the Board. I would now wish to report some of its activities.

ALT – I is a research and development organization with a mandate for making all modern ICTs usable and useful for African languages. It focuses on both advocacy and production of tools and solution. The following are some of the success stories at ALT- I.

- a. Localization of Microsoft windows and office products for Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba through a working partnership with Microsoft. ALT-I is now rounding off work on Microsoft Windows 7 and initiating work on Windows 8.
- b. Software development around Human Language Technology. These include keyboards and alternative input approaches such as speech. These include technologies such as speech recognition in Yoruba, speech synthesis and machine translation. ALT-I recently developed Yoruba spelling checker for open office based on 5 000 root words and morphemes as well as many highly productive morphological rules that are used to derive over 10,000 words from the relevant morphemes.
- c. Mobile Communication. An example of this is linking of GSM networks to IP-based networks. This will make it possible to use cell phones to obtain information from database resident on such IP-based networks.

Naija Language Project and Naija Langwej Akedemi

There is evidence that around 1869, there was already a form of English based Pidgin between the British and Niger-Deltas. Dike reports a discussion between Oko Jombo, one of the contenders for the throne of Bonny, and Consul Livingstone over a statement with his rival, Jaja (later of Opobo). Oko Jombo said to Livingstone about Jaja, in Pidgin:

He be one of ourselves, we no want to crush him (1956: 188)

Waddle (1848) reports that “broken English was already spoken along the coast from Gambia to Gabon.” (cf. Ade Ajayi 1965). The above assertion is reinforced by the following statement credited to the men of Calabar in early 19th century explaining why girls are excluded from schools.

*They no can saby book... they no want go for shun
make trade.*

Suppose they sabi book, they saucy book.

It no fit they pass bos.

(Isichei 1995: 176)

Nigerian pidgin has evolved from being derogatorily called “broken English”, through pidgin English to Pidgin and now Naija. It has also spread from its humble origins to become one of the most widely spoken languages in Nigeria. It is believed to have creolized in Warri-Sapele axis where it serves as mother tongue to a sizeable population.

The spread of Nigerian Pidgin has been aided by the music of Fela Anikulapo Kuti; sports and the Midwest factor, urbanization and urban settlement patterns, trade specialization by different ethnic communities, the Nigerian civil war, politics and the creation of new political structures, popular culture (music and comedians), Pentecostal revival, community radio, collapse of public school system and low English proficiency among other factors (see Egbokhare 2003, 2010). Nigerian Pidgin is now widely used in the media, in advertising, in political campaign and is growing in profile as a medium of intellectual exchange.

The Naija project started after the conference on Nigerian Pidgin which was held at the University of Ibadan in July 2009, under the auspices of IFRA. The conference set out to lay the ground work for a platform for the progressive and sustainable development of Nigerian Pidgin, given its growing profile, population of speakers, its potential as a language of integration in the ECOWAS zone, its ethnic neutrality and a language of mass mobilization and participation. The conference adopted the name *Naija*, partly

to rebrand it, destigmatize it and align it with the emerging concept of “naija” identity in media and popular culture. The term was to finally help to rid it of its negative baggage while acknowledging that it is a language in its own right.

The 2009 conference put in place a Naija Langwej Akedemi, of which I am president. The Akedemi is entrusted with the responsibility of the Naija Langwej project. It has the following objectives:

1. to research, facilitate research and/or publish research on the nature of Naija (including scientific articles, journals, books, dictionaries, etc);
2. to develop a standard and acceptable writing system/orthography for Naija;
3. to document, publish and/facilitate the development of scholarly and non-scholarly, literary and non-literary materials in Naija;
4. to establish a scientific committee to govern and facilitate sound and original research on any aspect of Naija;
5. to compile and make available online digital corpus (in form of audio files and transcribed glosses) of the language; and
6. to develop a method for teaching and learning the Naija language.

There is now a Naija spelling that can be accessed on IFRA website. Field research is currently ongoing towards the production of a Naija corpus. Three research teams are working in Lagos, Benin, and Warri, each recording regular everyday use of Naija. The audio recordings will be digitally annotated, glossed/transcribed and made available online.

Prior to the inception of the project, I had undertaken a dictionary project which was aborted when funding was withdrawn after a year due to change in focus by the funding agency. I am also working on and proceeding with the translating of Chinua Achebe's “Things Fall Apart.” A tentative title for the book is *Kàtàkátá*. In addition I have a

wiki based website **pidginpedia.com** which is an initiative to promote the development and propagation of Naija.

In the last few years, the demand for resource control has been a primary agenda on which the South-South political platform has been built. Yet the primary resource under the control of its people has been largely ignored. The struggle against political marginalization of the region has also found expression in rotational presidency, yet the best evidence of its marginalization to date is the lack of recognition of Nigerian Pidgin. Nigerian Pidgin is an invention of the Niger-Delta. It is its primary asset and if properly exploited, it can provide its best opportunity not only at relevance but also real power. Nigerian Pidgin, like oil, flows from the Niger-Delta but not through pipelines. It does not come from the belly of the earth. It is a resource that erupts in the bellies of people and flows through social networks.

The Literacy Dilemma and Harmonization of Orthographic Practice

Underlying the great diversity (in language in West Africa) there is a fundamental and elaborate unity, the exploration of which by African scholars in the decades to come can only contribute to the development of African social and political unity.

(Armstrong 1967:23)

How do we recognize the shackles that tradition has placed upon us?

For if we recognize them; we are also able to break them.

(Franz Boas)

Literacy

The problem of illiteracy is sometimes dramatized by the anecdote of an individual in the village who pretends to be literate and buys newspapers which he holds upside down. People gather around him as he gives them the news of the day. What can also be more dramatic than an individual that

urinates on a sign that says “do not urinate here”? You can imagine the gravity of illiteracy when you consider the fact that people take overdose of prescriptions simply because they cannot read instructions. Bamgbose (2001) puts the problem succinctly. He states that:

a person who is unable to read and write is at great disadvantage in the modern world. Documents, including personal letters, have to be read to him or her by other persons, forms to be completed, bank transactions, receipts for purchases, business records, voting etc. require the intervention of an intermediary. (p.10)

Those who are literate in a Nigerian language only do not have much better opportunity than those who are completely illiterate. Dr. Tunde Adegbola related a story to me of a cooperative in Ibadan that was turned back at one of the banks when they tried to open an account because their minutes of meeting were written in Yoruba. If it is not a bank policy that minutes of meetings must be in English before they can be accepted, could it be then that there was no one among the bank staff who could read Yoruba? UNESCO/UNICEF figure quoted in Bamgbose (2006) puts the illiterate population in Africa for 1990 at 52.7% as against the world average of 26.9%. Part of the problem of literacy in Nigeria is that the public school system has become an “illiteracy mill.” This is compounded by low enrolment in schools in many states of the country. At another level is the problem of reading. “Bring Back the Book” initiative of President Goodluck Jonathan has to go beyond the show in the media. If the school system is functional and we put in place mechanisms for assisting people with reading difficulties, we can then focus on generating interest in reading by ensuring that people have access to content that speaks to them culturally through a language that they can understand best. There are now cases of undergraduates who cannot read at the level of a primary school kid. We need a survey to determine the reading levels of our undergraduates at the

point of admission. Universities need to be responsive and responsible instead of gleefully publishing "tsunami list" of candidates who have been asked to withdraw. It is not an evidence of high standards when students are failing in their numbers; it is an evidence of a fundamental flaw in the system. For instance when students have no opportunity to evaluate their teachers, and teaching ethics are not defined and enforced, one should not be in doubt that learning cannot take place.

The connection between literacy and development and cognitive processes is widely discussed in the literature. Anderson (1960) states that a society requires 40% literacy rate for economic take off (p2). Literacy is believed to affect cognitive processes in that "it facilitates empathy, abstract context-free thought, rationality, critical thought, post operative thoughts, detachment and kinds of logical processes exemplified by syllogisms, formal languages, elaborated code, etc"(p.21). Goody (1968, 1977:5) states that, "Writing is closely connected to 'fosters' or even 'enforces' the development of logics, the distinction of myths from history, the elaboration of bureaucracy, the shift from little communities to complex cultures, the emergence of scientific thought and institutions, and even the growth of democratic political process" (p.3). Literacy promotes the accumulation of information, transmission of knowledge, free and scientific thought and growth of sophisticated literary expression.

There are over 400 languages in Nigeria. This raises the question of which language to use for literacy. Experience has shown that there is no unique solution to the choice of language of literacy. Three critical points noted by Bamgbose (2001) are:

- i. It is very difficult to carry out literacy programmes in the official language when it is not the mother tongue of adult learners. (UNESCO 1992a: 23).
- ii. A language that excludes most of the learners is unlikely to be productive.
- iii. We should not underrate community interest and commitment.

UNESCO (1992a cf Bamgbose 2001:27) proposes the following in selecting the ideal language of literacy:

- it should be familiar to and preferred by learners and teachers;
- it should be spoken by a large number of people over a large area;
- it should be useful for communication in the local and national life, and especially working life;
- it should be well-supplied with enough teaching materials; and
- it should be provided with enough printed texts to prevent newly literate people from forgetting what they have learned.

The above thus requires that in some cases, speakers of small group languages will have to receive literacy training in languages other than theirs. There are compelling reasons why we cannot promote the above recommendations. But we do recognize that there is a need for a national survey to determine various community initiatives, existing orthographic practices and the state of publishing in local languages (especially small group languages).

During the course of my fieldwork in NE, I came across some efforts in publishing local languages. There is a degree of community effort going on in terms of literacy, as well as translation of portions of religious materials. We should also determine the extent to which there is compliance with the national policy on education as it relates to the use of mother tongue and language of immediate community at the pre-primary and primary school levels.

The argument against literacy training in mother tongue has drawn some sympathy from the fractious linguistics situation in Nigeria. Because of the sheer number of languages, planning is said to be difficult and unworkable. The real problem however appears to be the criteria used to count African languages (Prah 2001:188 – 9). The languages are far less if they are classified on the basis of more practical

criteria. For instance 80% of Africans speak no more than 12 key languages: Fulfulde, Hausa, Swahili, Nguni, Sotho, Tswana, Western Interlacustine Bantu, Amharic, Yoruba, Igbo, Bambara, Oromo and Luo. In Nigeria, the 400 languages can be reduced to about 100 mutually intelligible clusters (see Egbokhare, Oyetade, Urua and Amfan, 2001). Besides, if we take the population of those who speak the 10 major and medium languages as first or second languages in Nigeria, we would cover close to 90% of the population. There is no reason for instance why Efik, Ibibio and Annang should be listed as separate autonomous languages. The distinction between Urhobo, Okpe and Uvwie as autonomous languages is not linguistically supported. The North Central Edoid language group such as Bini, Esan, Emai-Ora-Iuleha, Yekhee show a fair degree of mutual intelligibility, yet they are all added up to the 400 languages in Nigeria. But we consider Akoko and Ijebu not as separate languages but dialects of Yoruba. Igbo linguistic area is very diverse, yet the dialects are not listed as separate languages. Yoruba and Igbo are united by orthography, history and politics, while the same forces divided related minorities.

Harmonization of African Languages

Prah (1999: 2 – 7) argues that in as far as African development is concerned... the harmonization of African languages, which show high levels of mutual intelligibility would greatly facilitate the economies of scale in the development of educational, media and cultural materials which would go a long way in strengthening the basis of society for the cultural and social development of Africa...

I got involved in efforts to harmonize orthographies of African languages working with the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS). This followed a colloquium held in Cape Town and a workshop in Lagos in October 1999. I was the leader of the group of five scholars from Nigeria. Three volumes were produced through our efforts: *Language Clusters of Nigeria* (CASAS) monograph series No 12, 2001, Egbokhare et al. ed and *Harmonization*

and Standardization of Nigeria Languages (co edited with S.O. Oyetade). Whereas the former was a preliminary reclassification of Nigerian languages on the basis of mutual intelligibility, the latter proposed strategies for unification of orthographic practices of *Defiod* languages (Yoruba, Igala and Isekiri), *Edoid* languages, lower cross languages and a group of closely related languages of North West area of Nigeria.

Our initial efforts in 1999 – 2001 have since been followed by the harmonization of Nigerian and related languages in Benin, Cameroon, and Niger Republic. Yoruba spellings across Nigeria, Benin and Togo have been harmonized. Similarly, Hausa in Nigeria, Niger and Chad have been done. Ijaw cluster and once intractable Igbo cluster have also been harmonized. I played an active role as the Nigerian coordinator and facilitator at a two-day workshop organized by the centre for Black and African Arts and civilization in collaboration with CBAC. The workshop was held on 27 October 2010 at Abuja. A follow up review meeting was held in Johannesburg in December 2010 and the final documents were launched and presented to the public on 4th of May 2011 at Abuja.

Some pertinent observations were made in the communiqué of the Abuja workshop of October 2010, which may help accentuate the significance and intellectual value of the project in harmonization of orthographies.

1. That to attain development in Africa, the use of indigenous Africa languages is not only imperative but also strategically important.
2. That the quest for regional and continental integration and development can best be met by the harmonization of African languages.
3. That the harmonization of African languages is the first step towards creating a firm foundation for the production of literature which could be used to enhance civil participation or advance public service media.

4. That there is a need to unite African languages such that they could reach wider audiences and this could be achieved if the orthographies are harmonized.
5. Thus, the desirability to remove orthographic differences between mutually intelligible languages becomes a compelling necessity because, in the first instance such differences arose on account of the fact that different and often rival missionary groups produced orthographies without cognizance or regard for the profound structural similarities between these languages.
6. In the same vein, orthographic revision has the advantage of economy of scale because instead of producing literature for say one or two million people, it is possible to produce it for ten, twenty or more million people.
7. That apart from encouraging mass education, the revision and standardization of orthographies has the added advantage of upgrading spelling systems and simplifying them for readers and writers.

Leadership and Higher Education Management

A leader is best when people barely know that he exists, not so good when people obey and acclaim him, worse when they despise him...but a good leader, who talks little when his work is done, his aim fulfilled they will all say, we did this ourselves.

(Lao Tzu)

Ọ̀nọ̀khífa ríá fá ghe, agbọ̀n kha re dé ágbọ̀n ghi igbégbẹ. Ọ̀nọ̀khífa ríá fá ghe (an Ora song).
 Meaning: "A person with honor can never lose face in spite of trends, fashion and changing values"

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I have been involved in leadership positions in Higher Education as a unionist, scholar, and

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administrator. Because of this, I have gained useful insights which I hope to integrate into a book before long. I was secretary of the local branch of ASUU, Chair of Research and Publications Committee, Chair of Editorial Board of *The Scholar*, headed the committee that established ASUU Library, and so on. I was Head of Linguistics and African Languages Department between 2002 and 2004, Director, Distance Learning Centre (2004-2010), member of Council among many other opportunities to serve. My scholarships in Higher Education management are reflected in the following local and international papers (among others): *Nigerian Universities Today: Imperatives for Change and Relevance* (2000); *Industrial Disharmony: Socio-economic Implications on Human Resource Management* (2005); *Issues in Labour Management and Relations* (2005); *University Decline and its Reasons: The Nigerian experience* (2007); *Institutional Autonomy: Promoting Competition, Collaboration and Exchange among Nigerian Universities* (2007); *Bridging the Knowledge Gap* (2007); *Developing the Academic Industry in Nigeria through Distance Learning* (2008); *The Concept of Entrepreneurship* (2008); *Fund Generation and Institutional Support at the University of Ibadan* (2009); *University without Walls: Open Distance and E-learning and the Challenges of National Development* (2009); *Engaging the Crises of Higher Education in Nigeria* (2011). I participated in numerous workshops and seminars on Higher Education in Nigeria and abroad. I was a participant at the Brainstorming E-Learning Think Tank in 2006 (foundational member of the Think Tank for Africa); Intellectual Leadership and African Information Society Initiative; What Roles for Africa's Academic Community organized by Ford Foundation (2003); Discussant at the Consultative Forum on Education for Modernization: Creating World Class Universities in Nigeria, organized by the Independent Policy Group (2005), plenary paper presenter at the Third Biennial Seminar for the National Association of Pro-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities:

Managing for Organizational Stability and Growth in Nigerian System (2007).

In the last six years I steeped myself completely in the business of the Distance Learning Centre of the University of Ibadan. I have observed that the problem of access must be solved before we can address the problems of quality effectively; when demand far outstrips supply and you cannot have a direct-formal upward review of cost, indirect and informal costs augument, which reflect as various vices and quality issues in education today. In solving the problem of access, we must also recognize the demographics, that is, the crisis is not generalized, not at the same level across the country; that it reflects at different educational strata across different states, affects different gender, etc. The real problem of access has not started; it will begin after we have addressed the problem of enrolment at the basic level. We shall see a dramatic increase in those demanding for university education. Demand for access varies along the lines of disciplines. The poverty element also plays a critical role to the degree that the crisis reduces as we move from federal to state to private universities. Also, it is only the university system and not the polytechnics and colleges of education that have a crisis.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, quality assurance cannot be legislated until we get to a situation where Nigerian institutions begin to struggle to get students and keep them, where we move from a demand side economics to a supply side one, quality will remain an illusion.

There is no incentive today for any university to reform and restructure. Funds and allocation will come no matter what; staff will get promoted whether or not they teach or whether or not students are satisfied. Nigerian universities will not attain global ranking until their budgets, expenditures and management practices reflect their vision. The funding strategies by government is totally unprogressive, expenditures are not integrated with visions. An analysis of the expenditure patterns of an average university will show a disturbing trend.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, my experience in the last 29 years has exposed me linearly and dimensionally to four realities: The realities of leadership, followership, the marginal and their convergence. I have witnessed the centrifugal pull of intellect, ideas and high moral grounds collapse and be replaced by centripetal forces of religion, ethnicity, nepotism and cultism. I have witnessed the evolution of unions from loose intellectual associations to radical leftist ideological monolith. I have also seen the fall of ideology, and the concomitant morphing of ideology into rabble rousing; idealism has given way to opportunism and the politics of ideas has been overtaken by the politics of control and domination.

Ladies and gentlemen, one problem with the university system today is that the military orientation of a command structure persists because governance is driven by power and authority not service and responsibility. The loss of diversity in staffing and the pre-eminence of relationship networks that are driven by religion, ethnic and sub-ethnic affiliations, affiliation to external groupings is subverting the university idea. Some union leadership have become the beneficiaries of the space for autonomy and control vacated by government. Students' unions describe themselves as (alternative) governments while leadership of staff unions are known for their abrasive language and militant dispositions. In fact, ironically, they constitute the new mafia that muzzle dissent and disseminate patronage. University environments have become like a political party where you either hold a 'broom' or stand under an 'umbrella.' Union leaderships in many institutions are the new threat to academic freedom and free speech. Perhaps I should draw attention to the crisis associated with succession and change of leadership in universities all over the country. There is now zoning, rotational leadership, sub-ethnic balancing and localization of leadership. At the University of Benin, the Binis carried out a most volatile campaign and they got the "son of the soil" selected to appease them. So also the Efik at the University of

Calabar. In Amadu Bello University, religion and ethnic sentiments are the driving forces. All over the country, Federal Universities are increasingly succumbing to the primordial forces in the selection of their leaders and succession now look like a military coup or an opposition taking over from a ruling party. Private universities are not different. The faith based ones prefer people who share their religious inclination. Baptist prefer Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist hire their members, the CAC similarly, not to talk of the Muslims. Territoriality has led to in-breeding in leadership selection. In-breeding is "intellectual incest." Outsiders cannot compete fairly with insiders as processes are fixed from the beginning and are made to look transparent. You can no longer have the Adamu Baikie, the Tomori and the Ade Ajayi. The spirit of resource control has swallowed up our best judgement.

Ladies and gentlemen, I quite believe that people have the liberty to do whatever they like, but I would like to believe that there are sacred lines which should not be crossed and ancient landmarks which ought not to be moved. What I am saying here today has a high capacity to make me unpopular before a highly vocal minority; But what is popularity when you get lost in a crowd and are afraid to have a point of view.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen many tertiary institutions today can conveniently hold their Senate in a Nigerian language not because of policy but due to the loss of diversity in staff compositions. Diversity gives the "hybrid vigor" needed for perspectives, innovation, creativity and meaningful transaction of ideas. Complicating the above is the decay of institutional memory arising from a growing incompetence and politicization of administrative machinery. Administrative staff now lack confidence and to make up for this, they are preoccupied with psychophancy to the extent that there is an epidemic of "administrative amnesia."

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, it is my belief that a systems-conversation should be opened nationwide and actively

prosecuted. This is necessary if Nigerian universities are to achieve their goals of becoming world class institutions.

I would like to acknowledge my belief in unionism as a means of protecting the interest of staff and students, especially in a country like ours where office is personalized and institutions of governance are weak. But I must confess that I am disturbed that the once conservative, idealistic and ideological unions are appearing more like political parties of the day in their methods. Union aristocracy has replaced service and sacrifice. Conformity to prevailing currents has overcome intellectual sobriety. We have become blind to our errors, unwilling to challenge ourselves, but ever eager to agitate against the shortcoming of others. We have become like the rooster with the flaming crest and golden voice that sleeps in its own droppings. We urgently need to direct the agitation against ourselves to save our country. Ladies and gentlemen, bystanders, the indifferent and key actors, it is my opinion that the Ivory Tower has fallen and in its place we have built a temple to the worship of mammon.

Poetry

Our Glories, Our Shame

*Our glories are like the dew
While the sun is yet asleep
They scamper like goats on a rocky ledge
Then vanish at the first rousing
Of the sun's embers*

*Our achievements are mists in their best forms
They infect our sight and diffuse our visions
Our fame makes us bloated when we ought to run*

*We are grass
We are flowers but do not bloom
We swell up but do not grow
We produce but do not fruit
We stand up but are not upright*

*Our righteousness is the stuff of a beggar
It stinks and begs the point
In their glamour they trade unfair bargains
Our pious conducts are overlays of entrenched perversions.*

*Our lives, your fame, their glories
Are solitary giants in a deserted star*

*We are lunatics
Our world is our psychosis
We are master illusionists
Performers and audience together*

Conclusion

*We can be knowledgeable with other people's
knowledge; we cannot be wise with other
people's wisdom.*

(Michael de Montaigne 1533-1592)

One would like to conclude by asking: given what we know about the value of language and most especially indigenous languages, what should we do? What should Linguists be doing? How should a university respond? Answers to these and other questions have occupied linguists; have been subject of numerous articles which have been the basis of the promotion of countless individuals to the professorial chair. Our interest in language should not end with getting promoted and receiving applause and recognition.

I would like to recognize the efforts of Professor D.K.O. Owolabi as a model in terms of the directions that Nigerian linguists should follow. He is largely influential, with others, in the use of Yoruba in the conduct of the business of the house of Assembly in Ogun, Ekiti, Ondo and Oyo states as well as Hausa in Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Kastina, Jigawa, Zamfara, Kaduna, Niger and Plateau states. The groundwork for the use of Yoruba was laid when as Head of Linguistics, I

got Professor Owolabi to head a team to translate the Nigerian Constitution to Yoruba.

I align myself with the thrust of Owolabi's inaugural (2006) that Nigerian languages should be used in specialized domains, technologized (to promote scientific thought) and modernized for national development. It is the business of the linguist to see to these. Every Nigerian linguist should get involved in literacy efforts. Departments of Linguistics and African Languages should collaborate with Adult Education and Teacher Education Departments in this regard.

I have spent 29 years already on documentation efforts, teaching and researching in Linguistics. Language description has provided my life with meaning and linguistics has provided the resonance in this world with complex waves and vibrations.

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I must come home to my family. I will remain eternally grateful to my late father, Philip Oarhe (Ekun) Egbokhare who spent his life educating nine of us. My praying mother, my siblings, my in-laws, my uncle Professor J.A. Ilevbare and his family have given me much room to be grateful to God.

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Appendix

Field Experiences (1982-2004)

Ron Schaefer and I had some good times in Emai field between 1985 and 2000. We spent between 8 weeks and 6 weeks at a time in the field. We lived in a guest facility provided free of charge at the Institute of Physical Education, Afuze. We ate at the other end of town, about 2 kilometers from our accommodation at a restaurant called K-Hut; this was during our first two visits. Subsequently, we found a spot opposite my father's house on Irobo Street. There we mingled with the village elite and locals who were friendly. I remember the pepper sauce vividly. Before every meal, one has to brace himself up to tackle the ordeal. After the meal, it took about 45 minutes to cool down one's tongue and lips with Coca-Cola or Fanta. The real issue was the rearend and the staccato that accompanied the toilet ordeal. We had no choice. That was the only place to eat. Ron had his breakfast in the morning taking oat meal and lunch and dinner had to be at the restaurant. One problem was that each time we had oil things around our accommodation; we had to battle soldiers with fire for a good part of the night. I was often afraid that we will set the place on fire. The accommodation was in the extremity of the town and lonely. But we had no worry for safety of our lives and property. Much of Edo North is peaceful and the people are extremely hospitable. We sometimes had issues with the police. Ron got invited a couple of times to the police station. They were suspicious that he is a CIA official on an espionage mission. But I suspect the real interest was his camera. They were looking for an excuse to confiscate it.

Being in the field with him was helpful. Nigeria was in the thick of dictatorship and it was easy to pick up any white skin at the slightest excuse. The policemen were very interested in Ron's camera. He always managed to talk himself out of trouble by speaking Emai and showing them how Emai is written. I think everyone including the locals appreciated him for that. We were sometimes required by our informants to share hard drinks from the same cup. Ron and I gladly did that and I ate the cola nuts. If you know the level of poor oral hygiene in the village you would understand the sacrifice.

Once we got caught up in local politics. I believe that some of the visits to the police were engineered. Afuze had two factions. Our chief consultant was quite possessive and was in one camp.

The clan head belong to another. The consultant did not want the chief to have any part or share in the glory of our work and he forbade us to see the chief. I thought differently and as a native of Afuze, I advised the contrary and took Ron to see him. It was a case of the lesser of two evils. The chief was glad to receive us and we fulfilled what was culturally expected of us. Our consultant was offended and he wrote a letter to Ron's university accusing him of meddling in local politics. The same individual took the manuscript of the oral narrative which he was given to review, read it and put his name as author. After this he was no longer friendly. I was perceived by some as colluding with a white man to cheat and exploit the village. When Ron took ill during one of our field trips, I feared the worse. I had to spend a week in the field and a week back at Ibadan. I left Ron behind on the weekend and travelled 400km to Ibadan. Sometimes he would be by himself a couple of days if I am unable to get back in good time. At other times, he spent the weekend in Benin with Ann and Renato Pedrocchi, a European couple who ensured that Ron received some opportunity to eat decent food and get refreshed. Ron had a very stubborn strain of malaria and it lasted quite a while. When I got to the field, I was told that he had gone to Benin. I hooked up with him and he was really very ill. I was actually afraid he had had it when things turned round for the better. By the time he got on the plane back home, he was so pale and ghostly that I was just praying against bad news. You know the village environment well and our belief in witchcraft and Juju. You never know when these things turn up in the mind. One thing I remember vividly was that on a few occasions, we passed by a shrine where some ladies were confessing to some heinous crime. In one instance, the wife of a drunk-musician claimed to have stolen his voice and kept it behind a water pot. The musician was experiencing poor fortunes. When she was asked how they were to restore the voice, she burst into tears claiming that ants had eaten the voice. The crowd was livid and explosive; but a psychiatrist would have evaluated the situation differently. One other lady had ended her confession but claimed in addition that she had rendered the shrine ineffective by urinating and defecating on it. When witches defecate on a shrine in local beliefs, it is a big blow to the shrine and the priests. People stop patronizing it. One observed an attempt to hush her up, but the damage had been done. My conclusion was that the behaviour of the lady was a simple protest of a helpless soul. There are so many

stories about witches and wizards and juju and you can imagine that for me, the darkness was pregnant with meanings and there were foes around everywhere beyond bacteria and viruses. I must confess though that fieldwork was a purgative of sort to me as I observed and dealt with many cultural inconsistencies and contradictions. One of course was that only women and girls under one crisis situation or the other often were the witches.

My headaches in those days were many. Being seen in the company of a white man always in the field and the university brought its troubles. I made several trips to the U.S. Family, friends and relatives considered me rich and selfish. In the field, I was accused of exploiting the consultants. Some thought that I kept the money that I was supposed to give to them. When we had video recordings, one or two individuals thought that we were going to make a lot of money using them to make movies. I handled the transactions, so you can understand my situation. What helped though was that when they tried to engage Ron in bargaining in the markets, they found him shrewder than me. Ron was not just bargaining to buy, he was also interested in the process and conversation. In addition, we took a good decision to provide copies of the video recordings and pass them on to participants and chiefs to own and use as they wish.

It was really difficult to explain to some of the village elites that there are poor people in America and that Ron and I did not have enough money to spare. We operated a shoe string budget. When I travelled to the U.S., I spent long hours at airports, sometimes spent the night at an airport to catch a flight the following day. On one of my trips, I had only 20 dollars on me. At the University of Ibadan, I got all kinds of requests. My colleagues who had fewer opportunities to travel than me were living big and lavishly. I just couldn't convince people that I was living in a different reality. There was pressure on me to stay back in the U.S., some said just take off at the airport, all kinds of crazy things. What kept me focused was my long term perspective, my word of honour and patriotism. I also had so much interest in what I was doing that I couldn't just imagine walking away from it.

I survived in the U.S. by staying with Ron and his wife Diane. They would provide for my needs too. When Ron visited Nigeria, he would stay with me. Ron stayed with me at Agbowo, Orogun and Akobo. At Orogun, we narrowly escaped being robbed. The robbers stood in front of our house for over thirty minutes confused

because the adjacent building was identical. In my compound, there was nothing to suggest a place of abode for a white man. The neighbouring building had the trappings of wealth, there was a flashy car parked in it. They went there.

I witnessed the operation through my window and heard their conversations. My neighbour downstairs later informed me that when he observed the group standing in front of our gate he challenged them on their mission. But his wife restrained him from further interrogating them since they were on the streets.

The CUAP fieldwork and visits took some time to plan and organize. On arrival from the U.S., the group cooled off for two weeks at the Vice-Chancellor's guest facility. Then a smaller group left for Northern Edo field. We had sessions where we discussed earnestly and addressed expectations of all concerned. I will skip the experience we had on the first visit of the UI team to the U.S. It was a perfect visit. On our own side, we had to surmount some challenges from the planning stage to sourcing counterpart funding from UI, which we provided by sheer ingenuity. UI would provide boarding, accommodation and transportation at international rates. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Falase, provided a part of the funds and the Department of Linguistics and African Languages provided the other part. As a matter of fact, Dr. Pogoson and I made our cars available for transportation. We were also the drivers. From the first few days of the trip to Nigeria by the U.S. team, there were already signs of personal differences. It got really bad sometimes. Later on, it was between one member of the team and a member of the Nigerian side. Ron and I were the dust bins into which issues got dumped. Matt Emerson was in Nigeria for the first time. Laura Strand and Monica White did not have much of an experience either—both came on different trips. Rudy Wilson, Deputy Provost of Cultural Diversity (SIUE) tagged along during one of the trips. He was interested in telling folktales to primary school children and he was damn good at it. Ron and I did our best to ensure that conflicts were minimal and everyone respected the boundaries of other members. Matt was text book ready for the trip and his background as an Anthropologist came in handy, or so we thought. We often had arguments with him and on one occasion we threatened to embarrass him with *juju* during a presentation he was to make at the Institute of African Studies. You know that *juju* that makes one fart as broom sticks are broken. The point was that Matt had too much opinion about some cultural facts. He was operating from a pure intellectual angle and we wanted him to pay some

attention to the human angle. He succumbed to our threat or pretended he did; I think we were able to convince him to a certain level. You know how these things work, tell a lot of stories about personal experiences, let people corroborate. After all, Matt was still human.

We referred to Matt as the gadget man. He had all kinds of gadgets for fieldwork, had medications that could cure everything. He had Larium, a malaria prophylactic which gave him lucid dreams in technicolor. We would spend the mornings listening to him describe his dreams which would make the writer of *A TATAR* green with envy. Matt had CIPRO, a broad spectrum antibiotic which is equivalent of the local *gbogbounse*—one drug that cures all. He gave us an expert lecture on the powers of CIPRO.

Soon after the SIUE team got acquainted with the UI one, we got on our way to the field with great expectations. Like Mungo Park, we were on a mission of discovery. Our location was Oso, the highest point in Edo State. We had arranged to live in a decrepit government guest house and to have our meals there.

The road from Igarra to Oso was unpaved and wound through the sides of Kukuruku hills. It was a rainy day. That road ruined my “brand new” second hand Volkswagen Passat. I remember vividly the explorer’s excitement that had gripped Matt and Pogoson who rode together in Pogoson’s Mercedes. I remember also the groundnut saga. Pogoson bought some groundnut at Igarra. Matt had some. Ron cautioned him against eating anymore, but he was in the spirit.

If you know Ron, he is a rule’s man. He lived a disciplined routine that he had developed by years of study and experience. You can trust his judgement. From Igarra to Oso was an uphill task, literarily speaking. We had to drive in the rain, up rocky ledges, through the scenic beauty of Uneme Osu to Oso. I often wonder if the spectacle in Jos or Zuma rock, compared to the grandeur of Kukuruku hill. At Igarra, the hills are framed against the sky and the rocky projections are like animal heads stuck against a great canvas. The village itself stands like little footings on this enchanting footage of a volcanic past.

Just about dark, we settled in. The guest house is perched on a rock. You get to it through tens of steep steps which are a traction test for an overweight person. We spent most of the first two hours monitoring Francis Odemerho’s progress on his journey from Benin. We were worried because of the rain. He arrived just before we thought he would not make it. He hobbled up the steps to the

restaurant and just as we were going to heave a sigh of relief, he slipped and landed on the floor, really heavily; I thought I saw him bounce up and down like a football. There was dead silence and anticipation of the worst, when he broke the silence with a joke, got on his knees then on all fours, then supported himself up with a table. Had Odemerho been less endowed with weight, size, and flesh, I am very sure that we would have returned him to the emergency ward in Benin that night. We joked and laughed and were relieved and ate and went to sleep. Not before green bottles were emptied into the alimentary canal.

I can't remember all the details, but I think the following day, Matt went to inspect the cooking area. You can imagine coming from the U.S. to see a firewood hearth and some scruffy looking fellows waiting to cook your meal. Matt saw a pet monkey pissing very close to the fire place. He came to report his consternation and gave us a lecture on monkeys and HIV-AIDs. I enjoyed Matt but I just think he got too serious sometimes to realize that we had some education too. The monkey business set the tone for his misery in Oso as he could not bring himself to enjoy the meals.

I think, while the Americans were worried about hygiene, we the Africans were more concerned about the darkness and its inhabitants. Oso hill-top is heavily forested down the north valley. It is very cold and eerie at night.

Monica White is an African-American lady. Our first contact with the village was interesting. Youths gathered around Monica who had dreadlocks. They thought she was Queen Lateefa. You can imagine Queen Lateefa unannounced in an isolated village. Someone thought that Ron Schaefer was a Reverend Father and so, we began to address him as "Father" throughout the rest of our stay. Demola Lewis was the butt of all kinds of joke. He was yet a "catholic brother" and had not gone the way of all flesh when we undertook fieldwork. We enjoyed hearing him say "I beg your pardon" with his head cocked up like a British knight. Pogason and I feasted on all kinds of bush meat which we renamed venison when we realized that our habit met with disgust from one or two of the others.

The turning point of the Oso visit was when Matt took ill, quite early in the visit. Remember that he quaffed much cooked groundnut on our way to Oso. Remember also the monkey-piss. First he stopped eating stew with his meal, then he stopped eating—altogether. I was told that he started eating bullion cubes. Initially we would tease him, and then things got serious. Ron was

handling the situation well and then I think everyone realized that something had to be done. Matt was very knowledgeable. It was difficult to persuade him to consider other options. He was stooling, and running temperature, and unable to join in our foraging. Demola came to me one night, looking very frightened. He warned me that Matt was going to die if nothing changed. I calmed him down, and persuaded him that if Matt was sure that he had turned the bend, he would cooperate. Then, I called my younger brother at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital, 200km away, to alert him that I may be bringing him an emergency case. The problem was that I knew that Matt would not agree to be treated in any local hospital. I think it was a day or two later that I went to hold the ultimate conversation with Matt. He was hopeful and placed absolute trust in Cipro and all that it can do. I joked with him that Nigerian Bacteria don't respect all that "America Spec." Then I advised that he should not focus on what Cipro can do but on what works. That was the expression that changed his outlook. At the time we were talking about, I was still addressed as a Doctor and in the village during fieldwork I sometimes had people seeking medical help from me. This should prepare you for what I am going to tell you now. From my experience and analysis of Matt's symptoms, I realized that he needed Tetracycline capsules. I also realized that he needed to eat some decent meal. Having won his trust or maybe, he realizing that he may not have much time left, I went to the village chemist, bought eight tablets of tetracycline capsule and prescribed a 4:2:2 dosage. Matt only took the first dose and in less than an hour, he had a miracle and I became his hero.

On one of the visits, Laura Strand also took ill. We were fortunate that it was close to her departure. She managed to get on the flight back home. Rody Wilson had asthma. I have also had my own experience failing ill at least twice on my trips to the U.S. I remember a moment of great pain and great sadness. During our second trip to the U.S., Sam Asein took ill and was rushed to the hospital. He was there for about a week or so and was discharged with a clear bill of health. He had a pre-existing heart condition. On the eve of the day when we were to return, he had an emergency and died shortly after in the hospital. I can never forget the pain, the sadness, and the confusion. The lot fell on me to break the news.

The motivation behind sharing these experiences is to help students understand that when they read articles or works done, that

there are sometimes painful experiences that are not considered as part of the data. But they are human experiences and important in the narrative of intellectual growth.

Armed robbers visited my house after one of the trips to Nigeria by the SIUE team. Normally, the team will leave their travel documents with me and the money which they needed to change or money which they will not need for a while. On the last few days of that visit, we went to Agbowo shopping complex opposite the University to buy analgesic and a few other things. I had four Americans with me. I drove right into the park area. It was about 5pm. Some six young men sat on the fence close to where I parked my Passat. In the trunk I had travel documents of our guests in-between books which I was taking home. For some reasons I felt uneasy and had to come out twice in a space of ten minutes to check my car. When we were done, we came out to find that my car trunk had been forced open. The key was damaged. I panicked, sloshed through the books and found all documents intact. In relief, I exclaimed loudly, "all the passports and documents are intact." The young men heard me. I asked them if they saw the person who burgled my car, they said no. One week later, I was robbed. That was the time it took them to find my house. The robbers were asking for dollars. My international passport with an American visa was stolen; my brother's Mercedes, phones and personal belongings were taken. For the next six months, my family and I were traumatized.

Let's get back to the light side. In Oso, we had to bathe fetching water with a bowl from a bucket. That was too much for Monica. One day, she hiked with Odemerho to Abuja; just two hours away, stayed two nights in Sheraton, had a decent shower, shampooed her hair and feasted on decent meals. Odemerho was not supposed to let us in on the secret but he did, but after a long time. The average Nigerian may regard this as a big deal, but it really is a big transition for an American. Put this together with the power outages and all the many inconveniences, you will appreciate what sacrifices our non-Nigerian team members had to make. Going to America, I have also made sacrifices. For instance, the sheer frustration of going to Walmart and having to decide which cereal in a hundred I should chose; knowing which way the door opens, having people pass you by without greeting as if you do not exist, seeing all the flashy cars and houses which you cannot afford. Need I continue? Different strokes for different folks!

Anthony Cheeseboro is a Professor of History. He was not part of the field trip. He remained in the campus and integrated well. He is an African American. He is interested in *Steatopygia*; "the study of *bumbum*, i.e. excessive deposit of fat on the buttocks and thigh". I hope not the history of it. We had a lot of opportunities to joke and laugh. I remember one individual asking me why I never look at the female booty. The guy said he almost always falls over watching the moving sculptures. Well, I said it is a difference in technology. I capture the images and store in my hard disk for later viewing. His own problem which is dangerous to driving is that he captures it real time. One other guy asked me why our young men were in the habit of grabbing their crotch as if trying to confirm that it was there or lost or perhaps trying to find out if there was an outbreak of some fungal infection. My reply simply was that they were only imitating Michael Jackson. On our second visit to SIUE, Rudy Wilson took us out to lunch as was his custom. After the meal, he asked me why we almost starved them during their visit to Nigeria. I was filled with shame. I wanted to learn from them that some particular university caterers helped themselves to a decent portion of the meals and left five of them with a portion suitable only for two people. They were afraid to inform me while still in Nigeria. They feared they might be poisoned if they made an issue of it. The following year, we used a private caterer.

We can go on and on. I believe that other members of our field team have their own stories to tell. I have tried to be accurate and have left out materials where I felt I would be making an unfair comment. I still would advise that this piece should be taken with intellectual skepticism especially where references are made to individuals. They have not had any opportunity to read through and express their opinions.

Let me conclude by stating that we can measure the success of my field work with Ron and the CUAP project by the fact that SIUE and UI have maintained a relationship since 2004. SIUE is a preferred destination of MacArthur Grant Awardees on staff training. I have a long list of lecturers and students who have had an opportunity to go for professional development because of a private collaborative relationship between a teacher and his student, which grew into a relationship between people with similar professional interests; two universities with shared goals and two nations across the Atlantic. This is the power of the academia; the way of the intellect.

**BIODATA OF
PROFESSOR FRANCIS OISAGHAEDE
EGBOKHARE**

Professor F. O. Egbokhare was born on 22 September 1962 to Mr. and Mrs. Philip Oarhe and Margret Abunovbo Egbokhare of Afuze-Emai, in Owan East Local Government Area of Edo State. He had his school certificate from Our Lady of Fatima College Auchi in 1978. In 1979 he was admitted to study Linguistics at the University of Benin. He won an award as Best Student of Linguistics and graduated with a Second Class Honours, upper division in 1983. In 1985, he obtained an M. A. Degree and subsequently a Ph.D Degree in 1990, both from the University of Ibadan. Professor Egbokhare was appointed as an Assistant Lecturer in 1985; Lecturer II in 1988; Lecturer I in 1991; Senior Lecturer in 1994 and Professor in 1999. He has held many administrative positions. He served as Head of Linguistics (2002-2004); Director, Distance Learning (2004-2010); Member Strategic Planning Committee; Member Committee on Drafting of Internationalization Plan; Chair Business Committee of Senate (1999-2000); member search committee for the appointment of Vice-Chancellor (1999-2000); member, Committee for the Decentralization of Disciplinary Processes (1999-2000); UI at 60 Committee; member, committee on Diamond FM; Member University of Ibadan/UCH Development Blueprint Committee (2002); Secretary Academic Staff Union (Ibadan Branch, 1992-1996); Chair, ASUU Library Project (2003-2006); Chair, ASUU Publications Committee (2002-2006); Chair, Editorial Board of the Scholar (2002-2006); Member of Council, University of Ibadan (2008-2011) and so on. Professor Egbokhare has been involved in several grants and funding initiatives. He was a member of the McArthur Grants Proposal Writing and Implementation Committee (2004-2010); Partnership for Higher Education Grant Writing and implementation Committee (2009-2010); World Bank STEP B Project. He is a recipient of the Endangered Languages

Fund; numerous Senate Research Grants; collaborator with Ron Schaefer on National Science Foundation and National Endowment for Humanities Grants (on Emai and Northern Edoid project); State Department funded Colleges and Universities Affiliations Project between UI and SIUE, USA; Nigerian Pidgin Project (funded by IFRA) and so on.

Professor Egbokhare has many academic fellowships and professional affiliations. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Development Administration of Nigeria; Institute of Social Works of Nigeria; Member/Vice-President Institute of Management Consultant, Ibadan Chapter; President Naija Language Academy; Member of Council West African Languages Congress (2004-2008); Member Inter-ministerial Committee on Development Information, Science and Technology (CODIST); E-Learning Think Tank. Professor Egbokhare has enjoyed Visiting Fellowships to the Southern Illinois University, University of Georgia at Athens, and University of Hamburg as a Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. In addition, Professor Egbokhare has received a number of Awards, some of which are: Distinguished Alumnus Award 2010, awarded by the General Assembly of the University of Benin Alumni Association at the 40th Foundation's Day celebration; Distinguished Personality of the Year 2011, Linguistics Students Association; Association of Faculty of Arts Students, Lecturer of the Year Award (awarded by Linguistics Students Association) 1998; other awards are from Senior Staff Club, Non-Academic Staff Union, Association of Nigerian Authors, Oyo State, Union of Campus Journalists, and Preliminary Science Students Association, Faculty of Science. He has the honour of having the library of the Department of Linguistics, University of Benin named after him. Professor Egbokhare is a good teacher, mentor and connector with colleagues and students. His relationship with Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville led to the signing of an MOU with the University of Ibadan: 3 Registry, 1 Bursary, 3 Library, 8 Arts, 2 Engineering, 1 Institute of African Studies, 2 Education, 1

Science and 1 Distance Learning Centre staff and students have benefitted from the UI/SIUE relationship. Professor Egbokhare is very active in the community. He is a member or chair of many boards and councils, one of which is African Languages Technology Initiative. He is Chair of the Project Implementation Committee of the Proposed Dominion University. Professor Egbokhare is a story teller, a poet, a writer, a dreamer, a teacher, a community and grassroots person, a connector, a leader, a highly creative, resourceful and innovative man. Ladies and gentlemen, Professor Egbokhare is married to Yinka Egbokhare and they are blessed with two children.

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