Promoting the use of the Igbo language among the Igbo people in Nigeria and in the diaspora

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Abstract

Nobody promotes what he does not possess or what he knows little about. Promoting a product implies that the product is in the custody of its promoter or that details of the product are well-known to its promoter. The Igbo language however is alien to the majority of Igbo youths especially the urban dwellers who form part of the highly placed civil servants and who may be privileged to interact with members of the international community. The objective of this paper therefore is to investigate ways of redirecting the negative attitude of the Igbo people towards their language in order to be well equipped to promote it among themselves and the international community. Discussions and awareness campaigns were carried out at different levels with different classes of Igbo people (youths as well as the elderly), in order to find out the reasons for this aversion to their language. It was observed that their attitudes are embedded in some socio-political and economic factors. The paper therefore highlights these factors and then suggests ways of boosting the Igbo language among the Igbo at home and in the diaspora.

1.0 Introduction

Igbo Language is one of the three main Nigerian Languages (the others being Hausa and Yoruba). Of the three, Igbo is the most neglected by its speakers. The majority of the native speakers of the language are located in the South Eastern States of Nigeria namely: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo while the minority speakers reside in some parts of Delta and Rivers States. Igbo has an estimated population of about twenty five million speakers. It is dialectically highly diversified. Nwadike (1981: 22) discussing the multiplicity of the Igbo dialects grouped them into clusters and remarked that all the dialects in a given cluster are not similar in all respects but that they share degrees of intercomprehensibility while grammatical, lexical and phonological differences exist among them.

The Igbo Language has received a lot of attention of linguists, promoters of the language and some other agencies like: Society for Promoting Igbo Language and Culture (SPILC) now replaced by the Igbo Studies Association (ISA), the Nigerian Educational and Development Council (NERDC) and the Igbo Standardization Committee (ISC). These bodies have achieved a lot towards Igbo lexical enrichment through the planned metalanguage projects. Emenanjo (1989:222) affirms that the projects of these agencies have brought in not fewer than 20,000 words to modern lexicon of Standard Igbo (S.I).The questions that should be asked are:

i) Where are these words stored and who makes use of them? Where does a learner/user of Igbo find them?

ii) Why would anyone want to learn Igbo? Is it for its technology, tourism or medicine?

Interest in a language will naturally develop on its own if one sees the need to learn the language. For instance, the English Language was easily marketed because of British Colonial influence, educational system and technological advancement. In a similar manner, the Chinese language is being marketed because of China's growing influence in the areas of technology, medicine etc. Equally Spanish is very influential due to Tourism.

The aim of this paper therefore is to identify ways of creating awareness to the Igbo community both in Nigeria and the International community of the huge treasure/ resources in stock in developing the language. Candid efforts have been made and are still being made by individuals, groups and agencies towards the revitalisation and development of Igbo language and culture and spreading it here in Nigeria and in the Diaspora. The work will be in two parts: the first examines the factors militating against the spread of the Igbo Language in Nigeria and abroad and the other focuses on the ways of appropriating the language by the Igbo so as to be able to market it to the outside world.

2.0 Factors militating against the spread and popular use of the Igbo language

This section of the paper deals with the factors militating against the popular use and spread of the Igbo language among the Igbo native speakers themselves in everyday life. We decided to probe these factors because they are the major problems facing the language. There are of course many other problems facing the language but we count the above as primary because Charity, they say, begins at home. If the Igbo do not have love for their language and its development, how can an outsider who does not know anything about the language show interest or want to speak it? It is only when one cherishes and shows that what he/she has is precious that others will want to possess or be share-holders of such a precious possession. This paper classifies the factors militating against the development and popular use of the Igbo language under the following headings:

a. Socio-political factors
b. Economic factors
c. Standardization factors

2.1 **Socio-political factors**

The major issues to be discussed here are:
-effects of the Nigerian civil war and the attitude of the Igbo towards their language.
-language policy in the Nigerian education system

2.1.1 **Effects of the Nigerian civil war and the attitude of the Igbo towards their language**

The civil war has been identified as one of the factors militating against the development of the Igbo language. Onumajuru (1998:82) observes that after the civil war (1967-1970), the Igbo who used to be very free with and proud of their language jettisoned the language in a bid to get re-integrated economically, politically and socially to the Nigerian system. This problem of re-integration as remarked by Onumajuru haunted the Igbo immediately after the war and is unfortunately still haunting them today. He maintains that in Federal Government ministries and even in State establishments, the average educated Igbo (especially the urban dwellers, university milieus) hides his/her identity and plays down on anything Igbo, especially the use of the Igbo language where other non-Igbo are present for fear that the use of the language would expose his/her cultural identity and earn him disfavour from his/her ‘’superior’’ compatriots from other tribal groups. This attitude among the Igbo which has not changed much is a clear case of the psychology of a defeated people, sequel to their loss of the Nigeria/Biafra war (1965-1970).They always prefer the English language because it gives them neutral cover and security.

In the families of academics, civil servants and nouveaux rich Igbo, the language of interaction among members is mostly English, thereby alienating not only themselves but also their children and wards from the language. The situation resembles Munzali’s prediction about Hausa language as recorded in Kuju

(1999:51) where he states inter-alia that "…languages which have a restricted currency … are going to be weakened to extinction''. For instance, in the University Community here in Port Harcourt (personal experience), more than eighty per cent of the staff children of Igbo origin neither understand nor speak Igbo. Very few of them can tell you that they understand but cannot speak. These are children who were born and nurtured here in Nigeria and both parents are Igbo.

An interesting but embarrassing thing about the situation is that even the parents (Igbo elders) cannot sustain a conversation in Igbo without code-mixing and switching between English and Igbo. Dawulung (1999:35) describes it as laziness and ignorance for someone to either speak his/her native language with English accent or a concoction of English and the native language. This is the actual linguistic situation among the Igbo in the University of Port Harcourt which I believe may not be different in other similar institutions. In the Igbo native/local communities (in the villages), the situation is not very different. Semi-illiterate parents will prefer their children to speak at least pidgin but not Igbo since they themselves cannot speak good English to them. This is rife in cosmopolitan cities and townships such as Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt etc. The question then is: now that the young generation of the Igbo neither understand nor speak the Igbo language, who then will market the language to the local community first of all, before marketing it to the international community? Can one market a product/commodity that one does not possess?

Another attitude similar to the above is the recent trend in distorting Igbo names. An authentic Igbo person knows that an Igbo name is a story/history (Mbonu 2010: 70) and any indigenous Igbo hearing an Igbo name mentioned would be able to deduce some information about the bearer and/or his or her family. Language is the most important vehicle of any culture and Igbo language does this effectively through human names, both given and taken names. But some contemporary Igbo disguise some elements of their Igbo names so that the bearers cannot be quickly identified as Igbo.

Some of the reasons may be politically motivated and as a result, some businessmen and even civil servants who want to get assimilated to the mainstream of their host communities distort and adulterate their Igbo names in order to disguise their cultural identity. However in some Igbo communities, this distortion of Igbo names may sometimes be due to elision and sometimes as a result of integration. When the distortion is as a result of elision, the meaning can still be deduced but when it is a deliberate attempt to disguise identity, the original meaning cannot be guessed at. The following are some examples of both distortions:

Ndukauba → Kuba
Muonedu → "Modu"or "Moore"
Oraagwu → "Ragu"
Onwuegbuna → "Bunus'' or 'Buna'
Onukwuli → '' Kuli''
Tabansi → "Tansi"

Chinwuba → '' Chubbie''
Ifeoma → '' Iphie'', etc.

The examples of such practices are inexhaustible because they are so many and the primary objective of the distortion is the mask of identity. In the case of the above situation, one may not blame the individual adulterator because it is a survival instinct and the strategy for survival in a multi-ethnic state with tribal prejudices.

The next problem that we can subsume under attitude is what Uwalaka (2003:415) describes as the impenetrable democratic spirit of the Igbo. She argues that the impenetrable democratic spirit of the Igbo makes them resist any form of imposition that holds the key to the dearth of literacy and linguistic scholarship. It is pertinent to remark that this recalcitrant and uncompromising spirit retarded and is still stalling the Igbo standardization project that has been a subject of controversy among Igbo scholars. The choice of dialect of standardization raises a colossal task as no one would allow the opinion of the other to prevail. The inability of Igbo linguists to produce and evolve a standard dictionary because of the multiplicity of the dialects is a glaring example of the uncompromising spirit.

The attitude of the governments of Igbo States is not friendly to say the least. Eminent Igbo scholars who carry research on Igbo studies are always busy brain storming, organising conferences and workshops with suggestions/decisions capable of improving the status/of the Igbo language but the governments do not reciprocate by making the enabling legislation to back them up.

These decisions/suggestions are published in journals that are not properly disseminated to the wider public. Sometimes these write-ups circulate around the authors and are finally dumped. The people in government may be acting out of ignorance as their attitude sometimes shows.

They need therefore to be guided by some professional associations such as Igbo Studies Association(ISA), Igbo Standardization Committee(ISC) etc. What practical achievement can the Igbo State Governments say they have made in the policies/programmes regarding the Igbo language development? What impacts are the governments making in promoting the teaching and learning of the Igbo language in schools?-primary, secondary and tertiary? If the attitude of the governing body changes and they show some interest, the effect will manifest immediately in the teaching, learning and use of Igbo not only in the institutions but also in the larger society.

2.1.2 **Language policy in the Nigerian education system**

In Nigeria, a credit pass in the English language is a pre-requisite for university admission. As a result of that, parents would persuade their children to speak and write English so as to help them master literacy and fluency in the language. That is a normal reaction that any parent would put up. The policy affects not only the Igbo children, other ethnic groups are affected and yet in their families the communication/interaction is mainly in their mother tongue/vernacular language to enable the children acquire their mother tongue. For the Igbo, the situation is different. They

would not want their children to speak any other language except the English Language. For infants in the Day-Care centres and nursery/primary schools, parents would prefer to send them to schools where teaching is solely in the English language. Some have private English teachers for their children. Such parents ignore the fact that a child grounded in his/her mother tongue has unconsciously acquired both the 'Universal and Particular' language structures which dispose him/her to learn with greater ease, and simultaneously, any second language or languages presented to him/her, since what he/she needs in the second language(s) is extensive acquisition of its vocabulary (Fromkin& Rodman (1974)quoted by Onumajuru (2005:77)).

Apart from its importance in University admission, English has also the following characteristics/potentials:

- Over the years, English has gained popularity as the language of national unity, political integration, economic, social and cultural mobility across the nation.
- English, as the world's number one language of diplomacy, international relations, business, culture, medicine, science and technology is a sure passport to the wider world.
- It enjoys the double status of the first official language and lingua franca in Nigeria-a multi-lingual State where English language is the only official medium of expression which guarantees maximum inter-ethnic communication and comprehension among all the linguistic groups in Nigeria. This over-riding importance of English seems to be responsible for the aversion of the Igbo towards their

language. Granted that these advantages are there in English, the other ethnic groups in Nigeria such as the Yoruba, the Hausa, etc. who are subjected to the same colonised situation/condition still interact among themselves, in their families and elsewhere in their vernacular languages and Igbo children who may 'neither speak nor understand' their mother tongue do not make better grades in English than those of other ethnic groups. Whereas other ethnic groups domesticate their local languages for their informal use, the Igbo neglect their mother tongue and preferred English in both their informal and formal communications.

2.2 **Economic factors**

Under economic factors, we shall discuss the implication of economic problems in the execution of the Igbo language projects. At different times, the implementations of programmes/projects are stalled because of lack of funds. The Igbo language dictionary is a case in point. There is up till now no standard Igbo dictionary and the importance of a standard dictionary for any language learning can never be over-emphasised. Oweleke (2007:12) observes that

Igbo dictionaries are still being produced single-handedly and hap-hasa*rdly* by individuals without financial assistance from the government or non-governmental organisations and without collaboration among lexicographers and other specialists. She therefore calls for collaboration of governments, lexicographers, linguists, scholars, language planners and educationists to address

the issue of Igbo lexicography in order to bring about the realisation of Igbo Standard dictionaries in both bilingual and monolingual forms that will be of international standard. Oweleke commends the candid contributions of the Igbo metalanguage project agencies but argues as follows:

> We observe that Igwe's (1999) and Echeruo's (2001) dictionaries though published many years after the release of the technical and scientific terms to be used in Igbo do not have a record of such words among others:
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> | | |
> |---|---|
> | mkpọàhà | "noun'' |
> | nnọchiàhà | "pronoun'' |
> | ụ̀dàumē | "vowel'' |
> | mgbakwunye | "affix(es)'' |
> | mbunaobi(sic) | "aim'' |
>
> (Oweleke 2007:36)

She then wonders where a learner of Igbo can find those words.
The remarks of Oweleke are pertinent because such problems had been raised in the Igbo studies times without number. What is the last resort of an Igbo language learner who wants to confirm the right usage of a particular word, or its correct spelling, its phonological notation, its grammatical category or even its

meaning? Some individuals have tried to produce dictionaries which however may be judged deficient and/or inadequate in content and quality as well as in circulation, the problem is that these works are hardly reviewed or criticised in order to encourage development and improvement.

A case in point is Kay Williamson's Igbo English Dictionary published in 1972. Igbo lexicography is yet to witness the branching off into specialized dictionary-making as is done in other languages of the world. By so doing, learners/users of Igbo language can find materials to consult for such problems relating to pronunciation, spelling, meaning or grammatical uncertainty. Sincere Igbo governments and corporate organisations who are really interested in the development of Igbo language should provide finance to assist publishing houses, encourage scholars and linguists to write Igbo books, develop soft-wares suitable for writing Igbo.

2.3 **Standardization factor**

Standardization is a factor in Igbo studies development project because of the multiplicity of Igbo dialects. It is part of the problems responsible for the lack of a standard Igbo dictionary. As a result of the problem of standardization, no dictionary of Igbo published in a variety of Igbo can be appreciated by all Igbos.

Landau (2001:98) as recorded in Oweleke (2007:36-37) remarks that:

> .....before a dictionary can be written for a language, the language must have developed

> more or less standard spellings or in a language with various dialects, have a preferred dialect.

For the Igbo language, there is an urgent need for the review of the present orthography to adequately cater for all the distinctive sounds in the language. There is need to harmonize the written standard Igbo with the spoken form. The present situation witnesses a uniform written standard while the spoken form is dialectically based.

2.3.1 **Marketing Igbo to the international community**

This part deals with proposals/methods of selling Igbo both to the local and the international communities respectively. Some groups, organisations and agencies have mounted programmes locally and internationally for the promotion of the Igbo Language and culture, which is a healthy development. Are the programmes yielding the desired effects/results? These are questions raised because we know that here in Nigeria, Igbo language is not given the required attention by both the government and the people. A language is considered extinct if children no longer learn it at home. The survival of a language therefore does not depend only on the written documents and literatures available. The spoken aspect is even more vital. It does appear that the enthusiasm in the spread of the Igbo language is more fervent in the Diaspora than here in Nigeria.

The first part of this paper depicted the actual situation of the Igbo language in Nigeria. We are aware that today, Igbo language is not well patronised particularly among the young generation of the Igbo. This is because the parents who should encourage the young ones to speak it are also deviants. This evidence is an eye-witness account of the plight of Igbo language in Nigeria today. We do recognise that language is the mark of identity of a people and a community that loses its language loses automatically its identity. Emenanjo (1999:83) citing the Centre for Endangered Languages(C E L) captures it philosophically when he affirms that:

> Language is the key to the heart of a people. If we lose the key, we lose the people. If we treasure the riches which cannot be guessed at; at the other side of the door.... 'A lost language is a lost tribe, a lost tribe is a lost culture; a lost culture is a lost civilization. A lost civilization is invaluable knowledge lost.... the whole vast archives of knowledge and expertise..... will be consigned to oblivion.

3.0 Suggestion/recommendation

To boost the revival and flourishing of the Igbo language among the Igbo locally and in the Diaspora, this paper makes the following recommendations:

3.1 **In the local community:**

The Igbo should turn a positive attitude towards their language. Igbo language should be loved, appreciated and cherished as a treasure by its indigenous speakers. The first step is to speak Igbo among the Igbo every time, everywhere; in the homes, in the market, at village meetings, church services and any gathering of the Igbo. Minutes of Igbo meetings should be written and also read in the Igbo language. Parents should encourage their children to learn and speak Igbo by speaking it with them. They should teach their children the importance of mother tongue; that any child that neither speaks nor understands his/her mother tongue is a cultural bastard since it is said that language is the most effective means of disseminating and perpetuating the culture of a people. It has also been pedagogically proved that the knowledge of mother tongue facilitates the learning of other languages since it serves as the framework for other languages to take root.

3.2 **In the wider Igbo community:**

By wider community, we mean the market, the school, the office, the political arena, the church, all gatherings of the Igbo. In all these places, locally and internationally, the positive attitude to Igbo language gospel should be preached. Wherever and whenever two Igbo people discuss, the code should be in Igbo language except in official setting where other non-Igbo speakers are involved in the discussion. However, it is observed that non-Igbo speakers in government offices use their local languages among themselves even when a non- native speaker is involved in the

matter of discussion. They do not feel that they owe anybody apologies for discussing in their mother tongue. However, this paper does not recommend that kind of attitude because it is not in any way edifying. What we are advocating is a situation where all Igbo native speakers will find joy in speaking the Igbo language and thereby get other non-native speakers to admire it, learn it from them and begin to speak it with them. Otherwise, the Igbo language will gradually be predisposed to the factors that facilitate the endangerment of natural languages of which the principal one is the dearth of speakers.

If a language is not spoken by many, no matter the amount of the written materials, documentations, literatures or encyclopaedias, the language will eventually go extinct when all its speakers die. The Igbo festivals and lecture series like the Odenigbo, Ahajioku, Iwa-ji and other socio-cultural activities already existing should be encouraged and given wider publicity and patronage so that more Igbo speakers will participate in the events with their non-Igbo invitees and friends.

3.3 **In business(the trade)**

The Igbo are known for their dynamism, republican nature and business acumen, they can use these God-given qualities/talents of theirs to attract others to speak their language. They can do this subtly in business by putting across Igbo words and phrases in the process of price bargaining and of course by reducing the price of their commodities for a non-native Igbo speaker/customer who may reciprocate by trying to speak Igbo. If

the customer knows that the reduction in price is as a result of his/her ability to speak the seller's language, it will definitely motivate and encourage him/her to acquire at least the Igbo with which he/she will bargain with Igbo traders.

In the hospitality industry for instance, in hotels and restaurants, it is no gainsaying that some Igbo dishes have cut across ethnic boundaries and tastes, dishes like 'ngwọngwọ, nkwọbi, isiewu, ofe onugbu etc. are solicited by all and sundry. The ordering of these dishes is made in Igbo even by non-Igbo speakers. These are some of the ways by which lexical items are involuntarily marketed to the non-native speakers.

3.4 **In the church**

The church is one place where the use of Igbo language is flourishing very well. In the Igbo states (local community churches), the services/Masses are mostly held in Igbo. In other heterogeneous communities such as urban cities, the services are held in the English language or even pidgin but the interesting surprise is that most of the choruses (80%) are rendered in Igbo language with full participation of the congregation in a hilarious mood. We cannot but commend the composers of these songs and choruses and encourage them to continue to compose more of them in Igbo.

It is worthy of note that the Catholic Archdiocese of Owerri under the charismatic leadership of Archbishop AJV Obinna has founded and sponsors a *Pan Igbo* annual socio-cultural conference called *Odenigbo* where Igbo language is the only medium of

communication and where eminent Igbo scholars are invited to deliver lectures on contemporary Igbo and national issues. This has been in existence since September 1996.

Curiously, the Ahiajioku annual lecture, a socio-cultural discourse organised and sponsored by Imo State Government, has English as it's medium of communication instead of Igbo as would be expected. If properly organised, this conference should be a Pan Igbo affaire involving all the Igbo State Governments with invitees from across the nation.

3.5 **The play writers, musicians and actors**

The play writers should be encouraged to write and act more in the Igbo language. It has been observed that most of the Nollywood plays in African Magic have Igbo background but are packaged and acted in English. Some of these plays could be written and acted in Igbo with synchronizing phrases and sentences in English language as it is often the case in Yoruba.

Some Igbo musicians have succeeded to a large extent in marketing Igbo through their songs and music, for example a song like 'Akanchawa' made and is still making waves in the music industry across cultures.

Even non-Igbo speakers who do not even understand the lyrics of the music enjoy listening to the music as is observed often in taxi cabs with non-Igbo drivers who slot in the cassettes and hum and shake their heads while doing their routine shuttle. The attraction for them is mostly the song, then the rhythm of the instrument and less importantly the wordings which they rarely

understand. But that could be a motivating factor for someone to learn a language because from the music, one might decide to probe what the music is saying in terms of meaning and from there he/she gets to know one or two words in the language and the interest can develop from there.

3.6 **The government's role**

The governors of the Igbo states should constitute a forum where issues concerning the development of the Igbo language should be discussed and decisions taken and implemented. The issues of the Igbo language should be a collective responsibility and should not be treated with levity by individual state governors as if it were a private affair. A lot can be achieved if the state governments concerned could come together and give a pride of place to the issues of the development of the Igbo language and culture irrespective of their party affiliation.

In the bid to address the problems of the promotion of the Igbo language, the different governments of Igbo States should collectively sponsor an Igbo research and technological centre/institute. This centre should aim at encouraging manufacturers, academics and technologists to invent Igbo products in diverse aspects of human endeavour such as medicine (traditional and orthodox), science, arts etc, and create new Igbo terminologies for them. The different state governors should also consider doing the following:

-Harmonise programmes for Igbo curriculum for primary and secondary schools.

-Establish an institute of Igbo studies for the training of qualified Igbo teachers in diversified disciplines such as: Igbo language for Sciences; Igbo language for Engineering; Igbo language for Medicine etc.

-Establish a scholarship scheme for the training of Igbo language teachers

-Establish powerful Radio and TV stations in each state for the dissemination of programmes in Igbo language and culture such as: news, entertainment, traditional/cultural dances, stories, riddles and jokes, proverbs, idioms, music requests interspaced with music from other local language groups to win their interest in Igbo programmes.

-Establish a powerful Printing Press with appropriate orthographic Igbo symbols for the publications of high quality newspapers, magazines, journals, text-books etc.

-Give a legislative backing on policies regarding the teaching, learning and use of Igbo in both public and private settings notably; institutions, State houses of Assembly, political campaigns etc.

-Make a policy whereby a credit pass in Igbo language in WAEC/ GCE should be a basic condition for any political appointment and for State Government Scholarships.

-Invite eminent Igbo nationals (both at home and in Diaspora) to endow Chairs in Igbo Studies as done in other disciplines in universities and other institutions of higher learning.

-Task eminent Igbo scholars to draw programmes that will boost the study of Igbo language and culture.

-Set in motion a machinery for periodic assessment and evaluation to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes and make appropriate recommendations.
-Organise regular workshops, conferences and in-service training for Igbo teachers to update their knowledge and methods.
-Assemble/gather all Igbo artists and encourage them morally and financially to work harder.
-Encourage those in the home movies should be to get all their best-sellers translated and acted in Igbo in such a way that what is heard (audio) is Igbo language and the foot-notes of their English equivalent will synchronise. This will facilitate comprehension to non -Igbo speakers.

3.7 **Igbo communities in diaspora**

The bulk of marketing the Igbo language in the Diaspora should be done by the Igbo living in the Diaspora themselves. They should like the Igbo in the local community resolve to make Igbo a living language. In other words, they should speak the language among themselves, in their families with their children, with their fellow Igbo neighbours and friends. Most of the recommendations we made for local Igbo communities are applicable to the Igbo in Diaspora but the latter will in addition to the following:

-Hold their town/village meetings in Igbo.
-Organise from time to time social gatherings among the Igbo communities and invite their non-Igbo friends and neighbours.

-Occasionally invite and sponsor some Igbo renowned musicians to sing only Igbo songs in their social gatherings of Igbo and non-Igbo spectators.
-Contribute and sponsor prominent Igbo play writers and world-acclaimed actors like Pete Edochie, Patience Ozokwor (Mama G) and other celebrated actors (who can perform exclusively in Igbo) to come and act/perform Overseas.
-Occasionally organise Igbo Day which will feature programmes such as symposium, concerts/plays, exposition of work of art, funfair, fashion parade (Igbo attire), traditional dances, songs, poems/riddles/jokes, Igbo kitchen(delicacies). Non-Igbo nationals will be invited as guests. This will help to create awareness about Igbo civilisation and culture with Igbo language as vector.
-They should liaise with the home governments of different states and decide which programmes they would like to sponsor and they should go ahead doing it in collaboration with the state government.
-In their churches, they should arrange for their Masses/services to be held in the Igbo language where the songs/choruses should be accompanied with traditional musical instruments. This will make the Mass/service very lively and some other non-Igbo Christians may by curiosity be attracted to worship with them. This may enkindle their interest to know more about the Igbos and their language.
-In all these activities, the organisers should not lose sight of their objectives. They should direct the programmes in such a way that they would reflect their stated goal.

4.0 Conclusion

This paper has tried to investigate the possibility of marketing Igbo language to the international community but we

realised that this would be impossible without a strong linguistic home-base for the language. It started by exposing the true situation of the language among the Igbo in general and finally suggested various ways of resolving some of the issues raised. It is observed that Igbo is a language that can easily serve as a vehicular language in Nigeria, given the dynamism, versatility and ubiquitous presence of the Igbo in every nook and cranny of Nigeria, if not in the world. We make this remark because we discover that Ndigbo as great travellers and business men and women inhabit every nook and cranny of Nigeria and mix freely. Besides, the status of Igbo as one of the three Nigerian national languages is a factor that could, with proper management play out in favour of the Igbo language as one of the world's stable languages.

Igbo linguists should close ranks and resolve their differences about choice of a standard dialect. They could even borrow a leaf from German language where Martin Luther's own creation *Hochdeutsch* serves as a Standard German that is spoken and used today in schools, universities and in public life. *Hochdeutsch* is different from the dialectal German that the various ethnic nationalities speak. Igbo language needs such an approach to hasten its development.

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