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## A Sociolinguistic Analysis of *Nwa* and *Ụmụ* in Igbo

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### Abstract

*There are Igbo words that seem so common, but when their use in social situations is considered, it reveals a rich endowment with multi-dimensional meanings. Against this backdrop, this study offers a sociolinguistic analysis of the Igbo terms: 'nwa' and 'ụmụ'. The study's objectives are to explain the sociolinguistic uses of 'nwa' and 'umu' and the implications of their usage analysis. The method of the study is descriptive. The theory adopted in the analysis of data is the Use Theory of Meaning. The data for the study is sourced primarily, because the researcher is an intuitive speaker of the Igbo language. The study finds out that in some social situations, 'nwa' is used to denote relationship type, singularity, negligibility, offspring and parent, derogatory reference, child of a shrine, title name etc. The findings also show that 'ụmụ' is applied in some social circumstances to depict plurality, children and their parents, negligibility, a set of people, trainees or servants, disparagement and relations. In terms of the implications of the analysis, it is discovered that 'nwa' and 'ụmụ' share some semantic similarities in their contextual usage to refer to child and children, respectively. Also, 'nwa' and 'ụmụ' are found to express oppositeness, especially when they refer to singularity and plurality, respectively. That notwithstanding, the analysis has exposed us to the knowledge of the way the Igbo language assigns comprehensible descriptions to attitudes, professions and disabilities which have no names in Igbo.*

**Keywords:** sociolinguistics, plurality, Igbo terms, contextual usage

## 1. Introduction

There are social roles language plays in a community. In other words, language tries to make itself suit and meet up with the needs of society. The discipline under which language does all these is sociolinguistics. The study of sociolinguistics engages in the process of blending sociology with linguistics. This explains why sociolinguists busy themselves with finding out what real speech actually is, within and among communities'. Their major concern is to study the way in which language changes according to not only the social context but also the social group that uses it.

The social group of concern for this paper is the Igbo, whose language is spoken in Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, and some parts of Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Delta and Rivers States. In these areas, Igbo language performs some specific functions. It is, however, not certain how the language uses these functions to convey social meanings. Based on this, the topic of study here is "A Sociolinguistic Analysis of 'nwa' and 'umu' in Igbo".

The objectives of the study are to explain the sociolinguistic uses of *nwa* and *umu* and analyse their uses. The study will also draw out the implications of their usage analysis. The research method for the study is descriptive. The theoretical frame work is the Use Theory of Meaning propounded by Wittgenstein in 1953. The data for the analysis are primarily procured, because the researcher is an intuitive speaker of the Igbo language. For the purpose of organised research presentation, the work is divided into four sections: the introduction, literature review, data analysis and conclusion. These sections are dealt with in sequence. The study is expected to be of immense benefit to researchers, the Igbo language, linguists and Igbo language learners both at home and in the diaspora.

## **2. Literature Review**

According to <https://www.meriam.webster.com>, “speech communities are groups that share values and attitudes about language use, varieties and practices”. They have recognised beliefs and value systems regarding forms and styles of communication. McGregor (2009) defines it as a coherent group of people that have a language or languages common to them with more or less the same norms of language use. This group of speakers constitute a network of interacting individuals that linguistically communicate with one another in a more frequent and intensive way than they engage with outsiders. Hudson’s (1980: 26) definition of community is “the whole set of people who communicate with one another, either directly or indirectly, via the common language”. The understanding in all these views centres around three major things: a speech community has to share a common language, the group has to be interacting frequently and have common norms of language use. This directly means that Igbo is a speech community.

### **2.1 Language**

Language, according to Sapir (1921), is a method that is not instinctive, but precisely human, and human beings make use of it to share ideas, emotions and desires through the process of communication and use of symbols produced intentionally by the same human beings. Related to this definition is that of Trager (1949) that sees language as a non-concrete system of symbols generated vocally by means of which societal members interact in accordance with their whole culture. Okwudishu, in Okolo (2010) describes language as something that is as important as the soul of a people; a system of communication which the people of a specific community, region or country employ through its symbols in their speech and writing. Supporting the view, Maduagwu (2008) emphasizes that a people’s history is kept alive through language,

even as it is a means of transmitting a people's culture. In fact, once language is affected in any way, the owners of such a language will also be affected in one way or the other.

From the definitions of language by Sapir (1921), Trager (1949), Okolo (2010) and Maduagwu (2008), it is easy to point out some areas of sameness and divergencies. For instance, Sapir (1921) and Trager (1949) agree that language functions as a system. In this system, both of them particularize the use of symbols. And they agree that the use of these systematic human vocal symbols is for the purpose of interaction or communicating ideas, emotions or desires. Where both of them differ is that Trager (1949) specifies that it is the members of a common society that use language. Okolo's (2010) concern is on the importance of language to human beings, an idea which Maduagwu (2008) shares with him. They agree that language is mainly for the purpose of communication in a community or a region, and that symbols are used systematically. Following this analysis, language is obviously systematic and involves the use of systematic symbols for communication in a community which views their language as an indispensable instrument in their collective life.

## **2.2 Igbo Language**

In the words of Ohiri-Aniche (2013: 17):

Igbo language is spoken homogenously in five south-eastern states of the country, namely, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. Sizeable numbers of Igbo speakers are found in Delta and Rivers States, while they are also found in one or two communities in Edo and Akwa Ibom States.

Onwuejeogwu (1975: 1) also captures the area where Igbo language is spoken. He maintains that the area is delimited by an:

imaginary line running outside the settlements of Agbor, Kwale, Obiaruku, Ebu (West Niger Igbo area), Ahoada, Diobu, Umuagbai (Port Harcourt area), Arochukwu, Afikpo, Ndinioafu, Isiogo (Abakaliki area) and Enugu Ezike (Nsuka area and Nzam).

According to Ohiri-Aniche (2013), the people who share boundaries with the Igbo are as follows: Igala, Tiv, and Idoma to the north; the Anaang, Ibibio, Efik to the South-east. Then, to the South-west, are the Urhobo, Isoko and Edo. On the side of South-South are Delta areas with Ijaw and Ogoni. With these geographical descriptions by Ohiri-Aniche (2013) and Onwuejeogwu (1975), it becomes clear that the words ‘*nwa*’ and ‘*umu*’ of the Igbo language are used in these areas of Nigeria.

### **2.3 Linguistics**

As Gleason (1961: 2) puts it through Anozie (2007: 27), “linguistics is the science which attempts to understand language from the point of view of its internal structure”. As is explained by Anozie (2007), the target of general linguistics is to present language as an activity and instrument used by human beings and not by the lower animals in the world. Linguistics aims at scientifically comprehending the position language occupies in human life, how language is organized to enable it satisfy the needs it serves and the roles or functions which language performs for human beings.

Finch (2000: 1) gives a stage-by-stage explanation of the work of linguists, thus:

Linguists begin their work by observing the way in which people use language, on the basis of which they provide a description of language use, and finally, when all the data has been analysed, an explanation. Explanations of language use are the stage at which linguists endeavour to establish the underlying rules which speakers are following.

According to Prasad (2012), the work which linguistics does is to describe the nature, scope, structure, production, perception and how to transmit language independently. Linguistics also does the work of establishing a theory of language, studies the components of a language system and tries to arrive at an explanation of how language works. The work of linguistics is, therefore, mainly descriptive, even as it also engages in historical and comparative investigations about language.

In all these explanations, Gleason's (1961) focus is on the linguistic study of the internal structure of language. Anozie's (2010) concern is about how linguistics sets to differentiate language as a human behavioural aspect reserved for human beings alone. Other roles he (2010) recognizes are that linguistics arranges language to satisfy human needs and also perform some functions. Finch's (2000) description of linguistics is centred on its scientific functional modalities, which, summarily, are empiricity, observation description and explanation. It is from Prasad (2012) that the things linguistics describes are shown: nature, scope, structure, production, perception and transmission of language.

Based on all these, the position of this study is that linguistics is a scientific study of language as an aspect of human behaviour. In this study, linguistics descriptively explains the nature, scope,

structure, production, perception and how language is transmitted to satisfy the needs of humans in various ways.

### **2.3.1 Descriptive Linguistics**

Anagbogu, Mbah and Eme (2010) maintain that descriptive linguistics involves making effort to describe or show how language existed at a specific time. This calls for analysing language precisely the way it is found, without additions or changes. Prasad (2012: 5) obviously agrees with the above view from Anagbogu, Mbah and Eme (2010) when he says that “descriptive linguistics deals with the description, and analysis of the ways in which a language operates and is used by a given set of speakers at a given time”.

These authors also agree that descriptive linguistics involves phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. What this implies is that it is through these branches that any language is described according to how it works at a particular point in time.

### **2.3.2 Syntax**

Syntax is “the study of grammatical relations between words and other units within the sentence” (Matthews, 2007: 397). Finch (2000) defines syntax as a reference to the rules that determine how words are combined to generate sentences. To him, it is about arranging words in a particular order. On his part, Echebima (2015) maintains that syntax is about how different words are arranged so that they be in agreement with other words to deliver a meaningful expression.

From the views of Matthews (2007), Finch (2000) and Echebima (2015), it becomes clear that syntax involves putting words in an acceptable order to produce the sentences we use in speech. It is about sticking to the rules of a language to use the words from morphology to form sentences.

### **2.3.3 Semantics**

What we study in semantics is meaning. It has to do with the meaning of the sound of the word, structure of the word and the arrangement of the words. This is because language is communication by human beings, and this communication conveys meaning plus message (Echebima, 2015). Quoting Lyons (1977), Anagbogu, Mbah and Eme (2010: 215) maintain that “semantics is the study of meaning”. According to Ndimele (1999: 1), “Semantics is an area of linguistics which studies the meaning of words and sentences in language”.

What is to be learnt from the above definitional attempts is that semantics is about the meaning which words and sentences convey in language. In other words, it is about the purpose of a piece of communication, which is passing information and delivering an actual message.

### **2.3.4 Sociolinguistics**

Sociolinguistics, in the view of Hudson (1980) studies language in relation to society. The study believes there are relations between word-meaning and culture. Through it, one has to learn the nature of language and the nature of society. It is through sociolinguistics that social contexts in language are learned and used. Sociolinguistics shows that speech is clearly a social behaviour; it enables us to realise that speech has a social function, can serve as both a means of communication and the identification of social groups. Prasad (2012) explains that sociolinguists indicate that one learns language in the society and that language follows social structure and culture. Language remains a reflection of social structure. According to Prasad (2012), sociolinguistics includes phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics, vocabulary, proverbs

and sayings. In all these, language, being social, is always identical from one member of a speech community to another.

Anozie (2007), in explaining sociolinguistics, maintains that it accounts for the social backgrounds of both the speaker and the addressee, the relationship between the speaker and the addressee and also the context and manner of the interaction. All these will help in comprehending both the structure and function of the language used in a situation. It is easy to learn from all these views that sociolinguistics involves relating word-meaning to culture, social contexts and the social function of speech. In sociolinguistics, the background, relationship and the manner of the interaction between the speaker and the addressee have to often be considered.

#### **2.4 Stylistic or Social Meaning**

Ndimele (1999) defines stylistic or social meaning as that which is as a result of a word producing a meaning which is characteristic of a specific speech pattern, a linguistic variety or a social situation, social meaning obtains when a person's diction reveals his background. Ogbulogo (2005: 22) is of the view that "when a particular pattern of speech, language variety or speech form is associated with a specific social context, stylistic or social meaning is achieved".

Emenanjo (2015) mentions 'nwa' and 'ụmụ' as Igbo words used as singular and plural markers, respectively. He (2015: 14) gives the following as examples of where 'nwa' and 'ụmụ' are used to mark singular and plural, respectively.

- |  |                |         |
|--|----------------|---------|
| (a) Nwa (child)                                      | ụmụ (children) |         |
| (b) Nwa nne (brother/sister)<br>(brothers/sisters)   | ụmụ            | nne     |
| (c) Nwa akwụkwọ (pupil/student)<br>(pupils/students) | (ụmụ           | akwụkwọ |

Also, Emenanjo (2015) goes ahead to stress the meaning of “insignificance” in the use of ‘nwa’ and ‘ụmụ’, thus:

- (d) ụmụ ihe → little things
- (e) ụmụ osisi → shrubs

On treating “components with clear and independent meanings and genitival relationships”, Oruchalu (1979: 67) points out the meaning of ‘nwa’ and ‘ụmụ’, thus:

- (f) nwa agboghọ (Lady). In this case, ‘nwa’ stands as ‘offspring’ while ‘agboghọ’ means ‘Lady’.
- (g) ụmụ nwaanyị (women): This is as plural.
- (h) ụmụ okorobịa (youths): This is as plural.
- (i) ụmụ ntakịrị (children): This is as plural also.

The above studies of Emenanjo (2015) and Oruchalu (1979) make it known that ‘nwa’ is actually used to express singularity whereas ‘ụmụ’ is used, in Igbo to establish plurality in a construction. Through the manner of their written forms, both of them have shown that both ‘nwa’ and ‘ụmụ’ play qualificative roles in Igbo. In the words of Uba-Mgbemena (2011: 43), “in Igbo orthography the writing of ‘nwa’ and ‘ụmụ’ deserves special attention. This is because each of these two items has three distinct semantic readings”. The three different meanings he is talking about for ‘nwa’ are: (i) child (ii) insignificant and (iii) one or not more than one.

The examples of each are as follows:

- (j) Nwa Okeke b́jara (‘nwa’ as child)  
(Okeke’s child came)
- (k) Ọ bụ nwa ụlọ ahụ na-eko ya isi? (nwa as insignificant)  
(Is it that insignificant house that swells his head?)

- (l) Nwa akwụkwọ gị ahụ alaala (that student of yours is gone) ‘nwa’ as singular marker).

Uba-mgbemena’s (2011: 44) examples on ‘ụmụ’ and its three distinct meanings are these:

- (m) Ụmụ Okeke bịara (ụmụ used as ‘children’).  
(Okeke’s children came)
- (n) Ọ bụ ụmụ ụlọ ahụ na-eko ya isi? (insignificant)  
(Is it those insignificant houses that swell his head?)
- (o) Ụmụ agbọghọ ahụ bịara (‘ụmụ’ as plural marker)  
(Those maidens came)

The clear point here is that both ‘nwa’ and ‘ụmụ’ have three varying meanings each. If there are other meanings beyond these, we shall see that in the data analysis.

## **2.6 Theoretical Framework**

The theory that guides this study is the Use Theory of Meaning founded by Wittgenstein in 1953. This theory is also known as the contextual or operational theory of meaning (Ogboluogo, 2005).

### **2.6.1 Objective of the Theory**

The objective of the theory is to see that the meaning of a word is determined by the context under which such a word is used. What this means is that it is the effect which a word creates within a specific situation that stands as the full meaning of that word. By extension, the theory is saying that words should not be seen as entities, that is, as things that exist separately from other things. It is the decision and its accompanying effects that bestow a meaning on a word. Words do not just mean what is said, but their meaning lies in the way such a thing is said and the condition under which it is said.

### **2.6.2 Application of the Theory**

By implication, the application of the use theory of meaning requires finding out what is said, how it is said and under what type of speech situation the word is used. The expression being considered must be some data from a competent user of the language (<https://link.springer.com>).

Following the explanation, in order to apply use the theory of meaning on any data, it requires finding out the words and the manner of their use and then using the situation of usage to draw out the meaning of the words. The social meaning of such a word is always key in determining the intended understanding of it.

### **2.7 Empirical Review**

Odo (2018) conducted a research on “A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Youth Language in Igbo”. The sole objective of the study is to investigate the Youth language so as to highlight the language used by youths. The theory which is used in the research is systemic functional grammar (SFG). The findings of the study are that youths use language to express love, dislike and to achieve other goals. It also includes that total desires are expressed through language. Considering the topic, objectives, theoretical framework and findings of the study, it becomes obvious that this research of ours is free for continuity; as both have no area of relationship. The only similarity is that both are sociolinguistic analysis, but in varying areas of the Igbo language.

Madueke (2020) carried out a research on “The Sociolinguistic Analysis of Binomials in Igbo”. The objectives are to explain sociolinguistics and binomials and their types in Igbo. Another objective is to analyse the varieties of binomials. The research is guided by the use theory of meaning by Wittgenstein (1953). The findings give the explanation of sociolinguistics and

declare the existence of only two types of binomials, the reversible and irreversible. It also finds out that binomials can be categorized in many ways based on context.

From this review, the only similarity her work has with this one is the use of the same Use Theory of Meaning. Outside that, both do not have the same topic, objectives and findings. What this implies is that these researches cannot prevent the continuity of this one.

### **3. Data Presentation and Findings**

What is to be done in this section is the presentation of the data generated by the intuitive researcher carrying out this study. The various data have to be classified and analysed along the line of their contextual meanings as stipulated in the research objectives.

#### **3.1 Explaining the Sociolinguistic Uses of ‘nwa’**

In sociolinguistic analysis, the modus operandi is to survey how social factors affect or even determine the use of language in the society. In this light, the word has to be brought out as data for analysis. After that, the context of usage of the word has to be stated. It is now from the context that the real meaning of the expression has to be defined, as this table portrays:

**Table 1: ‘Nwa’ as singular (One Unmarried Person)**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sentence Type</b>	<b>Content of Usage</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
(1) Nwa okorobia (a youth)	Ikenna bu nwa okorobia	Where the occasion requires	(1) It shows that Ikenna is one person, not more than on.
(2) Nwa agboghọ (a spinster)	(Ikenna is a youth)	stating the status of Ikenna and Adaku.	(2) It also means that Ikenna is not yet married.

**Table 2: ‘Nwa’ as insufficient or insignificant (very little)**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sentence Type</b>	<b>Context of Usage</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Nwa oge (a little time/insufficient time)	(1) Ọ nọrọ nwa oge tupu ọ laa. (He stayed a little time before he left)	When emphasis is on how long he stayed	He stayed for a short time.
Nwa ofe (a little soup)	Ọ bụ nwa ofe ahụ I kunyere m ga-ezuru m nri a? (Is it that small soup you put for me that will be enough for this food?)	When emphasis is on whether the soup is big enough for the whole food	He was given an insignificant amount of soup.
nwa ụlọ (Nwa ụlọ) (insignificant house)	Ọ bụ nwa ụlọ ahụ na-eko ya isi? (Is it that insignificant house that swells his head?)	When somebody is unnecessarily so proud of the house he built.	He is not supposed to be laying excessive emphasis on the house he built.

**Table 3: ‘Nwa’ as an indicator of offspring and parent**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sentence Type</b>	<b>Context of Usage</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
‘Nwa’ Uche (Uche’s child) nwa Uche (Uche’s child)	Udoka bu <u>nwa</u> Uche (Udoka is Uche’s child)	When emphasis is on the parent of the child	Uche is the parent of Udoka and Udoka is the child

**Table 4: ‘Nwa’: Naming persons in accordance with their Igbo market day of birth**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sentence Type</b>	<b>Context of Usage</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Nwa + Orié - Nworíe/Nwoyé (a name/ born on Orié day) (Nwafọ (name/ born on afọ day)	Nwankwo na Nweke b́jara ebe a (Nwankwo and Nweke came here).	When it is necessary to say the name of a person that came.	Nwakwo, Nweke And Nwoyé are persons named against the Igbo market days in which they were born.
Nweke (name/born on eke day Nwankwo (name/born on nkwo day).	Nwoyé gara ah́ja afọ (Nwoyé went to afọ market).	When it is necessary to mention the name of the person.	

**Table 5: ‘Nwa’ as a revealer of relationship type**

Words	Sentence Type	Context of Usage	Meaning
(1) Nwanne (brother/sister)	Onyinye bu <u>nwanne</u> m (Onyinye is my sister).	When there is the need to specify relationships shared	It shows the type of relationship Onyinye and Ikenna have with the concerned person.
(2) Nwanna (paternal relation)	Ikenna bu <u>nwanna</u> anyi (Ikenna is our paternal brother).		

**Table 6: ‘Nwa’ as indicating an afflicted child**

Words	Sentence Type	Context of Usage	Meaning
Nwa nzuzu (a foolish child)	Ọfoma bu <u>nwa nzuzu</u> (Ọfoma is a foolish child)	Ọfoma is a foolish child when a person’s behavior calls for question	It means that the behavior of such persons are not normal.
<u>Nwa Ogbanje</u> (a reincarnated child)	Agwa ya bu nke nwa ogbanje (Her behavior is that of a reincarnated child).	It arises when a child’s behavior appears strange.	

Nwa enwe nne enwe nna (child not having mother or father an orphan)	Qbxm bụ nwa enwee nne enwe nna (He is an orphan).	When someone is expected to call his/her parents.	It shows that the child has no parents still alive.
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**Table 7: ‘Nnwa’/ ‘nwa’ as a child belonging to a group**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sentence Type</b>	<b>Context of Usage</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
(1) Nwa akwukwo (a child of a school pupil/student).	(1) Chinedu bụ nwa akwukwo (Chinedu is a pupil/student)	When the group or community one belongs to needs to be identified.	(1) It shows that Chinedu belongs to the school community and that Okeke belongs to Umuchu community. It means also that a child that belongs to Arondizuogu community also came.
(2) Nwa Umuchu (a child from Umuchu)	(2) Nwa Umuchu ahụ bjara ebe a, ya na nke Arondizuogu (that Umuchu child came here together with the Arondizuogu child		
(3) Nwa Aro Ndizuogu (a child from Arondizuogu)			

**Table 8: ‘Nwa’ as a derogatory expression**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sentence Type</b>	<b>Context of Usage</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Nwa Nsuka (Nsuka child) nwa Abakaliki (Abakaliki child) nwa ohu (a slave child).	Leenu nwa Nsuka a ka o na-agwa m okwu (Look at this ordinary Nsuka child talking to me). Chidi bu nwa ohu (Chidi is a slave child).	When civilization and enlightenment are being discussed people from a less developed Nsuka & Abakaliki are ridiculed (nwa ohu - a slave child is always ridiculed).	It means that the use of nwa Nsuka or nwa Aba or nwa ohu is a derogatory reference.

**Table 9: ‘Nwa’ as a child of a shrine**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sentence Type</b>	<b>Context of Usage</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
(1) Nwaogwugwu (a child of ogwugwu shrine)	(1) Ikem jere ikpesara nwa Ogwugwu	(1) When there is a case to be decided	(1) Ikem can report a matter to a shrine god.
(2) Nwa Agbara (a child of Agbara shrine)	(Ikem went to complain to nwa ogwugwu)	(2) A situation where the attention of Dike is	(2) It shows that the shrine can invite any of its worshippers to come and
(3) Nwa Ngwu (a child of Ngwu shrine)	(2) Nwa Agbara kporo Dike oku (Nwa Agbara		

	shrine summoned Dike)	needed over a case.	answer to a case.
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**Table 10: ‘Nwa’: As the Qualified, Underlying Form, ‘Nnwa’**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sentence Type</b>	<b>Context of Usage</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
(1) Uru nnwa (a child of profit)	(1) Obiageli bu uru nwa (Obiageli is a child born out of wedlock)	When the status of children in the family is being defined.	It shows that every child has a known status in his/her family.
(2) añurị nwa (child birth celebration)	(2) Ha na-eje añurị nwa. (They are going for child birth celebration).	In the case of stating one’s destination	One can specify his/her destination.

(3) Akwa nwa (Cry for childlessness)	(3) Akwūla na- ebe akwa nwa n'ūla nka. (A prostitute cries for childlessness at old age)	When expressing the regrets of a prostitute or the disadvantage of prostitution.	Every bad profession or attitude has its adverse effects in the long run.
(4) ukọ nnwa (child scarcity)			

**Table 11: 'Nwa': As Title Names**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sentence Type</b>	<b>Context of Usage</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
(1) Nwa + ka ibe ya (Nwakaibeya) (a child bigger than others)	(1) Aha a na-etu ya bụ Nwakaibeya. (His title name is Nwakaibeya)	When persons take titles to enhance their social status.	It means that those are names with which they are honoured in public.
(2) Nwa + ka nnwa (Nwakannwa) (Same as above)	(2) E chiri ya Nwaezefunamba (He was given the title Nwaezefunmba)		
(3) Nwa + Ezeefunamba --> Nwaezefunamba (A king's son never gets lost)			

**Table 12: ‘Nwa’ in figurative expressions**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sentence Type</b>	<b>Context of Usage</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
(1) The formula -- > nwa + an expression Nwa eyinne, eyinna	Udoka bụ nwa eyinne eyinna. (Udoka has a queer behaviour)	During character assessment	Udoka’s behaviour resembles neither the father’s or mother’s.
(2) Nwa si owere ba nne ya n’afọ (A child that entered the mother’s womb through unknown means.	Nweke bụ si owere ba nne ya n’afọ. (Nweke is a strange child)	When a child keeps manifesting an aberrant behaviour	The child keeps behaving in an unusual, unacceptable way.
(3) Nwa ka ọ mụrụ, ọ bughị ụmụ (He gave birth to a child and not children)	N’ebe Obioma nọ, nne ya mụrụ nwa ọ bughị ụmụ. (In Obioma, his mother gave birth to a child and not children)	When a child exhibits appreciable behaviour always.	The child is a well-behaved one and not like the badly - behaved ones.
(4) Nwa e ji a ụ m ihe (a child of recompense).	Ibekwe bụ nnwa e ji a ụ ihe	When a specific child’s conduct is	He/she is a child that has come to pay his/her

	(Ibekwe is a requital child)	always in the negative.	parents back for the bad things they did.
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### 3.3 Explaining the Sociolinguistic Uses of Ụmụ

**Table 13: ‘Ụmụ’ denoting plurality**

Words	Sentence Type	Context of Usage	Meaning
(1) Ụmụ nwoke (men) (2) Ụmụ nwaanyi (Women) (3) Ụmụ agboghọ (Spinsters) (4) Ụmụ okorobịa (Youths) (5) Ụmụ nkịta (dogs)	(1) Ụmụ nwoke na ụmụ nwaanyi bịara (Men and women came) (2) Ha bu ụmụokorobịa na ụmụagboghọ (They are youths and spinsters). (3) Ụmụnkịta ahụ na-ata ọkpụkpụ. (Those dogs are chewing bone).	When there is the need to specify the attendees.	That those who came were men and women  Specifying that the people are unmarried young boys and girls.  Explaining the action of many dogs, masticating bones.

**Table 14: Ụmụ: denoting offsprings**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sentence Type</b>	<b>Context of Usage</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
(1) Ụmụ Oḡonna (Oḡonna's children)	(1) Chika na Amaka bụ ụmụ Oḡonna. (Chika & Amaka are Oḡonna's children)	A situation where the parents of some children are to be specified.	It means that the subjects of discussion are the offsprings of a parent.
(2) Ụmụ ọkụko (Chickens)	(2) Ụmụ ewu oḡii ahụ na-anụ ara. (Those kids are sucking breast).	Where the goats sucking breast need to be defined as to whether they are the offsprings of the goat.	
(3) Ụmụ ewu (Offsprings of goat)			

**Table 15: 'Ụmụ' used in derogatory remarks for 'many'**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sentence Type</b>	<b>Context of Usage</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
(1) Ụmụ oḡwụḡwụ oge (end time children)	(1) Esokwala ụmụ oḡwụḡwụ oge a n'agwa ha na-akpa. (Don't join the end time children in their misbehaviour)	When acts of bad conduct are being discussed.	It means that the person in question is very badly behaved.
(2) Ụmụefurefu (Good for nothing children)	(2) Agwa ha bụ nke ụmụ efurefu		
(3) Ụmụ iberibe (Misbehaving children)			

	(Their behaviour is that of end time children).		
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**Table 16: ‘Umụ’ showing negligibility and littleness**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sentence Type</b>	<b>Context of Usage</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
(1) Umụ ehi Igbo (Igbo cows) (2) Umụ nghangha akwa (good-for-nothing clothes)	(1) Ọ bụ umu ehi Igbo ndị ahụ o gburu ka o ji eme ọnụ? (Is it those Igbo cows that he is proud of?) (2) Ọ bụ umu <u>nghangha</u> akwa ya ahụ ka o ji eje ụka? (Is it those good-for-nothing clothes that he wears to the church).	When what a person is proud of is diminutive and negligible.  When the cloth somebody is putting on is not fit for a formal outing.	It means that somebody is laying emphasis on things worthy to be ignored.  It means also that the time for a good thing is being wasted on a bad thing.

**Table 17: Ụmụ used in describing a set of trainees**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sentence Type</b>	<b>Context of Usage</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
(1) Ụmụ ọrụ (apprentices) (2) Ụmụ akwụkwọ (Pupils/students) (3) Ụmụ odibo (Servants)	(1) Ha bu umu ọrụ yá. (They are his apprentices). (2) Ụmụ odibo ya na-asa afere (His servants are washing plates). (3) Ụmụ akwụkwọ ahụ na-amụ akwụkwọ (Those students are studying).	Used when the people concerned are still learning a particular art, job or business.	It means that the persons in question are still being taught what they are doing.

**Table 18: ‘Umụ’ signifying relations**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sentence Type</b>	<b>Context of Usage</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
(1) Umụ ada (daughters)	(1) Oḡoḡ bu nwanne m. (Oḡoḡ is my maternal relation)	When specifying blood relation is necessary.	It means that one form of blood relation or the other is shared by them.
(2) Umụ nne (maternal relations)	(2) Umụ ada nwere nzuko (The daughters of the land have a meeting).		
(3) Umụ nna (Paternal relations)			

### **3.4 Implications of the Analysis**

The analysis of the data gathered for ‘nwa’ and ‘umụ’ has enabled the researcher to check, reorder and present the available data in the form of applicable and understandable information. One of the implications of the analysis is that the researcher should now be able to make meaningful deductions and conclusion from the data. Of course, through it, the results can be properly used and applied. From the analysis, it comes out clearly that one thing is to know the meaning of ‘nwa’ and ‘umụ’, another thing is to know their multiple dimensions of meaning in a social setting.

Again, it is now a common knowledge, through this research, that different sentence types have their different contexts and interpretations in the use of the words ‘nwa’ and ‘umụ’. The analysis has made the revelation that ‘nwa’ and ‘umụ’, in their social contexts, are similar in being used not only to refer to singular and plural, child and children, but also to make derogatory references, figurative expressions and to refer to applications.

Another implication of the analysis is that it will help the Igbo language to have improved linguistic performance in several social situations. Also, the analysis has the implication of pointing towards how language mirrors social reality. In a final note, the analysis shows how the Igbo language assigns comprehensible descriptions to positions, attitudes, professions and disabilities which have no known name in Igbo.

#### **4. Summary of Findings and Conclusion**

##### **4.1 Findings**

The task of the sociolinguistic analysis of ‘*nwa*’ and ‘*umu*’ has been started, done and concluded. The first objective has been to explain the sociolinguistic uses of ‘*nwa*’ and ‘*umu*’. On the part of ‘*nwa*’, summarily speaking, the findings of its sociolinguistic uses include being applied in certain social circumstances to mark relationship type, singularity, insignificance, offspring and parent, child affliction, membership of a group, derogatory reference, child of a shrine, and title name. It is also used in figurative expressions. As for ‘*umu*’, its sociolinguistic applications in varied social situations have to do with denoting plurality, children, negligibility, a set of people, trainees or servants, parents of children, disparagement and relations.

In the area of the implications emerging from the analysis of the sociolinguistic uses of ‘*nwa*’ and ‘*umu*’, the study finds out that ‘*nwa*’ and ‘*umu*’ share some similarities and oppositeness in some contexts of usage in Igbo. In the aspect of similarity, they both designate parenthood and offspring, derogatory reference and belittling. Then, in oppositeness, ‘*nwa*’ is for singular where ‘*umu*’ is for plural, especially in situations of talking about parenthood or products of marriage. Where ‘*nwa*’ is about singular, ‘*umu*’ is used there to refer to the opposite, which is plural.

The analysis of the data has made it easy for meaningful deductions and conclusion to be made about the use of the words, their contexts and sentence types. It is easy to draw out these pieces of knowledge from examining the sets of data. From the analysis, there is an obvious lesson that different sentence types vary in their interpretations as informed by their contexts. The analysis has the implication of helping to showcase how the Igbo language is used to reproduce social reality.

#### **4.2 Conclusion**

This research has revealed the hitherto hidden advantages of studying the discipline of sociolinguistics. If not for this study, how could it have been imagined that such seemingly disregarded words as ‘*nwa*’ and ‘*umụ*’ would have such multi-dimensional meanings in social language usage as we have seen? What it translates to is that this study has brought to the fore a lot of issues of significance in language study.

Firstly, it is now certain that theoretical linguistics is not of much use without sociolinguistics. One thing is to construct language structure, and another thing is to understand the social structure of their application. Secondly, it is now obvious that there are many variables that facilitate any comprehensive understanding of both structure and the language used in a situation.

Thirdly, it is no longer a hidden fact that it is the society that determines the said choice of language use. Fourthly and finally, with this study, the Igbo can afford to increase their knowledge of what is common across our various communities of communication.

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