

THE LEXICOGRAPHER'S BURDEN: THE CASE OF IGWE'S (1999) IGBO-ENGLISH DICTIONARY.

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This paper has two sections: the first attempts to articulate the optimal conditions and qualities that can encourage the successful practice of lexicography; while the second part is a critique of Igwe's (1999) Igbo-English Dictionary (845 pages). While his treatment of the major lexical categories is examined and found problematic, his discussion of suffixes, inflectional and extensional, is seen as his most enduring contribution to Igbo grammar. The paper is concluded with the suggestion that aspiring lexicographers may do well to study the contents of the first part of this paper.

Cette communication comprend deux parties: la première essaie d'articuler les conditions optimales et les qualités qui peuvent encourager le succès d'un lexicographe; tandis que la deuxième partie est une critique du Dictionnaire Igbo-Anglais d'Igwe (1999), (845) pages. Comme son traitement de catégories lexicales principales est examiné et trouvé problématique, sa discussion de suffixes, flexionnelle et extensionnelle, est vue comme sa contribution la plus durable à la grammaire d'Igbo. La communication est terminée avec la suggestion que les futures lexicographes peuvent faire mieux d'étudier les contenus de la première partie de cette communication.

0. INTRODUCTION

This paper has two sections: the first attempts to articulate the optimal conditions and qualities that can encourage the successful practice of lexicography; while the second part is a critique of Igwe's (1999) Igbo-English Dictionary (845 pages). While his treatment of the major lexical categories is examined and found problematic, his discussion of suffixes, inflectional and extensional, is seen as his most enduring contribution to Igbo grammar.

1. THE 'BURDEN' OF A GOOD LEXICOGRAPHER

1.1 TRAINED LINGUIST

A lexicographer should be a trained linguist, not merely an enthusiast. Enthusiasm at the expense of expertise is not acceptable. Igwe (1999: x), commenting on what one requires to handle Igbo lexicography, observes:

To be qualified one needs to be a linguist in the scientific sense of the word or be linguistically trained to understand and handle Igbo. It is simply not enough for one to be an indigenous speaker of the language, or be proficient in speaking, reading and writing it. Neither is it sufficient to have obtained a school certificate in which Igbo was a subject, they must be seen as preliminaries to the proper and relevant qualification needed for work on any aspect of Igbo.....

The age and nationality of a qualified linguist are not relevant to work in Igbo.

1.2 UP-TO-DATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GRAMMAR

He must possess an up-to-date knowledge of the grammar of the target language. A non-practising linguist is ill-equipped for the task since he will not be able to give a state-of-the-art account of the grammar of the language in question. Such a linguist runs the risk of misleading the dictionary user.

1.3 RESILIENCE AND PERSISTENCE

Virtues of resilience and persistence are essential attributes of a typical linguist/lexicographer. The above qualities will be tested almost to a breaking point in the process of writing a dictionary especially in a case like Igwe's, where he is the sole author of the volume.

1.4 ABILITY TO WORK COOPERATIVELY

Humility and ability to work cooperatively with experts from specialized disciplines such as engineering, agriculture, medicine, geology etc with whom he must check his entries for factual accuracy, and with various categories of research assistants are essential.

1.5 GIVES EXAMPLES

Provision of examples of usage must accompany the entries. A modern dictionary should not only be informative, but also be educative.

“This means that the learner always has a model of each pattern, and usage and helps to ensure that the learner produces the correct form”,
Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1996: viii)

1.6 INCLUDES REFERENCES

Williamson (1972) and Echeruo (2001) include references in their dictionaries, an approach which other linguists/lexicographers may find instructive. The advantage of this is that later analysts would be in a position to assess their works appropriately. For example, at the time the first work was written, the author derived words like

- (1) **àhùmụzò**¹ act of seeing
 èzumike act of resting
 àchọmoku act of looking for trouble

from the following sentences

- (2) **ahù m ụzò**
 I see road

¹ High and low tones, and the downstep S (which is a slightly lowered high tone) operate in Igbo tonology. Mid tone has not been established. The high tone is left unmarked throughout, while the low tone is marked with / / and the downstep is marked with / - / . Tones in Igbo are marked on the vowel or syllabic nasal

Two groups of Igbo vowels exist: those that have the feature [+ATR] which include **i, e, o, u,** and those that have [-ATR] including **ì, ẹ, ọ, à.**

Vowel harmony operates in Igbo, implying that in any given word, vowels belonging to one group must co-occur, except for /a/ which can occasionally occur with the [+ATR] group.

- (3) **ezù m ike**
 I rest
- (4) **achọ m okwu**
 I look for trouble

Ezikeojiaju (1978: 12-13), on the other hand, saw the **-m-** in (1) as an interfix occurring between non-identical roots. Emenanjo (1982: 85) rejected this analysis and upheld Williamson's. Anagbogu (1990: 94-5) showed conclusively that those words are in fact nominalizations derived from verb phrases:- **hụ ụzọ**, **zù ikē**, and **chọ okwū**.

A latter analyst would not blame Williamson (1972) for claiming that the words in question have sentential bases because the state of Igbo grammatical studies at the time she wrote provided no alternative. Anagbogu (1990) was then not in existence. But he will definitely castigate Igwe (1999) for making the same claim since he would assume that Igwe ought to have read every available literature on Igbo linguistics at the time he wrote—a blame which would have been perhaps mitigated if he had included a list of references or a bibliography.

1.7 INCLUSIVENESS OR COMPREHENSIVENESS

Inclusiveness or comprehensiveness should be the target. Words which are used today may be forgotten tomorrow if they are not documented. For that reason, the task of the lexicographer is to ensure a comprehensive documentation of extant lexical items.

1.8 CLARITY AND SIMPLICITY

Clarity and simplicity should be the watchword.

1.9 AVOIDS CONTROVERSY

The lexicographer should avoid controversial issues in grammar such as the mid tone, intonation, how to write the compound word etc since such materials are more appropriately suited for presentation at conferences and seminars where they are resolved. Otherwise, the non-linguist who sees the dictionary as the ultimate source of incontrovertible information may be misled.

The contents of (1) above constitute the evaluation metric for Igwe 1999. The present analyst would exercise them in subsequent discussions.

2. OVERALL STRUCTURE OF IGWE'S DICTIONARY

Rev. Dr. G. Egemba. Igwe, M.A (Cantab). Ph.D (London) is clearly one of the precursors of modern linguistic studies of Igbo. The seminal book, A descriptive grammar of Igbo (1963) which he co-authored with Margaret Green was indeed the first linguistically-oriented Igbo grammar. It has therefore served as a sole reference for more than a decade. Igwe's involvement in Igbo studies has spanned six decades. The present volume (Igwe 1999) appears to be his magnum opus. The contents of Igwe 1999 are organised into three broad sections:

- (i) Introductory material
- (ii) Phonology and
- (iii) The grammar of the language

(i) is purely introductory, (ii) examines the phonology of the main dialect he is adopting in the dictionary while (iii) examines the grammar; the latter will form the focus of the present analysis. The lexical categories treated are (1) Verbs (2) Nouns (3) Pronouns (4) Adjectives (5) Adverbs (6) Ideophones (7) Suffixes

3. VERBS

His classification of Igbo verbs yields three classes because here, he takes into consideration the reduplicated verb roots, Earlier analysts had classified the verb into two classes, ignoring the issue of verbs with reduplicated roots. The infinitives also have three classes: eg.

- (1) Class I – **izu** High Tone, henceforth (HT) buy
- Class II – **iwe** Low Tone henceforth (LT) take
- Class III – **igbugbe** (HML) to act sluggishly

Mid-tone has not been established in Igbo. It would seem that Igwe (1999) is still following the convention of Green and Igwe (1963) in this regard.

3.1 IMPERATIVE VERBS

In Igwe and Green (1963: 63-70), it has been argued that there are two categories of verbs: those that do not require a suffix to imperativize and those that do. The following are provided as examples of the first category

- (2) a. **igā** to go
- b. **ibya** to come
- c. **igwā** to tell
- d. **inyē** to give
- e. **izá òkù** to answer a call
- f. **izī** to show
- g. **ihụ** to see
- h. **bha** grip

It is note-worthy that in trying to exemplify the claim that the verb in question do not require suffixes to form imperatives, Green and Igwe (p 69) used only two examples out of the seven: **nye** and **bha**; the first is used in four sentences and the second in one as reproduced below

- (3) **nye m** give me!
- nye ya** give him!
- nye anyị** give us!
- nye ha** give them!
- bha ya** grip him!

However, (2)a, above, a monosyllabic low tone verb root, invalidates his classification since as is demonstrated in (4) below, it requires a suffix to imperativize

(4) **gàa bē ya** go to his house

while those with high tone verb roots do not. (see 3 above). Even in some dialects of Igbo, some verbs with high tone verb roots also require suffixes. Examples:

(5) **kwùò okwu** < **-kwu okwu** speak word
Speak (cf. Anagbogu 1982)

(6) **gbàa mbọ** < **-gba mbọ**
make effort
try

(7) **siè ikē** < **-shi ikē**
boil strength
be strong

Igwe (1999) got into a more serious problem with his analysis of the imperative verb. Consider the following examples from p. xvii

(a) **ri nrī** Begin to eat food or go on eating food²

For one, **-ri** is a low tone uninflected verb root, a citation form, which obviously requires an open vowel **-e** for it to be grammatical as well as be able to belong to the imperative category. Even if we rectify the anomaly and write

(8) **riè nrī** eat food

only the imperative is implied. Clearly Igwe's gloss which suggests 'inceptive' is also wrong. There is nothing in the sentence which suggests 'Begin to ... or go on ...' Consider his example below (9)

(9) **riè nrī** eat up the food or the food to a finish

Although he has now given the verb its imperative suffix, the gloss suggests 'inceptive' and 'completive'. His glosses are misleading. His claim, therefore, that 'the addition of the open vowel suffix to the imperative verb adds the sense of 'completion' to the 'action' denoted by the verb cannot withstand investigation as has been argued above. Furthermore, his claim that "the imperative verb does not have to have a suffix just as non-imperative verbs do not" is an overstatement which he could not substantiate. For, in fact, he contradicts himself by providing (9) above where the imperative verb clearly has an open vowel suffix (see p. xvii).

3.2 COGNATE OBJECT (Participle).

The term, as Igwe rightly observed, was initiated by Green & Igwe (1963: 31) and adopted by latter analysts. His description of its structure is adequate and his claim that the term is a misnomer has long been recognised. Emenanjo (1978: 131 ff) and Nwachukwu (1983, 1985: 61) engineered the metamorphosis that has taken place so

² If Igwe wanted the imperative to suggest 'completive' he should then add the suffix **-cha** to **-ri**:
richa 'eat to a finish' 'eat completely'

that for more than a decade now the cognate object had become the Inherent Complement Verb (ICV). It is expected that before one could suggest a change, he should consider what is available.

It is obvious that Igwe was not familiar with what had transpired with regard to the change of nomenclature, definitely his suggested term the 'aorist verb form' for the inherent complement verb is belated and unacceptable.

4. CLASSIFICATION OF IGBO NOUNS

Igbo nouns are classified using the following criteria

- (i) Number of syllables
- (ii) Number of tone classes.

Three main classes of syllables are listed and illustrated: monosyllabic, disyllabic and polysyllabic nouns. The tone classes listed are five, of which the last is high mid.

There is one puzzle frequently encountered in Igwe (1999): a point of view is presented without justification, that is, without demonstrating that the antecedents were deficient one way or the other, and without analysing the nature of the deficiency. An example is the inclusion of mid-tone in Igbo tonology which surfaces in other aspects of the dictionary. Three types of classification of the Igbo tone class are presented in table 1 below:

(10)

Green & Igwe 1963	Emenanjo 1978	Igwe 1999
HH	HH	HH
LH	LH	LH
HL	HL	HL
LL	LL	LL
	Downstepped High Tone (henceforth HS)	HM

Table 1

Although Igwe had more than a decade to study Emenanjo (1978), he made no comments at all about the high step tone in Emenanjo. Although the mid-tone had been a subject of controversy in Igbo linguistic circles in the eighties, one would have loved to read Igwe's comments showing why he rejected Emenanjo's classification since all the Igbo scholars would have profited from such views; but he did not. Even before Emenanjo (1978), the down step tone had become generally accepted in Igbo linguistic circles.

Igbo nouns are divided into two types: The underived and the derived. The underived nouns are few and are treated in a few lines, whereas the derived ones are as numerous as the processes involved in their derivation. A total of twenty-one processes of derivation are listed. In characterising the processes involved, Igwe states

Many types of nouns are derived from verb roots. A number of processes are used in deriving them. They include affixation in which prefixes, suffixes and infixes are employed, reduplication, duplication, and triplication. In a number of cases some of these processes are combined. (p.xxiv)

Igwe (pp.xxiv-xxv) demonstrated that at the least a total of twenty-nine items could be derived from a high tone monosyllabic verb root, while at least twenty-four are derivable from its low tone counterpart, and this derivational possibility extends to disyllabic and complex verb roots. He listed a total of twenty-one noun types based on kinds of derivation. (pp. xxiv-xxxiii)

4.1 INTERFIXES v INFIXES

Some of the derivational processes, however are not adequately handled. One of the problems arise from an inability to differentiate the infix from the interfix. An infix is 'an affix inserted into the root itself' (cf. Katamba 1993: 58) whereas an interfix is an affix which occurs in the middle of a word/root in such a way that it is divided into two equal parts. The infix is rare in English and Igbo languages. They are mostly found in Semitic languages and has recently been identified in Birom, one of the languages spoken in Plateau State of Nigeria.

Consider then examples of what Igwe listed as derived by Duplication of verb root having an **a - / e-**vowel prefix and infixing – **m-** (p.xxix). The tabulation below is mine.

(11)

Root	Interfix	Root	Gloss
eme	M	eme	things to be done
eri	M	eri	food, nourishment
ele	M	ele	spectacle, show
adi	M	adi	things that occurs, show

Table 2

Clearly Igwe's claim is not tenable. What is there is Root + Interfix + Root. There are no prefixes and no infixes.

Consider another example of Igwe's derivational process

"Addition of a vowel or nasal prefix to a suffixed verb or compound verb stem and also adding to it the prefixed form without its suffix or second verb root"
Examples: (tabulation is mine).

(12)

Root	Interfix	Root	Gloss
alụ	gha	alụ	person, thing excessively untidy
àkà	ta	àkà	person, excessively powerful
èbè	de	èbè	thing enormously broad and flat
ibe	ri	ibe	foolishness, stupidity
`mmì	ghi	`mmì	thing too much extruded

Table 3

Obviously the derivation involves insertion of the interfix between two roots. Again, Igwe's unwieldy description is confusing and untenable.

4.2 MISLEADING ANALYSES

Some of Igwe's analyses are vague and completely misleading. He states: (p. xxiv)

“Addition of **a - / e -** prefix and **- m** suffix to a simple or complex verb root.
eg.
èmém/èmèèm the fact of doing something , act of doing
èmème (èmèème) festivity, celebration

.... Furthermore they can occur with other types of nouns to yield new nouns” eg.

- (13) **àmàmihye** wisdom, understanding (**amamihe**)
 àgamahya market-going
 èzùmike rest, relaxation

What is involved above is the insertion of a verb root into a circumfixal frame. A circumfix is an affix which is structured as a frame with an affix at each end thus **e-/a-mu**. In Igbo the verb root is inserted into this frame thus- **à ma m ihe , è zu m ike** etc. It is therefore used for deriving the examples of (13) above. Neither the prefix nor the suffix is involved as Igwe claims.

Indeed the controversy that led to the above form of derivation is familiar enough (cf. Williamson 1972, Ezikeojiaku 1978, Emenanjo 1982, Anagbogu 1990). It will not be discussed here.³

Another example of doubtful analysis is the derivational process described below:

‘Duplicating two-syllable nouns and infixing **-mv-**. The nouns thus derived carry a sense of ‘plurality’ ‘each’ ‘every’ ‘any’.’

In the first place, it has been demonstrated that no infix exists in Igbo and that the so-called infix is really an interfix, consider then Igwe's examples (p. xxxii) (tabulation mine) below

(14)	Root/word	Interfix	Root	Gloss
	aka	mà	aka	hand with plus hand
	anya	mà	anya	eye with plus eye
	nna	mà	nna	each father, all fathers

Table 4

In several dialects of Igbo including the Standard Igbo, those examples do not indicate plurality as Igwe claims. It would seem rather that the interfix serves as an emphazier.

³ See Anagbogu (1990) for details of this.

4.3 DIALECTAL DIFFERENCES

Some of the noun classes listed are interesting even though they are so deeply dialectal that speakers of several other dialects find them difficult to comprehend (cf. p. xxxii, No. xx); which is why it is very necessary to illustrate the use of any entry with at least one sentence. That will enable the learner to learn more about the lexical item concerned and in addition make him gain an insight into the usage in practical terms.

5. PRONOUNS

The pronoun is a close category so the treatment is expectedly scanty. But what is of interest however is his treatment of pronouns in 'indirect speech'. The title appears novel in Igbo grammar. As the author observes

As far as is known, except in the present writer's thesis for the University of London on 'The role of Affixation in the Grammar of Igbo', there has not been any discussion of pronouns in 'indirect speech'.⁴ Igwe Egemba G. (1999: xxxiv)

It is pertinent to observe that Uwalaka 1995 exhaustively analyses the pronoun in indirect speech. The problem, however, is the question: Does the pronoun undergo any sort of change when it occurs in the indirect speech? If it does, his discussion is motivated, if it does not, then it is unnecessary. Consider now his examples, which are based on his dialect and accompanied with their Standard Igbo equivalents:

(15) a. **ọ jùrù ma Ezè họ n'ụlò** He asked whether Eze is at home

b. **ọ jùrù ma Ezè ọ họ n'ụlò**

(16) a. **ọ jùrù mà họ n'ụlò** He asked whether I was at home

(16) b. **ọ jùrù ma m họ n'ụlò**

A close study of his examples and those of the Standard Igbo equivalents shows that the pronoun does not undergo any form of change whether morphological or syntactic in both examples; therefore it is not economical to discuss the issue since both the form and grammatical behaviour are constant whether the speech is direct or indirect.

6. ADJECTIVES

6.1 NOT AN OPEN CLASS

Igwe, while acknowledging the fact that linguists see this category as being restricted to a few lexical items, nevertheless, insists that the category has 'innumerable members' (p. xxxv). He claims that failure to recognise this fact arises from 'neglect of the study of Igbo morphology'.

Igwe (p. xxxv) observed correctly the close relationship between the verb and the adjective and quotes literature to show that in Bantu many adjectives are

⁴ It is clear from her analysis that sometimes the pronoun in question has an accusative morphology, but more often however, it does not. A full discussion of Uwalaka 1995 however is beyond the scope of the present paper.

synchronically derived from verbs. The situation is not quite different in Igbo. In Igwe & Green (1963) the adjectives.

oma ,	good, beautiful
ocha	white, fair
ojoo	bad

are closely associated with their cognate verbs **ima** ‘to be good’, **icha** ‘to change colour’ **ijo** ‘to be bad’.

Emenanjo (1978:70) adds **oji** ‘black’ which has **-ji** ‘to be black’ as cognate verb and **ukwu** ‘big’ which cannot be traced to any verb. Igwe (1999 p. xxxv) adds

okpoo dry, dried < **-kpoo** dry hard **ochie** old < **chi** close; be closed (verb).

It is clear that the linguistic universality of verb-adjective relationship extends to Igbo. Igwe (xxxvi) describes the syntactic behaviour of those adjectives which in some cases is dialect specific.

6.2. ADJECTIVES DERIVED FROM VERBS

The adjectives, seven in number, mentioned above and below-

- (17) **ocha**
ojoo
oji
ukwu
okpoo
ochie
oma

are those recognised in the grammars. They are derived by prefixing **o-/o-** to the verb root and suffixing the open vowel. In other words they are derived from verbs with the exception of **ukwu**; whose verbal root cannot be traced. It is for this reason; probably that Igwe attempts to show that the other 19 classes are also verb- derived and are also adjectives.

6.3 IGWE’S CLASSIFICATION OF ADJECTIVES

Igwe (pp. xxxv-xlii) introduces numerous adjectives classified into twenty groups. They are formed by the kinds of affixation that were used in (3) above.

6.3.1 The nineteen other classes of putative adjectives which are introduced in pp. xxvi to xliii are making their debut in Igbo grammar as ‘adjectives’. Consider now, the second class, which is derived by prefixing **e/-a** to a reduplicated verb root.

- (18) **ajuju** worth asking for/ about
derived from **-ju**, ask, inquire
- (19) **akuko** story worth telling or narrating, capable of being told
< **koo** tell

There is a problem here,. Williamson (1972: xlv) glosses **ajuju** and **akuko** as 'question' and 'story' while Igwe (p, xxxvi) glosses them as 'worth asking for /about' and 'worth-telling or narrating' and 'capable of being told'. In both cases, the verb root bases are **-ju** 'ask' and **-ko** 'tell'.

Let us contextualize the lexical items thus:

(20) **Obi juru m ajuju** Obi asked me a question

(21) **Ada koru akuko** Ada told a story

Clearly the words are actually nouns since they occupy the noun slots in sentences . But consider then the following glosses for **ajuju** and **akuko** used by Igwe:

(22) * Obi asks me worth asking for /about

(23) * Obi told me worth telling or narrating, capable of being told

The unacceptability of (22) and (23) shows conclusively that Igwe's claim that **ajuju** and **akuko** are adjectives is misleading. One is constrained to observe, therefore, that the lexical items are indeed nouns, not adjectives as Igwe claimed, and that his glosses do not reflect the appropriate meanings. In other words, in Igwe's analysis, the words and their meanings are asymmetrical because of his wrong analyses of **ajuju** and **akuko**

6.3.2 This third class of 'adjectives' is formed by prefixing any vowel and suffixing **-riri/riri** to the verb root. (24) represent three of the examples presented.

(24) **achariri** snipped or cut rather small (cha snip, cut)
apiriri very tiny or small
iwiriri very feathery, wearing off easily .

Such 'adjectives' are claimed to occur predicatively or attributively with **'di** 'is'. Unfortunately no examples of their syntactic behaviour are presented. However (25), (26) and (27) where they are contextualized are non-attested

(25) * **osisi ahù di achariri** tree that is
(26) * **opi Obi di apiriri** horn obi is
(27) * **okuko ahù di iwiriri** fowl that is

Acceptability here is a problem. See 4.3 above.

Igwe's failure to use sentences to illustrate the meanings of his entries makes some words opaque semantically. Frankly, members of this category appear to be ideophones. According to Igwe they can function attributively and predicatively which are characteristic of the syntactic behaviour of ideophones. They are not adjectives categorically. An application of the test for adjectives confirms that they are not adjectives.

Emenanjo (1978: 79-71) provides four diagnostic tests for the adjective

- (i) With the exception of **ajō**, ‘bad’ which always comes before the nominal it modifies, all the other four adjectives come after
- (ii) When used with nominals neither the adjectives nor the nominals undergo changes characteristic of the associative construction
- (iii) Adjectives must never be used after **-di** ‘have the qualities of, superfluous.....’
- (iv) Finally in the NP, the adjective is the nominal modifier that comes closer to the head noun of the NP.’

If we go by the above observations, Igwe’s examples are automatically disqualified as being adjectives since his putative adjectives must occur after **di** or before. If we try to apply test (i) we will have

- * **akwa achariri** or **achariri akwa**
- * **iwiriri ọkụkụ** or **ọkụkụ iwiriri**

His examples again have failed the test for inclusion into the adjectival category.

The best analysis is to claim that they are ideophones, as has been pointed out earlier, since they occur predicatively and attributively as Igwe himself observes (pp. xxxvi).

The other classes that are derived as nouns are treated in paragraph 3 above and it would therefore be unnecessarily repetitive discussing them here. For an example, his classes (iv) and (v) are replete with ideophones and ideophonic reduplications with frequent occurrence of interfixes such as

- (28) **owoghowo** roomy
- (29) **ogologo** tall and thin

7. ADVERBS

7.1 FREE-FORM ADVERBS

Igwe is the first linguist to claim that Igbo has many adverbs in ‘uniquely free form’. Because of the heavily dialectalized nature of his examples here which are not contextualized, it is not possible here to provide an objective assessment of the syntactic behaviour of the so-called free form adverbs. Verb-derived adverbs, however, appear to be more interesting.

7.2 ADVERBS DERIVED FROM VERBS

Igwe claims that adjectival forms derived through the morphological processes can also function as adverbs. The difference is that while the adjectives will occur attributively before or after the nouns they qualify, or predicatively after the verb **di**, the adverb must follow the verb form from which it is derived. His eight examples are unacceptable:

- (30) **fem ūfe** swift or sudden flight
- (31) **fe fem** fly swiftly or suddenly
- (32) **femfem ūfe** intermittent flight
- (33) **fe femfem** fly intermittently
- (34) **fufere ūfe** continuous or non-stop flight

- | | | |
|------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| (35) | fe fufere | fly non-stop or continuously |
| (36) | fufefe ũfe | continual flight, regular flight |
| (37) | fe fufefe | fly continually or regularly |

Ufe in (30) is an abstract noun modified by an ideophonic noun *fem*. The gloss itself confirm this. In other words, there is no verb in the phrase and no adverb. A comparison between (30) and (31) shows that the *fem* in (31) is performing an adverbial function (even though it is an ideophone) since **fe** is a verb. The gloss confirms this. A comparison between **femfem** in (32) and (33) shows that the ideophones perform adjectival function in (32) and an adverbial function in (33). The same observation stands for the pairs (34) and (35); (36) and (37). The derivational processes he discusses latter (p. xliii) are *mi!* sleading and his examples are all ideophones.

Pertinently earlier analysts who are cautious in their analysis are justified. Patricia Carrell (1970:3), as observed by Igwe, did not find any lexical category called 'adverb' in Igbo. Emenanjo (1978: 49) only found adverbial nouns, not adverbs, followed by Anagbogu (1995:51). The conclusion is that for now there are no 'free form adverb' as claimed by Igwe and the so-called verb-derived adverbs are ideophones.

8. IDEOPHONES

Igwe (p. xliv) observed that "ideophone" is a term used by linguists to categorise forms which cannot be described as verbs or nouns. He further states that this follows naturally from the fact that "Igbo has not got the categories of adjectives and adverbs". This is not quite true. It has been demonstrated above that a definite lexical category, the adjective, exists in Igbo grammar. He demonstrates that **pòtòpótó** which would otherwise be described as an ideophone is derived from two verbs

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| pò | cut something soft, succulent and thick |
| tò | lay down, put down, lie motionless or inert |

a combination of both **pò + tò** 'mean lie or be in a soft, wet thick and inert condition' The problem with the monosyllabic verbs is that the gloss of **pò** is extremely outlandish. I have had cause to discuss this with native speakers of the language who could neither accept the gloss nor even suggest a consistent meaning. But once **pòtòpótó** is mentioned, the idea of 'wet and muddy' is conjured in their minds. So **pòtòpótó** is definitely an ideophone. (cf. Emenanjo 1978: 50-51)

9. SUFFIXES

Igwe (p. xliv) discusses affixes under two categories: derivational and inflectional. Derivational suffixes are dismissed in two lines but he discussed a total of eight different groups of inflectional suffixes which were fully exemplified. He also listed a total of thirty-six lexical suffixes. In fact what he describes as lexical suffixes are what we, today, call extensional suffixes. It is in his treatment of inflectional and extensional suffixes that Igwe makes his most enduring contribution to the Igbo grammar in his dictionary.

10. PLURALITY IN NOMINALS

This is discussed in more detail here than in any other linguistic grammar of Igbo. Examples are drawn from a variety of dialects which include Onicha and Igbouzo (spoken in Delta State of Nigeria). The description is clear and concise.

11. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Igwe (1999) is the most comprehensive Igbo dictionary of quality to date. While his treatment of the major lexical categories is examined and found problematic, his discussion of suffixes, inflectional and extensional, is seen as his most enduring contribution to Igbo grammar.

The problems observed notwithstanding, the author should be congratulated on embarking on this most ambitious project all alone.

Linguists who may in future embark on writing dictionaries are encouraged to study the first part of this paper, which is the 'burden' of the lexicographer.

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