

# THE INLAND WEST CLUSTERS OF IKEKEONWU'S IGBO DIALECTS CLASSIFICATION: A MODIFICATION

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## **Abstract**

*Among the five clusters Ikekeonwu classified the Igbo dialects, is the Inland West Dialect Cluster, which covers the Igbo dialects spoken in Onitsha, Awka and Aguata areas. The classification seems not to properly position the Igbo speech varieties of Qmambala area, which have some linguistic traits that qualify them to be recognised as a main dialect of the Inland West Igbo Cluster. This paper seeks to position Qmambala speech varieties within the landscape of Igbo dialectology by modifying the Inland West Cluster. It uses linguistic criteria with focus on the similarities and differences in the phonemes, phonological patterning of words, phonological processes and secondary articulation features. It adopts minimal pair/set analysis and comparative analysis. From the result, Qmambala speech varieties are grouped as Qmambala Main Dialect of the Onitsha Inland West Igbo.*

**Key words:** *Igbo, dialectology, dialects, classification, phonology.*

## **Introduction**

A lot of studies have been done on Igbo dialects and speech varieties, which include Ikekeonwu (1987), Manfredi (1991), Nwaozuzu (2008; 2017), Eme (2008) and Ohiri-Aniche (2013). Ikekeonwu (1987) groups Igbo dialects into five clusters; and each cluster has its satellite dialects. However, Qmambala speech varieties are not positioned in the classification.

Although Ikekeonwu (1987) does not mention Qmambala speech varieties in her classification, it is inferred from her schematic representation of the clusters that Qmambala speech varieties are among the satellite dialects of the Inland West Dialect Cluster (IWDC). Manfredi (1991) captures the name *Qmambāla* in

his classification and considers it a dialect of southern Igbo cluster. Emenanjo (2010), adapting Manfredi's (1991) classification, places *Qmambāla* in the Northern cluster and sub-divides it into three, namely: *Qka*, *Qñichà* and *Àgùlerì*. *Àgùlerì* is here used to represent the varieties of Igbo spoken in *Qmambala* area. This is considered inappropriate since *Qmambala* is a general name for referring to the people of Oyi, Ayamelum, Anambra East and Anambra West (Uwaezuoke (2017) and therefore should have been used the speech varieties of the area.

In this paper, *Qmambala* Igbo varieties are repositioned within the landscape of Igbo dialectology using Ikekeonwu's (1987) classification as basis. The phonological differences and similarities existing among *Qmambala* speech varieties are first identified with focus on their phonemes, phonological patterning of words, phonological processes and secondary articulation features. The name *Qmambāla* is derived from the *Qmambāla* River (young people call it *Qmambāla*, while elderly people call it *Qmabāla*), which cuts across Oyi, Ayamelum, Anambra East and Anambra West Local Government Areas. The Local Government Areas are offshoots of old Anambra Local Government Area, which had Otuocha as its headquarters. However, the people of Ayamèlùm Local Government Area were at a time placed under Uzō Ūwaàñì Local Government Area of Enugu State. Following a protest by the people who felt separated from their kith and kin, they were returned to Anambra State and placed under Òyi Local Government Area and in 1997 given a local government status.

In Anambra East Local Government Area are eleven communities of *Àgùlerì*, Enugwū *Àgùlerì*, Enugwūotū *Àgùlerì*, Ezi *Àgùlùotū*, Mkpunaàdò, Ūmùèrì, Ūmùòba Anam, Ñsugbè, Naàdò, Ìkem and Ìgbàriam. Anambra West Local Government Area has ten communities made of Nzam, Ìfite Ānam, Ezi Ānam, Ūmùèze Ānam (also called Ūmūziam), Oròma Ètiti, Ūmùenwelum Ānam (also called Ūmùem), Inomà, Owellè, Ùkwalà and Olumbanasà. There are eight communities in Ayamèlùm Local Government Area,

namely: Anàkù, Ọmọr, Ìfite Ọgwārì, Ụmùòlụm, Ọmàsì, Igbàkwù, Ụmūējē and Ụmùmboō. Finally, in Ọyi Local Government Area are five communities of Ntèjè, Awkuzu, Ụmūnyà, Ogbunikē and Nkwèlle Èzùnakā.

Following the 2006 Census, the four Local Government Areas have a population of six hundred and fourty-five thousand, eight hundred and five (645, 805) persons who are distributed as follows:

- i. Anambra East – 152, 149 (77,539 male and 74, 610 female)
- ii. Anambra West – 167, 303 (85,833 male and 81, 470 female)
- iii. Ayamèlùm – 158, 152 (81, 065 male and 77, 087 female)
- iv. Ọyi – 168, 201 (85, 694 male and 82, 507 female)

Nzàm, Ìnọmà, Owellē, Ụkwàlà and Olumbànasà in Anambra West Local Government Area are coordinate bilingual as they speak the Ìgbò and Ìgalà languages, but without equal mastery of both of them. They speak Ìgalà more fluently as L1 than Igbo because of their closeness to the Ìgalà people of Kogi State.

### **A Review of Ikekeonwu's Classification**

Ikekeonwu (1987) classifies Igbo dialects into five clusters using linguistic criteria such as grammar, especially the morphology and phonology readily available. The linguistic data are the negative suffix ghi [ɣi] / [ɣɪ], the perfective suffix –le / -la, the progressive marker, the vowel system, the vowel harmony patterns and some tonal patterns. The five clusters she identifies are:

1. Niger Igbo
2. Inland West Igbo
3. Inland East Igbo
4. Northern Igbo
5. Riverain Igbo

In this classification, Ikekeonwu regards dialects which exhibit same characteristics with minor differences as one. She considers the dialect that possesses all the characteristics as the main dialect

(MD), while others around it are the satellite dialects. Ikekeonwu does not consider their minor differences as making them separate dialects. The satellites differ from the main dialects in some minor phonological and syntactic details.

According to the scholar, the Inland West Igbo dialect cluster are the varieties of Igbo spoken directly to the east of the Niger River. She states that these dialects lie to the west of the group spoken further inland in Owerri, Umuahia etc., on the basis of which she has chosen to classify them as 'Inland West'. She identifies three main dialects in the Inland West cluster, namely: Onitsha, Awka and Aguata, with each having its satellites. Ikekeonwu asserts that the Inland West cluster is more homogenous than the Niger Igbo cluster except for the Aguata dialect which, to her, seems to have been affected by the dialects of their Inland East Igbo neighbours. The scholar says that Enu-Onitsha satellite is distinct from other Onitsha group of satellites to some extent and notes that the difference exists in their individual phonemes and assimilatory possibilities. Ikekeonwu point out that Enu-Onitsha dialect does not have the velar fricative [ɣ] and the velar nasal [ŋ]. Below is Ikekeonwu's schematic representation of the Inland West Igbo Dialects:

Fig. 1 Ikekeonwu's Inland West Igbo Dialect Cluster

<b>MD1 Onitsha Inland West Igbo</b>	
<b>MD1 S1</b>	Enu-Onitsha dialect
<b>MD1 S2</b>	General Onitsha dialect
<b>MD1S2i</b>	Obosi General Onitsha dialect
<b>MD1S2ii</b>	Umuoji General Onitsha dialect
<b>MD1 S3</b>	Otu Onitsha dialect
<b>MD1 S3i</b>	Obosoid Otu Onitsha dialect
<b>MD1 S3ii</b>	Ọkaoid Otu Onitsha dialect
<b>MD1 S3iii</b>	Oweroid Otu Onitsha dialect
<b>MD2 Ọka Inland West Igbo</b>	
<b>MD2 S1</b>	EnugwuUkwu Ọka dialect
<b>MD2 S2</b>	Amọbija Ọka dialect
<b>MD3 Aguata Inland West Igbo</b>	
<b>MD3 S1</b>	Amaiye Aguata dialect
<b>MD3 S2</b>	Orumba Aguata dialect

Ikekeonwu (1987) uses the General Onitsha dialect to represent the Igbo varieties spoken in the Onitsha immediate environs, like Umuoji, Obosi, etcetera. She submits that the velar fricative [ɣ] and velar nasal /ŋ/ are found in this dialect. She notes that both the General Onitsha and Enu-Onitsha dialects have the /f/ ~ /h/ and /l/ ~ /r/ alternations with Owere, Umuhahia and other Inland East dialects, such that where the former use /f/, the later would use /h/, e.g. *afa* /*afal*/ and *aha* /*ahāl*/ 'name'.

Ikekeonwu never mentions Omambala speech varieties in her classification, but her groupings of Igbo dialects suggest that Omambala Igbo is among the Onitsha Main dialect of the Inland

West dialects cluster. Her claim that both the Enu-Onitsha and General Onitsha dialects exhibit /f/ /fi/ and /l/ /r/ alternations with Owerri, Umuahia and other Inland East dialects is not very true of Ọmambala varieties as most of them do not possess /f/ and /fi/ phonemes and wherever they occur in Igbo words, they are replaced with /v/. Ọmambala Igbo varieties possess the /l/ and /r/ phonemes. Also, Ikekeonwu's (1987) claim that /ɣ/ and /ŋ/ are found in the General Onitsha Dialect is not true of all the speech varieties of Ọmambala, since /ɣ/ is absent in Ayamelum and Ifite Ogwari lacks /ŋ/.

### **Methodology**

The study is designed to be comparative in nature whereby the data obtained from the speech varieties of Ọmambala area are compared to bring out their similarities and differences. Linguistic data were obtained mainly from the primary source through oral interview; and using Swadesh 100 wordlist, the researcher-adapted 138 wordlist and 70 phrase and sentence list for data elicitation. The respondents also explained a cultural or occupational activity of their choice, which enabled a confirmation of data obtained with the lists. A digital audio recorder was used to record the data for easy retrieval before analysis. In analysing the data, minimal pair/set analysis and comparative analysis are used.

The population of the study was drawn from thirteen speech communities: the local government headquarters, based on convenience, and two other speech communities in each Local Government Areas selected using the random sampling technique, except in Ayamelum where one speech community which was used for pilot was included. The speech communities are Àgùlerì, Ñsugbè, Ìkem, Nzàm, Ānam (Ụmùèze Ānam/Ụmùziàm and Ụmùdiòrà), Ụkwàlà, Anàkù, Ìfite Ọgwàrì, Ụmùdolum, Ụmùmboō, Ñtèjè, Awkuzu and Ogbunikē. However, Nzàm, and Ụkwàlà were later discovered to speak Ìgalà as their L1 and Igbo as their L2, consequent upon which data from the two communities were

dropped, leaving the number of the speech varieties at eleven. From each of the speech communities, three respondents were chosen without reference to gender as their selection was based on our conviction that they are competent speakers of their speech varieties. They are between the ages of 40 years old and above. On the whole, there were thirty-three respondents.

The data are phonemically transcribed and tone-marked using the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) (revised to 2005); and Achebe, Ikekeonwu, Emenanjo, Eme & Ng'ang'a's (2011) *A Composite Synchronic Alphabet of Igbo Dialects (CSAID) and Guidelines for Data Transcription* where necessary. Green and Igwe's (1963) tone marking convention is adopted whereby high tone is left unmarked, low tone is marked with grave accent [ ` ]; and the downstep tone is marked orthographically with a macron [ ¯ ] and phonemically with a down pointing arrow before the syllable that bears the tone followed by an acute accent on the tone bearing unit [ <sup>↓</sup> ].

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

The number of the SI consonant phonemes present in the speech varieties of Omambala area vary. They are identified using the minimal pair/set analysis as contained in Appendix 1, while the consonant charts and vowel chart are shown in Appendix 2A and 2B respectively. The consonant phonemes are first discussed followed by the vowel phonemes.

### **Consonants Phonemes**

The minimal pair/set analysis reveals that there are twenty-five consonants in Àgùlerì, Ñsugbè and Ìkem comprising ten plosive, five nasal, two affricate, one trill, four fricative, one lateral and two approximant. The consonants are the same in quality. The voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/, voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ and voiced glottal fricative /h/ found in the SI do not exist in Àgùlerì, Ñsugbè and Ìkem speech varieties. Where /f/ and /h/

phonemes appear in any SI word, they are most often realised as /v/; and where there is /ʃ/, it is realised as /r/.

Ànàm has twenty-four consonants comprising ten plosives, five nasals, three fricatives, two affricates, one trill, one lateral and two approximants. The consonants of Ànàm are: / p b t d k g kp gb k<sup>w</sup> g<sup>w</sup> m n ɲ ŋ ŋ<sup>w</sup> ʃ dʒ r v s z l j w/. All the consonants in the SI are found in Ànàm speech community except / ʃ ɣ fi/. Where the phoneme /fi/ occurs in SI word, it is realised as /v/ in Ànàm. Ànàm speech variety also realises the voiceless labiodentals fricative /f/ and voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ as voiced labiodental fricative /v/. In Ànàm, the phonemes /l/ is realised as /r/ wherever it occurs in SI word. In some cases, the phoneme /ɣ/ is realised as voiced labialised velar approximant /w/ in Ànàm as found in the following words:

(1)	<b>S.I</b>	<b>Ànàm</b>	
	aghùghò /aɣòɣò/	awùwò /aàwò/	‘cunning’
	ghò /ɣò/	wò /wò/	‘pluck’

The minimal pairs/sets analysis for identifying consonants of Ntèjè and Awkuzu applies to Ogbunikē except that the woed *n̄n̄ò* does exist in Ogbunikē. Ntèjè and Awkuzu have twenty-five consonants each and they comprise ten plosives, five nasals, one trill, two affricates, three fricatives, one lateral and two approximants; while Ogbunikē has twenty-six which include the same number of plosives, nasals, trill, affricates, lateral and approximants found in the other two communities. It is only on fricative that it contains five instead of four existing in the other two. The voiceless labiodental fricative /f/, voiceless alveolar fricative /ʃ/, and voiced glottal fricative /fi/ found in the SI do not exist in Ntèjè and Awkuzu. The phonemes /f/ and /fi/ are most often realised as /v/ in these communities whenever they appear in any SI word; where /ʃ/ appears in any SI word, the two communities realised it as /r/. Ogbunikē has the phoneme /f/ and /ʃ/, but does not have /v/ found in Ntèjè and Awkuzu, and /fi/ found in SI. In any SI word, where /fi/



and /v/ phonemes appear, /fi/ is most often realised as a voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ in Ogbunikē, and sometimes as alveolar trill /r/; while /v/ is realised as voiced bilabial plosive /b/. Ñtèjè, Awkuzu and Ogbunikē realize /v/ as /b/ in the SI word *mvọ* /m̩vɔ/ 'nail', which they have as *mbọ* /mbɔ/. The voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ is found to be used in free variation with /j/ in the agha/aya 'war' in Ñtèjè and Awkuzu. Also, /f/ and /r/ are in free variation in Ogbunikē in *afọ/afɔ* 'year'.

Anàkù and Ụmùòluṁ have twenty-three consonants each made up of ten plosive, five nasal, one trill, two affricates, two fricatives, one lateral and two approximants. In Ìfite Ògwarì are twenty-six consonants consisting of ten plosive, four nasal, one trill, two affricates, six fricatives, one lateral, two approximants; and Ụmùṁboṅ has twenty-four consonants with ten plosives, five nasals, one trill, two affricates, three fricatives, one lateral and two approximants. The consonants of Anàkù and Ụmùòluṁ are /p b t d k g kp gb k<sup>w</sup> g<sup>w</sup> m n ɲ ɲ<sup>w</sup> tʃ dʒ v s r l j w/. Anàkù and Ụmùòluṁ do not have the SI phonemes /f z ʃ ɣ fi/. Ụmùṁboṅ has all the consonants in Anàkù and Ụmùòluṁ plus the voiceless post-alveolar fricative /ʃ/. It does not have the SI phonemes /f z ɣ fi/. All the consonants in Anàkù, Ụmùòluṁ and Ụmùṁboṅ exist in Ìfite Ògwarì. The only consonants not witnessed in Ìfite Ògwarì are /ɲ ɣ/. Other consonants of the SI not in Anàkù and Ụmùòluṁ which are in Ìfite Ògwarì are /f ʃ fi z/. The SI consonants common to the four communities are /p b t d k g kp gb k<sup>w</sup> g<sup>w</sup> m n ɲ ɲ<sup>w</sup> r tʃ dʒ v s l j w/. The phonemes /ɲ f z ʃ v fi/ do not completely exist in each of the communities. For example, the phonemes /f z fi/ are not seen in Anàkù, Ụmùòluṁ and Ụmùṁboṅ, but they are found in Ìfite Ògwarì; the voiceless post alveolar fricative /ʃ/ does not exist in Anàkù and Ụmùòluṁ, but is witnessed in Ìfite Ògwarì and Ụmùṁboṅ; and the consonant /ɲ/ is lacking in Ìfite Ògwarì, but is present in Anàkù, Ụmùòluṁ and Ụmùṁboṅ. Where /f/ and /fi/ phonemes appear in any SI word, they are most often realised as /v/

in Anàkù, Ụmùòluṃ and Ụmùṃboṓ; the phoneme /z/ is also realised as /r/ in these three communities. The /j/ phoneme is also realised as /r/ in Anàkù and Ụmùòluṃ. None of the communities has the SI voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ as it is most often realised as /j/. Sometimes, Ìfite Ȫgwarì realises the SI phoneme /r d/ as [dz] before a high front vowel as in *agiri* [agɪdzɪ] ‘intimate girlfriend’, SI word *ndì inyòm* [ndzìyòm] ‘women’.

### Vowel Phonemes

There are eight vowels in the eleven communities. These vowels are the same as the SI vowels both in quantity and quality. They are: /a e i ɪ o ɔ u ʊ/.

### Comparison of the phonemes and phonological patterning of words

The study reveals that the eleven speech varieties used for analysis have twenty-one phonemes of the SI in common. The phonemes are: /p b t d k g kp gb k<sup>w</sup> g<sup>w</sup> m n ɲ ŋ<sup>w</sup> ʃ dz r s l j w/. Àgùlerì, Nsugbè, Ìkem, Ntèjè and Awkuzu speech varieties have twenty five consonants out of the twenty-eight consonants existing in the SI; Ogbunikè and Ìfite Ȫgwarì each has twenty-six consonants; there are twenty-four consonants each in Ànam and Ụmùṃboṓ; while Anàkù and Ụmùòluṃ speech varieties have twenty-three consonants. All the speech varieties have the eight vowels of the SI without any additional vowel.

Àgùlerì, Nsugbè, Ìkem, Ntèjè, Awkuzu, Ànam, Anàkù and Ụmùòluṃ speech varieties do not have voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/, voiceless post-alveolar fricative /ʃ/ and voiced glottal fricative /ɦ/. In addition to not having these phonemes, the voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ does exist in Ànam, Anàkù and Ụmùòluṃ, Ụmùṃboṓ and Ìfite Ȫgwarì; other consonants lacking in Anàkù, Ụmùòluṃ and Ụmùṃboṓ are voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ and voiced alveolar fricative /z/. Other speech varieties where the voiced glottal fricative /ɦ/ does not exist are Ụmùṃboṓ and

Ogbunikē. It is found only in Ìfite Ògwarì. Ogbunikē is also the only speech variety where voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ is not found; and /ŋ/ is in all the speech varieties except Ìfite Ògwarì.

Some of the speech varieties exhibit tonal differences with others in some words. For example, while Anàkù, Ùmùdolum, Ìfite Ògwarì and Ùmùmboò realise *alā* /a<sup>1</sup>lál/ 'breast' with a high – down step tone sequence, other speech varieties have it as *ala* /ala/ with a high – high tone sequence. There are also some lexical differences among the speech varieties; the SI word *nwaànyì* 'woman' is called *nwaànyì* in Ñsugbè, Ànam and Ogbunikē; it is called *nwaànyà* in Àgùlerì, Ìkem, Ntèjè and Awkuzu; Anàkù, Ùmùmboò and Ùmùdolum call it *naànyà*; but Ìfite Ògwarì calls it *ndziòmù*. Also, the word *onwa* 'moon' in SI remains so in Àgùlerì, Ìkem, Ñsugbè, Ntèjè, Awkuzu, Ogbunikē and Ìfite Ògwarì; but Anàkù, Ùmùmboò and Ùmùdolum call it *ona*; and it is known as *onye ivè* in Ànam.

Ntèjè, Awkuzu, Àgùlerì and Ñsugbè operate 25 system of consonants, but Anàkù operates 23. It is also discovered that Ogbunikē has 26 consonants excluding /h/ and including /ʃ/. This study reveals that Ìfite Ògwarì operates 26 consonants including the /f/ sound as seen in *fùọ* 'give chance'. The consonants not found in Ìfite Ògwarì are the voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ usually replaced with /j/, and the velar nasal /ŋ/, which is usually replaced with the labialised velar nasal /ŋ<sup>w</sup>/. The study has shown a clear evidence of the distinctiveness of /r/ in Ntèjè and Ñsugbè, example:

- |     |     |                     |               |     |
|-----|-----|---------------------|---------------|-----|
| (2) | arà | /arà/               | 'weaver bird' | /r/ |
|     | avà | /avà/               | 'name'        | /v/ |
|     | oyī | /o <sup>1</sup> jí/ | 'cold'        | /j/ |
|     | orī | /o <sup>1</sup> rí/ | 'steal'       | /r/ |

Some similarities and differences in the phonological patterning of words are observed among the speech varieties involving the retention or substitution of some of the SI phonemes in some words in some speech varieties.

The labialised velar nasal sound /ŋ<sup>w</sup>/ in the SI exists in all the speech varieties investigated, but in Anàkù, Ụmù̀mbō and Ụmù̀òlūm, it is realised as /ŋ<sup>w</sup>/ only when it precedes the high back rounded vowel u/ù; when it does not precede u/ù, it is realised as /ŋ/. The phoneme /ŋ/ does not exist in Ìfite Ọ̀gwarì (See Appendix 4a).

In any environment where Àgùlerì, Ìkem, Ñsugbè, Ànam, Ñtèjè, Awkuzu, Anàkù, Ụmù̀mbō and Ụmù̀òlūm would use the voiced labio-dental fricative /v/, Ogbunikè uses its voiceless counterpart /f/ and Ìfite Ọ̀gwarì uses voiced glottal fricative /ɦ/. Finally, the voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ is not found in all the speech varieties investigated except in Ogbunikè and Ìfite Ọ̀gwarì. The occurrence of voiceless labio-dental fricative in Ìfite Ọ̀gwarì is very limited. Therefore, where Àgùlerì, Ìkem, Ñsugbè, Ànam, Ñtèjè, Awkuzu, Anàkù, Ụmù̀mbō and Ụmù̀òlūm would use /v/ and Ogbunikè uses /f/, Ìfite Ọ̀gwarì most often uses /ɦ/ and on rare occasions uses /j/. Few instances from our data are presented in Appendix 4b. Instances such as this is what Nwaozuzu (2018) refers to as sound shift, where; /ɦ/ → /f/ → /v/.

In some cases where some other speech varieties would use voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ at medial position, Ogbunikè and Ìfite Ọ̀gwarì use voiced labial plosive /b/. This usually occurs at CVCV syllable structure as can be found in Appendix 4c. Anàkù, Ụmù̀mbō and Ụmù̀òlūm are the only speech varieties studied where there is complete absence of voiced alveolar fricative /z/; where other speech varieties would use /z/, Anàkù, Ụmù̀mbō and Ụmù̀òlūm use voiced alveolar trill /r/.

In Ụmù̀mbō, where SI word has /z/ at intervocalic position involving two ‘o’, the /z/ is replaced with voiced alveolar plosive /d/; while Ìfite Ọ̀gwarì would have /r/. This is manifest in the SI word ọ̀zọ ‘again’. Ñtèjè and Ogbunikè sometimes realize the labial velar nasal /ŋ/ where SI has the velar nasal /ŋ<sup>w</sup>/ as seen in *anyàsì* /aŋàsì/ ‘night’ as against *anàsì* /aŋàsì/ found in SI as well as in Àgùlerì, Ìkem, Awkuzu and Anàkù; for Ànam and Ìfite Ọ̀gwarì, the

consonant of the second syllable is elided to realise àasị /àasị/ and aasị /aasị/ respectively. Ìsugbè calls it ùchichì /ùtʃiʃi/ ‘night’.

At CVV syllable structure, where the vowels are from –ATR group and some speech varieties would have ‘o’ at final position following ‘u’, some speech varieties have ‘a’, but when the vowels are from +ATR group and some speech varieties would have ‘o’ at final position following ‘u’, some speech varieties have ‘e’. Examples are presented Appendix 4e. At VCV syllable structure, where in other speech varieties /b/ is at medial position followed by the final vowel /ɔ/ or /ʊ/, Ìfite Ògwarì would have /v/.

(3)	<b>Others</b>	<b>Ìfite Ògwarì</b>	
	mbɔ /mbɔ/	mvɔ /mvɔ/	‘nail’
	abù /abù/	avù /avù/	‘armpit’

Where in the same environment Àgùlerì, Ìkem, Ìsugbè, Ànam, Ìtèjè, Awkuzu, Anàkù, Ùmùmboō and Ùmùdolum realise /v/ and Ogbunikē realises /f/, Ìfite Ògwarì uses /fi/ as seen in Appendix 4f. At intervocalic position of VCV syllable structure involving the phonemes /i/ and /e/ respectively, Ìfite Ògwarì realises /j/ where Àgùlerì, Ìkem, Ìsugbè, Ànam, Ìtèjè, Awkuzu, Anàkù, Ùmùmboō and Ùmùdolum would realise /v/, while Ogbunikē realises /f/.

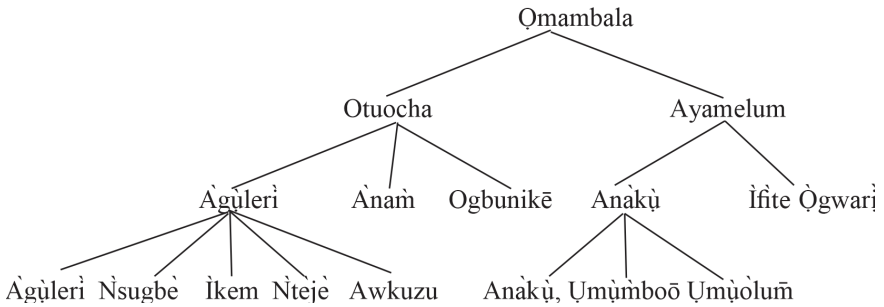
For the SI word SI ‘anyi’ /àɲi/ ‘we/us’, Àgùlerì, Ìkem, Ìsugbè, Ànam, Ìtèjè, Awkuzu and Ìfite Ògwarì would say ànyì /àɲi/, while Anàkù, Ùmùmboō, Ùmùdolum and Ogbunikē say àyì /àɲi/ with /ɲ/ ~ /j/ alternation. In Àgùlerì, Ìsugbè and Ànam, /n/ change s to [r] in SI word *ogonogo*, but it is not like that in the other speech varieties investigated. In some cases, Ùmùmboō realises the voiceless post-alveolar fricative /ʃ/, but the other speech varieties would realise the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ especially at word medial position. Instances of this occurrence are noticed at word medial position. Examples are presented in Appendix 4h. Where some speech varieties would use voiced velar fricative /ɣ/, others use /j/. There is also evidence of Ànam using /v/.

## Modification of the Inland West Dialect Cluster

From the foregoing and on the basis of the major differences and similarities discovered among the speech varieties, the Igbo speech varieties of Ọmambala area are reclassified as Ọmambala dialect. There are two major features of this dialect. The first one is the replacement of /f/ and /h/ phonemes with /v/, except in Ogbunikē and Ìfite Ọgwari; Ogbunikē and Ìfite Ọgwari have /f/, while /h/ exists in Ìfite Ọgwari only. The second feature is the elision of second syllable of a VCVCV structure. Within Ọmambala dialect are two sub-dialects: Otuocha and Ayamelum; each having its characteristics. For example, in Otuocha sub-dialect, there is lack of /f ɥ h/ phonemes found in S.I., and the use of /ɲ/ instead of /j/ e.g. anyi 'we/our'. Within the Otuocha sub-dialect are Àgùlerì, Ànam and Ogbunikē; In Àgùlerì and Ogbunikē, there is the presence of the voiced velar fricative /ɣ/, while Ànam replaces it with /v/. The major difference between Àgùlerì and Ogbunikē is that the former lack /f ɥ/ phonemes existing in the latter; Ogbunike does not have the /v/ phoneme. Ànam also elides consonant of the second syllable of VCVCV structure followed by progressive assimilation and have the tendency of multiple elision in lexicalised words e.g. *Umù ezè Ànam* which is lexicalised as *UmùezèÀnam* becomes pronounced as *Umùzìàm* with the elision of first and second *e* in *ezè*, first *a* and consonant of the second syllable in *Ànam*; *Umù ndi òrà* lexicalised as *Umùndiòrà* is pronounced as *Umùdòrà* with the syllabic nasal and vowel of the second syllable in *ndi* being elided. For Ayamelum, there is a complete absence of the S.I. phoneme /ɣ/ which is usually replaced with /j/; second syllable of VCVCV word structure is elided except where the derived form has another meaning. In Anàkù, the S.I phoneme /z/ is usually replaced with /t/, and there are the S.I phonemes /ɲ<sup>w</sup>/ and /ɲ/, but /ɲ<sup>w</sup>/ occurs between rounded vowels or after a rounded vowel, while /ɲ/ is found between unrounded vowels or before an unrounded vowel; Ìfite Ọgwari is the only speech variety that has /h/, but does not have the S.I phoneme /ɲ/. It is the only variety with

syllabic nasal elision. In figure 2 is the tree diagram structure of Omambala dialect:

Fig. 2 A tree diagram structure of Omambala dialect



This study modifies the schematic representation of Igbo dialects of Ikekeonwu (1987) in figure 1 in figure 3 to accommodate Omambala Igbo varieties within the Inland West cluster.

Fig. 3 Modified Inland West Igbo Dialect Cluster

MD1 Onitsha Inland West Igbo		
MD1 S1		Enu-Onitsha dialect
MD1 S2		General Onitsha dialect
	MD1S2i	Obosi General Onitsha dialect
	MD1S2ii	Umuoji General Onitsha dialect
MD1 S3		Otu Onitsha dialect
	MD1 S3i	Obosoid Otu Onitsha dialect
	MD1 S3ii	Ọkaoid Otu Onitsha dialect
	MD1 S3iii	Oweroid Otu Onitsha dialect
MD1 S4		Ọmambala Onitsha dialect
	MD1 S4i	OtuọchaỌmambala Onitsha dialect
	MD1 S4ii	Ayamelum Ọmambala Onitsha dialect
MD2 Ọka Inland West Igbo		
MD2 S1		EnugwuUkwu Ọka dialect
MD2 S2		Amọbja Ọka dialect
MD3 Aguata Inland West Igbo		
MD3 S1		Amayi Aguata dialect
MD3 S2		Orumba Aguata dialect

## Conclusion

This paper sought to position Ọmambala speech varieties within the landscape of Igbo dialectology through the modification of the Inland West Igbo Cluster. It used linguistic criteria but focused on the similarities and differences in the phonemes, phonological patterning of words, phonological processes and secondary articulation features. Data from Ọmambala speech varieties were compared and their similarities and differences identified. From the result, Ọmambala speech varieties are grouped as Ọmambala Main Dialect of the Onitsha Inland West Igbo, which sub-divides into Otuọcha and Ayamelum, thus positioning Ọmambala speech varieties within the landscape of Igbo dialectology.

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