Globalization and Modernization on Igbo Language, Communication and Culture

By

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Abstract

Globalization has turned the world into a global village, whereby the contents, ideas, and so many other things are shared across countries, and information happening in one country. These contents shared across the globe make easier and enhance exchange of information and news of daily events, new ideas, peoples' heritage, languages, culture, and so on . However, such exchange of ideas or contents sometimes, negatively affect people's values, beliefs and cultural heritage, as people of developing countries unconsciously adopt foreign beliefs, languages, culture and communication pattern leading to language endangerment and extinction of their heritage, as in the case of the Igbo language and culture. Igbo language is a means of expression of Igbo culture, preserving and transmiting such culture from generation to generation. However, the Igbo language is one of the three major Nigerian languages has been listed by the UNESCO in 2012 as an endangered language. The study examines globalization and modernization, highlighting its positive and negative implications on Igbo language, communication and culture. The research adopts a library-based method, which essentially entails a review of extant literature as the basis for understanding the research issue and making necessary inferences. Finding reveals that globalization is a critical factor to the endangered state of Igbo language and culture. This study therefore, contributes in the promotion of Igbo cultural heritage by suggesting strategies for revitalization and preservation of Igbo language, communication and culture, which include among others, constant portrayal of Igbo language and culture in both local national and international media for adoption by Igbo indigenes at home and in diaspora; encouraging the Igbo language speaking in Igbo families, policy

formulation and implementation by Nigerian government to make major Nigerian languages compulsory in schools and at every level of education. It is believed that these recommendations, if effectively adopted and adapted, would help to prevent extinction of the Igbo language and culture.

Keywords: Endangered Language, Igbo Language, Communication, Culture, Globalization, Modernization.

Introduction

Culture is a way of life of a people. It is also, the belief system, custom and tradition, etiquette, art, food and eating habit, dress mode, etc, commonly accepted and practiced by a set of people in particular setting, locality or community. It refers to behaviour, values, shared ideas, and attitudes of people who are bound together by environment, language and location (Solo-Anaeto & Jacobs, 2015). The culture of a people comprises their mode of behaviour, language, communication pattern, dress pattern, religion, belief system, traditions and rites, economic systems, graphic arts and paintings, etc, which are acquired through observation and exposure to one's natural settings and surroundings. This definition is in line with the National Cultural Policy (1988) definition of culture as:

The totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment which gives order and meaning to their social, political, aesthetics and religious norms and modes of organization, thus distinguishing a people from their neighbours (p.5).

Language is a means for the expression of the experiences, heritage and cultural identity of a community or people. Human ideas, feelings, thoughts, interactions and reactions are expressed or communicated to others through language. The opinion of Umar (2018) supports this view when he stated that in any community, the importance of language for coherence and cohesion is universally acknowledged, together with its indispensable role as the only means of communicating with people.

Solo-Anaeto and Jacobs (2015) opine that 'culture and values are transmitted and kept alive from generation to generation through communication and

socialization',(p.40). Through this socialization or transmission of cultural heritage, people's culture is maintained through individual and media reportage of such people and their ways of life to people across other countries and cultures. Consequence upon that, every aspects of human socialization such as culture, religion, history and human existence have been expressed mainly through verbal means of communication.

The Igbo culture refers to socially transmitted patterns of behaviour that Igbo people are known for. Igbo language is one of the three main indigenous Nigerian languages, which has strong existence in Nigeria. Although, spoken by people from other ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Language is majorly spoken by indigenes in the Eastern part of Nigeria. But, a critical observation has shown that the culture and language are facing some challenges of endangerment and possibly extinction. Sequel to that, Ghosh and Guven (2006) regrettably noted that when a language is lost, the essence of living is challenged because language holds the lineage of people. Some factors responsible for this language challenge are identified by scholars as cultural openness and accessibility of the Igbo, gaps in intergenerational language transmission, the influence modern/foreign languages like English and pidgin Languages etc (Toni-Duruaku, 2012; Ekele, 2018; Abbu, 2019).

Cultural openness and accessibility help people to learn and adopt the cultural values of others. Because of the cultural exchange, there has been exchange of culture, a situation where one culture influences or incorporate another culture. In this case, one culture begins to adopt or borrow another culture, especially when the later is perceived to be superior and dominant. This is exactly with the case of western culture and African culture, where Africans have unconsciously embraced foreign or western education and cultural values, as a result of the universal concept of global village. Some of the cultures adopted from foreign culture include among others, language pattern, greeting pattern, behavioural patterns, dressing, marriage, religion, education, food, arts/crafts and music often times change the perception of Africans.

As a result of the increasing rate of globalization, it is believed that every country or nation should be parallel in developmental process with others across the

world, based on modern trends across the globe. Since the emergence of globalization, Nigerian nation andthe Igbo region in particular, have made concerted efforts to join the rest of the world in her drive for scientific, technological, economic and cultural advancement. One outstanding advantage of globalization to human existence is its ability to facilitate access to information and knowledge at a virtual or speedy rate. Besides, people have expressed worries that globalization leads to acculturation which poses danger to cultural and linguistic development of people across the world, especially the African continent and the race in particular.

The advent of modern civilization and modern education (by the western world), the Igbo region have embraced in several ways the new trend with the attendant danger of neglecting their own ways of life (Ahamefule & Okoye, 2014). This cultural interaction and exchange otherwise, known as cultural globalization or acculturation has the tendency to erode indigenous culture together with the language of its transmission. It is on this premise that this study sought to establish the effect of globalization and modernization on the Igbo language, communication and culture with suggestive way forward.

The concept of Globalization and Modernization

Globalization is a product of technological advancement in information and communication. According to McQuail (2005), technological and communication revolutions engender social revolutions. There is a cause and effect analysis between globalization and modernization brought about by introduction of new technology and the changes in society's way of thinking, feeling, or acting (Solo-Anaeto & Jacobs, 2015).

Globalization is an emerging "global culture", where people often consume similar goods and services across the globe and use a common language of business - English (Igboeche 2014). For Okunna and Omenugha (2012), globalization implies setting the pace in the interaction of cultures with consequence that local cultures are overwhelmed. Globalization is the process of bringing the world together as a common system either economically or socially. It could be said to be the movement towards modernization and bridging economic cultural and technological gaps. With the global village concept of

McLuhan (1962), different countries of the world have come to be identified by one form of culture or the other . In so doing, ideas, cultural values, norms and morals are swiftly transferred from one country to another. This interchange of ideas, technological innovations and cultural values across countries facilitates the developmental process and economy of the countries involved. Nevertheless, the disturbing issue is that this acculturation does not flow symmetrically, in that the western economy and culture have gradually outshine the African economy and culture. That notwithstanding, there is high dependence and reliance on information, ideas and innovations from the western world to the detriment of African cultural heritage.

Modernization has to do with the creation of new ideas, system or methods of doing things. It is the transformational trend occasioned by emergence of information and communication technologies and globalization.

The advent of Information and communication Technology (ICT), which has given rise to innovation, people across the world have found ways of getting better results with less work. A typical example is the fact that formal education and certification could be obtained from the western world through online technology by people from any part of the world. However, this transformation has taken its tolls on the lives of Africans, particularly the Igbo race.

From the communication pattern, most African parents hardly communicate to their children in their native languages, all in the name of embracing modern trend. Most Africans now prefer the dishes (noodles, pastas, soft drinks etc) and eating patterns of westerners like eating with cutleries instead of using bare hands to eat local dished like Ukwa, Apku, Ugba, Ofe Ede, ofe olugbo etc. Besides, the pattern of dressing and hairstyles of Africans and Igbos have been greatly influenced by modern or western styles. The usual native material or wears and native hair styles with which Africans and Igbos are known have been replaced with English suits and flamboyant hairstyles of different colours. More so, the culture of "ino odu ezi" (moonlight talks) by the Igbo race, through which the Igbo culture and tradition are passed down to younger generation have all phased out because of modern pattern of minding one's business without caring about one's

brother's welfare. These negative attitudes of cultural negligence are done in the bid to be modern and educated.

Igbo language and Culture: Endangered Specie

Nigeria as a nation has many of ethnic cultures, the Igbo culture could be said to be the customs and traditions, modes of eating and worshipping, attitudes and behaviours, dos and don'ts of the Igbo people. Therefore, Igbo culture is a product of interactions of the people that live in Igbo land, usually expressed through communication. Hieber (2012), Nzeaka and Ehondor (2021) note that there were about 20000 languages in the world around 8000 BC, which has declined to 6,909, and has continued to deteriorate at a speedy rate, due to the influence of world-leading languages such as English, European, Spanish and Chinese Mandarin. These foreign languages are gradually phasing out minority languages of the world due to social contact, globalization, business and the spread of the new media.

Showing concern on the endangered state of African language and culture due to foreign languages, Ndimele (2005) states :

> Of all world languages today, English has become the most attractive. On the Internet, information on major events and discoveries in science and technology is available in English. Everywhere in the world, people request to learn and speak English as the language of the new information age. The consequence is that English has become a predator language which is steadily consuming other tongues, particularly in the former colonies of Britain. It is reported that every 24 hours, at least one language dies somewhere in the world, and that two-thirds of these deaths occur in the African continent (p.67).

When it is noticed that a language is under risk of extinction, it poses a threat to the entire affected society because, their ways of life are endangered (Nzeaka & Ehondor, 2021). If a language communication is already dead, it implies that society has discontinued to live (p.26). hence, the loss of people's language such as Igbo language could result in the loss of their cultural or ethnic identity and their tradition and heritage. Finding of these scholars revealed that the endangered state

of Igbo language and culture is due to the failure in the transgenerational transmission of language (Nzeaka et al., (2021).

With the introduction of new media and innovation in arts and culture, native Igbo languages and cultures are gradually giving way to foreign or second languages, especially English, French and pidgin languages, thus threating the survival of the native languages. With great disappointment, Akujobi (2016) stressed that African continent with a projection of 400 million people and 2000 languages, has been outshined by English Language in the communication process, thus making this second language a lingua franca. African languages were effective means of communication in commerce and industry before the advent of colonialism. But, the unconscious embracing of colonial languages in social and academic institutions has denied the contribution of African languages to the world's academic system (Akujobi, 2016).

Supporting the above statement, Ohiri - Aniche (2014) attributes the extinction of Igbo language to negligence and abuse of the language by the speakers. This linguist also stressed that the greatest challenge of the language is inability of the adults to pass it down to the children in the family . The Ohiri - Aniche's statement corroborates the finding of Nezeaka et at (2021), which revealed that Igbo language is 'endangered', based on the fact that language is largely spoken only by the parents while only 10% of the children speak the language, and only 4% can write the Igbo language (p.39).

Also, finding by Babalobi (2020), reveals that a substantial 25% of children under the age of eleven could not speak any local Nigerian language. Stating the probable reason for language endangerment, Babalobi maintains that most parents from the formative years, forbid their children from speaking native language at home, as they see language as unimportant from social and economic positions.

Communication in Igboland: Past and Present Pattern

Communication is the means through which language and culture are expressed and passed down to younger generations. In the opinion of Nzeaka et al (2021), communication in a family is indispensable to raising the children in such family. This communication involves the transmission of culture, values, language, etc.

Hence, parents have the obligation of nursing their children into individuals with positive attitudes towards a general culture. Family communication transcends the exchange of words between family members, it incorporates components like facial expressions, body language, tone of speech and posture. Communication is a transgenerational transmission of how to live, speak and be a human being in family and community. Parents socialize their children to process information coming from outside the family. Nonetheless, styles adopted by parents in interacting with children may be a success or a hindering factor in family communication Nzeaka et al (2021).

Previously, religious beliefs, family values, how to prepare African dishes etc were communicated from elders to children through folktales, drama, moonlight talks and dance. Also, languages and cultural values of the Igbo are communicated to children and younger ones in Igbo dialect. But, this, no longer obtains Akujobi (2016) maintains that many educated families now speak English Language to their children to broaden the economic and social horizons of their children. Worst still, most schools and institutions in Eastern Nigeria prohibit pupils and students from communicating in the language . Expressing being disappointed in the way school owners and instructors in Igboland are relegating Igbo language and culture, Onwuka (2015) stresses that most institutions in the Igbo land use English Language as a means of teaching, and they inspire the students not to speak the Igbo Language. In most schools in Igbo land, it is disheartening to observe a situation where Igbo students put on English, Indian, Chinese, Yoruba or Hausa attire during their cultural day.

Nzeaka et al (2021) note that most movies with Igbo background are expressed in the English Language, and most media channels do not have Igbo programmes. They observed in Igboland that many religious organizations in Igbolandpreach to their congregation in English Language. Recently, preaching in most Pentecostal churches in Igboland is interpreted in English language thereby relegating the local dialect and promoting the second language.

Effects of globalization and modernization on Igbo language, communication and culture

The main purpose of globalization is to decrease the entire world to global village and communication has become the fulcrum around with the purpose revolves. Ohiagu (2010) asserts that the impact of new media or Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) on Nigerians has positive and negative implications. Inasmuch as these technologies provide a platform for global societies and cultures to meet and interact, especially with increased access to information at a very speedy rate, they also have the tendencies to erode local cultures, to the extent of threatening them into extinction. Johnson (2012) laments that "the explosion of new media realities and globalization are recognized as both an opportunity and a threat especially to African culture. This is based on the fact that new media technologies have formed new spaces and new contexts for the emerging new virtual and cyber communities where incorporation of different cultures of different nations take place.

Ahamefule and Okoye (2014) assert that the concept of globalization often creates the impression that the world is moving towards a precipice, whereby there is a rapid alteration and shift in ideas and people's way of life, culture and language. Hence, old and cherished values are outshined almost overnight. Ancient heritage is rendered obsolete; everything has a new appeal and complicatedly interrelated and bonded together in change (p.94). In recent times, ICTs, especially the internet is perceived as a threat to African culture as it is negatively influencing Africans, especially the younger ones with its much western culture contents, thus making them to adopt western culture to the detriment of their own language, culture and tradition.

The culture of Igbo people include regular town hall meetings, communal living, eating together from one plate by family members, greeting to elders in native dialect, receiving gifts with both hands by young ones, younger person not talking when elders are talking, moonlight talks and dance by men and women, folktales, decent dressing and covering of head by women, women are to be only seen and not heard have all been sacrificed on the altar of globalization and modernization. It could also be noted that Igbo language and communication have been relegated to the background in the global village era, based on the fact that foreign language,

especially English language has been universally accepted and adopted as the language of globalization and modernization. As Ahamefule and Okoye (2014 : 94) rightly observed "the global spread of English language has been facilitated by the Mass Media, Internet, satellite cable television, telecommunication facilities and other Information Communication Technology (ICT) facilities".

The acceptance and usage of English language poses almost all the countries all the world poses threat to the existing Igbo language, as Igbo speakers forcefully align themselves to this global language and their attitudes and behaviours are subtly influenced and patterned after the western world. This is evident in Igbo parents speaking English to their children at home, youths preferring to use English in communicating with their contemporaries. In schools and colleges today, textbooks and reference materials on various subjects are written in only English with little or none written in Igbo language even in the Igbo region of Nigeria. The most unfortunate is that no undergraduate of contemporary higher institutions chooses to study or to specialize in Igbo language, probably because, they think that Igbo language has nothing to contribute in the global community. Besides, music and movie industries are equally influenced by modernization, as observed in their use of English in their various productions. Even in Igbo movies, actors are seen using English language in passing some Igbo messages. No tangible effort is made towards translating the entire script to Igbo language. A close observation of music and movies released in recent times show a significant western influence as reflected in their settings, backgrounds, costumes and make-ups, tunes etc with a rapid tendency of globalization. This tendency does not encourage the preservation or continual existence of Igbo language and culture, rather it is a shift towards its extinction if not guarded against.

Ahamefule et al (2014) revealed in their findings that there is a subtle acculturation going on globally among different cultures, which the flow has not been favourable to the African cultures especially the Igbo. They observed that Igbo language and the Igbo culture are faced with imminent danger of language and cultural extinction if the trends continue unchecked. In line with this finding, Ani (2012) contends that the advent of the new media has adjusted the way Igbos communicate. Supporting this view on the encroachment of the new media on Igbo language due to globalization, Ya'u (2002), emphasized that globalization

and the convergence of media technologies have significantly adjusted the delivery of information.

The advent of western education caused most Igbo folks embraced western values and Christianity, as the western education later became a measure of high social status. Again, Wester language (English) and culture are now the main language of governance, education, communication, science and technology clearly to the neglect of the Igbo language and culture. Because of the global acceptance of English language, Igbo indigenes are fast learning and using it, as it is highly favoured in respect of social needs, communication and interaction in the global village. The yearning to identify with the universal language (English) has resulted in the subtle abandonment of the Igbo language in favour of this dominating global language. This endangerment to Igbo language could be attributed to threats posed by internal and external factors of globalization and modernization.

Strategies towards revitalizing, protecting and preserving Igbo language, communication and culture in the face of globalization and modernization

For Igbo language to be universally recognized, appreciated and restored, dedicated efforts should be made by Igbo indigenes (home and diaspora) towards projecting and practicing Igbo language and cultural values as well as handing it down to younger generation for its continual existence. However, the following ways are suggested for revitalizing and projecting Igbo language, communication and culture in the era of global village and modernization.

Constant media reportage and portrayal of Igbo language and culture: Mass media contents on Igbo culture such as dialects, tradition, ethics, mode of dressing, lifestyle, religion, arts, music, food and etiquette, etc should be constantly uploaded and transmitted by local, national and international media to enable citizens of other countries to know, understand and appreciate the different aspects of African cultures, especially the Igbo culture. With that, Igbo language and culture could become a public agenda or issue of important discourse by people across the world, thus, leading the continuation of the culture.

Archiving of Igbo dialects and cultural materials: Documenting different Igbo dialects and cultural materials in the media (local, national and international),

internet (social media) and library which are in permanent form could serve as good storehouse or archive for Igbo culture and tradition, hence enabling the preservation of such culture. Such Igbo cultural materials (videos, food, poems, literature, dance, drama, music, images) archived or documented in the media, internet and State and national libraries are always available and could be accessed at any time, even in years to come by Igbo people (home and diaspora) as well as other people across the world.

Parents should put more efforts to speak Igbo language in the family no matter the environment, as this is the only means of transferring the language to the subsequent generation. There should be conscious effort to guarantee the transgenerational transmission of the Igbo language despite the location or societal transformations.

Igbo scholars, including historians should try and translate some English literature to Igbo literature and write new textbooks in Igbo language as a way of encouraging and maintaining Igbo culture and language.

Training and sending of trained language instructors throughout the country. Language enthusiasts and graduates of Nigerian major languages should be given orientation and posted to communities in different LGAs of the 36 States in Nigeria to consciously teach Nigerian languages and ensure its constant usage in various localities.

There is need for a review of the national communication policy, creation of language policy and a declaration that the three major Nigerian languages (Igbo, Hausa and Yuruba) be added to the list of languages for national communication and be compulsorily taught in schools (nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary). This action will help in no small measure to check rate of language endangerment in Nigeria.

Igbo language should be adopted and permitted in Igboland to serve as the language of official communication, government, business, economy, science and technology, which prominent foreign language (English) used in the global village is serving. For examples, in the banking sectors located in Igbo land, a trained Igbo

language staff could be designated to carry out banking transactions in Igbo dialect for Igbo indigenes instead of sole reliance on English, which is foreign language. Again, government activities in Eastern region such as senate meeting, political dialogue and participation programmes, election campaigns, etc should be organized and conducted in Igbo language for the listening and learning pleasure of all Igbo people, especially children and youth.

Conclusion

This paper has comprehensively explored the effects that globalization and modernization have on Igbo language, communication and culture, using secondary data from library and internet. From the literature reviewed, it is discovered that globalization and modernization have affected negatively the language and cultural values of the Igbos. This is evident in the preference of foreign languages to indigenous languages, attitudes, foreign mode of dressing, preference of foreign foods to local delicacies etc which showed a huge influence of the western culture on African culture. Globalization and modernization, again, have brought with them great potential with increased access to information across the world at a very speedy rate, however, they also have the possibility of eroding local languages and cultures, to the extent of threatening them into extinction.

The result of the literature reviewed has revealed that global village process and innovation brought about by the emergence of technology have caused Africans, especially the Igbo race to adopt foreign languages, dressing, food and eating patterns to the detriment of their own language and ways of life. Igbo Language is an essential aspect of Igbo culture which is transmitted through communication. To protect and preserve the Igbo culture and heritage, the study recommends that concerted efforts should be made by parents to speak the native language to their children, teach them tradition and ensure that every member of the family uses native dialect as the common language of communication. There is also need to universally adopt Igbo language as the official language of communication and business transaction in the Igbo region, so that the Igbos will remain relevant in the globalization trajectory. Dr

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