

PERMISSIVENESS IN IGBO LANGUAGE USE BY THE STUDENTS AND THE ELITES IN IGBO LAND: IMPACT AND ELUCIDATION

Nneka Justina Eze Ph.D
Department of Linguistics, Foreign and Nigerian Languages
National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja
neze@noun.edu.ng

Abstract

Igbo language is the language of the tribe called Igbo; it is their identity which their life and culture is embedded on. The impact of western education has really brought a setback to the language in diverse ways to the extent that it is currently struggling with extinction. It is now assumed or seen as the language of the illiterates, and so children, students /elites and adults avoid using the language. Negligence of this language has brought about confusion and disunity and poverty to this tribe because one's negligence of his/her lineage (origin) is equal to death. The inculcation of AI in the use of this language will bring about revitalization, rebranding the language at international standard. The study was conducted in South Eastern Nigeria. The study adopted a combination of causal comparative and descriptive survey design. A total of five hundred students drawn from the five States of the South Eastern geo-political zone constituted the sample for this study. Data were collected using Laxity in Igbo language Impact Assessment Scale (LILIAS). Data collected with the instrument were analysed descriptively using mean and standard deviation. The summary of result revealed that permissiveness in Igbo language use by the students and the elites influences the Igbo land in education, economic, social and political. Based on the findings the researcher made recommendations on affirmative procedures for addressing some these issues via the use of AI tools.

Keywords: Permissiveness, Igbo language, Elites, Elucidation

Introduction

In the context of linguistic diversity, the use and preservation of indigenous languages are increasingly seen as essential in maintaining cultural identity and fostering community cohesion. Onyebuchi, and Agbasi, (2024) assert that indigenous languages, however, face challenges such as language attrition, loss of fluency, and limited use in both formal and informal settings, especially among younger generations. One key issue emerging in the discourse surrounding indigenous language use is the concept of permissiveness, where language norms are either more lenient or flexible in certain contexts. (Eze, 2023) This permissiveness can be observed in the language practices of both students and the elite members of native-speaking communities. While indigenous languages are central to the cultural heritage of their communities, modern influences, globalization, and technological advancements often lead to shifts in language behavior. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in educational settings, where students may mix their indigenous languages with more dominant languages, and among elites who often engage in bilingual or even multilingual communication. This paper explored the effects of permissiveness in (Igbo (indigenous) language use among students and elites, and how

AI-driven tools can help elucidate this complex linguistic dynamic. Language is an indispensable means of communication and a veritable tool of socio-economic mobility in every society. Eze, (2011) Opines that Language is a means of communication used by certain groups of people to express their thoughts and feelings, adding that a language is a particular kind of system for encoding and decoding information. Igbo language can interestingly be programmed in AI. Igbo language as one of the three major Nigerian indigenous languages is the language of communication in Igbo land. Igbo as the name goes is embedded in all that pertains to the Igbo people thus the name of their language is their name. It is as well associated with all about the Igbo tribe which is known as their identity of which their uniqueness is: their language, their culture, their manners, their dressing code, their feeding habit and styles of their foods, their beliefs in their 'chi', their hospitality, their life principles, in fact, their general views about life itself in totality. All these can be seen in the ethics of their lives, they can as well be programmed in the AI.

Permissiveness or Laxity in Igbo Language Use

Permissiveness in language refers to the flexibility with which speakers use their native language in conjunction with other languages, allowing for code-switching, borrowing, and the fluid integration of linguistic elements. In the context of indigenous languages, this can manifest in several ways:

Code-switching: The practice of alternating between an indigenous language and a dominant language, such as English, depending on the social or communicative context.

1. **Language mixing:** Combining indigenous language with foreign linguistic structures or words, sometimes to fill lexical gaps or because of social pressure.
2. **Language simplification:** Adjusting the complexity of the indigenous language to align with the language of the dominant culture.

For students, this permissiveness is often a coping mechanism in educational settings where they must navigate between their native language and the language of instruction. For elites, however, the flexibility may reflect their position in a globalized world where they have access to multiple languages and may use their native language as a marker of identity while also participating in wider, multilingual discourses.

Effects of Permissiveness or Laxity in Indigenous (Igbo) Language Use

The permissiveness in language use can have both positive and negative effects, depending on the context in which it occurs.

Positive Effects:

- **Preservation of Cultural Identity:** Even when indigenous languages are mixed with other languages, they remain part of daily communication, allowing for the continued use of key expressions, concepts, and traditions that are rooted in the native tongue.
- **Language Revival:** When students and elites embrace their indigenous language in hybrid forms, it can serve as a bridge to revitalize the language. For instance, young

people may feel more connected to their cultural heritage if they can comfortably use the language in modern contexts, including social media, music, and entertainment.

- **Increased Intergenerational Communication:** Permissiveness can facilitate communication between generations. For example, younger speakers who are more comfortable with a dominant language may still maintain contact with older generations who primarily speak the indigenous language.

Negative Effects:

Language Erosion: Over time, the heavy mixing of languages can lead to the erosion of the indigenous language itself. Students who frequently code-switch or mix languages may lose proficiency in their native language, leading to reduced fluency and understanding.

1. **Cultural Dilution:** If indigenous languages are only used in diluted forms, they may gradually lose their cultural richness, including unique phrases, idioms, and worldviews that cannot easily be translated into dominant languages.
2. **Social Stratification:** In some cases, elites might prioritize foreign languages in formal settings, inadvertently devaluing indigenous languages. This could lead to social divisions where the use of the native language is seen as less prestigious or less useful for upward mobility.

Igbo Language

According to Umo and Ezema (2007) Igbo language is the language of the inhabitants of the South-east region of Nigeria. They are found in the Eastern States of Nigeria: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States and some part of the following states in Nigeria: Delta, Cross River, Rivers etc. They share the same culture; have so many things in common such as tradition, mode of dressing, the type of things they eat (food) similar house styles, the type of names given to their offspring due to events connected to the child or the arrival of the child, like how and when the child came. So, their language is called Igbo while some mistakenly call them Ibo due to the fact that the whites that colonized them then cannot pronounce Igbo without difficulty so they call them Ibo. Uzoegwu, (2023) supports that Igbo people are the main people occupying this particular geographical vicinity of the South East of the nation Nigeria. Majorly or widely seen or located at the following states in the country; Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. Enwerem, (2015) supports that these five states connote Igbo, although some parts of the neighboring states where the Igbo indigenes occupy like: Rivers state, Delta State, Akwa Ibom State, Kogi States, Benue State and Cross River State where you can see some of the them occupying some places close to any of these pre mentioned five States.

The Structure of Igbo Language

Igbo language is structured with Igbo components in all that concerns them that is what made them Igbo. In other words, the Igbo people speak Igbo language in its variety forms, eat Igbo type of foods with Igbo style of cooking some particular types of food especially those foods that made them Igbo. Ihuoma, (2023) avows that they believe in extended family relationships as such they live a communal lifestyle in their different villages.

Majority of them used to be farmers in the olden days which made them to be more polygamous than monogamous because they needed more hands in the farm work to always sustain plenty foods during harvest as such then every average Igbo man wants to bear the honorable name Diji (Yam master) It portrays he is a great farmer women run after them to marry them because of their strength to acquire many farm lands, harvesting many tubers of yam that fills his barn. Meanwhile, nowadays some of them are now shifting from that view about prosperity and are shifting into so many types of businesses, and they are always successful in their businesses because of God given wisdom on how to go about their businesses in order to succeed. While some are now into the pursuits of academics, enrolling into some professional courses that will announce them. (Igboanusi, and Mbah 2017) This is the more reason they are seen as industrious and successful people in whatever they do for their living, because they will do it with all their might. However in their style of worship of the Igbo, they have their Igbo beliefs especially in Chukwu Okike Abiama (The Almighty God or the Creator). They are hospitable people that take good care of their visitors; their culture is Igbo as well as their outright mentality. (Eno-Abasi, 2017)

Nature of Igbo people

However, their desire for wealth acquisition can never be over emphasized, currently it cuts across their gender. In the pursuit of wealth nowadays the masculine or feminine gender is immaterial, as such that a woman can assume any type of available office in Igbo land or in diaspora, in other to acquire wealth or fame. Nwankwo, (2023) states that this enthusiasm for wealth acquisition is in born in every average Igbo man or woman as such they are known for looking for greener pastures wherever they are, they can live anywhere at all, so long as living things survive there, hence the adage “wherever you go and didn’t see an Igbo man living there, run away from that area because it is not inhabitable” they are always looking at opportunities not minding the distance where the fortune is. However, this attitude or enthusiasm to acquire wealth or to be famous has affected their language negatively in such a way that it is bringing endangerment into the language currently.

The Igbo Language, the Student and Elite

Igbo language is a local or indigenous language as such it is not a foreign language. It is used majorly by the indigenous of Igbo land. It has its particular way of speaking it in different variety forms by each geo-political areas or towns which is called dialect, while the general Igbo language or central Igbo language is called the standard Igbo. This standard Igbo measures up with every other standard language, as such it is being used in formal schools, it is generally accepted nationwide and even internationally. Meanwhile, some foreign countries are currently interested in studying the language. Igbo language is a standard language that has standard orthography that guides its activities especially the written Igbo language. There is nothing that suppose to make Igbo language less equal to its counterparts even its foreign counterparts, so longer a language can perform all the meaningful purposes or objectives of a language, it is a unique language that ought to be used by the owners. In Nigeria the most acknowledged prominent indigenous languages are: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba: they are both studied in the formal schools, even written external exams on it. This is to support the assertion of Anigbogu (2001) pointing that no language is better than the other. However, the Hausa

and Yoruba among others in Nigeria have a very high regards, respect and value for their language that most of them made theirs the medium of communication wherever they are and at all times even raise their offspring with it with passion. Ajao, (2024) states that on that note, no matter the level of their education, their mother tongue can never be far from their mouth as such it is their identity, it is used even at their formal place of work as it does not remove anything from their intelligence or self-worth rather adds more value to their indigenous language and representation. This is unlike the Igbo tribe that sells their identity for wealth acquisition, firm, greener pastures; they have no value for their native language. Some of them living outside the South East geo-political zone do away with their indigenous language and begin to learn the language of their present environment as such their children acquire the language of that environment, prefer it and uses it even at the detriment of English language which is the language of the colonial masters in Africa that has endangered most of the African language in general. However, Eze, (2016) asserts that they think that one cannot achieve one's life goal with this indigenous language and therefore, always say, "O nwegi ihe e ji Igbo eme". Everyone wants to associate with English in order to measure up with other students from high-class group in the society and so the interest, effort and ability to learn or specialize in Igbo language is killed or demoralized. The students are scholars or learners; they can only be good students when they are willing to learn because they are called learners. Anyaegbunam, and Ndukwe, (2023) opine that student especially those in the secondary schools' display disdain attitude towards Igbo language in the school to the extent that so many of them do not want to have anything to do with Igbo language not to talk of studying it in the schools. This attitude is not farfetched from the attitude they discovered given to Igbo language by parents, teachers and even the Government when they were pupils. The pupils then believed that the language is irrelevant and time wasting. Therefore, their interests were exterminated in the language innocently, while they were ignorant of the damage they are causing to their identity. According to Ohiri-Anichi (2004) research has proved that if serious attention is not giving to Igbo language, in fifty (50) years' time, there will be no language called Igbo in the world.

Parental Influence in Igbo Language

The child's socio-economic background can facilitate or hinder the learning ability of Igbo language, where a particular child may have interest in Igbo language, but because of his or her background the child will do away with anything Igbo language, thinking that he/she wants to keep the family's reputation. Eze, (2016) asserts that you hardly see a child so proud of Igbo language, even though a few still exhibit their love for their mother tongue, even though it is on the ground that no matter how a person's mother's soup is; for that person, it is still the most delicious, and simply the best. Obianuka (2004) posits that little or no regards is given to the Igbo language both at home and in diaspora. Parents also have big impact on their children as it pertains language. A parent can encourage the child positively through his/her attitude in encouraging their children to speak Igbo at home, interact with it with every amount of freedom. While negatively: when a parent forbids the children never to hear Igbo language from their mouths, dare not use it, it is primitive archaic, timid, outdated, barbaric etc. Okafor, (2024) supports that when such is being inculcated in such a child, the child does everything humanly possible to avoid Igbo language in favour of matter the effort of the language teacher and the availability of resources, sometime, it still proves abortive Eno-Abasi, (2017) opines that the major

languages are considered 'developed' in terms of having well-established Orthographies, standard written varieties, long traditions of writing, large and varied corporate of written literatures and dynamic metalanguages. Brann (1986) calls these "demolects".

AI's Role in Analyzing Permissiveness in Igbo Language Use

Artificial intelligence (AI), particularly natural language processing (NLP) tools, offers promising solutions for analyzing permissiveness in indigenous language use. AI can be leveraged to:

Monitor Linguistic Shifts: AI algorithms can track language patterns across different social media platforms, educational settings, and informal conversations. By analyzing vast amounts of text data in indigenous languages, AI can help identify trends in language mixing and shifting preferences, offering insights into how language use is changing over time.

Language Revitalization: AI-powered tools such as language models and chatbots can assist in language learning and revitalization programs. These tools can interact with users in indigenous languages, providing them with conversational practice and educational resources in a highly accessible and engaging format. This can help to bridge the gap between traditional language learning and modern digital environments.

Documenting and Preserving Languages: AI can also be used to help document indigenous languages, compiling dictionaries, grammar guides, and audio recordings that can be used for future generations. Through machine learning, AI can improve transcription accuracy and help to create language corpora that reflect current usage trends, including permissive patterns.

Cultural Analysis: AI can analyze how different generations and social groups use language in different contexts, allowing researchers to understand the cultural significance behind language choices. For instance, AI could help uncover how elites use language in public speeches versus private conversations, offering insights into how language is utilized as a social marker.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to determine the impact of laxity in Igbo language use by the students and the elites in Igbo land: impact and psychotherapy, specifically the study evaluated:

- (a). impact of permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on education.
- (b). impact of permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on economic matters.
- (c). impact of permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on politics.
- (d). impact of permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on social activities

Scope of the Study

The study will cover educational impact of Igbo language, economic impact of Igbo language, political impact of Igbo language and social impact. Generally, Igbo language is been looked down upon, as the elites impact their children and students too with the notion that Igbo language is irrelevant (o nweghị ihe e ji Igbo eme) Therefore giving credit only to the foreign languages, the tendency to give all credit to a particular group and the bias in use of the Igbo language both at home and in schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed study.

- i. What is the impact of permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on education
- ii. What is the impact of permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on economic matters.
- iii. What is the impact of permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on politics
- iv. What is the impact of permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on social activities

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The survey approach involved studying, collecting, and analyzing data from a selected sample of individuals, items, reports, and other relevant indices to assess the extent of laxity in the use of the Igbo language by students and elites in Igbo land, its effects, and potential psychotherapeutic interventions. The study was conducted within South Eastern Nigeria, specifically in Igbo land. Data were collected using the Impact Assessment Scale developed by Abonyi, Okereke, Omebe, and Anugwo (2006). The instrument is a 30-item Likert-type scale, which is divided into four sections. Section A (items 1–6) focuses on the educational impact of laxity in Igbo language use. Section B (items 7–13) addresses the economic impact. Section C (items 14–23) evaluates the political impact. Section D (items 24–30) explores the social impact. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select participants from the five Eastern states of Nigeria where the Igbo language is predominantly spoken. A total of 500 women (100 from each state) participated in the study. The data collected were analyzed quantitatively using mean and standard deviation to assess the overall impact and identify trends.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the impact of permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on education?

Data for this research question were collected using Section A of the instrument. Data were analyzed on individual item basis using mean and standard deviation. Summary of result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean responses of the respondents on the impact of permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on education.

SN	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Igbo language speaking is now prohibited both in private and public schools to influence the Igbo elites.	3.65	0.29	Very Great Impact
2	Most Igbo children /students claim that they do not know how to speak Igbo language and so they are not interested in the language.	3.59	0.42	Very Great Impact
3	Igbo parents avoid taking their children to schools that use Igbo language for teaching and learning no matter the class.	3.82	0.31	Very Great Impact
4	The National Policy of Education does not care if their policy on indigenous language is implemented in the schools or not.	3.51	0.27	Very Great Impact
5	Igbo students to a great extent avoid using Igbo language especially in the schools, where foreign languages are preferred.	3.67	0.41	Very Great Impact
6	Most Igbo language teachers are not proud to use Igbo language in schools even while teaching Igbo language.	3.49	0.22	Great Impact
Grand Mean		3.62		

As shown in Table 1 The effect of laxity in Igbo language by the students and the elites on education in Igbo land. As shown in the Table the grand mean impact of laxity in Igbo language on the education is 3.62 on the 4-point scale.

Research question 2: What is the impact of permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on economic matters?

Items 7 – 13 of the instruments were used to collect data for this research question. Data were also analyzed on individual item basis using mean and standard deviation. Summary of result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean responses of the respondents on the impact of permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on economic matters

SN	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
7	Igbo language is a viable language in the agricultural productions in the farm lands in Igbo land.	3.76	0.37	Very Great Impact
8	Permissiveness in Igbo language has affected the buying and selling in the market in the Igbo land.	3.81	0.29	Very Great Impact
9	Igbo language is majorly used in petty trading activities in the Igbo land.	3.62	0.32	Very Great Impact
10	Igbo language is generally used in teaching apprentice in the traditional jobs like gold smiting, tailoring, etc	3.50	0.44	Very Great Impact
11	Igbo language is more used for hawkers in the villages in the villages.	3.72	0-39	Very Great Impact
12	Igbo language is used by the fisher men living near the rivers in the Igbo land.	3.59	0.42	Very Great Impact
13	The Igbo language book authors make money from their publications	3.55	0.38	Very Great Impact
Grand Mean		3.65		

Result summarized in Table 2 indicates that permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on economic matters has impact to a very great extent. The grand mean impact on students and the elites is 3.62

Research Question 3: What is the impact of permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on politics?

Data for this research question was collected using items 14 – 23 Of the instrument. They were also analyzed on individual item basis using mean and standard deviation. Summary of results is presented in Table 3

Table 3: Mean responses of the respondents on the permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on politics *impact*.

SN	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
14	During campaign, politicians use Igbo language to communicate with the Igbo indigenous to create the impression one oneness with the people.	3.52	0.48	Very Great Impact
15	Igbo language is used among the Igbo folks in Igbo land.	3.42	0.35	Great Impact
16	Igbo language speakers accept subordinate roles in governance.	3.57	0.42	Very Great Impact
17	Igbo languages users take decisions in Igbo language when they do not want strangers to understand them.	3.39	0.44	Great Impact
18	The Igbo traditional rulers use the indigenous language in their meetings.	3.74	0.38	Very Great Impact
19	Igbo language is used to preach in the churches to convince the followers.	2.74	0.31	Great Impact
20	Igbo indigenous institute age grade leaderships in their villages, which is a good forum for political campaigns	3.56	0.62	Very Great Impact
21	The politicians' select Igbo language users or speakers to represent them in the land or place they want to take charge to make the indigenous relax with them.	3.75	0.29	Very Great Impact
22	The Igwe, Onowu and Ichies use Igbo language to pass their judgments or serious decisions in the land.	3.67	0.44	Very Great Impact
23	Igbo language is widely used in the South East in the decision making in leadership	2.14	0.31	Little Impact
Grand Mean		3.35		

Result summarized in Table 3 also reveals that Igbo oral literature is a strong force of impact on the political aspects of women impact with a grand mean impact of 3.35 on the 4-point rating scale.

Research Question 4: What is the impact of permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on social activities?

This research question was answered using data collected with items 24 – 30 of the instruments. They were also analyzed on individual item basis. Summary of results is presented in Table 4

Table 4: Mean responses of the respondents on the impact of permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on social activities.

SN	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
24	Igbo language speakers prohibit female from close interaction with male folks in the villages.	3.66	0.64	Very Great Impact
25	Igbo language students enjoy Igbo social functions	3.29	0.34	Very Great Impact
26	The Igbo elites always disagree with Igbo traditional activities.	1.32	0.51	Very Little Impact
27	The Igbo elites believes so much on freedom of speech.	3.69	0.39	Very Great Impact
28	The Igbo language students try as much as possible not using Igbo language while communicating with members of other tribes unlike Hausa and Yoruba	3.55	0.44	Very Great Impact
29	The students and the elites in Igbo land have consciously neglected the oral Igbo literatures that no one has time for moon light plays any more.	3.74	0.36	Very Great Impact
30	The children of the elites are prohibited from unnecessary visitations moving from pillar to post	3.16	0.48	Great Impact

Summary of result in Table 4 shows that the permissiveness in Igbo language by the students and the elites on social activities impact is very pronounced. It yielded a grand mean impact of 3.20 on the 4-point scale.

Discussion of Results

Results of data analysis presented in Tables 1 – 4 reveal that the permissiveness in Igbo language use by the students and the elites in Igbo land impact is to a very great extent. A cursory look at the various clusters reveals that educational impact of the permissiveness in Igbo language use is affecting the whole system in Igbo language education, because if Igbo language neglected educationally, it will affect the Igbo indigenous' status. However, education is the paramount in every region currently, hence if Igbo language should be promoted through Igbo language learning in schools. Ohiri-Aniche (2010) asserts that negligence of Igbo language by the Igbo indigenous will bring about language endangerment.

This study gawks into some psychotherapy which can be as well called talk-therapy that can help to revolutionize their wrong assertion of their mother tongue or indigenous language to avoid it been endangered in future, as it has been threatened already. However, It is recommended that the Igbo language should be encouraged by both parents, teachers and government to make sure that it is not been endangered against foreign languages in our country since our country is a multi-lingual country. Parents should allow or encourage their children to use Igbo language at home, church, market places and school. Igbo language should be promoted by all and sundry. This will encourage the youngsters to proudly use it wherever they see themselves and not to deny it and call it barbaric names and disassociate from it.

Conclusion

The permissiveness observed in the use of indigenous languages by students and elites has profound implications for the future of these languages. While it may offer a pathway for continued cultural expression and intergenerational communication, it also carries

risks of language erosion and cultural dilution. However, with the support of artificial intelligence tools, these challenges can be mitigated. AI offers powerful methods to track, analyse, and preserve indigenous languages, ensuring that the linguistic diversity and cultural heritage of native communities are not only acknowledged but actively maintained.

As indigenous languages continue to evolve in an increasingly globalized world, the combination of flexible language practices and cutting-edge technological tools can provide a blueprint for sustaining these languages for future generations. By embracing both traditional language use and technological innovation, communities can safeguard their linguistic heritage while adapting to the changing demands of the modern world.

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