

## Verbs in Igbo Home Signs

Maureen Azuka Chikeluba

[ma.chikeluba@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:ma.chikeluba@unizik.edu.ng)

Department of Linguistics

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Nigeria

### Abstract

Home sign is a gestural communication system, often invented spontaneously by a deaf child who lacks accessible linguistic input. This paper on verb in Igbo home signs sets to investigate how deaf persons who lack input from a language model in their environment express Igbo verbs during communications. The linguistic data for the study were collected from our informants who are the deaf persons that make use of home signs for communication, and their relatives who understand them very well. These set of individuals were reached in their various homes and some basic were administered to them in order to capture their real signs and interpretations. The picture/video recording of each of the words (verbs) were taken and analysed. Observations show that these deaf persons' form of expression of action words is basically the demonstration of the act through gestures. This work therefore suggests more scholarly investigations into Igbo home signs and its development in order to have a formal and more intelligible form of signing in Igbo. Thus, in this era of global dispensation, a call for development and establishment of a standard sign language model that will be learnt by both the deaf persons and the hearing persons i.e. the Igbo sign language (ISL) is recommended.

**Key words:** home signs, verbs, deaf persons, communication system, gestures

## **Introduction**

One of the basic notions which linguistics as a field of study holds is that all human languages are very important and deserve to be studied no matter the category of people that use them. It is about this that Whitney (1976), cited in Anagbogu, Mbah and Eme (2001) speaks:

“The material and subject of linguistics science in its entirety; all the accessible forms of human speech, in their infinite variety, whether still living in the minds and mouths of men...It has a field and scope limited to no age, and to no portion of mankind.”

Going by the above assertion of Whitney, it is now straight that all human languages no matter the status or categories of people that uses them are of great concern to a linguist. This paper therefore stands on this particular notion mentioned above to study the verbs as used by Igbo home signers, to see how these deaf individuals who lack input from a language form in their environment express Igbo verbs when having discussions with other people around them; both hearing and non-hearing persons.

The claim by linguists that every language is of equal importance and worthy of study has been supported by the UN convention on the Rights of persons with Disability (UNCRPD) committing governments of all member countries to recognize the significance of sign languages and promoting their use. This commitment is not only meant for the European sign languages and other developed countries, instead they are mostly meant for the untapped and undeveloped indigenous languages of the deaf scattered all over the world of which the Igbo deaf persons are inclusive.

American Sign Language and other sign languages of the developed countries have been receiving much attention in terms of promoting and developing them with African Indigenous Sign Languages being relegated to the background. The abandonment of the indigenous signed languages all over the world by researchers, especially the African Indigenous Signed Languages is becoming too destructive. The attitude of not giving the deaf individuals living in the most remote communities of African countries the opportunities to exercise their right in various levels of human endeavours is quite

disheartening. This has obviously caused these indigenous signs to be going into extinction. In support of the above assertions, Carlos Oen (2018) says that indigenous sign languages are on the verge of extinction as ASL becomes dominant. Quoting Darin Flynn, Professor of linguistics at the University of Calgary, “The extinction of indigenous sign languages is similar to loss of indigenous spoken languages”.

Of course, language loss or language endangerment is when a language is at risk of falling out of use as its speakers die out or shift to speaking other languages. And when such situation occurs, the language automatically becomes a “dead language. It is about this that Rafiu and Boluwaji (2013) says “language endangerment is a situation whereby a language is under the threat of disuse, which leads to death”. Indigenous African Sign Languages are presently facing this situation of endangerment because of communication gap between these deaf individuals and their relatives and the society. They are marginalized and denied the opportunity to participate and make contributions in families, government and society at large. As Asonye, Emma-Asonye and Okwaraji (2018) rightly puts:

“Communication gap between deaf people, their hearing family members, and their immediate communities in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. A high level of unconscious stigmatization of deaf person in the country is caused by the communication gap between them and hearing people except few trained individuals (sign language interpreters/instructors and deaf educators)”.

This implies that deaf persons who have not gone for formal education are always in the dark when it comes to what happens in the society except for those of them who are educated and so can grab when news and other social information are being interpreted in American Sign Language in some channels, not all.

The attitudes of some scholars towards indigenous sign languages are quite discouraging as some of them hardly believe that American Sign Language and other indigenous sign languages that have started developing can be separated. This experience is mentioned in Asonye (2018) in his study of deaf in Nigeria. He laments about this

referencing Nyst (2010) saying that some scholars think that Nigerian sign language (NSL) should rather be called Nigerian American Sign Language (N-ASL) or a dialect of ASL as it retains the structure of signed English. This is uncalled for as indigenous sign languages are not different from the indigenous spoken languages that were developed with the same structure of spoken English but were not named with English attached. Therefore, the same trend has to be followed in indigenous sign language development.

### **Literature Review**

Using the descriptive approach, the key terms in this work such as verb, home sign and gesture are discussed in details referencing various authors including other contributions made so far towards the development of African indigenous signs by sign language scholars. Eyisi, (2004) defines verb as a word or group of words that is used to tell what someone or something is, does or experiences. She maintains that it is an obligatory element of a sentence expressing an action done by the subject (the nominal) or, a state experienced by the subject or what is becoming of the subject. Verb is seen as the most important part of speech. No sentence can be deemed acceptable without it. A verb expresses the state of being or an action of the subject in a sentence. For Ibe, (2004), “A verb is a word or group of words that expresses action, existence or occurrence, i.e what the subject of a sentence does, is and what action the subject receives”. She says that a verb is the heart of the sentence since it gives meaning to the sentence.

Describing “gesture”, McGregor (2009) says that it is the distinctive movement of a body part conveying meaning. For example, a manual gesture conveying the meaning, “Ok”, or shaking the head in denial. Hall and Hall (1971) refer to gesture as nonverbal and first form of communication” in the explanation of their study on the language of the body which they captioned “Kinesics and Proxemics”. According to them, “nonverbal which includes gesture is the first form of communication one learns, and the only language used throughout most of the history of humanity”.

Speaking on home sign, Goldin-Meadow (2003) says that it is an informal rudimentary sign system which is sometimes developed within a single family. When hearing parents with no sign language

skills have a deaf child, the child may develop a system of sign naturally unless repressed by the parents. For Meadow, home sign is amorphous and generally idiosyncratic to a particular family where a deaf child does not have contact with other children and is not educated in sign. Home sign is not a full language in non-signing communities, but closer to a pidgin.

As Goldin-Meadow (2003) maintains, such systems are not generally passed on from one generation to the next. She says that creolization would be expected where they are passed on, resulting in a full language. She however puts it that home sign may also be closer to full language in communities where the hearing population has a gestural mode of language. What this implies is that home signs can be gathered from different users of it and used to form a standard sign language.

On further review of home sign, Frisberg (1987) says that home signs differ from sign languages in the sense that they do not have a consistent meaning – symbol relationship, they are not passed on from generation to generation, they are not shared by one large group, and are not considered the same over a community of signers. Following Frisberg's explanations, it is understood that home sign systems show same characteristics of signed and spoken languages, and are quite distinguished from the gestures that accompany speech. Words and simple sentences are formed, often in similar patterns despite different home sign system being developed in isolation from each other. She however says that home sign is often the starting point for new deaf sign languages that emerge when deaf people come together. For example, following the establishment of the first deaf school in Nicaragua in the 1970's, the previously isolated deaf children quickly developed their own sign language, now, known as Nicaraguan sign language, from the building blocks of their own diverse home sign systems.

The contributions of some sign language scholars on indigenous sign language development cannot be overemphasized. According to Nyst (2013), an impressive number of sign languages have come to be studied from a modern linguistic perspective, generating ground breaking insights into the influence of communicative channel on

language structure, years back. She observes that it is only a handful of these studies concern sign language on the African continent.

Nyst (2010) is one of the outstanding studies in West African sign language. She presents some basic information on the sign language situation and structure of Ghana, Mali and Nigeria. She starts off with an inventory of basic facts about deafness in West Africa, followed by a short history of Deaf education in the region. The impact of language policies in Deaf education on the current sign language situation is considered, most notably visible in the extensive use of American Sign Language based varieties. She lastly gives an overview of sign languages reportedly found in West Africa and then presents case studies of the sign language situation in Ghana, Nigeria and Mali.

Studying the Yoruba sign Language (YSL), Orie (2013) makes a survey of deaf people in Akure. The study demonstrates that there are home signers, micro gender-based deaf communities and educated bilingual who are fluent in both YSL and the American Sign Language (ASL). Orie (2013) explains that many educated bilingual deaf people live and work in Akure because the city has one of the ASL based elementary schools in South Western Nigeria. “The sign language of home signers and micro-gendered deaf communities commonly referred to as local sign by bilingual deaf people are considered inferior to ASL by the educated bilinguals.

The study of Nyst (2013) on West African sign languages has shown also that sign language of Adamorobe, an Akan Village in Ghana has had a high incidence of hereditary deafness for as long as anyone can remember. She says that a descriptive analysis of Adamorobe sign language reveals a number of striking features that set it apart from most sign languages studied so far. According to her, one of the differences is found in the expression of intransitive motion, which seems to be almost universally expressed by a system of entity classifier predicates. These predicates she says consist of a hand shape that typically represents a size and shape of the moving entity. The sign language work presented in a manual, formally known as “Working Together Manual for sign Language Work within Development Cooperation” is the one which has been successfully implemented in the Balkans, specifically in Albania and Kosovo. The

deaf associations in these two countries as recorded in the manual have cooperated with the Finish Association of the Deaf (FAD) in joint development cooperation projects for 10-15 years, and examples of best practice for Sign Language Work Development during these projects provides the basis for much of the information in the manual. According to the report, the initial focus in both countries was on organizational support with management training from an international advisor.

In summary, some scholars have understood the need to study and develop the African indigenous Sign Languages and have contributed quite a lot towards that. This paper is therefore answering that call to study and have our own African Indigenous Sign Languages developed and standardized.

### **Methodology**

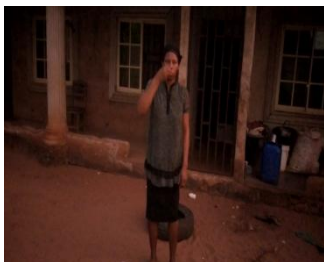
The fieldwork was carried out in the major Igbo communities viz: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The few selected informants comprising the deaf individuals and their relatives were reached in their respective homes and places of work. A word list of six verbs was administered to each informant for signing and the linguistic data for analysis collected through snap shots. The pictures depicting signs of each of the verbs in the word list are presented according to the respective Igbo states i.e, Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. Each sign is rightly labeled and phonetically transcribed in the local language and then glossed. The transcriptions so given are also tone marked as the language of our research is a tone language. High tone is marked with the acute accent [´], the low tone with grave accent [˘] and the down step tone with macron [-].

### **Data Presentantion and Analysis**

The pictures bellow showcase home signs (verbs) as used by deaf persons in Igbo community. We try to look at these verbs; ri (eat), nù (drink), de (write), sù (wash), bu (carry) and kọ (cultivate) to see how they are signed locally by indigenes of the communities that make up the Igbo states. Using the phonological analysis of the signs; handshape, location, movement, palm orientation and non- manual expressions, the data so collected from the various states are analysed in turn with relationship to their respective socio-cultural background. The analysis is presented in tables as seen bellow.

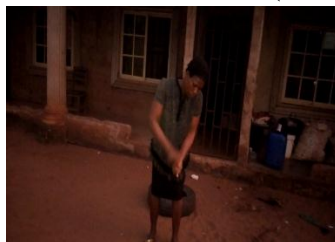
**Anambra State:**

**Fig. IA 38 years old woman signing**



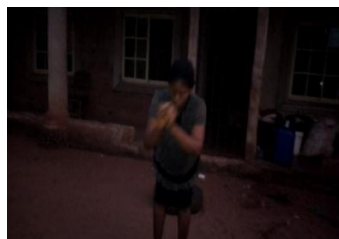
**ri/rí/(eat)  
(drink)**

**ñu/ñó/**



**sụ/só/ (wash)**

**de/dé/ (write)**

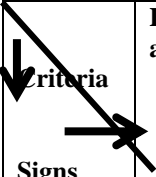


**kọ/k>/ (cultivate)**

**bu/bú/ (carry)**



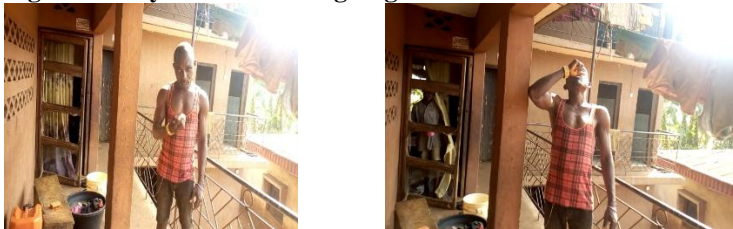
**Table 1. Description of the Home Signs (Verbs) from Anambra State**

 Criteria  Signs (Verbs)	Handsh ape	Orienta tion	Movem ent	Locatio n	Non- Manual Express ion
<b>ri/rí/ 'eat'</b>	Tips of five fingers brought together in a manner that suggests holding an edible.	The palm is closed.	The hand goes up.	Front of the mouth	None
<b>ñụ/ηú/ 'drink'</b>	Rounded fingers that form the shape of a cup	The palm is closed.	The hand goes up.	Front of the mouth	The head is thrown backwards
<b>su/sú/ 'wash'</b>	Shape of fists formed with two hands closely brought together	The palm is closed.	Frictional contact between the two closed fists	Front of the body	Waist is bended

<b>de/dé/ 'write'</b>	The index finger and the thumb come together to make a pen-like shape	Two palms closed	Wiggling of the hand	Front of the body (on a planespace) from left to right	None
<b>bu/bú/ 'carry'</b>	Shape of fists formed with two hands raised above the head	Two palms closed	Static above the head	Up above the head	Sluggish walk with two legs
<b>kọ/kó/ 'cultivate'</b>	Shape of fists formed with two hands	Two palms closed	Up and down	Above the head and down towards the ground	Two legs wide apart and waist bended

**Abia State**

**Fig. II: A 45 years old man signing**



**ri/rí/(eat)**

**ńụ/ńú/(drink)**



**sụ/sú/ (wash)**

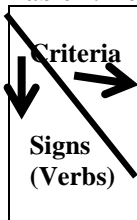
**de/dé/(write)**



**bu/bú/ (carry)**

**kọ/kɔ/ (cultivate)**

**Table 2. Description of the Home Signs (Verbs) from Abia State**

 Criteria Signs (Verbs)	Handsha pe	Orientat ion	Movem ent	Locat ion	Non- Manua l Expres sion
<b>ri/rí/ 'eat'</b>	Tips of five fingers brought together in a manner that suggests holding an edible.	The palm is closed.	The hand goes up.	Front of the mouth	None

<b>ñụ/ñó/ 'drink'</b>	Rounded fingers that form the shape of a cup	The palm is closed.	The hand geos up.	Front of the mouth	The head is thrown backwards
<b>su/sú/ 'wash'</b>	Shape of fists formed with two hands brought together	The palm is closed.	Fictional movement between the two closed fists	Front of the body	The waist is bended
<b>de/dé/ 'write'</b>	The index finger and the thumb come together to make a pen-like shape	Two palms closed	Wiggling of the hand	Front of the body (on a plane space) from left to right	None
<b>bu/bú/ 'carry'</b>	Shape of fists formed with two hands stationed in a way that suggests lifting a heavy object	Two palms closed	From right to left	Front of the body	Waist is bended
<b>kọ/kọ/ 'cultivate'</b>	Shape of fists formed with two hands opened as to grab an object	Two palms are open	From side to side (left to right)	Front of the body	Two legs slight apart and waist bended

**Ebonyi**

**Fig. iii: A 26 years old boy signing**



**ri/rí/(eat)**



**ñụ/ηó/(drink)**



**de/dé/(write)**



**sụ/sú/(wash)**

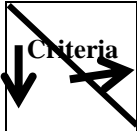


**bu/bú/(carry)**



**kọ/kɔ/(cultivate)**

**Table 3: Description of Home Signs (Verbs) from Ebonyi State**

 <p><b>Criteria</b> <b>Signs (Verbs)</b></p>	<b>Hands hape</b>	<b>Orientat ion</b>	<b>Movem ent</b>	<b>Locati on</b>	<b>Non- Manual Expressi on</b>
<b>ri/rí/ 'eat'</b>	Tips of five fingers brought together in a manner that suggests holding an edible.	The palm is closed.	The hand goes up.	Front of the mouth	None
<b>ñụ/ñú/ 'drink'</b>	Rounded fingers that form the shape of a cup	The palm is closed.	The hand goes up.	Front of the mouth	The head is thrown backwards
<b>sụ/sú/ 'wash'</b>	Shape of fists formed with two hands that are brought	The palm is closed.	Frictional movement between the two fists	Front of the body	The waist is bended

	together				
<b>de/dé/</b> <b>'write'</b>	The index finger and the thumb come together to make a pen-like shape	Two palms closed	Wiggling of the hand	Front of the body (on a plane space) from left to right	None
<b>bu/bú/</b> <b>'carry'</b>	Shape of fists formed with two hands stationed in a way that suggests lifting a heavy object	Two palms closed	From right to left	Front of the body	Waist is bended
<b>kọ/kó/</b> <b>'cultivate'</b>	Shape of fists formed with two hands	Two palms are closed	From down left to up and then down right	Front of the body	The waist is bended

**Enugu State**

**Fig. iv: A 17 years old girl and a 14 years old girl signing**



**ri/rí/(eat)**



**ńụ/ηú/(drink)**



**de/dé/(write)**



**sụ/sú/(wash)**



**bu/bú/(carry)**



**kọ/kɔ/(cultivate)**



**Table 4. Description of the Home Signs (Verbs) from Enugu State**

Criteria Signs (Verbs)	Handsh ape	Orientat ion	Movem ent	Locati on	Non- Manual Express ion
<b>ri/rí/ 'eat'</b>	Tips of five fingers brought together in a manner that suggests holding an edible.	The palm is closed.	The hand goes up.	Front of the mouth	None
<b>ñu/ñú/ 'drink'</b>	Rounded fingers that form the shape of a cup	The palm is closed.	The hand goes up.	Front of the mouth	None
<b>su/sú/ 'wash'</b>	Shape of fists formed with two hands closely brought together	The palm is closed.	Frictional contact between the two closed fists	Front of the body	Waist is bended

<b>de/dé/ 'write'</b>	Right index finger and the thumb come together to make a pen-like shape while resting on the surface of the left palm	Right palm closed while the left palm is open	Wiggling of the right hand on the surface of the left palm	Front of the body (on a space) from left to right	None
<b>bu/bú/ 'carry'</b>	Two palms juxtaposed facing upwards	Two palms open	Swinging of the hands from one side to the other	Front of the body	smiles
<b>kọ/kɔ/ 'cultivate'</b>	Shape of fists formed with two hands	Two palms closed	Up and down	Above the head and down towards the ground	Two legs wide apart and waist bended

**Imo State**

**Fig. v: A 40 years old man signing**



**ri/rí/(eat)**



**ñụ/ñó/(drink)**



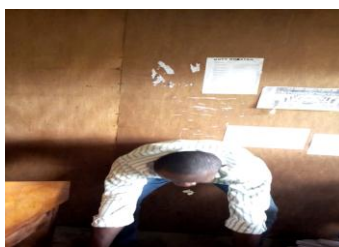
**de/dé/(write)**



**sụ/só/(wash)**

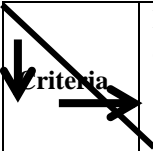


**bu/bú/(carry)**



**kọ/kɔ/(cultivate)**

**Table 5. Description of the Home Signs (Verbs) from Imo State**

 Criteria Signs (Verbs)	Handsh ape	Orientat ion	Movem ent	Locati on	Non- Manual Express ion
<b>ri/rí/ 'eat'</b>	Tips of five fingers brought together in a manner that suggests holding an edible.	The palm is closed.	The hand goes up.	Front of the mouth	None
<b>ñụ/ηú/ 'drink'</b>	Rounde d fingers that form the shape of a cup	The palm is closed.	The hand geos up.	Front of the mouth	The head is thrown backward s
<b>sụ/sú/ 'wash'</b>	Shape of fists formed with two hands closely brought together	The palm is closed.	Friction al contact between the two closed fists	Front of the body	None
<b>de/dé/ 'write'</b>	The index finger and the thumb	Two palms closed	Wigglin g of the hand	Front of the body (on a plane	None

	come together to make a pen-like shape			space) from left to right	
<b>bu/bú/ 'carry'</b>	Shape of fists formed with two hands positioned at one side	Two palms closed	Static at one side of the body	Right side of the body	A hasty walk towards the left side
<b>kọ/kò/ 'cultivate'</b>	Shape of fists formed with two hands	Two palms closed	Up and down	Above the head and down towards the ground	Two legs wide apart and waist bended

### Findings

From the analysis we observed that:

Most home signs in Igbo local communities are iconic and Imageries. For instance, signs for food, cup, pen etc are iconic and imaginary.

The pattern of signing found in the local Igbo communities are very much related and look alike, except for few areas where slight differences are noticed. Such areas include the signing patterns of 'bu'(carry) and 'ko' (cultivate). In signing of 'bu' (carry), an Anambra, woman demonstrated a load being carried on the head. An Abia man showed a lifting of a heavy object from the ground. The same pattern of lifting is seen in Ebonyi, while the little girl from Enugu demonstrated the cuddling of a baby; an action which we see as being influenced by her age (her perception of what she

understands carry to mean). At her age it is mostly babies are being carried. In Imo too the man also demonstrated lifting a heavy object from one side to the other

Moreover, in the signing for 'kọ' (cultivate), the Anambra, Enugu and Imo signers demonstrated similar signs while the signing patterns in Abia and Ebonyi seem to be the same. These demonstrations we believe are culturally and partially gender oriented. This is to say that in some areas of Igbo culture men are known to stand and dig sand for mounds from one side with either shovel or a kind of hoe with loner handle and wide blade (e.g Ezza in Ebonyi State). Also women are isolated in cultivating; rather they clear bushes in Ebonyi. Abia keep such manner of cultivation also because some parts of Ebonyi are now Abia State. However, in Anambra and Imo, women can cultivate and the type of hoes and mounds being used are such that call for keeping the legs apart.

Apart from these differences, signing for other verbs; 'ri'(eat), 'nụ' (drink), 'de' (write) and 'su'(wash) are virtually the same.

### **Suggestions**

In order to meet the objective of this study, we therefore make the following suggestions:

- (i) Further investigations into developing the Igbo home sings should begin.
- (ii) Those responsible for language development should as a matter of fact work together with the government in order to come up with a formal sign language system for the vulnerable deaf persons in Igbo community.
- (iii) Just as other indigenous spoken languages are there in educational curriculum, the Igbo Sign Language should also find its way into the curriculum of education.
- (iv) The campaign and support for indigenous African sign language development should be facilitated especially in areas like Igbo communities.

## **Conclusion**

This paper supports the linguistics notion that all human languages are very important and deserve to be studied irrespective of the category of people that use it. The idea here is that no human language should be disregarded whether spoken or signed.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability stressed this and had urged all government of member countries to imbibe the idea of promoting sign languages and their use. It is on this ground that this paper stands to survey the local signs (home signs)- verbs as used by the vulnerable deaf persons in Igbo communities who have no access to any formal education in signing.

The observation shows that the means of communication of this group of people have not been studied thereby they are denied a lot of things in the society due to their poor state. Their communication system is relegated to the background and they suffer ignorance in all its aspect. Therefore, giving to the present era of global dispensation, there is an urgent need to get this endangered means of communication of this group of individuals explored and then establish a standard sign language model; Igbo Sign Language (ISL) which both the deaf and the hearing persons should learn in schools to foster mutual intelligibility among them.

When this is achieved, deaf stigmatization will be curbed and deaf linguistic competence improved.

## References

- Ajavon, P. A. (2006). *An overview of deaf education in Nigeria*. Article from the international Deaf children Society;s resource library [www.idcs.info](http://www.idcs.info). (retrieved on 8/6/15).
- Anagbogu, P. N., B. M. Mbah, C. a. Eme (2001). *Introduction to Linguistics*. Awka: Amaka Dream.
- Asonye, E. Emma – Asonye, E, & Okwaraji, O. (2018). *Towards the Documentation of Nigerian Sign Language Lexical Signs*. A paper presented at the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of African Linguistics ACAL, Michigan State University.
- Carlos, O. (2018). *Fighting to save indigenous sign Languages*. The Tyee.ca
- Eyisi, J. (2004). *Common Errors in the use of English*. Onitsha: Africana First Publishers Limited.
- Frishberg N. (1987). *Ghanian Sign Languages*. In V. John, van cleve (ed) Gallandet encyclopedia of deaf people and deafness. vol 3. sz. 778 – 779. New York: McGraw – Hill.
- Goldin – Meadow, S. (2003). *The resilience of language: What gesture creation in deaf children can tell us about how children learn language*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Hall,E.T. & R.Hall (1971). *The language of the body: Kinesics and Proximics*. In V. P. Clark, A. P. Escholz and A. F. Rosa (eds). *Language introductory readings*. New York: St. Martin;s Press
- Ibe, U. C. (2004). *Complete English Course for senior secondary schools*. Onitsha: Africana First Publishers Limited.
- McGregor, W. (2009). *Linguistics: An introduction*. New York: Cambridge University Press.



- Murray, J. (2015). *Linguistic human rights discourse in deaf community activism*. *Sign Language Studies*, 15(4), 379 – 410.
- Nyst, V.( 2013). *The significance of Africa linguistics and sign language studies: linguistics interface in African language*. Orié O.O., K.W. Sander (eds). Somerville M.A: Cascadilla Press.
- Nyst, V.( 2010). *Sign language in West Africa: A Cambridge language survey*. D. Brentari (eds). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Orie ,O., (2013). *From conventional gesture to sign language*. Selected proceedings of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference of African Linguistics. Orié O.O., K.W. Sanders (eds) Somerville, MA: Cascadilla proceedings project.
- Rafiu, K.A. & O. Boluwaji ( 2013). *Language endangerment in Nigeria: Focus on Small ethnolinguistic communities in Niger State* *Dialectologia* 11 (2013), 17 – 45.

### **Short Bio**

Maureen Azuka Chikeluba is a Lecturer II in the Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Arts. Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Nigeria. She obtained her first Degree (B.A.) in Linguistics in the year 2005 from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, while her second Degree (M.A.) was gotten in the year 2009 from the same institution. Presently, Maureen is running her Doctoral Degree Programme (PhD) still in Linguistics and the same University. Her areas of interest are; Phonology, Sign Language and Semantics.