

THE USE OF IGBO ACCENTS IN SELECTED RADIO STATIONS IN LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

This paper examines various Igbo accents from the radio stations that broadcast in the Igbo language in Lagos State. Extant studies on this aspect of studies have paid little attention to radio stations in Lagos that broadcast in the Igbo language. This study is designed to investigate the various Igbo accents in Bond FM, Voice of Nigeria (VON) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Radio. Allen Bell's Audience Design Theory was adopted for this study. Data from both male and female broadcasters were collected through recordings of news from these three radio stations mentioned above. The duration of the data from all the stations used in this research is approximately three hours. Findings show that in BBC, /l/ is used over /r/, /e/ is used over /o/, .u. is used over /i/. In Von, /f/ is used over /h/, /ʔ/ is used over /t/, /w/, /l/, /r/, /f/ and /o/ are used over /b/, /r/, /d/, /h/ and /e/ respectively. In Bond FM, /l/, /s/, /w/, /r/, /a/, /o/, /t/, /e/ and /r/ are used over /gh/, /ch/, /b/, /h/, /a/ /p/, /a/ and /r/ respectively. BBC employed few phonological variables, followed by VON and then Bond FM. The use of these phonological variables shows how various accents manifest in Igbo radio programmes and also how various accents have been affecting the use of a unified spoken Standardised Igbo in the broadcast media.

Keywords: Igbo Accents, Radio broadcasting, Lagos State.

Introduction

A question about variation in the phonological data in broadcast media has been raised by Obiorah (2022). There are over forty-five (45) radio stations in Lagos State, of which the majority of them use the English language as a means of broadcast; others share among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria; the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Variation of accents in Igbo language in selected radio broadcasts in Lagos State is a research that focuses on the differences in the use of Igbo sound by reporters and radio presenters in Lagos State. It is an aspect of phonological variation in radio broadcast. Phonological variation generally analyses the surface appearance of sound which has multiple forms of pronunciation. This choice is not uniquely determined by the rules of the language, but by an individual at the time of performance (speaking and writing). According to Anttila (2018), phonological variation is a situation where the choice among expressions is phonologically conditioned, sometimes statistically, and sometimes categorically. As Chen (2014) claimed, a sociolinguistic investigation of one phonological variable illustrates how social characteristics influence a speaker's phonological realization of variants. From this definition, one can understand the relationship between phonological variation and language users, as phonological variation influences the social characterization of a speaker.

Coetzee (2008) is of the view that phonological variations are all strictly grammatical and can interact with lexical items only in terms of their grammatical properties (their phonological and morphological properties). Studies on phonological variation utilize variables. As Watts, (2006) rightly pointed out that 'studies of variation employing the linguistic variable have also

been used in studying grammatical variation in addition to phonological variation. However, in understanding how phonological variation affects social meaning, Eckert and Labov (2017) point out that meaning does not accrue to phonological structures in which those sounds participate. This definition thus creates the need for the application of meaning to phonological variation. Poladova (2017) claims that two or more phonemes can replace each other in a word and the replacement may not affect the meaning of the word. He further asserts that 'free variation may occur between allophones or phonemes'. This tallies with the assertion of (Romaine, 2008) which suggests that phonological variation is 'an attempt by sociolinguists to analyze the differences in sounds within a similar word'. He goes further to say that 'by counting variants of different kinds in tape-recorded interviews and comparing their incidence across different groups of speakers, the replication of several sociolinguistic patterns across many communities permits some generalizations about the relationship between linguistic variables and speakers'.

As earlier stated, this study intends to know the nature of spoken Igbo on the following station: VON, BBC Igbo radio, and Bond FM. This study aims to examine the similarities in the pronunciation of Igbo words in these radio stations as well as the local Igbo accents they are linked to. The benefit of this study is that it serves not just only as referencing material but as an insight into phonological variation in Igbo broadcast programmes on Lagos radio stations. Schools and institutions interested in researching phonological variations can make use of this research as a guide toward understanding the use of various sounds in these stations. This study is not only beneficial to students but to presenters, broadcast corporations, broadcasters and linguists.

Radio Broadcast in the Igbo Language in Lagos State

Udomisor (2013) suggests that 'Broadcasting is the distribution of audio and video contents to a dispersed audience via any audio-visual medium. Receiving parties may include the general public or a relatively large subset thereof.' Adejunmobi, (1974) in describing the history of Radio in Nigeria claims that Wired wireless-- also called "Wired Radio," "Radio Distribution Service" (RDS), or "Re-diffusion"--was a method of distributing programs by wire to those who subscribed. This was dated far back to 1933 when it began. Radio has come a long way from its introduction to Nigeria in 1933 primarily for relying on the overseas service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to the public over loudspeakers. Since the then Radio Diffusion Service (RDS) metamorphosed into the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), radio has been embraced by both public and private interests as a medium of mass communication. Its reach is in such proportions that each of the country's 36 states has at least one government-owned and another private radio station. Radio, as one of the electronic media, has been playing a significant role since world war years. It has helped in the maintenance of peace, unity and harmony among the people world over. The radio is Nigeria's biggest means of news dissemination (although it remains perpetually in the shadows of television and print/online in terms of influence). Akanbi and Aladesanmi, (2014) also describe radio as an electronic medium, and like any other media, serves three major purposes. These major purposes include informing, educating and entertaining. In Lagos State presently, few radio stations make use of the Igbo language as a language of broadcast. These radio stations include Voice of Nigeria (VON), Wazobia F.M, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Igbo and Bond F.M 92.9. Out of these stations, Bond F.M 92.9 is more prominent in Igbo broadcast.

Igbo Dialect/Accent

The book *Dialects of the Igbo language* Nwaozuzu (2008) says that ‘every language has two major forms – the standard and the non-standard, otherwise called dialect’. In inference, a standard language is a form of the language which has been selected as the standard/norm. It is used in official or professional contexts. Non-standard language or dialect is a variety of a language whose grammar differs in systematic ways from other varieties. To Oweleke, (2017), ‘The term, dialect can be defined as the variation in the speech forms of a people signalled by regional or social differences in phonological, syntactic and lexical patterns. The difference at the phonetic level is called accent. The different accent from various dialects/accents encourages variation. According to Oyeka (2019) it is erroneous to think that a dialect is an inferior or degraded form of a language. She further expresses that ‘if something can be expressed in one language or dialect, it can be expressed in any other language or dialect’.

Several Igbo scholars have classified the Igbo dialect. For example Emenanjo (2015) based on Manfredi classified the Igbo language based on locations, states, dialect and sub-dialects, etc. Nwaozuzu (2008) on the other hand classifies the Igbo language into major groups, namely; the West Niger Group Of Dialects, East Niger Group Of Dialects, East Central Group Of Dialects, Cross River Group Of Dialects, South Western Group Of Dialects, North Eastern Group Of Dialects, South Western Group Of Dialects, Northern Group Of Dialects. In these dialects are many accents that occur in different Igbo dialects. For example /r/ and /l/ alternates in words, same with /f/ and /h/. Using consonant sounds for example:

- /f/ and /h/ alternate in ife [ife] and [ihe] = thing
- /ʔ/ and /t/ alternate in p̄ta [p̄ʔa] and [p̄ta] = come out
- /p/ and /f/ alternate in p̄ta /p̄ta/ and f̄ta /f̄ta/ = come out
- /w/ and /b/ alternate in w̄u [w̄u] and b̄u [b̄u] = is/become
- /l/ and /r/ alternate in ɔ̄r̄u [ɔ̄r̄u] and ɔ̄l̄u [ɔ̄l̄u] = work
- /r/ and /d/ alternate in diri /diri/ and /riri/ = be
- /o/ and /e/ alternate in otu [otu] and [etu] = how
- /tʃ/ and /d/ alternate in ch̄i [tʃi] and d̄i [di] = is
- /u/ and /i/ alternate in ah̄u [ah̄u] and ah̄i [ahi] = that
- /h/ and /y/ alternate in imehari [imehari] ; imeghari [imeghari] = to redo
- /a/ and /e/ alternate in kamgbe [kambe] and kemgbe [kembe] = since
- /s/ and /tʃ/ alternate in ɔ̄b̄osi [ɔ̄b̄osi] and ɔ̄b̄och̄i [ɔ̄b̄och̄i] = day
- /r/ and /h/ alternate in iru [iru] and ihu [ihu] = front
- /o/ and /a/ alternate in asata [asata]: asat̄o [asat̄o] – eight
- /a/ and /i/ alternate in k̄owari [k̄owari]: k̄owara [k̄owara] = narrated
- /k/ and /h/ alternate in ɔ̄kaobodo [ɔ̄kaobodo]: ɔ̄haobodo [ɔ̄haobodo] = society
- /n/ and /ŋ/ alternate in an̄ur̄i [an̄ur̄i]; an̄ur̄i [an̄ur̄i] = joy
- /l/ and /n/ alternate in elu [elu] ; enu [enu] = up
- /t/ and /p/ alternate in tutu [tutu]; tupu [tupu] = before
- /e/ and /i/ alternate in nde [nde]; nd̄i [nd̄i] = people
- /u/ and /ʊ/ alternate in kwuru [kwuru] ; kw̄ur̄u [k̄w̄ur̄u] = Said
- /dʒ/ and /ʒ/ alternate in eziokwu [eziok^wu]; ed̄ziok^wu = truth

All these variations provide alternatives in which Igbo radio broadcasters can chose from during radio broadcast. The rest of this paper explores the alternation of these sounds in the news report on these aforementioned Lagos radio stations.

Data Collection

Data were collected from the three radio stations used for this study, specifically; Bond FM Lagos, Voice of Nigeria (VON) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Igbo radio. The duration of the data we got from Voice of Nigeria spanned up to 30 minutes. Bond FM has three data that spanned between 5 and 8 minutes. In all, the duration used in this research is approximately 3 hours. The reporters were a mix of male and female in equal proportion. The Bond FM data was majorly from a newspaper review. This also had both a male and female presenter. The scope of this research does not exceed the radio stations in Lagos State that broadcast in the Igbo language. The choice of these stations is because these stations promote the Igbo language and culture usage on their radio broadcasts and reports online. This study adopts the framework of Audience design theory by Allen Bell 1984. The main assumption of this theory is that phonetic choices in broadcast speech are audience driven, that is, how a newscaster perceived the nearest audience will determine the choice of a phonetic variable. The Igbo language which has various accents is not an indigenous language in Lagos State, where Igbo speakers of various accents live. This has influence on Igbo broadcasters on a daily basis.

Data and Discussion

1. Voice of Nigeria (Von)

The voice of Nigeria (VON transmits globally on 7255KHz on the 41m band, 9690 kHz on the 25m band, 15120 kHz on the 19m band and 11770kHz on the 31m bands. The languages used in the broadcast are English, Arabic, French, Kiswahili, Hausa, Fula/Fulfude, Igbo and Yoruba languages. There is phonological variation involving several consonants and vowels that are phonemes but function as variants in some contexts. The data exemplified the context of use and where one sound segment is preferred over another.

- a. In Voice of Nigeria /f/ is used in the place of /h/ in the following context 'Ife' instead of 'ihe' (something) occurring in the sentence, 'I nwere ike igwa anyi aha gi na ife gbasara ntolite gi' (Can you tell us your name and a little about your growing up).

In the above example, /ife/ and /ihe/ have same semantic representation but differ in phonological representation. This type of variation is mostly seen in the Ogbaru dialect of Anambra State.

- b. There is also a preference of /ʔ/ over /t/ in the word /ma'a/ occurring in the sentence, 'ngwanu mekwuzie ka anyi ma'a maka Ezinaulo gi'. (Alright, let us know about your family).

In this above example, ma'a [ma'a] is used in the place of mata [mata] = (know).

- c. /w/ and /b/ also alternate in several Igbo words and in this case /w/ is preferred by this newscasters over /b/ in the following sentence: /wu/ occurring in the sentence, 'i ga-asị na o wu ya na-amasikwaru gi'. (Would you say that you prefer him/her/it most?)

In the above example, wu [wɔ] is used instead of bu [bɔ] (is). The labiovelar approximant /w/ and voiced bilabial plosive sound /b/ are allophones in certain words in Igbo. This variant /wu/ was used six (6) times in this interview. This variation mostly occurs in dialects of Owerri, Mbaise, Mbieri and its environs in Imo State. Another instance of use is presented below: /owula/ occurring in the sentence,

- d. 'O nwere otu ihe mere na ndu gi na o na-abu ma mgbe owula ichetere ya... (There is a way something would happen in your life that whenever you remember it...). In the above example, owula [ɔwɔla] : obula [ɔbɔla] (whatever). It is also noticeable that /l/ and /r/ alternate in Igbo words. In this station also, /l/ variants occur as seen in the sentence,

- e. *pulū*/ occurring in the sentence,
'...ga-enye Chineke n'uzọ *pulū* iche?'

(Will give God in different ways)

So *pulū* [pɔlɔ] is used instead of *puru* [pɔrɔ] (is/becomes). Both '*pulū*' and '*puru*' are of the same semantic representation. This variation mostly occurs in dialects of Igbariam, Ogbunike, Nteje and its environs in Anambra State. The /r/ sound is also used instead of /d/ variation. For instance /*ri*cha/ is used instead of *d*icha [dɪʃa] occurring in the sentence,

- f. 'Ha *ri*cha nne mana e nwere a particular one..?'

(There is quite a number but there is a particular one..)

The difference in roll /r/ and voiced alveolar plosives /d/ does not cause a change in the pronunciation of the word above. This variation also mostly occurs in dialects of Owerri, Mbaise, Mbieri and its environs.

- g. Furthermore, /f/ is used over /h/ in the pronunciation of /afufu/ instead of ahufu /ah^woh^wɔ/ (suffering) occurring in the sentence,

'...na mmadu ga-ebu uzọ gbaa mbọ, taa afufu tupu eriwu uru'

(Someone has to work hard first before he/she can eat the fruit of his labor)

That is to say that the voiceless labiodental fricative /f/ and glottal fricative /h/ are allophones in the above. This variation also mostly occurs in dialects of Ogbaru and its environs.

- h. As regards vowel variation, /o/ & /e/ alternate, /nwoko/ is pronounced in the place of nwoke (man) occurring in the sentence,

'nwoko kwesiri inwu n'ihe mberede ahụ....'

(The man is supposed to die in that unexpected incident).

The back mid vowel /o/ and front mid vowel /e/ do not cause a change in the meaning of the word despite the difference in pronunciation. This variation also mostly occurs in dialects of Owerri, Mbaise, Mbieri and its environs.

2. BBC Radio

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is the national broadcasting company of the United Kingdom, UK. Although its headquarters is in London, it has strived over the years to provide quality broadcast services to the world through different languages, Igbo language not left out. The broadcast is usually carried out via its website and formally broadcast on 'BBC Nkeji' daily.

These are some of the phonological variations observed in its media broadcast.

- a. In BBC Radio, /l/ is used in the place of /r/ in token /melie/ occurring in the sentence,
'...ma ọ buru na ha melie na nturiaka Govano Anambra steeti.'

(If by any chance, they win in the Anambra State Governorship debate).

melie /*melie*/ : *merie* /*merie*/ (defeat). The lateral sound /l/ and roll /r/ are allophones of the phonemes hence '*pulū*' and '*puru*' are both of the same semantic representation but differs in phonological representation. This variation mostly occurs in dialects of Igbariam, Ogbunike, Nteje and its environs.

- b. The vowels /o/ is used over /e/ as seen in the token /rue/ occurring in the sentence, 'Ihe m choro bu aku rue ulo'

(What I want is for wealth to reach home)

In the above example, that is *rue* /*rue*/ is used instead of *ruo* /*ruo*/ (build). The back mid vowel /o/ and front mid vowel /e/ do not cause a change in the meaning of the word in the Igbo language, thus, it shows that '*rue*' and '*ruo*' are both of the same semantic representation. This variation also mostly occurs in dialects of Owerri, Mbaise, Mbieri and its environs.

- c. Also, the vowel /u/ is preferred over /i/ in the word /ahi/ occurring in the sentence,

‘o nwetarala n’irū ụlọ mmeputa ahị were wube....’.

(He brought it to the front of the compound and dig...)

From the above example, that ahụ [ahū] is pronounced instead of ahị / ahɪ / (that). the back high vowel /u/ and front high vowel /i/ are allophones of the phoneme in this instance. Thus, it shows that 'ahị and 'ahụ are both of the same semantic representation but differ in phonological representation.

3. Bond FM

Bond F.M. 92.9 is one of the most prominent radio stations in Lagos State, Nigeria located in Ikeja, GRA. Bond F.M, 92.9 unlike other radio stations in Lagos State makes use of the Igbo language as a means of broadcasting every Tuesday and Thursday in the afternoon.

These are some of the phonological variations observed in a recorded radio broadcast of Bond FM.

- a. In Bond FM /h/ is used instead of /gh/ in the word /imehari/ occurring in the sentence, ‘Tyson Fury enyeghị Deontay Wilder efe imehari ahụ’.
(Tyson Fury did not give Deontay Wilder a chance)

That is imehari [imehari] is heard instead of imeghari [imeɣari] / (to redo). The glottal fricative sound /h/ is used instead of the velar fricative /g^h/.

- b. Also /s/ is used instead of /ch/, that is why /ụbọsi/ is used instead of ụbọchị /ubɔtʃi/ (day) occurring in the sentence, ‘...ntuleakaelu ahụ a ga-eme na Steeti Anambra n’ụbosi Satodee na-abịa abịa’.
(The voting will bne in Anambra Steeti this coming Saturday)

In this example above, the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ and voiceless palatal affricate /ch/ are allophones. This variation was used two (2) times in this broadcast.

- c. Also /w/ is used instead of the /b/ variant in the sentence, ‘Ozi sitere n’ụlọ ọrụ wụ National Emergency Management Agency...’
(The information from our National Emergency Management Agency...)

In this above example, wụ [wū] instead of bụ [bū] = (is). /bū/ and /wū/ are both of the same semantic representation but differ in phonological representation. This variation was used two (2) times in this broadcast. This variation mostly occurs in dialects of Owerri, Mbaise, Mbieri and its environs.

- d. In the same vein /r/ is preferred over /h/ variant in the word /iru/ occurring in the sentence, ‘iji gbachibidoo ọdachị a ka ọ ghara gaa n’iru’.
(to prevent this fall from occurring in the future)

In this above example, iru [iru] is used instead of ihu [ihu] = (front). This variation mostly occurs in dialects of Anaku and its environs. This variation occurs three (3) times in this broadcast.

- e. The vowel sound /a/ is used instead of /o/ in the variant /abọli/ occurring in the sentence, ‘Ogbumoku dī na Mushin were ohere iri abọli.’
(...Ogbomoku in Mushin took ten nights...)

In this above example, abọli [abɔli] is used instead of abalı [abalɪ] = (night/days). In this case, the front low open vowel /a/ and back mid close vowel /ɔ/ are allophones of the same phonemes.

- f. Also, /ɔ/ is used instead of /a/ variant in the variant /asata/ occurring in the sentence, ‘...iri abọli atọ na asata ahụ enyere ha were nye efe n’okporo ụzọ ahụ’
(38 days were given to them to vacate the highway)

In this example above, asata [asata] is pronounced instead of asatọ [asatɔ] = (eight) making the back mid close vowel /ɔ/ sound out instead of the front low open vowel /a/.

- g.** In the variant /w/ & /ŋ/, ŋ is preferred in the word [aŋɔ.ɪka] occurring in the sentence, ‘..Ebe aha m bu Añurika Uzomefuna,’
(While my name is Añurika Uzomefuna)

In the above example, ‘añurika’ /anɔ.ɪka/ is heard instead of añurika [awɔ.ɪka] (joy/happiness). The approximant /w/ and velar nasal sound /ŋ/ are variants of the same phoneme.

- h.** Also /n/ and /l/ which alternate in Igbo is seen here but it is the variant /n/ that is used in the word /marite/ occurring in the sentence, ‘m iji akukọ gbasara ɔnwu mmadu wee marite,’
(I start with the news concerning the death of a person)

In this above example, marite [marite] instead of malite [malite] = (commence/begin) the alveolar nasal /l/ and lateral /l/ are variants in this case. Another instance is seen in the words. Variation mostly occurs in dialects of Anaku and its environs. This variation occurs two (2) times in this broadcast.

- i.** Also /t/ is preferred over /p/ variant /tutu/ occurring in the sentence, ‘.a si na o nwere ihe ɔputara ibu mmadu nkiti tutu ibu onye a mara ama ugbo a...’
(they said that it is significant to be ordinary man before you can be a popular person)

In this example, tutu /tutu/ is pronounced instead of tupu [tupu] = (before). The voiceless alveolar plosive /t/ and voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ alternates.

- j.** The alternation of /e/ and /i/ is seen in the word /nde/ occurring in the sentence, ‘.akukọ a na akuko nde ɔzo gbara ya gburu gburu wu nke no na Daily Sun.
(This news and some others are what is present in Daily Sun)

In the above example, nde [nde] is pronounced instead of ndi [ndi] = (people). In this case, the front mid open vowel /e/ is used in the place of the high back close vowel /i/.

- k.** Also /a/ is used in the place of /e/ in the word /kamgbe/ occurring in the sentence, ‘.nnɔo na kamgbe ndi Amotekun maritere ɔru’
(So since the Amotekun started work)

In this example, kamgbe [kambe] is sounds instead of kemgbe [kembe] (since). i.e. the low open vowel /a/ is preferred over the mid-front vowel /e/.

- l.** There is also a case of consonant nasalization over non-nasalization as seen in the word /rua/ occurring in the sentence, ‘.iji řua ulo ahu ike maka ndi isiala mba ɔzo ga na-abia njem nleta n’ala anyi’
(to use it to build that house for the heads of the other towns when they come for inspection in our town”

In this case, rua [řua]: is pronounced instead of rua [rɔɔ]/ (build). the ‘r’ sound becomes nasalized which is not a feature of standard Igbo. Nasalization occurs in different Igbo dialect accents (Nkamigbo 2014). From the data, it is observed that this radio has a quite high adoption of the dialects in their broadcast. As opposed to the BBC where there is a high use of standard Igbo, the VON and BOND FM is more of a non-standard dialect. About twenty-three (23) different variables were extracted from all stations used in this research. These variables are common in the three (3) radio stations used in this research, namely; Voice of Nigeria (VON), British Broadcasting Corporation (Igbo) radio broadcast and Bond FM 92.9.

Conclusion

This paper explored Igbo accents in selected radio broadcasts in Lagos State. It identifies not just the stations that broadcast the Igbo language but how they use various Igbo language sounds. It is an attempt to understand phonological variations and how it is used in Igbo radio broadcast in Lagos State. From all indications, the phonological variations of the Igbo language

in the radio broadcast are actually very high. While the sounds in some stations are closer to the standard Igbo, others are purely accentual. From our findings, we can see that there are several phonological variables seen in the language, most of these variables occur in consonant than vowel sounds.

Just like Onyeocha (2020) rightly said ‘the standard form of a language is promoted in schools and radio and TV programs. This is not much the case with the standard Igbo’. Hence, from all clear indications, we may conclude that the Igbo broadcasters use both the local and standard accents; this may be probably because many Igbo indigenes are not aware of the differences that exist between the standard Igbo dialect and the non-standard dialects.

It is very important to note that it is the form of Igbo which is intelligible to speakers of Igbo scattered all over the country that should be used. The language must be reachable to the majority of the listening audience. It must be delivered, using the accepted norms of grammar, vocabulary pronunciation and tone. This study has shown that there is the use of this non-standard dialect in places where the standard forms should apply. This is occasioned by dialectal interference in the speech of the newscasters. We, therefore, recommend that, firstly, the newscasters should undergo proper training in the use of Standard Igbo. This proper training is to ensure that the presenters are well grounded in the Igbo language, cultures and tradition. More so, it will go a long way to develop competence in broadcasting; to know how to conduct interviews and write manuscripts. As Obiorah (2021) rightly advised, manuscripts and news should be properly edited by an Igbo language expert before being broadcast, and possibly train and retrain media practitioners from time to time to be up to date with the language grammar, structure, form and phonology of the language. There should also be Igbo language translators who are trained and skilled in the art of translation using the standard phonological variables. Lastly, there is a need to have a standard Igbo pronunciation unit in all radio stations that can facilitate the use of standard Igbo pronunciations only.

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