

**REVISITING TRANSLATION EFFORTS OF IGBO COVID-19
TERMS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE PANDEMIC
AND POST-PANDEMIC ERA**

By

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Abstract

The paper examines the ongoing efforts at developing appropriate words and terms, for the Covid-19 in the Igbo language to enhance awareness and effective communications for new concepts and realities. Climate change and other ecological nuances such as the Covid-19 pandemic have posed a lot of communication challenges, especially for the indigenous languages. The paper adopts the descriptive survey and action research to examine the perceived gap in the Igbo terms and terminologies, for the covid-19 pandemic and the continuous response of linguists and translators; to the nouveau communicative situation orchestrated by it. Discussions arising from the paper will motivate and ignite researchers' interest for more studies in the area of Igbo language adjusting to novel realities, as a result of the worldwide covid-19 pandemic. Preliminary findings reveal that there are a lot of responses in developing Igbo terms for covid-19 and disease issues. There is the need for more concerted effort by Igbo scholars and linguists to respond to developmental language efforts, to help Igbo grapple with pandemic, and be enlightened especially for the rural dwellers and masses; who do not speak other languages than Igbo. The paper will give further motivation for the Covid-19 awareness and enlightenment campaign among the Igbo speaking populace, in Nigeria and beyond. The paper has some implications for the health of Nigerian citizens, it is expected that the government through relevant

agencies will sponsor provision of Igbo booklets for the health of the Igbo speakers.

Keywords: Covid-19, Igbo translation, environmental awareness in Igbo, pandemic communication

Introduction

Significant linguistic gaps exist in African languages, including Igbo, particularly in relation to scientific and technological terminology. (earlier version of this paper was presented at the First International Virtual conference of the Nigerian Ecolinguistics Association of Nigeria, see Ahamefula (2020) Besides, languages like Igbo are everyday faced with the challenge of meeting up with novel realities in the expanding world of scientific and technological explosion. The Covid-19 pandemic challenge is one of them. The scenario is aptly captured in the words of Ahiazunwa (2012:129):

In the present world of techno-scientific and information explosion, languages, especially developing ones such as Igbo, are struggling to live up to the demand to express the new realities; introduced into their culture.

From the foregoing, the Igbo language experts are expected to brace up to development capacities for using the Igbo language to address issues in every sector of life, and in every profession. Moreover, there have been calls and proposals for mother tongue education and literacy, though not fully implemented; at present Nigeria. The full implementation of policies and proposals towards mother tongue education in Nigeria, may be due to non development of capacities for teaching in mother tongues, or due to the fact that government policies made in this direction lack, impetus.

Recently, the National Universities Commission (NUC) of Nigeria gave directives through the Academic planning units of Nigerian universities including the University of Nigeria (UNN), to develop courses that will handle new realities being faced by the world, in the area of climatic change adaptation. If such policies are not backed up properly and if scholars in this case, Igbo scholars fail to respond appropriately by carrying out

terminological researches, and develop terms in this field; the proposal may never see the light of the day. Iwuchukwu & Oji (2005) attest to, the capacity of indigenous Nigerian languages to be used for pedagogical purposes; and their ability to accommodate novel scientific and technological advancements. Iwuchukwu & Oji (2005:1) research on translating Integrated Science lesson into Igbo, further nullifies claims of some scholars including Ajunwa (1991) that “it is almost impossible to translate certain scientific and technical terms into most African languages; with a reasonable degree of accuracy.” Moreover, such erroneous views could no longer hold water with coming on board of such works as Mbah, Mbah, Ikeokwu, Okeke, Nweze, Ugwuona, Akaeze, Onu, Eze, Prezi, & Odii (2013), where most Linguistics and Literary terms were successfully rendered in Igbo. Besides, in the past, several works have researched on translating terminologies into Igbo, as well as using Igbo to teach such subjects, both at secondary and primary levels. Such works include Eke & Ugoji (1999), Oli, Nwaozuzu & Mbah (2013), Iwuchukwu & Oji (2005, 2005b), Ikonne & Ohaike (2004), Ahiazunwa (2012), Okeogu (2012), Ianna (2005), Okeke (2005), Ijioma (2005). Iwuchukwu & Ugoji (2005, 2005b) show the promise of translating basic sciences into Igbo including Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Integrated Science, Mathematics, and also using the Igbo language to teach them.

Methodology

The main thrust of this paper is to contribute to the ongoing research for Igbo terms for Covid-19, various techniques and methods of translations were adopted. The study randomly selected terms for Covid-19 to further contribute to terminological development. This research is ongoing and aligns with action research.

Translating Covid-19 terms

In the translations of these terms for Covid-19, the practical approach to translation is mainly adopted following after Iwuchukwu & Oji (2005). In what follows, Iwuchukwu & Oji (2005:58-59), give a vivid insight into the practical approach to translation:

Translation theorists and practitioners have always been in disagreement over literal vs free translation with emphasis on form vs content. The practical approach used here ... is our

own term, to explain the same approach adopted by Margaret Okon and Paulinus Noah (2004:9); in their translation project. For them, based on data available (practical evidence), neither a highly literal kind of translation, nor an excessively free translation, can be called a translation in the usual sense of the term. We share their opinion that, while remaining faithful in the Source Language (SL) the translator may exercise a bit of freedom in rendering his text in the Receptor Language (RL), as a matter of style, since no harm is done to the substance. Though their postulation is centered majorly on bible translation, it tends to be true, even in technical translation. In fact, it is the inability to adjust to this approach by Igbo language translators, that has locked the Igbo metalanguage into an intractable structural controversy. Our opinion is that scientific translation into our indigenous languages should be more realistic, than idealistic. A very rigid adherence to Dolet's principles in translating technical terms from a source language with high technological history, to a Receptor Language with little or no technology background; will definitely be problematic.

Iwuchukwu & Oji (2005) note that their practical approach to translation depends on the use of words of nature, and accuracy; and recommends it for technical translations. They also adopted loaning words, created new ones, used existing Igbo metalanguage and also indigenized some, but did not fail to be sensitive to phonological conditioning; as accepted by the Igbo language. This paper will adopt the foregoing principles and techniques. Besides, Iwuchukwu & Oji (2005:59), refers to Emenanjo (2005:20) term, "Peculiar Genius" of the Igbo language, noting the verbose power of Igbo in expressing meanings and concepts freely; without any inhibition. They also note that Emenanjo asserts the descriptive prowess of the Igbo language, which manifests in certain coinages and loan translations, and reflects in the lengthy nature of some. Hence, Iwuchukwu & Oji (2005:59), from the foregoing, assert that this "does not make translation into Igbo almost impossible".

ENGLISH	IGBO TRANSLATION
Covid-19	Kovid- Iri na Itoolu
Corona	Koro, korona

Virus	Vaiṛṣ, nje vaiṛṣ
Corona	virus koronavaiṛṣ
Virus with antenna	vaiṛṣ nwere mpi
Infectious disease	ṛja na-eḡe eḡe
Transmission	Ibufe
Common cold	Oyi
Flu	azuzu
Respiratory disease	ṛja gbasara iku ume
Corona virus is contagious	nje korona na-eḡe eḡe
Covid-19 disease	ṛja Kovid-iri na itoolu
Corona disease symptoms	mgbaama ṛja korona
Sore throat	akpṛi ntachi
Fever	ahụ oku
Shortness of breath	ume oku
Bronchitis	ukwara ntuko
No symptoms	enweghi mgbaama
Lack of symptoms	enweghi mgbaama Danger ihe egwu
Kidney	akuru
Diabetes	ṛja shuga
High Blood pressure	obara mgbali elu
Isolation centre	ogbe nnopuiche
Self-isolation	nnopuiche keonwe
Quarantine	itinye n'ṛṇṇṇ nwezuga iḡe

Quarantine centre	ogbe ọ̀nọ̀dụ́ nwezuga iche
Alcohol disinfectant	mmiri mgbochi nje nke alkọ̀họ̀l
Preventive measures	ụkpụrụ nchekwa
Hydroalcoholic solution	mmiri haịdroalkọ̀họ̀likị
Face mask/nose mask	okpu imi
Face shield	mkpuchi ihu
Vaccine	Ọgwụ mgbochi Ọrịa
Moderna vaccine	Ọgwụ mgbochi Ọrịa Modena
AstraZeneca vaccine	Ọgwụ mgbochi Ọrịa Astrazeneka
Booster vaccine	mmeju Ọgwụ mgbochi Ọrịa
Distance	Oteeaka
2 metres	mita abụọ/mgbasaaka abụọ
Jab	ịgba Ọgwụ mgbochi Ọrịa
Shot	ịgba otuonụ Ọgwụ mgbochi Ọrịa

Conclusion

In line with the Peculiar Genius hypothesis as promoted by Emenanjo (2005), there is hardly any term that cannot be translated into Igbo, using its descriptive power and freedom of expression.

The paper, has adopted the practical approach which allows for free expression in translation of source language (English) terms into Igbo. The study dwelt on bridging terminology gaps as result of new concepts and advancing in the society such as the Covid-19 pandemic and it is believed that further studies will build on the present study, as new terms come in the area under study.

Recommendations

The paper calls for a concerted and sustained effort towards bracing up to the challenges of novel realities by linguists and translators, as regards terminologies; especially in the indigenous languages.

Relevant governmental agencies and NGOs should come in to train and collaborate with researchers and translators, to develop terms that will gain currency among the indigenous people; through community information dissemination. This will help avert dangers, especially for health-related realities.

The paper also calls for capacity building towards the use of the Igbo language, in all aspects of life; of the indigenous people.

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