

Migration; Its' Paradox to Igbo Language and Culture in Early 21st Century

¹Onuora, Ngozi Theresa, ²Obiakor, Ethel Ebere, ³Chinagorom, Longinus Chukwuemeka, ⁴Obayi, Joy Ifeadike

¹Department of Languages/Linguistics/Literary Studies/Theatre Art Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo

²School of General Studies Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education Owerri.

³School of General Studies University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

⁴Imo State University, Owerri.

Email: tessyblest@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The world has been described as a global village due to human migration. Migration can be defined as a platform of movement from an environment to another. The context can also be seen as the movement done through the modern means of communication such as smart phones and other electronic gadgets. Language and culture are not left out in this global migration as there are available means or mechanisms through which new ideas and information are mixed and exchanged. In other way, it can simply be defined as acculturation. This paper, therefore examines new method of communication in Igbo land and some cultural values adopted by Igbo people as a result of

migration in early 21st century and their impacts. The paper also assesses the influence of acculturation on Igbo children and the society at large including the position and future of Igbo language and culture at the face of this 21st century. Careful examination of these contexts reveals some gaps on Igbo language and cultural value system. It is observed that Igbo language is highly endangered and most of the cultural values are acculturated. Primary and secondary sources such as attending some „igba-nkwu“ Igbo traditional marriage ceremonies, textbooks and journals are used for data collection and analysis.

Keywords: Migration, acculturation, 21st century, Igbo language and culture.

INTRODUCTION

Migration is the movement from one territory to another. Migration is not exclusive to human beings alone because animals migrate, information migrate so also language and culture migrate. Human migration is the movement by the people from one place to another with the aim of settling permanently in the new location. Before migration takes place, the movement is sometimes over-long distances from one country to another. Though it is believed that sometimes there could be an internal migration which could be seen when people migrate as individuals in family units or in large groups to another place within a country. In other way, migration taking place within a country is described as refugee such as the internally displaced people

(IDP) camp in Maiduguri Nigeria. Any temporary movement of people from one place to another either for political, religious or nomadic movements are not regarded as migrations, hence there is no intention of settling in the new place because the movement is seasonal. Other causes for internal migration are for agricultural purpose and shift of population into cities known as urbanization. This study tends to limit the scope to international migration. There are uncountable reasons why immigrants choose to migrate to another country. Firstly, people migrate for economic purposes. Most migrants are generally from impoverished developing countries such as Nigerian people. The next reason is to search for food, sex, and

security outside their usual habitation. [1] is of the view that towns and cities are a creation of human struggle to obtain food, sex, and security. He further avers that to produce food, security and reproduction, human beings must, out of necessity, move out of their usual, habitation and enter into indispensable social relationships that are cooperative or antagonistic.

More improved technology further conditioned peoples' interest to interact together to cause or bring about migration and higher concentration of individuals into development countries or cities and social services are provided to meet those basic needs for human survival and pleasure. For [2], In

information technology (IT), migration is the process of moving from one operating environment to another operating environment that is, in most cases, thought to become better one. Migration can involve upgrading to new hardware, new software or both. Looking at the definition, in Igbo society before 21st century, there was not anything like cell phones that could be taken around for communication from place to place. The upgrading from home table phone led to a new software known as global system of mobile communication (GSM). Here, the migration process includes making sure the new environment's features are exploited, old settings do not require and current applications continue to work.

METHODOLOGY

The data collection were focused on three major sources; the library method which gave the researcher the insight where many scholars write copiously on migration, language, culture, and acculturation. Personal observations involved attending of some traditional marriage ceremonies and internet browsing where some researchers share their views online. The data were analyzed using postcolonial criticism theory because of its involvement in discussions about experiences in migration, slavery, suppression, resistance etcetra. The postcolonial theory has been produced in all societies into which the imperial forces of Europeans have intruded [3].

Igbo Language under Distress

Language is the highest aspect of culture that unites people together. It is a means by which people communicate to each other. The communication could either be in form of oral or signs. [4] "defines a language as a purely human and non-instructive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols". It is through language, that people living in a social bound area are able to voice out their ideas, communication, express their feelings both with musical instruments and by dramas. Language is what people in an

area socially share together. Language is a socially acceptable code or conventional system for delivering concepts. Nothing can unite or bind any society together without language. Language is the highest tool for communication between members of the public in the form of sound produced by humans. Human beings own language and not animals. Language is a series of sound produced by means of conscious human beings [5]. Most scholars see language as a means of human communication, socially acceptable symbols, tools for shaping the mind and influencing others and also a group of words put together to form speech.

Igbo language is one of three major languages spoken in Nigeria. The Igbo land is a common linguistic and cultural region in southern Nigeria that is characterized by a high degree of cultural and linguistic diversity [6]. The linguistic dominant in Igbo land led to the development of a standard Igbo to help unify the speakers of the different dialects of Igbo language. Igbo language is classified as one of the languages-of Benue- Congo, classified as sub-families of the Niger-Congo [7]. Igbo language suffered heavy controversial issues before Onwụ orthography in the year 1961. Onwụ committee resolved the problems that arose from linguistic

diversity and came out with standard Igbo language.

Despite all the efforts by Onwu committee, the 21st century migration which could not only be seen as movement of people from one place to another but also involve upgrading to new hard wares, new soft ware's or both are gradually putting Igbo language into danger. It is true that after colonization, Nigeria adopted English language as a lingua franca but among more than five hundred languages and ethnic groups in Nigeria, no other tribes have allowed the implantation of English language to eat up their ethnic language like Igbo people. These days, many couples don't allow their communication to be done in Igbo language both in their various homes and outside. They penalize their children

anytime they communicate in Igbo language. They think that communication in Igbo language is archaic way of life. It is observed that the Igbo people are no longer proud of their language and it is the reasons 78% of the people living in Abakaliki, Ebonyi state in Igbo land are no longer communicating to their children with Igbo language.

FBI's can help reveal or give a glimpse to the cultural practice of the people. These days the people have migrated afar off their language to the extent of converting Igbo names to western ways of pronunciation. This ugly phenomenon of converting to Whiteman's ways of life has affected the people to the extent of westernizing their Igbo names forgetting that they have semantically deviated. See table (a) bellow.

IGBO NAMES	M E A N I N G	CONVERTED NAMES	CONTEMPORARY MEANING
I k e c h u k w u	God's power	I y k e	Meaningless
C h i b i k e m	God is my strength	C h i b y k e	Meaningless
O n y e b u c h i	Who is God?	B u c h i i	Meaningless
N n e k a	Mother is superior	N i k k y	Name of dog in Europe
C h i d i m m a	God is good	M m a	B e a u t y
Q b u n i k e c h u k w u	From God's power	B u n y k e	Meaningless
E z i n n e m	My good mother	Z i n n y	Meaningless
S o l u m t o c h u k w u	Praise God with me	S o m m y	Meaningless
O s i n a k a c h u k w u	It comes from God's hand	S n a c h i	Meaningless
A z u b i k e m	My people are my strength	Z u b b y	Meaningless
C h i z a r a m e k p e r e	God has answered my prayer	Z a r a	Arabic flower given to the daughter of Princess
C h i o m a	Beautiful God	C h i m e	A musical instrument
O b i n n a	Father's heart	O b a i n o	Meaningless
M m a d u a b u c h i	Man is not God	B u c h i	Meaningless
M a k u o c h u k w u	Embrace God	M i k k y	Meaningless

Table (a)

On the other side of the coin, it is seen and analyzed that some Igbo people totally removed their surnames. They answer their father's English names just to make sure the trace of Igbo language is not found on their names so as to be fully westernized. See table (b) bellow:

FATHER'S SECOND NAME	S E C O N D N A M E	F U L L N A M E
A u g u s t i n e	E m m a n u e l	Augustine Emmanuel
J o s e p h	A n g e l a	Joseph Angela
A n t h o n y	A n t h o n y	Anthony Anthony
S u n d a y	E u c h e r i a	Sunday Eucheria
J a m e s	A n g e l a	James Angela
C h r i s t i a n	C h r i s t i a n a	Christian Christiana
A m b r o s e	R o s a l i n e	Ambrose Rosaline
G e r a l d	A n a s t a s i a	Gerald Anastasia
B e r n a r d	M a r g r e t	Bernard Margret

Table (b)

The people did not know that deviating from their ancestral names known as their original names and surnames are what is also known as using wrong passwords by the ancestors to connect or link to their children here on earth. It is because the Igbo believe that the ancestors are also the saints that always look into the affairs of their generations on earth.

Concept Of Culture

As migration takes place, culture must not be left behind. According to [9] the word culture is derived from the German word "kultur" which means "civilization". The concept of culture is very essential in our day to day life in all society. It is so because when a new baby is born, the brain is known as a tabular raiser which means empty and helpless organism who needs assistance from the older members of the family for survival. The infant will learn the skills, the way of life and the patterns of behavior of members of the society into which it is born [10]. To expand this definition, it means that the skills to suck the breast milk and to perform other social activities, give an indication that the infant is adapting to the cultural pattern of that particular family. In a clear study of people with their culture, [11] state that the definition of culture as the whole way of life of some people was proposed by E.B. Tylor when scientific anthropology was in its infancy. He wrote, "Culture is the complex whole which include knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by a man as a member of society. The implication of Tylor's definition is that culture outlives each generation if properly

guided. It does not die as people die. It is transferrable, from one generation to the next generation but if well preserved.

When the culture of a people is not properly guided, the result is acculturation. Encyclopedia meaning of acculturation is "the process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between cultural groups and members". Migration is a sharp tool that brings the contact between people from diverse cultural background. It is obvious that after the contact, changes in cultural pattern are clearly seen with one or both cultures. This is why [12] puts that "To Igbo society, they came in contact with the Europeans who influenced the Igbo people to adopt changes in their own social systems in relative to western ideas, belief, style of cloth, hair pattern along with other uncountable aspects". Since migration, for the pursuit of greener pasture, westernization or quest to put the world into our palm according to Mark Zukerberg, Igbo society started shifting their cultural patterns which could be seen as the *Omenala na odinalandi Igbo* to take root as a society that became acculturated to western customs and characters.

Migration versus Igbo Communalism

Individualism is not acceptable to man and nature surrounding him. It is uncultured to man's constitution. Biblical quotation puts that God has endowed man with companionship. In Gen 2, 18: the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him". Even Aristotle describes man as "enssocialis". He

believes that anybody who cannot live with other is either a beast or a brute. [13] captures the African sense of communication as intrinsic to the Africans when he posits it as: "... a way of life emphatically centered upon human interests and values; a mode of living evidently characterized by empathy and by consideration and compassion for human beings". The Igbo people being part of Africa are highly involved in communal living, because in Igbo culture no one does it alone. It is believed that *a nyuko mamiri oru, o gboq ufufu; gidigidi bu ugwu eze nakwa, igwebu ike*. For [14] this thought structure is evidenced in the Igbo man's sense of community, human

That was why Okonkwo had been chosen by nine villages to carry a message of war to their enemies unless they agreed to give up a young man and a virgin to atone for the murder of Udo's wife. The fear, their enemies had for Umuofia make them treat Okonkwo like a King and brought him a virgin who was given to Udo as wife, and lad Ikemefuna.

The Igbo people were known for the spirit of togetherness. This spirit, normally brings the community together, which unites all people as brothers and the welfare of every individual becomes the direct concern of everybody in the community. But these days, precisely in the 21st century, the spirit of individualism has penetrated and acculturated the people. The Igbo people, under the pretence of modernization have become engrossed with the European individualism and so forgotten their cultural values. The people's general slang in the contemporary Igbo society runs thus: "Is it your business "? Everybody should mind his/her own business.

Media Technologies versus Igbo Socio-Culture

The migration of new media technologies like smart phones, digital computers and televisions have become an effective channels of socio-cultural change. [16] opines that the contact between microelectronics, communication and computing technologies have given rise to new information systems, which have the ability to manipulate information rapidly in a number of ways and deliver such

relations, hospitality, time, authority and respect for the elders and even in her religious practices.

Communalism and community spirit is a very powerful cultural value among the Igbo people before migration took its tool to the people. Before the effect of migration which brings in acculturation, no individual is alone. Before the 21st century to be précised, if any Igbo person is happy, you are also happy with the people around you. If you cry, the people around you cry also with you. In fact, the identity of Igbo people is *Onye aghana nwanne ya*. This statement is portrayed in [15].

information at an incredible speed to global audience. The influences of these new technologies have given rise to the retirement of the Igbo socio-cultural activities in so many angles. Changes in both audio and visual communication technologies have brought new ideas and changes to Igbo socio-cultural life. According to [17], however amongst all the age-groups and classes of human beings that appeared to be affected by the wind of change blown by the new media, the Igbo youth seems to be more prone than other sets or class of human beings. The recent migrations in advanced communication technologies have seriously affected Igbo culture.

Ironically, some youths who really say they have believed on their socio-cultural activities do celebrate the traditional marriage ceremonies with so called *asoebi* which is a Yoruba borrowed culture. Though, it is now well acceptable in Igbo culture. This is because, some African Culture harmonize with each other. In this 21st century, the wearing of *asoebi* clothes have become rampant to the extent of ladies wearing trousers and shirts as their mode of dressing in Igbo traditional marriage ceremonies.

<http://www.inosr.net/inosr-arts-and-humanities/>

Onuora *et al*

INOSR ARTS AND HUMANITIES 5(1): 81-89, 2019.

Observing all these new trends in Igbo society, one begins to look at [10] who states that the relationship between society and culture is inseparable. Analyzing the above view, the Igbo peoples' case is quite different because,

the people are easily influenced with other people's culture and could separate immediately from their identity. Two pictures bellow are the typical proof.



Igbo traditional marriage ceremony on real Igbo asoebi attires in Enugu state, Igbo land.



Igbo traditional marriage ceremony on Western pattern of asoebi in Enugu state, Igbo land.

Though, [6] asserts that information technology (IT), migrates from one operating environment that in most cases the thought to become better arose. In this case, the analyses shows that the diversion of Igbo socio-cultural life to westernized method is not becoming better but worse. Looking at the above *asoebi* pictures, one has to observe that Igbo people adopting western culture in

RECOMMENDATION

Till the end of this planet earth, *Ndi Igbo* will never claim to be of the same lineage with the white people. They will forever have black pigment with their unique cultural heritage; therefore parents should first of all stop denying their

socio-cultural activities such as traditional marriage ceremony does not turn the people looks into that of White men. It rather places the embargo of ignorance on them. Moreover, it makes them look too awkward because they neither belong to Igbo cultural outlook nor the Whiteman's full culture.

children from speaking their mother tongue known as Igbo language to the detriment of considering English language. Mother tongue is the major cultural identity that should be transferred to every child from generation

to generation. All contemporary Igbo parents ought to realize that there is no way a child should live in Igbo society, participate in village meetings, *umunna* and *umuada* meeting with foreign language. Males among them must pray over kolanuts in one occasion or their likes, upholding the spirit and the dynamics of “onye *aghana nwanne ya*” and “*Igwebuike*” which were inherent from our forefathers. Briefly put, *Ndiigbo* should stop deceiving themselves hanging on to those superficial mental constructs that are inimical to their God-

given autochthonous values. Again the spirit of adventuring cannot in its entirety be said to be negated, however, caution must be applied in order to see, judge and act adequately and appropriately. *Ndiigbo* should consider migration as an essential human phenomenon, more importantly when it appears inevitable, but not as a merely animalistic expression of the instinct of quid novo? It is proper to consider the pro's and con's of every human advancement, before daring into an unnecessary platform [4]

REFERENCES

1. Achebe, C. (1984). *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann Education Books.
2. Ani, K.J. (2012). “Socio- Cultural Influence of the News Media Technologies on Igbo Youths: A Neo- Imperial Analysis”. *International Journal of Igbo, African and Asia Studies, NAU, Awka*.
3. Aschraft; Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (1989). *Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*. Retrieved 21, 2017.
4. Chinagorom, L.C.(2010). "Linguistic Isomorphism and Patterns of Migration and Settlement among the Igbo: The Nsuka and Owere Dialect Clusters Example " A Monograph, Department of Linguistics/Igbo and Other Nigerian Languages, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
5. Ejeonu, I. O. (2016). “Culture and Festive performances as catalyst for preserving African Values and Enculturation: Owerri Festival as Paradigm”. *Journal of Humanities and African Values*.
6. Idyorough. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hum>.
7. Ifemesie, C. (1979). *Traditional Human Living among the Igbo*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publisher.
8. Isichei, E. (1976). *A history of Igbo people*. London: Macmillan Press.
9. Mcquail, D.(1974). *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*. 3rd Ed. London: Sage Publications.
10. Nnajietho, C. (2011). *An Introduction to Society of Education*. Owerri: CelBez Pub.
11. Nsolibe, O. T. (2012). “Uzo A ga - esiwulite Asusu Igbo na Urudin'ikwalite Asusu Igbo”. *The Ideal Man*. Awka: Apple Book Pub.
12. Nwozuzu, G.I. (2017). *Dialects of Igbo Language*. Nsukka: MEKYNO Computer Ventures.
13. Obielosi, D. (2016). “Exegetical Study of Matt.18:20 and Application to African Ujamaa Aspiration: A Re-enactment of Igbo Communalism”. *Journal of Humanities and African Values, Faculty of Arts, NAU, Awka*.
14. Onuora, N.T.; Obiako, E.E. & Nnebedum, T.N. (2017). “Dialectal Variation: A Problem in Building Innovative Ideas into Cultural Agriculture in Some Igbo Communities”. *Conference Paper Presented at ISA .Owerri: Nigeria*.
15. Peoples, J. & Bailey, O.(1991). *Humanity: An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*. New York: West Pub. Comp.
16. Rouse, M. (2016). <http://searchcio.techtarget.com/defi>.
17. Santoso, (1990). *The Role Analysis of Language in the Philosophy of Language Development*. New York: Indonesian Studio Press.

<http://www.inosr.net/inosr-arts-and-humanities/>

Onuora *et al*

INOSR ARTS AND HUMANITIES 5(1): 81-89, 2019.

18. Sapir, E. (1967). "The Southern Paiut Language". *Proceeding of American Academy of Arts and Sciences*.