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A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF PHONOLOGICAL AND MORPHOLOGICAL VARIANTS IN THE EVOLVING SPOKEN STANDARD IGBO VARIETY

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Abstract

The evolution of Spoken Standard Igbo used by the Igbo people in public space in Nigeria, has undergone significant developments. However, this occurrence has received limited empirical attention. This paper examines five phonological and two morphological variables in the evolving spoken Standard Igbo variety. This study aims to establish the variants with the highest rate of occurrence. Data was extracted from the available corpus of Igbo language news from seven purposively sampled radio stations in South-Western and South-Eastern Nigeria, covering the period of 2021-2022. The data was analyzed using frequency count and simple percentage values of variants. The findings from the analysis of data established a higher frequency of occurrence of the variants: 'r' over 'l', 'r' over 'y', 'h' over 'f', 'h' over 'r', 'l' over 'n', the negative morphemes 'ghi' over 'ro', 'hu' and 'gi', and the aspectual morphemes 'la' over 'na', 'le', and 'go'. This study recommends that the variants with a wider spread and higher frequency of occurrence should be prioritized for Spoken Standard Igbo. The adoption of this recommendation would minimize pronunciation variation in Spoken Standard Igbo.

Keywords: Standard Igbo, Phonological Variants, Morphological Variants, Pronunciation Choices, Sound Specialisation

Introduction

The name, Igbo is a name that represents both the language and the people who speak it as their first language in Nigeria. Standard Igbo is the perceived idea variety of the language required to communicate across the Igbo speech community (Emenanjo 2015). It is used in the media (Ikwubuzo 2019) because it is spoken and understood by a majority of Igbo person in all parts of Igbo land (Nwadike 2008). The Standard Igbo variety has been subjected to conflicts, engineered by the quest for supremacy between the Union Igbo and Central Igbo (Igboanusi 2017). The resolution of the conflicts has led to the emergence of a written standard and evolving spoken Igbo variety which had undergone several developments (Nwachukwu 1983, Emenanjo 2005, 2015). This can

be attested by the availability of numerous publications of Igbo meta-language for different subjects and courses in schools, and the development of legislative terminology for lawmakers. Also developed with Standard Igbo is the curriculum for the Primary, Secondary, Advanced Teachers College and College of Education. This has also made it possible for Igbo to be taught at all levels of education in Nigeria. It has also increased the visibility of the language in the media, especially the internet, through the point-partnership with Microsoft. However, the evolving spoken Standard Igbo still contains many phonological and morphological variants. Variants are non-distinctive forms in a language. The aim of this study is to identify the pattern of alternating variants of sound in the evolving standard Igbo used in some radio stations, and the rate at which a variant is used over the other. The goal of this exercise is to recommend the adoption of variants with most spread and high rate of usage as the standard variable among other competing variables.

Literature Review

Some previous studies show that Igbo speakers substitute one variant of Igbo sounds with another. For example, in Umunze dialect, vowel 'u' is used in the place of vowel 'o', 'a', in the place of 'i'. The velar sound 'gh' also replaces the labio-dental fricative 'f' (Eze, 2019). According to Onyeocha (2012, 2020), who did a preliminary study on the influence of Onitsha and Awka accents on the Standard Igbo used by newscasters in ABS radio and Radio Sapientia Onitsha, the dialectal aspectual marker '*go*' is used against the other variant '*la*'. Onyeocha (2012, 2020) also reported that the dialectal sound 'l' is used in the place of 'r' in standard Igbo. In another data presented by Onyeocha (2012, 2020) the variety 'r' in words such as '*rụọ'* (work) was realised as 'l' '*lụo'*. Onyeocha (2012) serves as the first preliminary study that indicates variation in the spoken Igbo used by Igbo radio newscasters who are supposed to be using a standard spoken Igbo devoid of variation. In English, which is the official language in Nigeria, newscasters alternate their pronunciations of Standard English words in a classic case of interference. According to Melefa (2019a) who investigated the pronunciations of the Nigeria Television newscasters in Channels Television, Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), Silver bird Television (STV), Television Continental News (TVC) and African Independent Television (AIT), the newscasters in these stations did not maintain a qualitative difference between some vowel segments that maintain opposition in

Received Pronunciation (RP). According to the study, the vowel /e/ in English (of the Nigerian Television Newscasters) tallies with RP, same with the low vowel /a/. However, the realisation of open and low back rounded vowels can only be equated with that of RP in the speech of 80% of the newscasters, as the remaining 20% deviated in their pronunciation style. One obvious fact is that the newscasters exploited the internal segment variations in English vis-à-vis ethnic English, Nigeria English and RP, with both internal and external factors affecting their pronunciation. A similar result of pronunciation variation was also reported in Melafa (2019b) on the use of English stress in the speech of Nigerian Television newscasters in Channels Television, Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), Silverbird Television (STV), Television Continental (TVC) and African Independent Television (AIT).

The case of Igbo becomes a cause for worry because the variations in Igbo accent where spoken standard Igbo is derived from are so many, which can confuse a hearer. Standard Igbo has just thirty-six sounds while the other Igbo local dialects have about seventy-three sounds (Aniche 2011). The number of sound variations in Igbo dialect shows the accents that interfere in the quest by the broadcasters to use the evolving spoken standard Igbo during news programme.

In various Igbo dictionaries, which serve as reference pronunciation material for newscasters, pronunciation variations abound. In Echeruo (1995), one of the Igbo dictionaries, there are alternations in the choice of 'r and 'l' in the variants *ọrụ*/*ọlụ* (work), 'r' and 'h' in *iru*/*ihu* (work) and 'l' and 'n' in the *ụnọ*/*ụlọ* (house), 'l' and 'r' also alternate in both *sọpụru* and *sọpụlu* (respect), *ụla* and *ụra* (sleep), *ọgaranya* and *ọgalanya* (wealthy person), and *usoro* and *usolo* (method). The case of 'h' and 'r' alternation is seen in the variants *nhọpụta* and *nrọpụta* (selection), 'h' and 'f' in the *ahuhu* and *afufu* (sufferings). 'l' and 'n' alternation occur in *abalị* and *abanị* (night), and *alaka* and *anaka* (branches), *elu* and *enu* (up), *kene* and *kele* (greeting). 'y' and 'r' alternate in the variants *oyia* and *oria* (Igwe 2001). Also in Eke (2001), there are also 'h' and 'f' alternation in the variants *hụ* and *fụ* (see), *afa* and *aha* (name), to mention but a few.

The challenge of having various Igbo accents in the standardisation of evolving spoken Igbo has been acknowledged by Onyeocha (2020), and Nwoga **(**1982). Specialisation of phonological variants has been proposed in tackling this challenge. Specialisation of

phonological variants entails attaching a special meaning to each of the two variant that alternate (Emenanjo 2005). According to Nwoga (1982:172):

> the existence of medial consonants in different dialects in the situation where the same spelling in the same dialects gives different meanings, offers us an opportunity to use different spelling for different medial consonants from the various dialects to create different spellings for different words in Standard Igbo.

Emenanjo (2005) also suggested that both phonological variants and affixes, should be specialised and adopted by all for pronunciation uniformity. For instance, variants with alternating variables such as 'l' and 'r' can mean different things when pronounced with a particular variable. For example '*iru'* and '*ihu'* that have the same meaning in two different Igbo dialects will have two different meanings when specialised in standard Igbo. With this type of specialisation, the alternation or substitution between the 'l' and 'r', 'r' and 'h' etc, will no longer be arbitrary, and the 'competition' between variants will cease. A good number of lexemes have been adopted from different local dialects and specialised for general usage in standard Igbo (Emenanjo 2005). Establishing the phonological and morphological variants with high frequency of occurrence in a formal speech will aid the specialisation of variants in the evolving spoken standard Igbo just like the lexemes. This is the gap which this study intends to fill by providing data for the harmonisation and standardisation spoken standard Igbo.

Methodology

The data used in this study were recorded from seven radio stations, which were purposively sampled, based on the time allotted to newscasting. These stations are Broadcasting Corporation of Abia (BCA radio), Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS radio), Ebonyi Broadcasting Corporation (EBBC radio), Enugu State Broadcasting Service (ESBS radio), Radio Nigeria, Orient FM and Bond FM. The stations are spread over six states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Enugu, Imo, and Lagos State respectively.42 recorded news bulletins (six from each radio station) were selected owing to time allotted to the Igbo news programme. The selected stations reflect different states where Igbo is dominantly used as L1, as well as Lagos which has a special status as Nigeria's commercial centre. By the profile of these stations, Radio Nigeria Enugu and Bond FM Lagos are federal-owned radio

stations, while ABS, EBBC, ESBS, BCA radio and Orient FM are state-owned radio stations. These stations were purposively selected because they dedicate a reasonable time to Igbo language news. The same cannot be said for most private Radio Stations. All newscasters are L1 Igbo speakers who are also fluent in English. The distribution shows that in the data recorded ABS has (8) newscasters, ESBS (8), Orient (8), BCA (8), EBBC (8) Radio Nigeria (8) and Bond FM (4).

Table 1: the selected radio stations and time alloted to news session

Station	Location	**No of Bullet in**	Newscast er state of Origin	**Time Allote d to Each Bullet in**	**Tot al**
ABS	Anamb ra	6	Anambra	30	180
Radi o Nig	Enugu	6	Enugu, Abia, Anambra , Imo	15	90
ESB S	Enugu	6	Enugu,	30	180
EBB S	Ebonyi	6	Ebonyi	15	90
Bon d FM	Lagos	6	Lagos	10	60
BCA	Abia	6	Abia	30	180
Orie nt FM	Imo	6	Imo	30	180

6 news bulletins of 30 minutes recorded from ABS Awka, EBBC, Orient FM, and BCA while 6 news bulletins of 15 minutes each were recorded in ESBS and Radio Nigeria which. A 60 minutes recording was Bond FM for 6 news bulletins. All audio recordings amounts to 960 minutes, approximately 16 hours by a total of 52 newscasters. All data were recorded between the 1st of December, 2021 to 22nd of June 2022, at about the same period of the day. The audio recording were conducted with a mini recorder and subsequently fed into a HP laptop for listening, transcription and analysis. The news broadcasts were recorded from different locations with mini recorder, while some were collected from the newscasters.

The variables identified for this study were selected through feedback from data. By the selection criteria adopted for this study, the identified variables were identified as variants in the in the Standard Igbo variety. The following variants were selected: 'l' and 'r', 'l' and 'n', 'r' and 'h', 'h' and 'f', 'r' and 'y', variants of negative morphemes '-ghi', 'ro', 'hu' and 'gi', and variants of aspectual morphemes 'go', 'ne', 'na' and 'la'. Available data were transcribed following the Onwu orthography of 1961, and other Igbo scholars such as Uwalaka (1996, 1997) and Mgbeomena (2011). In the transcribed data, tokens of occurrence are extracted from the corpus. The variants were identified, and their frequencies of occurrences were counted for analysis. This approach is considered appropriate for this study because it naturally provides trends in choices of variants which are the most heard of all variants in Igbo speech communities. In addition to this advantage, news language gains prestige from the importance attributed to its subject matter. Radio news broadcasters are generally considered to be the ultimate spoken language professionals, who may rely mainly on voice only for their occupation. This is one of the reasons the public accepts their codification as the definition of correct speech (Bell 1983). To determine the most frequent variants, their rates of occurrence were compared across the identified stations.

Findings and Discussion

1 Orient FM

The recordings from Orient FM showed that, the variants: 'r', 'h', 'r', 'l', recorded 100% in their frequency of occurrence over 'l', 'r', 'f', 'y', 'n', respectively. The negative and the aspectual markers have many realisations. '*-ghi'* recorded a higher score of 15 (53.6%) while '*-gi'* recorded a lower score of 13 (46.4%), just a difference of 7% between them. In the choice of the aspectual morpheme '*-la', '-le', '-ne'* and '*-go'*, the set of '*-le', '-ne*' and '*-go'* were less frequent in the station when compared with '*-la'*. '*-la'* variant recorded the score of 17 (58.6%), '*-le'* 3 (10.3%), '*-na'*, and 4 (13.8%), while '*–go'* recorded 5 (17.3%). '*-la'* only, recorded above half of the aspectual morpheme recorded in this radio station, while each of the rest scored less than 18% with the aspectual morpheme '*-le'* recording the lowest with a minimal margin above 10%.

2 ESBS

The recordings from Orient ESBS showed that, except the negative morpheme experienced a bidirectional pattern in the choice of pronunciations in ESBS. 'r' has a frequency of 4 (4.3%) in the pronunciation of *ọrụ* (work). It does not reflect in *ụra* (sleep) and *arụ* (to work) pronunciation choices. It has a frequency of 30 (28.3%) in the /rv/ past tense morpheme. 'r' also recorded a frequency of 10 (9.4%), 8 (7.5%), 10 (9.4%), 9 (8.4%), 9 (8.4%), 9 (8.4%), 10 (9.4%) and 6 (5.6%) in the pronunciation of *ndọrọndọrọ* (election/section), *ntọri* (kidnapping), *ekpere* (prayer), *okporoụzọ* (main road), *akụrụngwu* (tools), *mgborogwu* (roots), *mkpuru* (seed) and *mpaghara* (part of) respectively. The variant /l/ has a frequency of 40 (52.6%) in *ọlụ* (work), 8 (10.5%) in *ụla* (sleep), 18 (23.6%) in *alụ* (to work) and 10 (13.1%) in '-rV' past tense marker, while the pronunciation *ndọlọndọlọ* (election/section), *ntọli* (kidnapping), *ekpele* (prayer), *okpoloụzọ* (main road), *akulungwu* (tools), *mgbọlọgwu* (roots), *mkpulu* (seed) and *mpaghala* (part of) are all absent in the pronunciation choices of ESBS radio newscaster. Out of these twelve words, only two words recorded only the 'l' variant while eight others recorded only the 'r' variant. The word *ọrụ* (work) and the past tense morpheme have a bidirectional pattern of pronunciation where both 'r' and 'l' variants are utilised. Interestingly, they occur in unequal proportions. The 'l' variant was higher in *ọlụ* unlike in past tense morpheme where 'r' recorded a higher occurrence than 'l'. In all, the choice of 'r' is more than that of 'l' which indicates that 'l' is marginally used in ESBS.

In the frequency and percentage of score of 'r' and 'y' choices of pronunciation in Igbo radio news, 'r' has a frequency of 3 (50) in *ọrịa*. (sickness). It does not reflect in *arịrịọ* (begging), while in *ịrịọ* (to beg), it has a frequency of 3 (50%). 'y' on the other hand has a frequency of 18 (45%) in *ọya* (sickness), 12 (30%) in pronunciation of *ayịyịọ* (sickness), and 10 (25%) in *ịyọ* (to beg). 'y' variants occurred in the three words while 'r' occurred in only two words. The frequency at which the 'y' occurred in Igbo news in ESBS is greater than 'r'.

Between 'h' and 'f', 'h' has a frequency of 3 (15.7%) in *ahụ* (to see), 3 (15.7%) in the pronunciation choice of *hụta* (saw), 4 (21.0%), 4 (21.0%) and 5(26.3%) are recorded only in the words *ihe* (something), *ahụhụ* (suffering) and *aha* (name) pronunciation choices respectively. On the other hand, 'f' has a score of 10 (31%) in *afụ* (to see), 15 (46%) in *fụta*

(saw), 4 (12%) in *ife* (something), and 3 (9.3%) in *ahụhụ* (suffering). The aggregate score shows that the choice of 'f' pronunciation is more in this station than 'h'.

The pronunciation of 'r' has a frequency of 20 (36.3%) in the pronunciation of *iru* (front), 13 (23.6%) in the pronunciation of *nrọpụta* (selection/election), and 12 (21.8%), 4 (7.2%), 2 (3.6%), and 4 (7.2%) in the pronunciation of *ọra* (all), *arapụ* (to leave), *arụ* (body) and *ori* (stealing) respectively. 'h' sound has frequency of 2 (15.3%) in *ihu* (front), 2 (15%) in *nhọpụta* (selection/election), 3 (23%) in *ahapụ* (do not leave), 4 (30.7%) in *ahụ* (body) and 2 (15.3%) in *ohi* (stealing) while *ọha* (all) is absent. Out of these six words, 'r' pronunciation occurred in five words, while 'h' also occurred in five words. The aggregate scores recorded for both shows that 'r' pronunciation occurred higher than the 'h' pronunciation.

In the pronunciation of 'l' and 'n', 'l' has a frequency of 40 (41.2%) in *ụlọ* (house) and 8 (8.2%), 12 (12.3%), 8 (8.2%), 8 (8.2%), 4 (4.1%), 7 (7.2%), 5 (5.1%), and 5 (5.1%) in *niile* (all), *ala* (land) *imemila* (eliminate), *ọnụọọlaa* (fight-and-run), *kwalite* (promote), *ọbụla* (every), *alaka* (branch) and *kaosiladi* (not withstanding) respectively. /n/ on the other hand had the frequency score of 1 (16.9%) in *anapụ* (snatch), 3 (48.9%) in *niine* (all of them), and 2 (33.9%) in *kwanite* (promote), while these variants *ụnọ*, *imemina*, *ọnụọọnaa*, *ọbụna*, *anaka*, and *kaosinadi* were all absent. Among the nine words where these 'n' and 'l' variants were investigated, 'l' and 'n' shared their occurrence in three words. Only 'l' pronunciation was recorded in six words.

By their frequency of occurrence, 'l' occurs more than 'n' in this station. The score of variants of aspectual morphemes '-go' and '-la' attached to many Igbo verbs used by the ESBS newscasters indicates that '*-go'* has a frequency score of 12 (25%) while '*-la'* appeared 36 times (75%) in the ESBS radio. The frequency of use of '-la' over '*-go'* aspectual morpheme shows that '-la' is more highly used than '*-go'*.

3 EBBC

The recordings from Orient EBBC showed that, between the 'r' and 'l' variants, 'r' recorded 100% frequency of occurrence over 'l'. In the pronunciations of involving the variants 'r' and 'h', 'r' scored 2 (28.5 %) in iru, and 5 (71.4%) in *nrọpụta*, while 'h' has a frequency score of 16 (59.2) in *ihu* (front) and 11 (41.4%) in *nhọpụta* (selection/election).

Their scores show that 'h' occurs more frequently than 'r' in these two words in this station. Between 'r' and 'y' variants, in pronunciation choices among EBBC Igbo newscasters, 'r' has a frequency of 13 (52%) in *ọrịa* (sickness) and 12 (48%) in the pronunciation choice of *arịrịọ* (begging). 'y' does not reflect in *aya* (sickness), it has the score of 3 (100%) in the pronunciation of *ayịyịọ* (begging).

In all, 'r' occurs more frequently and in more words than 'y'. As regard the variants of aspectual morphemes in this station, '*-la'* and '*-go'* recorded 36 (75%) and 12 (25%) respectively. '-go' aspectual morpheme contributed to one quarter of the aspectual morpheme used in the stations. For the variants of negative morphemes, '*-ghi'* has a frequency score of 21 (52.2%), '-gi' has a frequency score of 15 (37.5%) while '*-hu'* recorded the frequency score of 4 (10%). Only the negative aspect '*-ghi'* alone, contributed over 50%, out of the three variants of negative morpheme used in this station. The use of the aspectual morpheme '-go', and the negative morpheme '*-gi'* and '*-hu'* are very minimal in this station. The aspectual morpheme '*-go'* occur in limited form especially when interfixed between a verb and the past tense marker as seen in the word *jigoro* (has held), *nwegoro* (has had), *sọgoro* (has followed), *lagoro* (has gone).

4 ABS

The recordings from ABS showed that 'l' has a frequency of 40 (23%) in pronunciation of ọlụ, 10 (5.2%) in the '–lV' past tense morpheme. It has frequency score of 9 (5.3%), 9 (5.3%), 9 (5.3%), 10 (5.9%), 5 (2.9%), 10 (5.9%), 9 (5.3%), 11 (6.3%), 11 (6.5%), 8 (4.7%), 10 (5.9%), 8 (4.7%) and 8 (4.3%) in the pronunciation of *ụla* (sleep), *ọkala* (half), *mbelede* (emergency), *ịlụwanye* (to work more), *ịlụ* (to work), *nkali* (being stronger), *okwulọkaa* (outstanding fellow), *ọgalaanya* (wealthy man), *mmeli* (triumph), *akụlụngwa* (tools), *akpalumagwa* (character) and *usolo* (method) respectively. The 'r' on the other hand recorded the frequency score of 5 (12.1%) in *ọrụ* (word), 28 (67.9%) in the '–rV' past tense morpheme, 3 (7.3%) in *mmeri* (triumph), 2 (4.7%) and in *akụrụngwa* (tools), and 3 (7.3) in *usolo* and absent in the variants *ọkachara* (experts), *ọgaranya* (wealthy man), *ọkwụrụọkaa* (outstanding fellow), *nkari* (beingstronger), *iru* (front), *iruwanye* (work more), *mberede* (emergency), *ọkara* (half) and *ụra* (sleep). Out of the fifteen words where pronunciation was examined, only six words contained both 'l' and 'r' pronunciations. In those six words,

/r/ only recorded a higher frequency of occurrence in the past tense morpheme while 'l' dominated in the remaining five words.

Between 'r' and 'h' variants, the frequency and percentage of 'r' and 'h' in the pronunciation choices of ABS broadcasters, revealed that 'r' has a frequency of 25 (44%), 17 (30.3%), 6 (10.7%) and 8 (14.2%) in *iru* (front), *nrọpụta* (selection/election), *ọra* (all) and *arụ* (body). /h/ recorded 6 (66%) and 3 (33.3%) in the pronunciation of *ihu* (front) and *ahụ* (body). The choice of 'r' is more frequent than 'h' as it occurred in all four words whereas 'h' occurred in three words with a low frequency.

As for the variants 'f' and 'h', the frequency and percentage scores show that, 'f' has a frequency score of 17 (53.1%) in *afụ* (to see), 7 (21.8%) in *ọhụrụ* (new) and 8 (25%) in *ụnyafụ* (yesterday). On the other hand, 'h' recorded a frequency of 3 (21.8%) in pronunciation of *ọhụrụ* (new) but was absent in the variants *ahụ* (body), and *ụnyahụ* (yesterday). The score recorded in 'f' shows that it occurs more frequently and in more words, than 'h'.

Between 'l' and 'n' variants, 'n' has frequency of 13 (10.3%) in *abanị* (night), 7 (5.5%) in *kwanite* (promote) and 6 (4.7%), 5 (3.9%), 7 (5.5%), 7 (4.7%), 10 (7.9%), 30 (23.8%), 8 (6.3%), 6 (4.7%), 15 (11.9%), and 12 (9.5%) in the pronunciation of *anaka* (branch), *etolite* (growing), *imemina* (eliminate), *kene* (greet), *niine* (all), *nnekota* (supervise/look after), *ụnọ* (house), *ọnụọọnaa* (fight-and-run), *ọbụna* (all) and *mmanite* (begin) respectively, while 'l' recorded a frequency scores of 2 (13.3%), 1 (6.6%), 2 (13.3%), 1 (6.6%), 3 (20%), 2 (13.3%), 1 (6.6%), and 3 (20%) in *abalị* (night), *akwalite* (promote), *etolite* (growth), *imenila* (eliminate), *kele* (greet), *niile* (all), *nlekota* (supervise/look after), *ọnụọlaa* (fight-and-run) but absent in *alaka* (branch), *ọbụla* (every) and *mmalite* (begin). Although 'n' and 'l' shared occurrence in eight words, 'l' recorded a very low frequency, and had no absolute occurrence as against 'n' that recorded absolute occurrence in four words. For the variants of the aspectual morpheme, '*-go'* recorded a score of 41 (69.5%) whereas the '*-la'* variant recorded a frequency score of 18 (30.5%). The score shows that '-go' aspectual morpheme is highly preferred to '*-la'* which recorded one-quarter of all the frequency values.

5. BCA

In the eleven pronunciation choices recorded in BCA, nine of them show a unidirectional pattern of pronunciation, while only the negative and aspectual markers have variants in BCA radio. The scores for the aspectual markers and negative morphemes show that /-'*ghi'* has a frequency score of 15 (53.6%), while '*-gi'* has a frequency score of 13 (46.4%), giving an 8% difference between the two negative morphemes. The other variants of the negative morpheme '*-ro'* and '*-hu'* were not recorded in this station. The score of the two variants of the aspectual morphemes in this radio station shows that '*-na'* and '*-go'* are less frequent when compared with '*-la'* where they recorded a frequency scores of 15 (41.7%), 13 (36.1%), and 8 (22.2%) respectively.

6. BOND FM

Out of the seven markers recorded in Bond FM, five showed a unidirectional pattern in the choice of pronunciation while two variables manifest internal variation. Their scores show that the aspectual morpheme 'na' and 'la' recorded 2 (6.1%) and 31 (93.9%) respectively. On the other hand, the negative morpheme '*-ghi'* has a frequency of 27 (84.4%) while '-gi' has a frequency of 5 (15.4%).

7. RADIO NIGERIA

The recordings from Radio Nigeria Enugu showed that, the frequencies and percentage scores for variables in different words show that the pronunciation choice of /l/ has a frequency of 5 (27.7%) in the pronunciation of *ọlụ* (work). It does not reflect in *egwulegwu* (play), *okpoloụzọ* (main road), *usolo* (method), *akụlụngwa* (tools), *akpelima* (criminal), *ndọlọndọlọ* (contest), and *mkpọlọ* (prison) while a frequency of 13 (72.2%) was recorded in the articulation of 'rV' past tense morpheme. The 'r' variant on the other hand has frequency of 22 (14.3%), 30 (19.1%), 10 (6.4%), 9 (5.7%), 13 (8.3%), 12 (7.6%), 18 (11.5%) and 20 (12.12 %) 4 (2.4%), 8 (5.1%), and 10 (6.4%), in *ọrụ*, past tense morpheme 'rV', *egwuregwu* (play), *okpuru* (under) *okporoụzọ* (main road), *usoro* (method), *akụrụngwa* (tools), *okpurukpu* (hard), *akperima* (criminal), *ndọrọndọrọ* (contest), and *mkpọrọ* (prison) respectively. From the data above, 'r' and 'l' share occurrence in *ọlụ/ọrụ* (work) and the past tense morpheme, with 'l' recording a very low score among the two variants.

Between the variants ‘r’ and ‘h’, in the pronunciation choices in Radio Nigeria Enugu, ‘r’ has a frequency score of 5 (41.6%) in *iru* (front). It does not reflect in *ọha* (all), but reflected with a frequency score of 7 (58.3%) in *nrọ̀puta* (selection). On the other hand, ‘r’ sound has a frequency of 10 (37.0%) in *ihu* (front), 11 (58.3%), and a score of 0% in *nhọpụta* (election/selection) and *ọha* (all) respectively. In summary, ‘h’ recorded a higher score than ‘r’ although at a very marginal level.

In the pronunciation between ‘f’ and ‘h’, ‘f’ has frequency of 7 (77.7%) in *afụ* (suffer) and 2 (22.2) in *aha* (name). It does not reflect in *ọfụụ* (new), while ‘h’ has a frequency score of 19 (59.3%) in *ahụ* (body), 3 (9.3) and 10 (31.25%) in *aha* (name) and *ọhụrụ* (new) respectively. Like the case of ‘h’ and ‘r’ above, ‘h’ also recorded more occurrences of each word and in the number of words over ‘f’.

In pronunciation choices made by newscasters in Radio Nigeria Enugu, ‘r’ has a frequency of 3 (42.8%) in *ọria* (sickness), and a frequency of 4 (57.1%) in the pronunciation choice of *arịọ* (to beg), while *ọrịrịọ* (begging) is absent. ‘y’ on the other hand has a frequency of 17 (58%) in *ọya* (sickness) and a frequency score of 12 (41.3%) in pronunciation choice of *ayịyịọ* (begging), while *ayịọ* (begging) is absent. The two sounds shared their occurrence in one word and excluded each other in the other words.

In pronunciation choices of Igbo radio newscasters in Radio Nigeria, ‘l’ has a frequency of 2 (9.0%) in *kwanite*, 6 (27.2%) in the pronunciation choice of *ọbụna* and 2 (9.0%) and 12 (54.5%), in *niine* (all) and *ụnọ* (house) respectively. *Kwanite* (promote), *nnọkọta* (coming together), *abanị* (night), *mmanite* (beginning), *kponite* (call on), *etonite* (growth) and *kaosinadi* (notwithstanding) are all absent in ‘n’ pronunciation. ‘l’ sound has a frequency of 8 (6.5%) in *kwalite* (promote), 6 (4.0%) in *kelee* (greet), and 8 (6.5%), 10 (8.19%), 10 (8.19%), 13 (10.6%) 5 (4.0%), 26 (21.3%) 11 (9.0%), 17 (13.9%), 8 (6.5%) in the pronunciation choice of *nlekota* (supervise), *ọbụla* (every), *niile* (all), *abalị* (night), *mmanite* (begin), *ụnọ* (house), *etolite* (grow), *kpolite* (call on) and *kaosinadi* (notwithstanding). ‘n’ and ‘l’ sound shared occurrence in only four words, with ‘n’ recording more frequencies of occurrence in just two words. In all, ‘l’ recorded more frequency of occurrence than ‘n’ in Radio Nigeria Enugu.

As for the variants of the aspectual morpheme, ‘*-go’* recorded a score of 25 (45.5%) while ‘*la’* recorded a score of 30 (54.5%). The difference in the occurrence of these two aspectual

morphemes is 9%. Like some other radio stations, 'la' is used more than '*go'* aspectual morpheme in this station. The score of the variants of negative morphemes indicates that variants of the negative morpheme '*gi'* and 'ghi' recorded a score of 18 (51.4%) and 12 (43.3%) respectively in Radio Nigeria.

Comparative Value of Variants

This section examines the rate which these variants: 'l' and 'r', 'y' and 'r', 'f' and 'h', 'r' and 'h', 'n' and 'l', '-ghi' '-ro', '-hu' and '-gi', and '-la', '-na', '-le' and '-go' are used in all radio stations.

	l%	**r%**
ABS	80	20
ESBS	53	47
EBBC	0	100
ORIENT	0	100
BCA	0	100
RADIO NG	18	82
BOND FM	0	100

Table 2. The total percentage score of h and r

The percentage score of the variants 'l' and 'r' show that ABS recorded the highest number of 'l' pronunciation at 80%, followed by ESBS, 53% and Radio Nigeria, 18% while 'r' recorded 100% occurrence ESBS, ORIENT, BOND FM and BCA, and 82%, 47% and 20% in Radio Nigeria, ESBS and ABS respectively.

	h%	**r%**
ABS	3	97
EBBC	80	20
ESBS	18	82
ORIENT	100	0
BCA	100	0
RADIO NG	30.8	69.2

BOND FM	100	0

Table 3 the total percentage score of h and r

Between 'h' and 'r' in all stations, 'h' recorded the percentage score of 3%, 80%, 18%, 100%, 100%, 30.8% and 100% in ABS, EBBC, ESBS, Orient FM, BCA, Radio Nigeria and Bond FM respectively, while 'r' recorded the percentage score of 97%, 20%, 82% and 69.2 % in ABS, EBBC, ESBS and Radio Nigeria respectively but was absent in Orient FM, BCA and Bond FM.

	r%	y%
ABS	0	100
EBBC	81.2	18.8
ESBS	10	90
ORIENT	100	0
BCA	100	0
RADIO NG	80	20
BOND FM	100	0

Table 4. the total percentage score of r and y

In the choice of 'r' and 'y' in all stations, 'r' recorded 82%, 10%, 100%, 100%, 80% and 100% in EBBC, ESBS, Orient FM, BCA, Radio Nigeria and Bond FM respectively but was absent in ABS, while 'y' recorded the percentage score of 100%, 90%, and 20% in ABS, ESBS and Radio Nigeria respectively but was absent in BCA, Orient FM, EBBC and Bond FM.

	h%	**f%**
ABS	5	95
EBBC	100	0
ESBS	20	80

ORIENT	100	0
BCA	100	0
RADIO NG	78	22
BOND FM	100	0

Table 5 the total percentage score of h and f

In the choice of 'h' and 'f', 'h' recorded the scores of 5%, 100%, 20%, 100%,100%, 78% and 100% in ABS, EBBC, ESBS, Orient FM, BCA, Radio Nigeria, and Bond FM respectively, while 'f' recorded a percentage score of 95%, 80%, and 22% in ABS, ESBS and Radio Nigeria respectively, but was absent in BCA, EBBC, Orient and Bond FM.

	l%	**n%**
ABS	8	92
ESBS	95	5
EBBC	100	0
ORIENT	100	0
BCA	100	0
RADIO NG	85	15
BOND FM	100	0

Table 6 the total percentage score of 'l' and 'n'

For 'l' and 'n', the percentage of occurrence above shows that 'l' recorded the score of 8%, 95%, 100%, 100%, 100%, 85% and 100% in ABS, ESBS, EBBC, Orient FM, BCA, Radio Nigeria and Bond FM respectively, while 'n' recorded a percentage score of 92%, 5% and 15% in ABS, ESBS and Radio Nigeria respectively but was absent in BCA, EBBC, Orient FM and Bond FM.

	la%	**go%**	**na%**	**le%**
ABS	31	69	0	0
EBBC	75	25	0	0
ESBS	75	25	0	0
ORIENT	58	18	14	10
BCA	42	20	38	0
RADIO NG	55	45	0	0
BOND FM	94	0	6	0

Table 7 the total percentage scores of variants of aspectual morpheme

Between the variants of aspectual morphemes, the table above shows ‘go’ aspectual morpheme recorded 68%, 25%, 25%, 18%, 20%, 45% and 0% in ABS, EBBC, ESBS, Orient FM, BCA, Radio Nigeria, and Bond FM respectively, while ‘-la’ on the other hand recorded a percentage score of 31%, 75%, 75%, 58%, 42%, 55% and 94% in ABS, EBBC, ESBS, Orient FM, BCA, Radio Nigeria and Bond FM respectively. The aspectual morpheme ‘-na’ recorded a percentage score of 14%, 38% and 6% in Orient FM, BCA, and Bond FM respectively but was absent in ABS, EBBC, ESBS and Radio Nigeria, while ‘-le’ aspectual morpheme recorded 10% only in Orient FM.

	-ghi	-gi	-hu	-rɔ
ABS	98	0	0	2
ESBS	100	0	0	0
EBBC	54	38	8	0
ORIENT	54	46	0	0
BCA	54	46	0	0
RADIO NG	54	32	0	14
BOND FM	90	10	0	0

Table 8 the total percentage score of variants of negative morpheme

In the choice of variants of negative morpheme in all stations, '-ghị' is shared by all radio stations, namely: ABS, EBBS, ESBS, Orient FM, BCA, Radio Nigeria, and Bond FM. These stations recorded a percentage score of 98%, 100%, 54%, 54%, 36% and 90% respectively. ESBS, Orient FM, BCA, Radio Nigeria, and Bond FM shared the use of the negative morpheme '-gi' with a recorded score of 38%, 46%, 46%, 47% 32% and 10% respectively. '-hu' negative morpheme used only in EBBC, and Radio Nigeria recorded a percentage score of 17% and 8% respectively, while '-ro' negative morpheme used in ABS only recorded a score of 8%.

Conclusion

This study investigates the phonological and morphological variation in spoken Standard Igbo, focusing on the language used by Igbo newscasters. This goal is considered as an essential one for the expansion of the frontier of the nature of spoken Standard Igbo in public space. Seven variants occurring at varying degrees involving 'l'and 'r', 'y' and 'r', 'f' and 'h', 'r' and 'h', 'n' and 'l', 'ghi' 'ro' and 'gi', and 'la' 'na' 'le' and 'go', were found in the pronunciation of Igbo newscasters. In the choice of 'l' and 'r', ABS, EBBS and Radio Nigeria adopt a two way pronunciation but at different proportions in the choice of 'l' and 'r' while BCA, Orient, EBBC and Bond FM adopts one pronunciation choice by sticking to only the 'r' pronunciation. In the choice of 'h' and 'r', the use of 'h' is absolute in BCA, Orient FM and Bond FM while ABS, ESBS, Radio Nigeria and EBBC used both /r/ and 'h' pronunciations at varying degrees. In the choice of 'y' and 'r', the 'y' only pronunciation is seen only in ABS, while the 'r' only pronunciation is recorded in EBBC, Orient FM, BCA and Bond FM, while other radio stations apart from ABS use the two variants. Bond FM, Orient FM, BCA, ESBS, ABS and EBBS use the 'h' pronunciation, while only ABS, ESBS, and Radio Nigeria use both the 'f' pronunciation and the 'r' pronunciation at varying degrees.

In the choice of 'l' and 'n', a two way pronunciation is seen in ABS, ESBS, and Radio Nigeria while 'l' pronunciation only is seen in Bond FM, BCA, Orient FM and EBBC. In the choice of the variants of aspectual morphemes, the use of 'la' aspectual morpheme spread in all stations, namely ABS, EBBC, ESBS, Orient FM, BCA, Radio Nigeria and Bond FM. The '-go' aspectual morpheme is used in just six radio stations which are ABS,

EBBC, ESBS, BCA, Orient FM and Radio Nigeria. Also, the '-na' aspectual morpheme is used in three radio stations namely Orient FM, BCA and Bond FM, while the '-le' aspectual morpheme is used in just Orient FM. Also ABS, ESBS, EBBC, Radio Nigeria and Bond FM employed just two aspectual morphemes but different ones. ABS, ESBS, EBBC, Radio Nigeria and Bond FM use two aspectual morphemes of 'go' and '-la', Bond FM used same number but '-la' and '-na'. BCA used three aspectual morphemes, which are '-go', '-na' and '-la', while Orient use four aspectual morphemes, namely: '-go', '-la', '-na' and '-le'.

In the choice of variants of negative morphemes, the use of '-ghi' negative morpheme spreads in all stations, namely ABS, EBBC, ESBS, Orient FM, BCA, Radio Nigeria and Bond FM. The '-gi' negative morpheme is used in just five stations which are EBBC, Orient FM, BCA, Bond FM and Radio Nigeria, while the '-ro' negative morpheme is used in ABS and Radio Nigeria. Additionally, the '-hu' negative morpheme is only used in EBBC. Also, ESBS used just one negative morpheme which is '-ghi'. ABS, Orient FM, BCA and Bond FM employed just two negative morphemes but different ones. Bond FM, BCA, and Orient used only '-ghi' and '-gi', while ABS used '-ghi' and '-ro'. EBBC and Radio Nigeria employed three negative markers but different ones too. While EBBC used '-ghi', '-gi', and '-hu', radio Nigeria used '-ghi', '-gi', and '-ro'.

There is no doubt that various pronunciations pose a problem of uncertainty of right pronunciation for people in public space. Broadcast speech requires a spoken standard variety that will not put anyone in any situation of uncertainty because broadcast speech in most speech communities is an embodiment of standard variety (Bell 1983, Fromkin 2017 et al). If the issue of spoken standard is not resolved, it will definitely impact the spoken Igbo in media community and the public space in general. Since Igbo broadcast speech is the subtle face of the spoken standard Igbo, this study recommends the adoption of the variant with high frequency of occurrence in the standardisation of spoken standard Igbo which is also concur with Nwoga (1982) and Emananjo (2005).

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