THE IGBO VERSION OF THE ANAMBRA STATE ANTHEM: A TRANSLATION QUALITY ASSESSMENT

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Abstract

While English serves as Nigeria's official language and as well, for its national anthem, there's a growing movement to incorporate indigenous languages into official and symbolic domains, recognizing the importance of local relevance and cultural identity. The translation of the Anambra State Anthem into Igbo represents a significant step towards linguistic inclusivity, yet it has faced criticism for failing to fully capture the nuances and deep cultural resonance of the Igbo language, often prioritizing literal equivalence over idiomatic expression. This study evaluates the translation of the Igbo version of the Anambra State Anthem, with a focus on its semantic accuracy, cultural resonance, and poetic rhythm. Its objectives include examining these linguistic and cultural aspects, providing alternative translations for mistranslated lines, and explaining the technical reasons behind these issues. Utilizing a qualitative-descriptive research design and comparative translation analysis, the study scrutinizes both the English and Igbo versions. The data collection involved retrieving lyrics and tunes from the official Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board website and YouTube videos. The methodology involves examining linguistic features such as idioms, tone, and rhythmic adaptation between the source (English) and target (Igbo) texts, adopting the communicative (impact-driven) translation method. The researcher analyses lexical and poetic features, identifies mistranslated words or lines, explains the reasons, and attempts retranslation into the Standard Igbo, providing reasons for word choice. The revised translations are then subject to validation by linguists, musicologists, and translators. Findings reveal that literal translations often miss the cultural depth, and issues with tense and aspect appropriateness were observed. The study proposes lexical enrichment through synonym variation and emphasizes phonological considerations for improved musicality. It concludes by advocating for a critical review of the current Igbo version of the anthem and the adoption of the proposed revised version, stressing the need for a collaborative approach involving cultural experts, linguists, and musicologists to achieve effective and culturally sensitive translations of significant texts.

Keywords: Anthem, Translation, Igbo, Cultural Resonance, Semantic and Tonal Accuracy

Introduction

Nigeria is a multilingual society that has sustained inter-ethnic communication primarily through the use of English and Nigerian Pidgin. This linguistic reality is reflected in the use of English as the official language for the national anthem (Bamgbose, 1991; Adegbija, 2004). However, in many multilingual nations, including Nigeria, there is a growing call for the incorporation of indigenous languages into official and symbolic domains in anthems and at public ceremonies (Egbokhare, 2008). Some countries have translated their national anthems into dominant native languages, highlighting the importance of cultural identity and linguistic inclusion. This trend

shows that beyond the global accessibility of a language, local relevance and symbolic power are also critical. Beyond the economic and global prestige of English, local identity, cultural pride, and inclusivity are also central to national cohesion (Crystal, 2003; Igboanusi & Peter, 2005).

In an era of globalization, the preference for global languages like English is understandable (Graddol, 2006). However, adopting translation of works into dominant native languages in Nigeria, at the state level, could strengthen regional identity and deepen citizens' emotional connection to civic symbols. Nigerian states, many of which are linguistically homogeneous, present a unique opportunity for fostering regional identity through indigenous languages. For example, Igbo is widely spoken and culturally embedded in Anambra State, making it a suitable medium for a localized version of the state anthem (Nkamigbo, 2011). However, for an anthem existing already in the English language may employ the translation medium to get the indigenous language version. Such is the case of the Anambra state anthem. In line with this great feat, this study examines semantic accuracy, cultural resonance, and poetic rhythm during the translation process (Emenanjo, 2015; Newmark, 1988). It assesses its authenticity and faithfulness while promoting cultural pride, linguistic identity, and emotional connection among the people of Anambra (Ugot, 2010). Additionally, the study offers translation equivalence while stating the scores for such options. It generally assesses meaning, tone, and rhythm while maintaining cultural nuance (Newmark, 1988; Emenanjo, 2015).

Language is not merely a tool for communication; it is also a carrier of identity and a vessel for cultural expression. In Nigeria, a nation marked by rich multilingualism and cultural diversity, inter-ethnic cooperation, has long been sustained through the use of English and Nigerian Pidgin as lingua francas. However, the growing advocacy for the inclusion of indigenous languages in official and symbolic spaces, such as national anthems and public ceremonies, highlights the urgent need to reword key national and civic texts from English into local languages. This shift not only affirms linguistic identity but also strengthens cultural representation and inclusivity in national discourse. One notable effort in this direction is the translation of the Anambra State Anthem from English into the Igbo language. Currently, the Igbo rendition is recited only on Wednesdays in primary and secondary schools across Anambra State. While this initiative marks a significant step toward linguistic inclusivity and cultural affirmation, the poetic translation has faced criticism for failing to fully capture the nuances of meaning and the deep cultural resonance embedded in the Igbo language. Critics argue that the translated version often prioritizes literal equivalence over idiomatic and culturally grounded expression, thereby limiting its emotional and symbolic impact on native speakers.

Igbo speakers have observed that the current translation lacks the emotional impact, cultural relevance, and poetic elegance found in the original English version. This shortcoming potentially undermines the anthem's core purpose: to foster unity, affirm identity, and celebrate cultural heritage among Igbo-speaking communities. Beyond the loss of meaning and cultural nuance, the

translation relies heavily on a word-for-word technique, an approach widely considered inadequate for translating any text, especially poetic ones. Adding to the complexity of literary translation, Kolawole and Salawu (2008) identify a range of challenges, including cultural and linguistic differences, psychological factors, deceptive cognates, problems of equivalence, and issues of stylistic transfer. Such literalism not only strips the anthem of its stylistic richness but also fails to evoke the affective resonance necessary for symbolic and ceremonial functions. Therefore, the aim of this research is to assess the translated Igbo version of the Anambra State Anthem; to examine the semantic accuracy, cultural resonance, and poetic rhythm of the Igbo version of the Anambra State Anthem, provide translation equivalence for mistranslated lines and state the technical reasons for the classified mistranslations and the suggested ones.

Language and Identity

Language is not merely a tool for communication; it is a carrier of identity, worldview, and cultural expression. Scholars like Crystal (2003) and Adegbija (2004) argue that individuals often associate their native language with a sense of belonging and communal pride. For communities such as the Igbo in southeastern Nigeria, language reinforces ancestral ties and cultural memory (Ugot, 2010). When languages are used in official or symbolic domains, like state anthems, they enhance emotional connection and deepen civic loyalty (Emenanjo, 2015). Civic symbols such as anthems, flags, and mottos function as expressions of shared values and collective identity. Indigenous languages, when embedded in these symbols, affirm a people's cultural autonomy and pride. Scholars note that symbolic expressions in native languages tend to resonate more deeply with local populations than those in foreign languages (Kamwangamalu, 2004). Using indigenous languages in civic contexts fosters inclusivity, recognition, and a sense of ownership among citizens (Akinwumi, 2015; Olateju, 2006).

Translation and Translatability

Translation, according to Newmark (1988), is the process of transferring the meaning of a text from one language (the source language) into another (the target language), while aiming at reproducing the author's intended meaning as closely and accurately as possible. Similarly, Dabelnet (1997) defines translation as the act of transferring all the elements of meaning from one language into another; and only those elements while ensuring that they retain their relative importance and tonality in the target language. This process also requires careful consideration of the cultural differences that exist between the source and target languages.

House (2009) emphasizes that translation functions as a means of providing access to an already existing message, making it inherently a form of secondary communication. Okeke (1999) observes that any genre intended for performance on stage or before an audience should be translated with great care. Poetry, in this regard, shares similarities with dramatic texts, as it is

often composed for recitation and public presentation. Ajunwa (2014) then asserts that a deliberate effort to render faithfully the source language poetic forms into the target language, in order to preserve the aesthetic beauty of form, often results in a unique and intentional distortion of the original poetic message and vice versa. In a similar vein, Arthur Schopenhauer, in Ajunwa (2014), asserts that poems cannot truly be translated; rather, they can only be transposed, meaning that they must be reimagined or rewritten in the target language to capture their essence. To mitigate the challenges inherent in poetic translation, Ajunwa proposes several techniques. One is the Theory of Multiple Translations, which advocates for the rendering of a single poetic text by as many independent translators as possible, with the goal of uncovering various interpretive possibilities and enhancing overall fidelity. Ajunwa also adopts André Lefevere's translation strategies as useful tools for addressing the complexities of poetic translation. These include:

1) Phonemic Translation: This technique seeks to reproduce the sounds of the source language in the target language, while simultaneously preserving as much of the original message as possible.
2) Literal Translation: Seeks to render the exact words of the source text, but often results in the loss or alteration of the original message and poetic style.
3) Metrical Translation: Focuses on preserving the meter of the original poem, sometimes at the expense of the meaning or naturalness in the target language.
4) Poetry into Prose: Converts the poetic text into prose, often distorting the poetic context, particularly the formal and aesthetic qualities.
5) Rhymed Translation: Prioritizes the preservation of both rhyme and meter, which may lead to significant compromises in semantic fidelity.
6) Blank Verse Translation: Emphasizes a literal translation rendered in unrhymed iambic pentameter or similar metrical patterns, balancing form with some degree of message retention.
7) Interpretation or Imitation: Involves the creation of an entirely new poem in the target language, inspired by the source text but with significant creative liberty.

Ajunwa (2014) concludes that no single poetic translation can successfully employ all these strategies at once. Therefore, the translator must carefully consider the type of poem, its characteristics, and its intended purpose while striving to remain as close as possible to both the message and form of the original work. Additionally, Newmark (1988) outlines eight distinct methods of translation, each with varying degrees of fidelity to the source text and flexibility in rendering meaning. These are:

1) Word-for-word translation: Also known as interlinear translation, this method involves a direct substitution of words from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL), often ignoring grammatical structure or meaning.

2) Literal translation: This method translates the grammatical constructions of the SL into their closest TL equivalents while maintaining lexical fidelity.
3) Faithful translation: Attempts to reproduce the exact contextual meaning of the original, preserving the author's intent and style.
4) Semantic translation: Similar to faithful translation, but with a greater emphasis on preserving the aesthetic value of the source text alongside the meaning.
5) Adaptation: Described as the freest form of translation, this technique is commonly used in translating plays and poetry, allowing for substantial creative liberties.
6) Free translation: Focuses on conveying the contents of the original text without retaining its original form or stylistic features.
7) Idiomatic translation: Renders the message of the source text using natural expressions, idioms, and colloquialisms in the TL, though it may distort certain nuances of meaning.
8) Communicative translation: Aims at producing the exact contextual meaning of the original in a way that is both understandable and acceptable to the target audience.

In evaluating these methods, Newmark (1988) concludes that only semantic and communicative translation fully achieve the two principal aims of translation: accuracy (faithfulness to meaning) and economy (efficiency and naturalness in expression). According to him, these two methods strike the necessary balance between form and function in effective translation. This research aligns with the suggestions of Ajunwa (2014) and Newmark (1988); and only the relevant assessment strategies and methods are adopted.

Anthems in Indigenous languages: International and Local Case Studies

Globally, many countries have incorporated indigenous or regional languages into their national anthems to reflect linguistic diversity and promote cultural inclusion: New Zealand, for example, performs its national anthem *God Defend New Zealand* in both English and Māori, the indigenous language (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2022). Similarly, South Africa combines five of its eleven official languages: Xhosa, Zulu, Sesotho, Afrikaans, and English in its post-apartheid national anthem, symbolizing unity in diversity (Kamwangamalu, 2004). In Canada, both English and French versions of *O Canada* are officially recognized, reflecting the country's bilingual framework (Government of Canada, 2018). These practices affirm the value of linguistic inclusion in fostering national cohesion and respect for heritage.

Locally, West African nations provide relevant models of how indigenous languages are integrated into national symbols. In Senegal, while the national anthem is officially in French, Wolof versions are frequently performed during local events and are widely accepted in community and school contexts (Irvine, 2001). In Mali, the anthem *Pour l'Afrique et pour toi, Mali* is officially French, but Bambara translations are popular, especially in civic education and radio programs (Dembélé, 2012). Ghana offers a more formalized approach, with the national anthem rendered in Twi

(Akan), Ewe, and Ga during educational activities and state functions, reflecting its multilingual inclusivity (Ansre, 1979). These examples show that indigenous-language anthems in West Africa are not only feasible but effective in strengthening cultural pride and civic identity, even when the dominant official language remains European.

Within Nigeria, some states have made deliberate efforts to adopt indigenous languages in their state anthems: Lagos State includes Yoruba in its state anthem alongside English. Ekiti, Osun, and Ogun States render their entire anthems in Yoruba, celebrating their cultural heritage and promoting language use in official symbolic expressions (Akinwumi, 2015; Olateju, 2006). These examples demonstrate how state-level language choices can reflect cultural realities and contribute to language preservation. For a largely homogeneous state like Anambra, the potential impact of an Igbo-language anthem is both symbolically and linguistically significant. This will be maximally productive if rendered in lines reflecting the meaning and exploring the cultural nuances inherent in the Igbo language.

Nigerian National Anthem in Indigenous Languages: History and Challenges

Nigeria's rich linguistic diversity has long fuelled debates about language representation in national symbols. Although the national anthem has always been rendered in English, there have been informal efforts to translate it into indigenous languages, particularly Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo. One of the most notable efforts was undertaken by Adebayo Faleti, a celebrated Yoruba poet and broadcaster, who translated the anthem into Yoruba. His version was performed at cultural festivals, relayed on regional media, and used in schools within the South-West (Faleti, n.d.). Similarly, educators and cultural promoters in the South-East and North-West translated the anthem into Igbo and Hausa, respectively, for use in civic education, schools, and radio programs. These versions were intended to foster national unity through cultural inclusivity and to make the anthem more emotionally resonant with grassroot audiences. Despite their cultural value, these translations were never officially adopted by the Nigerian federal government. Consequently, while these translations were appreciated in educational and cultural contexts, they never progressed to official or ceremonial use. Today, these historic efforts serve as a reminder of the need to preserve and promote linguistic identity, especially in state-level contexts where homogeneity allows for clearer linguistic representation, such as in Anambra State, where Igbo is dominant.

Translation Studies and Challenges

Translating symbolic texts like anthems involves more than converting words; it demands cultural sensitivity, poetic awareness, and fidelity to both meaning and tone. Newmark (1988) distinguishes between semantic translation (which aims at faithfully reproducing meaning of the source text and form while remaining grammatically and stylistically acceptable in the target language) and communicative translation (which aims to produce on the reader of the target language, the same effect the original text had on the reader of the source language); with the latter being more suitable

for anthem translation due to its emotional and symbolic intent. Key challenges include: retaining rhythm, metre, and lyrical beauty, translating idiomatic expressions or cultural references, adapting tone and mood to match the original anthem's solemnity and inspiration etcetera. In the Igbo context, Emenanjo (2015) highlights the additional complexity of tonal variation and syntactic flexibility, which can affect how translations are perceived and interpreted. Anthem translation, therefore, must balance linguistic precision with artistic fluency.

The key challenges to translation and standardizing an anthem includes the absence of a Federal Policy Mandate. No governmental policy institutionalized the use of indigenous versions of the anthem. Without legal backing or funding, the translations remained localized and informal. Linguistic Pluralism is another factor, Nigeria's over 500 indigenous languages make national standardization highly complex (Eberhard et al, 2024). Prioritizing one or a few could be seen as ethnolinguistic favouritism, sparking political tension (Adegbija, 2004). However, in the context of this paper, such will not arise since Anambra State is linguistically homogenous. The issue of colonial legacy and the prestige of English may however, pose a big problem in the functioning of Anambra State Igbo Anthem. English, inherited from colonial rule, retains strong institutional dominance and symbolic authority in Nigerian governance. This dominance often marginalizes indigenous languages in high-status domains like national symbols and international diplomacy (Ugot, 2010). This unfortunately has also crept into our states. The issue of logistical and aesthetic concerns cannot be overlooked, translating anthems while maintaining musical rhythm, poetic structure, and solemnity presents technical challenges. Newmark (1988) notes that such symbolic texts require communicative rather than literal translation, demanding linguistic and artistic balance. Finally, lack of support from national institutions such as the Ministry of Education, National Orientation Agency, or the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, the indigenous-language versions lacked platforms for sustained visibility and legitimacy. In the case of the Anambra State Anthem, the Commissioner for Education, Zonal Inspectors for National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB), Principals and teachers in various primary and secondary schools in Anambra State need to support and enforce the use of the Igbo version alongside the English version.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative-descriptive research design, supported by translation analysis. The study explores the perceived effects of rendering the Anambra State Anthem in Igbo, the translation process itself, and the challenges involved. The approach allows for in-depth understanding of language attitudes, cultural identity, and translation practices within a defined speech community. The study is focused on Anambra State, Nigeria, where Igbo is the dominant language and widely spoken across urban and rural areas. Anambra provides a suitable context due to its cultural homogeneity and history of cultural preservation.

The lyrics and tune of the English and Igbo versions are retrieved from Youtube videos which were reconciled with the tune rendered by secondary school students in Community Secondary Schools, Amansea. The study adopts a performance based orthographic representation in text rendition which mirrors sung performance including features like contraction, rhythm. This will enable the translation fit into the anthem rhythm.

Comparative Translation Analysis examines linguistic features such as idioms, tone, and rhythmic adaptation between the source (English) and target (Igbo) texts while the communicative translation, an impact-driven method which aims to produce on the reader of the target language, the same effect the original text had on the reader of the source language, is adopted for this analysis. In the review of the original and translated anthem, the researcher analyses the lexical and poetic features of the English version of the Anambra State Anthem and check their correspondence with the Igbo version. Review is done in lines except where semantic adequacy runs into another line (enjambment), such previous or run-on-line is considered in choosing the right words. After the review, mistranslated words or lines will be listed and reasons for such labelling explained. The researcher then attempts a retranslation into the Standard Igbo, maintaining poetic and symbolic integrity; logically providing reasons for word choice. The new words or lines will be subjected to validation by linguists, musicologists and translators in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, to assess acceptability and identify potential issues.

Data Presentation

The Anambra State Anthem is presented here in two parts, one as rendered in English and the other, as rendered in the Igbo language. These two faces of presentations are necessary for proper evaluation of the rhythm, words and translation employed in the anthem.

The Anambra State Anthem in English and Igbo Languages

	English	**Igbo**
Line 1	With all our hearts	Na obi a'ị niile
Line 2	We pray and ask	Anyi na-ekpe na-arịọ
Line 3	God bless Anambra	Chukwu gọzie Anambra
Line 4	God bless the shining light that we bear	Chukwu gọzie ihe nke anyị bụ
Line 5	We are the only ones to make her brighter	Ọ bụ naanị a'ị ga-eme ka o nwuwaa
Line 6	The Only ones to make her better	Naanị a'ị ga-eme ka ọ ka mma
Line 7	The Only ones to make Anambra shine	Naanị a'ị ga-eme ka Anambra nwue
Line 8a	With our sweat and blood	N'ọsụsọ n'ọbara a'ị
Line 8b	Every breathe of our lives	Iku ume ndụ a'ị niile
Line 9	With trust in God	A'ị chekwubere na chukwu
Line 10	We will lift our homeland high	Anyị ga-eme ka ala nna a'ị dị elu
Line 11	We believe in togetherness	A'ị ga-eweta ịdịnaotu

Line 12	We'll build a land of progress	Ga-eweta oganiihu obodo a'ị
Line 13	Lift the Spirit of Anambra	Bulite Mmụọ Anambra
Line 14	Lift the Spirit of Anambra	Bulite Mmụọ Anambra
Line 15	Lift the Spirit of Anambra State	Bulite Mmụọ Steeti Anambra
Line 16	We love	Anyị hụrụ n'anya.

Data Analysis

It is worthy to note that Poetic License, that is, freedom of the poet to depart from the standard rules of the language, grammar, diction or fact in other to produce a desired artistic effect' (Abrams & Harpham, 2015), is employed in the use contracted forms and other adjustments in the retranslation and writing of some Igbo words. The Igbo lines in bold indicate parts the researcher considers problematic.

Line 1 *With all our hearts* *Na obi a'ị niile*

This translation is considered adequate given that it holds the semantics of the message intended and also aligns with the rhythm of the origin text.

Line 2 *We pray and ask* *Anyi **na-**ekpe **na-a**rịọ*

In line 2, the first word 'we' is supposed to be a full brave, but the translation is in two semibreves, distorting the lengthening rhythmic assonance observed in the first words of line 1 and 2 'with' and 'we'. This distortion is allowed but considered inadequate here because the rhythm of lines 1 and 2 come as a poetic pair (rhythmic/meter rhyme).

Solution - Removing Redundancies and Introducing 'ma':

If the first word *na-ekpe*, 'na-' is deleted, and the 'na' in *na-arịọ* is replaced with 'ma' and 'a' in 'arịọ' deleted from which is more suitable in the context. we will be left with "*Anyi* ekpe ma rịọ". This option resonates with line 1, and aligns with the core meaning of line 2 while retaining the rhythmic rhyme of lines 1 and 2 that characterises the intro tune of the Anambra State Anthem. This gives us: *Anyị ekpee ma rịọ.*

Line 3 *God bless Anambra* *Chukwu gọzie Anambra*

This translation is considered adequate given that it holds the semantics of the message intended and also aligns with the rhythm of the origin text.

Line 4 God bless the shining light that we bear Chukwu gọzie ihe nke anyị bụ

Line 4 is a literal translation, which does not represent or reflect the idiomatic and cultural values of the Igbo language.

Solution: Alternative Phrase

'The light that we bear' is symbolic of who we are, first, as light bearers, holding out our hands high with the light causing illumination to spread. The sentence '*Chukwu gozie ọkụ na-achawapụta ihe anyị bu'* represents this idea. From another angle, 'the light that we bear' *reflects* our core values, exemplary life, the life of hope and inspiration that make positive impact and influence on others. Ọnwa *moon* metaphorically represents guidance and illumination, pathfinding in darkness as seen in expressions like *'ọnwa na-etiri ọha'*, *'ọnwa obodo ji ahu uzọ*'. This has influenced the choice of the line: Gozie ọnwa na-etiri mba niile. Chukwu is removed to retain rhythm and also because the 'Chukwu' in the line 3 suffices as a run-on-line into line 4.

Line 5	We are the only ones to make her brighter	Ọ bụ naanị a'ị ga-eme ka o nwuwaa
Line 6	The only ones to make her better	Naanị a'ị ga-eme ka ọ ka mma

These translations are considered adequate given that they hold the semantics of the message intended and also aligns with the rhythm of the origin text.

Line 7	The only ones to make Anambra shine	Naanị a'ị ga-eme ka Anambra nwue

Nwue - lit does not represent the meaning of shine in the English context. Shine expressed in the English context, means to come to the lime light, noticed, focused, productive, and outstanding. Literally, *nwue* is to be lit (shine) in the sense of emitting light. *Nwukee* (shine with brightening force) may be more appropriate.

Solution: Alternative word

Anambra, personified, should not be described as *nwue*, rather as either *chakee, mukee, nwukee or guzo*. Nwue also does not connote productivity, or outstanding illumination but *nwukee does*. *Chakee* to shine brighter, *nwukee /Mukee* to burn brighter, *Guzo* to stand. These, better convey the metaphorical sense of shine in *Chakee*, rising to visibility or prominence; *Mukee*, evolve gloriously or exalted; *Guzo*, standing firm, achieve heights, surmount challenges. Meanwhile, *nwu-kee*, *mu-kee*, *gu-zo* and *cha-kee* have two syllables each translating to 2 beats which may cause obstruction in pronunciation and rhythm. However, *nwukee* may be maneuvered in a very smooth way given the onset sibilant in the first syllable, with smooth prosodic fit because of the onset /nw/ aiding elision or syncopation (displacing the normal rhythm by swallowing of sound), allowing better rhythmic flow. The last syllable *–kee* which is a suffix for enormous lightening is made prominent, making the appeal more passionate and poetic and aligns in gradable comparison with *nwuwaa* in line 5. Selected option: *Naanị a'ị ga-eme ka Anambra nwukee*

Line 8a	With our sweat and blood	**N'ọsụsọ n'ọbara a'ị**

Line 8a is a literal translation, which does not represent the cultural nuances and perceptions of the Igbo people. Sweat and blood to the English man represent a tenacious fight and struggle but to the Igbo man, fight is fought with strength and vigour. This is deeply rooted in phrases like ike na ume, Ike aji n'ume.

Solution: Alternative Phrase

N'ọsụsọ n'ọbara a'ị (in our sweat and blood) might evoke pity or suffering rather than valour, endurance, or heroic effort. Therefore, it is suggested that it be replaced with *Were ike n'ume* meaning with our strength and willpower. The clause *Were ike n'ume* resonates greater cultural accuracy that retains the fighting spirit and generally fits the anthem tone of uplifting, proud, courageous.

Line 8b Every breathe of our lives **Iku ume ndụ a'ị niile**

Line 8b is a literal translation. This does not carry the semantic weight of the English text, 'every breathe of our lives', which is hyperbolic, exaggerating, signifying total devotion, great sacrifice, commitment, and investment. An equivalence of such definition in Igbo will be expressions like *were mmuo a'*ị *niile,* which is devotion, mainly, or na *ntachi obi niile*, which is commitment and resolute. Both can suffice, given the one that best aligns with the tone.

Solution: Alternative phrase

Suggestion here is to replace *iku ume ndu anyi niile* which is too literal, lacks idiomatic depth and misses the emotive gravity and symbolic weight by not evoking the sacrificial devotion intended in the line, with:

(i) *Were mmuo a'ị niile* meaning, 'with our whole spirit or life devotion'. This expresses deep devotion, carries spiritual and emotional weight and is poetically strong in anthem context for patriotic allegiance.

(ii) *Na ntachi obi niile* meaning, 'all perseverance and all commitment'. This conveys steadfastness, emotional endurance, unwavering commitment and strong cultural resonance. Emphasizing grit, loyalty, firm resolve and willpower towards making the state move forward.

Line 9 With trust in God **a'ị** chekwub**ere** na Chukwu

Line 9 is overworded, it forces too many syllables into a short beat window, that is, making two syllables or 3 to be under one beat, with an overrunning effect, causing a pronunciation strain. Again, there is the issue of redundant grammar - **a'ị**, a contracted form of *anyi* implies 'we' which is not in the English line.

Solution: Brevity

Eliminating redundant word like line like **a'ị** and the suffix **–re** will leave the line as *Chekwube na Chukwu* which still captures all the semantics and gives allowance for choral breathing and delivery. This option is considered more concise, it has 4 syllables instead of 6; it maintains thematic fidelity, rhythmic smoothness, and cultural clarity.

Line 10 We will lift our homeland high Anyị **ga-eme ka** ala nna a'ị dị elu

In line 10, *ga-eme* 'will do' is semantically different from the English 'will lift'. It is too generic, lacks the uplift, mobilize, inspire components of the word 'lift'. Lift in this context implies elevation, uplifting progress, or empowerment, not just doing something. This work supports the use of *ala nna* for homeland because in anthems fatherland and homeland can be used interchangeably in English language while in the Igbo language, *ala nna anyi* wields more patriotic and passionate effect than *obodo*.

Solution: Alternative Phrase/Deletion of *ka* and *dị*

This paper suggests that *ga-ebuli* 'will lift' or 'will raise' replaces *ga-eme* 'will do'. This phrase is more semantically accurate for the English equivalence and evokes growth, promotion, transformation. It is more poetically strong and culturally intuitive in Igbo usage. Although it is made up of three syllables, it is rhythm-friendly given the lateral /l/ as the onset of the last syllable. *Ka* and *dị* are then deleted for their syntactic inappropriateness with *ga-ebuli*. *Anyị ga-ebuli ala nna a'ị elu* is the best option in this work.

Line 11 We believe in togetherness **A'ị ga-eweta** ịdịnaotu

A'ị ga-eweta idinaotu literally means 'we will bring unity / togetherness'. In this translation, there is a misrepresentation of Tense. 'We believe…' is present and ongoing while *ga-eweta* is futuristic, implying that togetherness is not yet existing. Again, there is a drift in the semantics. 'Bringing unity' is different from 'Believing in unity'. The former is action-oriented while the latter is value-based. Another down turn is the fact that Igbo version doesn't convey binding commitment or shared identity, which is crucial in the English meaning besides the Igbo audience may interpret it as aspiration, not identity or conviction.

Solution: Alternative Phrase

(i) *Anyi kwenyere na ịdịnaotu*, this is literal and the meaning fully captured because both the source and target languages share the experience of belief and togetherness, so the concepts are available in both languages.

(ii) K'aị jikọọ aka n'otu meaning 'let us join hands in unity'. This is visual, idiomatic, culturally powerful, suggests collaborative unity embedded in togetherness.

Anyi kwenyere na ịdịnaotu is preferred; it satisfies accuracy and economy of translation.

Line 12 We'll build a land of progress **Ga-eweta** oganiihu obodo

Ga-eweta is to bring not build. It does not capture the tone of ongoing, purposeful and collective building.

Solution: Alternative phrase
This research suggests

(i) *N'ilu olu Oganiihu*, or *Kwalite Oganiihu*. The plural pronoun is omitted in the given suggestion because it is captured in line 11 and line 12 is an annex or product of line 11

(ii) *Obodo anyị ga-aga n'ihu* meaning 'our land will go forward'. This is metaphoric and poetic. Tense is future and figurative, suggesting unstoppable growth. This option has 8 syllables but could work for melodic extension in pre-landing feature leading to the peak of the anthem.

Line 13	Lift the Spirit of Anambra	Bulite Mmụọ Anambara
Line 14	Lift the Spirit of Anambra	Bulite Mmụọ Anambara
Line 15	Lift the Spirit of Anambra State	Bulite Mmụọ Steti Anambara

Actually, the translation here, *Bulite Mmuo Anambra* is correct. But for poetic energy, the researcher suggests the use of three verbs we have in Igbo, which are gradable and used for evoking the spirit. Number one is *kpolite*, meaning 'summon', 'awaken' or 'call up'. The second one is *bulite*, which is 'lift up'. And then the third one, *kwalite*, which is 'uplift', 'promote' or 'push up'. That way the linguistic richness of Igbo is exemplified.

Repeating a core syntactic or structural unit *mmuo* but varying the verb slightly each time to express a progression (from calling, to lifting, to elevating) allowed in poetic translation. It is an elevated poetic technique, used in anthem or lyric translation where emotional cadence, rhetorical variation, and linguistic aesthetics are crucial. This technique is known as Semantic Parallelism. Using three different but related verbs *kpolite*, *bulite*, *kwalite* to translate the repeated phrase 'Lift the Spirit of Anambra' avoids monotony while enriching the expression and evoking a slightly different nuance. It keeps the listener engaged emotionally and aurally jeering towards escalation of intensity which is great for anthem climax. This climax takes the nature of a poetic crescendo, from invocation (kpolite), to elevation (bulite), to empowerment/progress (kwalite).

Line 16 We love **Anyị hụrụ n'anya**.

Line 16 is a literal translation. This is short and emotionally rich in English. But in Igbo, love is not expressed in such abstract or romantic terms when referring to the land or one's state. When Igbo people want to show affection or affinity, they use expressions like *ala nna m*, *ala anyi*, *be anyi*, expressing acceptability, ownership, commitment, which are the bedrocks of love. Therefore, one can say in Igbo that ownership, and deep emotional rootedness are what convey patriotic and communal affection.

Solution: Alternative Phrase

(i) *Ala anyị* meaning 'our land'. This evokes belonging, powerful in anthem; emotionally sufficient even without verb

(ii) *Ala nna m / ala nna anyị* meaning 'Land of my/our father(s)'. This option calls up our heritage and ancestral bond

(iii) *Be anyị* meaning 'our home' denoting FAMILIAR, INTIMATE, STRONG COMMUNAL TONE

If minimalist form of the English two syllabic words 'We love' is considered, a culturally true equivalent could be *ala anyị.* And also, all of the sounds there are vowels, laterals, and nasals which are sonorous enough for a soft landing in the closing line. It is a better option compared to ending with fricatives or stops which will make the landing jerky.

The Anambra State Anthem in English and revised Igbo Version

	English	**Igbo**
Line 1	With all our hearts	N' obi a'ị niile
Line 2	We pray and ask	Anyị ekpee ma rịọ
Line 3	God bless Anambra	Chukwu gọzie Anambara
Line 4	God bless the shining light that we bear	Gozie ọnwa na-etiri mba niile
Line 5	We are the only ones to make her brighter	Ọ bụ naanị a'ị ga-eme ka o nwuwaa
Line 6	The Only ones to make her better	Naanị a'ị ga-eme ka ọ ka mma
Line 7	The Only ones to make Anambra shine	Naanị a'ị ga-eme ka Anambra *nwukee*
Line 8a	With our sweat and blood	Were ike na ume
Line 8b	Every breathe of our lives	*Na ntachi obi niile (or Were Mmuo a'i niile)*
Line 9	With trust in God	Chekwube na Chukwu
Line 10	We will lift our homeland high	Anyị ga-ebuli ala nna a'ị elu
Line 11	We believe in togetherness	Anyi kwenyere n' ịdịnaotu
Line 12	We'll build a land of progress	Obodo anyị ga-aga n'ihu
Line 13	Lift the Spirit of Anambra	Kpọlite Mmụọ Anambra
Line 14	Lift the Spirit of Anambra	Bulite Mmụọ Anambra
Line 15	Lift the Spirit of Anambra State	Kwalite Mmụọ Steti Anambra
Line 16	We love	Ala anyị.

Discussion of Findings

The retranslation of the Anambra State Anthem into Igbo revealed critical insights into the intersection of language, culture, and musicality. Each line of the anthem posed unique challenges that required not merely direct linguistic substitution, but a culturally grounded reinterpretation of meaning, rhythm, and imagery.

1. Cultural Semantics versus Literal Translation

The study found that many literal translations of English lines failed to capture the cultural depth of the Igbo worldview. For example, the phrase 'every breath of our life' was initially rendered as *iku ume ndu anyi niile*, a literal equivalence that lacked the emotional and cultural weight intended in the original. It was successfully reinterpreted as *na ntachi obi niile* or *were mmụọ a'ị niile*, to evoke total devotion and sacrifice in a culturally familiar way. Similarly, 'we love', translated literally, would misrepresent Igbo expression of collective attachment. Instead, the use of *Ala anyị* provided a more resonant cultural equivalent, representing ancestral connection, identity, and belonging.

2. Tense and Aspect Appropriateness

Originally translated with future tense verbs, *ga-eweta* conveyed a sense of deferred action, which clashed with the present or continuous tone of the English source. These were revised in *Anyi kwenyere na idinaotu*, which is more accurately reflect ongoing commitment and active development. This adjustment aligns with both Igbo grammatical norms and the anthem's inspirational tone.

3. Lexical Enrichment through Synonym Variation

In the repetitive lines 'Lift the spirit of Anambra,' the original Igbo translation *Bulite mmụọ Anambra* was semantically accurate, but repeated without variation. To enhance poetic energy and stylistic variation, verbs like *kpolite*, *bulite*, and *kwalite* were rotated across lines. This strategy, a form of semantic parallelism, adds intonational variety, emotional layering, and linguistic richness, an important feature in anthem performance.

4. Phonological and Rhythmic Considerations

The retranslation process also revealed the importance of phonological structure in musical rendering. Words ending in fricatives or stops often caused rhythmic congestion or harsh landings, especially at line endings. In contrast, sonorous final syllables (e.g., vowels, laterals, nasals) allowed for smoother, more melodic closings. The final line *Ala anyị* exemplifies this, offering a two-beat phrase with open sounds that support a gentle musical resolution.

5. Symbolic and Emotional Fidelity

Beyond grammar and rhythm, the retranslation prioritized symbolic fidelity, ensuring that values like unity, courage, strength, and patriotism were conveyed in ways that resonate with the Igbo

cultural experience. Terms like *were ike n'ume* and *Anyi kwenyere na idinaotu* embody culturally familiar expressions of struggle, unity, and communal effort, aligning the anthem's contents with indigenous perspectives.

Contribution to Knowledge

The findings in this paper affirm that anthem translation requires more than linguistic accuracy. It demands cultural sensitivity, prosodic awareness, and symbolic alignment. By carefully selecting words that match Igbo rhythm, tone, and worldview, the retranslated anthem becomes not only a linguistic rendering but a culturally embedded expression of Anambra's identity and values. The study brings to light the need for systematic review process and a synergy among cultural experts, linguists, musicologists and translators, to ensure quality translations.

Conclusion

This study underscores the critical importance of cultural sensitivity and attention to linguistic nuances in the poetic translation of texts, especially those bearing national and cultural significance. Translating a state anthem goes beyond linguistic substitution; it demands a deep engagement with the cultural, emotional, and symbolic layers of meaning embedded in both the source and target languages. Therefore, a collaborative approach involving cultural experts, linguists, musicologists and translators with expertise in literary and poetic translation is essential. Such synergy ensures that the translated anthem retains its aesthetic appeal, emotional force, and cultural relevance. A well-executed translation can reinforce a sense of unity, national identity, and cultural pride among citizens. Conversely, a poorly rendered translation risks diluting these values, potentially alienating the very audience it seeks to inspire.

Recommendations

This study recommends a critical review of the current Igbo version of the Anambra State Anthem and the adoption of the retranslated version presented herein. The revised translation demonstrates greater cultural sensitivity and maintains fidelity to both the meaning and tone of the original English text. It is more impact-driven due to its deliberate adaptation to Igbo cultural references and values. Additionally, the retranslation employs idiomatic expressions that more accurately reflect the linguistic richness of the Igbo language, offering improved equivalence and resonance. The study further proposes the establishment of a systematic review process to guide future translations, ensuring they remain culturally grounded, linguistically effective, and appropriate for symbolic and ceremonial contexts.

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