

EZIOKWU: DENIZENS AND TRUTH-CONDITIONS IN IGBO PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

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Abstract

Eziokwu: Nature, Denizens and Truth-Condition in Igbo Philosophy of Language is advancing research on the Chapter Four of Professor Jerome Ikechukwu Okonkwo's Book- Zi: The Conditionality for Knowledge and Truth in Igbo Philosophy of Language. Truth and truth-condition in Igbo linguistic construct is different from the Western conception. Thus, the research explores the etymology and morphological manipulations of ezi (true) as the base-morpheme of eziokwu (truth). It explores the antinomies and cognate terms of eziokwu. It also accesses eziokwu from the treatise of Igbo linguists and philosophers of language, and from their ideologies, brings out different natures and postulates for the truth-conditions and truth-discovering in Igbo sociolinguistic construct. The work agrees with Prof Jerome Okonkwo that the Igbo truth-condition is adumbration. This adumbration-significance of eziokwu is akin to the Greek word for truth- aletheia, which morphologically portrays unveiling, as Martin Heidegger would explore in his Being and Time and this is the Igbo truth-condition: adumbration- Okwu ikpaoto. This study employs the philosophical methods of hermeneutics.

Keywords: *Eziokwu*, Denizen, Truth-Condition, Igbo philosophy of language

1. Introduction

This paper, *Eziokwu: Nature, Denizens and Truth-Conditions in Igbo Philosophy of Language*, is furtherance research on the *Zi-Theory as the Conditionality for Knowledge and Truth in Igbo Philosophy*, which is mostly championed by the Imo Circle of Philosophers of Language, notably- Prof Chidi Osuagwu, Prof Philip Anyaehé Ogbonna, and Prof Jerome Okonkwo, as well as other sociocultural and linguistic critics and analysts¹ of Igbo ontology, philosophy of language and cultural anthropology. The paper seeks to advance “Eziokwu: Its Denizens for Truth-Conditions' Wisdom Teaching in Igbo Language, which is the Chapter Four of Jerome Okonkwo's *Zi: The Conditionality*

¹Critics such as Francis O.C. Njoku, “Truth and Chaos in Igbo Philosophy” in *Igwebuiké: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Accessed 21/06/2023 from [Igwebuiké Research Institute.org](http://www.igwebuikeresearchinstitute.org), at <http://www.igwebuikeresearchinstitute.org>. See also F.O.C. Njoku, “A Theoretical Foundation for Understanding Law Subjects and Rights in Igbo Philosophy of Law” in *Open Journal of Philosophy* 2013. Vol.3, No.1A, 255-263 (257; 260)

for *Knowledge and Truth in Igbo Philosophy of Language*. The research centres on *eziokwu*, and explores the etymology and various morphological manipulations and positioning of *ezi* as base-morpheme. It also explores *ezi* as the major etymon that imports truth-significance to *eziokwu*. These morphological considerations of *ezi* lead to the exploration of the nature, opposite and cognate terms of *eziokwu*. The research further examines the denizens of *eziokwu* and makes a subtle discrepancy between *ezi* and *eziokwu* as cognate concepts. In the *Zi-theory* spirit, the research also makes a linguistic discovery of the denizens of *Ugha* (falsehood, untrue), which is the direct antinomy of *ezi* and *eziokwu*. It joins the *Zi-theorists* in exploring the ontological notion of 'scattering' and 'disordering' as significances inhering in the Igbo diphthong *gh*, which is the major morpheme in *ugha*, the opposite of *ezi*.

The research discussed *eziokwu* from the treatise of Igbo linguists and philosophers of language, and from their ideologies, develops the nature of *eziokwu* and the different postulates as truth-conditions and truth-discovering methods in Igbo worldview and language. It agrees with Jerome Okonkwo that the Igbo truth-condition is adumbration. Adumbration is akin to the Greek word for truth- *aletheia*, which morphological constitution portrays unveiling and standing-out or 'a being-there,' as it would be seen in an adumbrated gendered sculpture or in live-gendered nudity. *Eziokwu* is like the nakedness of a gender in broad daylight. The research also anticipates an advancement of this *adumbrating view of eziokwu*, in the Heideggerian spirit and the exploration of *aletheia* and *Dasein*, as an out-standing to be behold and "Being-there."

2. Theoretical Framework

This work is an epistemological treatise that is rooted in the linguistic analysis of the Igbo word for truth- *eziokwu*; in view of finding its nature and denizens, and as such involves morphological studies of the concept. Consequently, it considers the structure, patterns of inflections and derivations of *eziokwu*, as well as its cognate terms and antonyms. In this regard, the work is founded on morphological theories and analysis of Igbo sociolinguistic constructs on truth.

Mike Maxwell developed two theories of morphology. For him, theories of morphology can be classified into: Item-and-Arrangement (in which both roots and affixes are treated as morphemes), or Item-and-Process (in which roots are morphemes, but affixes are rules).² Maxwell's theory however, is a development of Charles Hockett's two classes of morphology: Item-and- Arrangement and Item-and-Process. This work adopts the 'Item-and-Process' (IP) classification, under which "only roots are morphemes, and therefore only roots are listed in the lexicon. Affixes are processes- another term would be 'morphological rules,' which exist in a separate component of the grammar."³ This view

²Mike Maxwell, "Two Theories of Morphology, One Implementation," *SIL Electronic Working Papers 1998-001*, February 1998. Accessed, 25/03/2024 at https://www.sil.org/system/files/realdata/SILEWP1998_001.pdf

³Charles F. Hockett, "Two Models of Grammatical Description," *WORD*, 10:2-3, 210-234, (1954).
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was highly advocated by Mark Aronoff,⁴ Arnold M. Zwicky⁵ and Steven R. Anderson.⁶ Thus, the work considers Igbo word roots as morphemes and their affixes as rules. With this theoretical stand, root-words are morphemes and as such, only roots are listed as lexicon for the discourse of the denizens of *eziokwu* and its truth-condition.

3. *Denizens of Eziokwu*

The word 'denizen' is a demographic concept. A denizen is an inhabitant- A person, animal or plant that is found in a particular region or environment. It is synonymous with habitu , resident and frequenter. In this work, 'denizens' is used not as a demographic construct but as morphemic habitu s of the term *eziokwu* in Igbo linguistic construct that to great somewhat brings out the nature of truth. It helps to unveil the epistemological significance of *eziokwu* from the sociolinguistic construct of native Igbo language speakers. The denizens of *eziokwu* here follow the morphological theory of 'Item-and-Process,' and thus take the roots as morphemes and affixes as process, all making up the denizens or inhabitants and habitu s of the term *eziokwu*. The denizens of *eziokwu* reveal the epistemological nature of truth, with its linguistic and social constructs.

In Western philosophy of language, whether a sentence is true or false in a given circumstance will depend on its parts. But in Igbo philosophy of language, truth conditions rely on some existential and pragmatic realities that often are dependent on the sociolinguistic constructs of the language speakers, and this is the object of the discussion. Some Igbo philosophers of language and ontologists place the denizens of *eziokwu* with social ontology and make truth a lived reality than object of abstraction.

Innocent I. Asouzu makes a socio-ontological conception of *eziokwu* in his *Ibuanyidanda- New Complementary Ontology beyond World-Immanetism, Ethnocentric Reduction and Impositions*. According to him, "the Igbo word for truth is *eziokwu*,"⁷ and the word *eziokwu* is compounded of two etymons: *Ezi-* straight, not crooked and *okwu-* word, and thus *eziokwu* means "correct word, straight forward talk or truth."⁸ It is a virtuous act that proceeds from *obi/mmueziokwu-* truthful mindset or spirit for truth, which is a harmonizing faculty. It testifies the dispositional mindsets that people exhibit, which produce benefitting outcome when faced with realities that require harmonization.

The mindset or faculty that has this character is called in Igbo language *obi/mmueziokwu* (harmonizing faculty). One of its major practical modes of expression is *obioha* (complementarity totalizing mindset or global mindset).

⁴Mark Aronoff, *Word Formation in Generative Grammar. Linguistic Inquiry Monograph One*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976).

⁵Arnold M. Zwicky, "How to describe inflection," *BLS* 11: 372-386, (1985).

⁶Steven R. Anderson, "A-Morphous Morphology," *Cambridge Studies in Linguistics* 62. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁷Innocent Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda- New Complementary Ontology beyond World-Immanetism, Ethnocentric Reduction and Impositions*. (London: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 316

⁸Innocent Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 315

Obi/mmueziokwuis the harmonizing faculty from which action and volition draw their being and have meaning. It is a form of intelligence or wisdom that ensures that human action and volition draw their being and have meaning.⁹

In this regard, *eziokwuis* more of praxis than theoretical construct. It is a habitual practice. *Obi/mmueziokwu* in Igbo ontology for Asouzu is centralized on the value of the human person, which gets its legitimacy as far as it is in conformity with the truth. This is noted in the Igbo sociolinguistic construct that *eziokwubundu*- truth is life. Accordingly, *obi/mmueziokwu* “turns out to be the faculty, which harmonizes all forces that tend towards bifurcation and exclusiveness.”¹⁰ This shows of *obi/mmueziokwu* as the faculty of harmony, mediation and equilibration. Asouzu notes that “authentic human existence interpersonal relationship gets its legitimacy from *obi/mmueziokwu*. On the other hand, all matters of truth and wisdom are immediately negated negative intelligence/wisdom that is introduced in human affairs. This negative intelligence is called *obi/ucheaghugho*.¹¹

For Jerome Okonkwo, the truth-condition in Igbo philosophy of language cannot be discussed without considering the centrality of the Igbo perfectionist consciousness morpheme- *Zi*, which is the main denizen of *eziokwu*.¹² In this perspective and in line with the IP morphological theory, *Zi* is the base-morpheme of the Igbo word- *Ezi* (truth, true, and real), while *E* is the prefix, signifying rightness, affirmative and an imperative directedness. Also *okwu* translates the English 'word,' speech, talk. Joining the two with the IP morphological stipulation, e-zi-okwu means: Truth word, true talk, real speech. The stress is on the structure and derivations of the root-morpheme: *Zi*, which is straightforward, not crooked.

This same root-morpheme is in Igbo language used in various constructs to form new words that have somewhat unique inclinations to the perfectionist consciousness of *Zi*. Chidi Osuagwu in his discourse on the etymology and morphemes of *eziokwu*, notes that *Zi* is a constant morpheme used in words generation in Igbo language.¹³ Also, Jerome Okonkwo conceived *Zi* as “a constant word in Igbo language use, no matter where it is part of any other word-formation building and stands always as the efficacy per se for human, pragmatic, relational and operational 'teacher-teaching-knowledge (wisdom)' actions and activity-modes for Igbo philosophy of life, the world and life (Uwa-Ndu) existential showcases.”¹⁴ Accordingly, this research sees *Zi* as a perfectionist consciousness morpheme in Igbo language, which constantly portrays same significance

⁹Innocent Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 313-314

¹⁰Innocent Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 316

¹¹Innocent Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 317

¹²Jerome Ikechukwu Okonkwo, *Zi: The Conditionality for Knowledge and Truth in Igbo Philosophy of Language*. (Owerri: Applause Multi-Sector, 2021).

¹³Chidi Osuagwu, “Dynamics of Truth within Igbo Cosmology” in *International Symposium. Religion in a World of Change: African Ancestral religion, Islam and Christianity*. (Owerri: Whelan Research Academy, 2002), 333.

¹⁴Jerome Ikechukwu Okonkwo, *Zi: The Conditionality for Knowledge and Truth in Igbo Philosophy of Language*. (Owerri: Applause Multi-Sector Ltd, 2021).

in words constructions; notwithstanding the varying positions of the *Zi* in such words formulations and speech functions.

The inner and ontological nature of *Zi* shows an optimal and perfectionist consciousness inhering in most Igbo words that have *Zi*, and their varying constructs. This perfectionist consciousness of the root-morpheme *Zi* emerges in varied forms as denizens of certain Igbo concepts. Their internal structure (morph) and how they are put together depict constant optimal and perfectionist consciousness such as: Totality/entirety, replenishment, imperatives (commands), envoi and mission-ing, teaching/saying and preaching, directional, correctional, properness, immediacy/instantaneity, questioning, and disclosure/revelation, etc. These are complementary to Otakpo's view of *Zi* (as meaning- Show, to let appear, to open, to let see or the let hear)¹⁵ and Okonkwo's regulators of *eziokwu*- as the way, the road, the method, and the rule, which “are the elemental denizens-moderators for the truth conditions in Igbo language.”¹⁶

4. Morphological Considerations of *Ezi*

The Igbo word *eziis* is compounded of two etymons: An assertive and affirmative prefix- *e*, and an Igbo affirmative consciousness base/root morpheme- *zi*; thus, *e-zi*. Its base-word- *Zi*, assumes varied parts of speech in Igbo language, which Igbo linguists have not given considerable thoughts. The morpheme *ezi* serves in the formulation of:

- a. A verb (*ngwa*), as in: *Zi* (show), *zipu* (send out), *zite* (send forth), etc. In this verbal structure, *Zi* is also used to form past tenses, as in: *O jeziri* (He/she later went), *E meziri* (It was later done).
- b. An adjective (*nkowa*), as in: *Ezi* (correct, true), *ezigbo* (good, dear, original), *nkuzi* (teaching) and *nduzi* (correcting).¹⁷
- c. A noun (*ngwaa*), as in: *Ozi* (message, news), *Ozioma* (Gospel, good news), *aziza* (response, answer, imitation), etc.
- d. An interrogation (*njuajuju*), as in: *I jeziri?* (Did you go?), *I meziri* (Did you do/make?), *E kwuziri* (Was it said?), etc.

Accordingly, *Zi* is a morpheme for construing words that signify manifestation, totality and entirety. As a perfectionist morpheme, it appears in two separate classes: As a base (or root-word) and as an affix (attached to words- prefix and suffix). As a base or root-word, the morpheme *Zi* gives perfectionist significance to formed words as it appears in the following:

- a. *Totality and entirety*: In this instance, *Zi* is the base-word to which morphemes are affixed as prefix and suffix. Yet, irrespective of the affixation, *Zi* retains same perfectionist constant, as in: *Zichaa* (finish showing/messaging); *Ziga/zipu/zipucha* (send out wholly); *Ha nile zi?* (All of them?).

¹⁶Nkeonye Otakpo, *Justice in Igbo Culture*. (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd, 2009).

¹⁷Jerome Okonkwo, *Zi: The Conditionality for Knowledge and Truth in Igbo Philosophy of Language*, 100 Noting the adjectival nature of gerunds

- b. *Replenishment*: In this formation, *Zi* as a morpheme assumes the root-word for replenishment- understood in the sense of Plato's pleasure and virtue ethics, whereby replenishment is bodily and psychic. Here the perfectionist base morpheme- *Zi*, connotes affixes that signify replenishment or enhancement, as in: *Mgbazi*(lending, supporting); *Gbazi*(lend, as in *Gbazi m ego*- Lend me money); *Gbazie*(mend, *gbaziere m uzo*- Mend the way for me). This *gba-zie* would also mean: *Gba* (shoot, kick) and *zie* (properly), then *uzo* (way). The *Gbaziere m uzo* would mean “kick/place the way properly for me.”
- c. *Imperative*: The morpheme *Zi* in some formations accepts imperative forms and may or may not have affixes, as in: *Zi m* (show me)- Here, *Zi* means ordering or demanding; or as in *Zikwa*- endeavour to show/message.
- d. *Envoi/Missioning*: As a root-morpheme, *Zi* in this formulation assumes missioning constructs and significance. It comes out fully as a verb or noun, as in: *I zi* (to show); *Ozi*(message, news, tidings); *Ezi*(be messaged); *Zie*(send); *Zipu*(send out); *Zikwa*(ensure/endeavour to message).
- e. *Preach/Teach/Say*: The morpheme *Zi* in this formulation assumes basement for saying, preaching and teaching. It accepts affixes that do not change its perfectionist consciousness, as in: *Ezi*(to say, preach); *Eziози*(deliver/make speech/give talk); *Ozioma* (good message).
- f. *Directional*: Sometimes, the morpheme *Zi* assumes either a root or affix in perfectionist consciousness; aiming at proper direction, as in: *Ziputa*(coming out, coming forth, send forth); *Ntuzi*(pointing properly, directing well); *Atuzi*(dictating, identifying, and demonstrating); *Nkuzi*(panel beat properly).
- g. *Correctional*: In this formulation, *Zi* plays a conjoint base-morpheme, signifying making right or the correctional, as in: *Mezie*(do well, make well); *Nyazi*(to bend well); *Gwazie*(tell correctly, say correctly); *Dozie* (keep well, make well).
- h. *Properness*: *Zi* as a morpheme of perfectionist consciousness often assume affixes which significances are adverbial, adjectival and gerundial, as in: *Lezie* (take good care, look well, watch properly); *Ihazi*(arrange well, organize, set up); *Gozie* (invoke nicely, bless); *Agozi*(blessing well).
- i. *Immediacy/instantaneity*: The perfectionist consciousness morpheme *Zi* is also arranged to show instantaneity that turns it to seeming admonition, as in: *Puzie*(leave/quit then); *Kpozie*(call/invite then); *Gwazie*(tell/say then);

Gawazie(go/leave then); *Gbagharazie*(forgive then); *Wezieiwe* (be angry/annoyed then).

- j. *Questioning*: *Zi* is also used in forming questions, to get perfect answers. In this instance, the morpheme takes varied positions, as in: *I jeziri/gaziri?* (Did you go?); *I meziri?* (Did you do?); *I ruziri?* (Did you work?); *I biaziri?* (Did you come?).

Disclosure/revelation: *Zi* here is used to form words signifying unveiling, as in: *Zi* (show, reveal, expose, etc); *Zi mu* (show me, reveal/expose to me), etc. As a morpheme of disclosure, *zi* (show)in modern linguistic variations, is also understood as *gosi*(show, unveil, reveal) and also assumes the act of permitting the other to totally perceive something that is formerly hidden or closed. It is on this significance of *Zi* that the Igbo notion of *eziokwu* is founded, as an unveiling, disclosure; which is the actual significance of the Greek word for truth- *aletheia*, which Jerome Okonkwo said is the aura of understanding the Igbo notion of truth.¹⁸ Vrasidas Karalis thus notes that according to the Greek philosophical language, *aletheia* is 'out there' in the very objecthood of the real.¹⁹ It means 'not-concealed,' as a struggle to un-conceal the concealed, which the Igbo linguistic constructs remarks that *eziokwugbaoto* (truth is naked, uncovered, unconcealed). For Heidegger, the Greek privative prefix-*a* (not), makes the 'concealment' meaning of *lethe* in *aletheai* mean *unconcealment*, not concealing, and thus true. Truth steps up from concealment.²⁰ It is visible or practical, and concerns being. Observing the struggle of uncovering the concealment of truth, Heidegger notes that "The truth of *phusis*- *aletheia* as the unconcealment that essentially unfolds in the emerging sway- now becomes *homoisis*and *mimesis*: resemblance, directness, the correctness of seeing, the correctness of apprehending as representing."²¹ The struggle for unconcealment of being as such becomes the struggle against the *pseudos*, against twisting and distortions.²² These anti-truths in Igbo linguistic constructs are considered as the family of *ugha*(falsity), which *eziokwu*is the opposite.

5. Nature of *Eziokwu*

Truth has different significances and characteristics in Igbo sociolinguistic construct. They include: *Ikpe nkwumoto/ikpeziriezi* (justice), *ama* (witness), *ezigbo* (real, dear), *nkwenye* (belief, acceptance), *agwa* (behaviour, character), *ozizi/mkpuhe*

¹⁸J. I. Okonkwo, *Zi: The Conditionality for Knowledge and Truth in Igbo Philosophy of Language*, 11.

¹⁹Vrasidas Karalis, "Martin Heidegger and the *Aletheia* of his Greeks," accessed 27/04/2024 at <https://www.beyng.com/docs/Karalis-Aletheia.html>

²⁰Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000), 64

²¹Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 197

²²Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 205

(exposing/revelation), *ihiezirize* (correct, suitable, rightful thing), *ihemere* (what happened, actuality, eventuality), etc. These characteristics never confuse the use and understanding of *eziokwu*, except the subtle clarification that needs to be made between *ezi(e)* (truth, true) and *ezigbo* (real, dear, good). The two words have the same etymon-*ezi* and the same significance. *Ezi-gbo* is composed of *ezi*- true, real, good and *gbo*- Ancient, earliest, prime, and principal, etc. The affix- *gbo* (ancient, primordial, also meaning prime and principal), distinguishes *ezi* from *ezigbo*. *Ezigbo* means primarily real, olden reality, chiefly real, while *ezi*, means true, truth, fact, reality, actuality and certainty. C.B. Nze remarks a subtle difference between *eziokwu* and *ezigbo*. *Eziokwu* is used to represent utterances with the characteristics of *eziokwu* stated above, while *ezigbo* is used ontologically. *Ezigbo* is used to refer to substance and entity, to mean *true, genuine, or good*. These two Igbo words according to Nze are descriptive of truth,²³ and thus *eziokwu* represents *utterances; parole, speech* and *ezigbo*, ontologically refers to perfect qualities in substance and entity.

This work nonetheless parts ways with Nze on his misconception of *eziokwu* and *ezigbo* as adjectives or same *Parts of Speech*. *Ezi* is a distinct Igbo adjective (*nkowa*) and *eziokwu* is a noun (*aha*). *Eziokwu* is composed of this *ezi* in the fullest significance of perfection and *okwu* (word, speech, utterance)- a noun; both being base-morphemes. But when joined, both form a noun- *eziokwu*, yet depicting the same fullest significance of perfection, which is Nze's object of confusion. Nze seems confused on the parts of speech *eziokwu* and *ezigbo* belong or better put, he transferred the fullest perfection-significance of *true* that inheres and exerts optimally in the new construct- *ezi-okwu*, to *Eziokwu*. *Ezi* and *ezigbo* are synonyms. *Ezi* is an adjective and *ezigbo* is an adjective, and as such, both are linguistically *cognate objects*, while the confusing *eziokwu* is a noun.

6. *Eziokwu in Igbo Literature and Philosophy*

With the above preliminary clarifications, a brief on these concepts would be more beneficial, and as such the need to explore further the concept- *eziokwu* within the ambits of Igbo written literature and philosophical postulates. *Eziokwu* is construed in diverse manners, which are pointers to their sociolinguistic constructs and significances in native language usage. Some of the constructs are:

- a. *Eziokwu as actual event/occurrence*: *Eziokwu* signifies 'what really happened,' or as Damian Oputa puts it in common Igbo parlance, "The mere *eme*."²⁴ It is a referenced fact underpinning a discourse, an agreement.
- b. *Eziokwu as pact/agreement*: *Eziokwu* has the nature of being the summary of discussions and conclusions/agreement that ensued in man's rational sociality, which is uttered, and as procrastinated execution behoves on the fidelity of the discussants to the agreed fact. In the realm between man and man, Pita Nwana notes that "Okwu ekwuruekwu e ji isiekweya"²⁵ (Already said words are nodded with head), or as the poet Ihechukwu Madubuike declared "Asim nauka a

²³C.B. Nze, "The Igbo Concept of Truth as Correspondence" in *Uche, a Journal of the Department of Philosophy, University of Nigeria Nsukka*, Vol.9 (Nsukka: Department of Philosophy), 4

²⁴Damian Oputa, *Essays on Igbo World View*. (Nsukka: AP Publishers, 198)8, 73-80.

²⁵Pita Nwana, *Omenuko*. (Ikeja: Longman, 1963), 28.

kparaakpa e ji isiekweya”²⁶ (I said that a discussed term is noted at when mentioned). The nodding-at act entails affirmation, and what is affirmed is existential truth, subjectively or universally. This nature of truth is elucidated with Madubuike's further explanations on *uka akpara akpa* (a discussed term) that “Ikwuwe ya ozo bu ikpaasi” (bend the discussed term again is hatred). Though Madubike's use of *ikwuweya* has some nuances. *Ikwuweya* would mean 'saying it again' or 'to bend it.' This ideology has some implications on truth-nature. *Ikwuwe* means 'to bend or undo the saying, or saying it again, which implies double-talking, speaking from both sides of the mouth or reneging on. Existentially, the undoing is hatred (ikpoasi). *Ikpoasi* further entails intentional spurning- rejection, declining or repudiation. It is contempt in repudiation, while truth here implies love, faithfulness and continuity. This is the background for which Innocent Asouzu sees the opposite of *obi/mmueziokwu* to be *obi/mmuoaghugho* as seen before.²⁷

- c. *Eziokwu is confirmable from experience*: *Eziokwu* in this manner partakes in claims of realism and precisely of Aristotelian realism, which sees knowledge as a bundle of experience. Often, the referred experience is not a lived one but pre-informed or forewarned. This forewarning often comes from more than one person, and in most times from more experienced persons, elderly ones and significant affinities. Toni Ubesie's Adaobi noted that “Okenye na-ekwuokwuna-agbu aso n'ala, tupu aso ogburu ataa n'ala, ihe o kwuru emezuo”²⁸ (As an elder speaks and spits on the ground, before his saliva dries up, what he said accomplishes). Given the above, the elderly words and admonition are perfect truth and reality. Their utterances are experienced and thus loaded with knowledge and truth. *Eziokwu* here becomes not just a truth-condition as Jerome Okonkwo sees it, but also as confirmation from experience and statement of fact, which is hallmark of old age, eldership, professionalism and experience. This further makes *eziokwu* a manifestation of the speaker's sensibility (I nweuche), and always, such speech are accorded the affirmation- “Eziokwu ka Ikwuru.”
- d. *Eziokwu is also verifiable and certifiable*: *Eziokwu* has verifiable nature besides its confirmable nature. This is one of the endeavours of A. B. Chukuezi's *Akucha Fecha*. The verification begins with sceptical acts or inquiries that not just entail doubt but necessitate the speaker to come up with the nude form of his declarations. Thus one sees Chukuezi's Agu demand: “O bueziokwu ka I na-ekwu? (Are you saying the truth?). Nze's swift response- “Banyen'imeobodo, ji onugijuoajuju” (Enter into the community and use your

²⁶Ihechukwu Madubuike, “Asim” in Emenanjo, N. (ed). *Utara Nti*. (Ibadan: UPL, 1981),32.

²⁷Innocent I. Asouzo, Innocent I. Asouzo, *Ibuanyidanda: New Complementary Ontology: Beyond World-Immanentism, Ethnocentric Reduction and Impositions*. (London: Transaction Publishers, 2017), 317

²⁸Toni Uchenna Ubesie, *E Nenebe Eje ? I?*. (Ibadan: University Press, Limited,1993),15.

mouth to make inquiries), brings up the notion of verification that certifies, and “jirionugijuoajuju” (use your mouth to make inquiries) makes multiple subjective truths have seeming universality and thus objectivity, which makes for indubitable and existential truth.²⁹

This verifiable and certifiable nature of *eziokwu* has an extension that makes *eziokwu* identifiable and remarkable. The *Odunke Artists* brought in this version of truth-nature in the declarative of Ezeukwu who habitually makes conformational declaratives: “Eziokwuka I kwuru!”³⁰ You are saying the truth. A.B. Chukuezi's personae- Obidiya, came up with the same verifiability of truth, as she inquires, “Ikwurueziokwu?” (Did you say the truth?). Obi's swift response to her: “I ga e ji anyagi wee hu. E nyela ndu gi nsogbu”³¹ (You will use your eyes to see. Do not disturb yourself), makes truth evidential and practical. In these two discussions, Chukuezi reveals certain scientific or empirical approaches and methods of truth-Verifiability, with self-inquiry and self-consternation, (especially, consternation as bewilderment), to reveal the reality of an unbelievable.

- e. *Eziokwu stirs passion: Eziokwu* has the nature of stirring submissive emotions in listeners, which end is often salvific and results in turning a new leaf for mischievous persons. Tony Ubesie's *Ukpana Okpoko Buru* has this communicable passion of truth as central consciousness in the major themes of his work. Ubesie's personae- Ekwueme, confesses the touching nature of naked truth in the felt interiority of man. Thus he declares: “Okwu ya meturu madu nile n'obi”³² (His speech touched everybody in the heart), and again he recalls that “Okwu a, na ofo a I goro mgbe ahu e mere emume metutara m muo mu nke nkwu”³³ (This speech, and the prayer you said then during festival touched my spirit greatly). The referred speech is embodied with reality and truth, memorable and penitent, that it keeps one restless as Ubesie's personae- Ekwueme confessed. This further shows the immensity of its experienced interiority. *Eziokwu* as spoken reality arrests; suspends and causes seeming inertia. Its practical nudity is infectious that it not only apprehends but suspends every other conviction in the hearer.
- f. *Eziokwu makes for grandeur of speech and speech-value: Ezi-okwu* (true word/speech) implies the possible existence of *ajo-okwu* (false-word), and as such, of species of words/speech (*udiokwu*), with regards to their veritable qualities. Thus, in Igbo linguistic construct, there are species of speech/word that are distinguished based on their veritable qualities. Some of them are: *Eziokwu* (true word), *ajo-okwu* (false/bad word), *okwuojoo* (evil word), *ihuokwu* (direct speech), *azuokwu* (indirect

²⁹ Anamelechi B. Chukuezi, *Aku Fechara*, (Ibadan: University Press Ltd, 1980), 2

³⁰ Otu Odunke, *Ojadili*. (Ibadan: University Press Ltd, 1979), 36.

³¹ A.B. Chukuezi, *Aku Fechara*, 72

³² Tony Ubesie, *Ukpana Okpoko Buru*, (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1975), 16.

³³ Tony Ubesie, *Ukpana Okpoko Buru*, 16.

speech), *nchikotaokwu*(summary) *njakiri* (joke, tease), *isiokwu* (main matter, theme), and *nkekachaburueziokwu* (the real/actual truth).

This “*nkekachaburueziokwu*” (the real/actual truth) makes for further taxonomy of *eziokwu*. Here, there are *taxonsofeziokwu* as: *Nkekachaburueziokwu* (actual truth), *eziokwu* (truth), and *njakiri*(joke). Others are: *Egbeonu* (hyperbole), *ogharaokwu* (irony), *nghagideokwu* (antithesis), and *akpaalaokwu* (climax) and *ilu* (proverbs), etc. These are sundry variants of truth-telling in Igbo sociolinguistic constructs.

Experts in Igbo language often forget or neglect the role of *njakiri* as specie or figure of speech, which is not considered so in English. It differs from direct and indirect speeches. As specie of *eziokwu*, *njakiri*³⁴ is the direct opposite of the apex truth (*nkekachaburueziokwu/eziokwunile*- the entire truth). *Njakiri* lacks the totality and entirety of *eziokwu* and *ugha/asi*(falsehood), and it is considered 'not said' but 'casted' (*imanjakiri*). Its speaker is not considered as one holding talk/speech (*I ji okwu*).³⁵ This shows the uselessness of *njakiri* as its audition equates chattering, idling and time-wasting.

- g. *Eziokwu as revelation/uncovering*: *Eziokwu* as revelation tends to be a privilege of the intimate or cherished few. This purports the features of disclosure, which is granted to some secluded few, most especially to one's close relative, in-group or as obliged by the most respected, whose social status compel truth to be told before them. Odunke Artists also shade more light on this conception of *eziokwu*, in the conviction of Onukwube's parents that their daughter would not lie to them. Thus, Onukwube's father Adibe declared: “Kpoo nu Onukwube ka anyi juoyaaajuju. O ghaghi ikwuru anyi eziokwu. Anyi bunneya, buru nna ya”³⁶ (Call Onukwube let us ask her questions. She will not fail to tell us truth. We are her mother and her father).

This declaration shows that *eziokwu* can be got from inquiries/questioning. A session of interrogation and investigation is staged with the 'out-coming' of truth as the desired end. Truth here comes out from the hidden treasures of the speaker, from concealment, and from a reserved interiority. Affinity and filiations have some natural forces that compel the coming out of truth in such occasions. Thus, bonds (consanguinity, subjugation, cordiality, affinity) have seeming force that compels truth-emergence, like the Heideggerian *aletheia*. The truth here is not auto-disclosed by the subjective bearer and hider.

³⁴Chuks Demson defined *okwu-njakiri* (joke) as “*okwu a na-enwenkenaabuchaghiezasusu. Ma ufozun'ime ha aghoolaezigbo a na-ekwuziekwu*”. Chuks Demson, *Igbo OgbaraohuumakaNkuzina OmumuAsusuna Uto Asusu Igbo*. (Owerri: Mike Moore Graphics, 2003), 88

³⁵Odunke Artists, show this as a regrettable discovery for someone who is interested in truth- “*Eche m naunu ji okwu*” (I thought you have a speech), Otu Odunke, *Ojadili*. (Ibadan: University Press Ltd, 1979),17

³⁶Otu Odunke, *Onukwube*. (Ibadan: University Press Ltd, 1986), 37-38.

- h. *Eziokwu* is the hallmark of certain classes of persons. Though truth is an issue of good character, certain class of persons are by status meant to say or be told the truth. For instance, J.U.T Nzeako designates *ofo*-holders as speakers of truth and to whom in reciprocity, truth must be told. He remarked that “Oji ofo 'na-ekwuokwuziriezi, na-ekpeikpekwooto, wee ghara icho imegide mmadu n'efu”³⁷ (Ofo-holder speaks truth, dispenses justice, and avoids undue oppression). Also, Christopher A. Ajaeree brings up some classes of persons whose social status compel them not to lie and forbid being lied to or told falsehood. They include: Ndi eze, nandiechiriechichi, ndi ukochukwu, ndi isi ulooru obodo di iche iche”³⁸ (Kings, chieftains, priests and heads of different companies).

7. *Synonyms and Antonyms of Eziokwu*

The morphological construction of *eziokwu* as seen already, shows that it is made of two words: *Ezi* and *okwu*. But with or without *okwu*(word), *ezi/ezie* (true) and *n'ezie* (truly) have the same meaning as *eziokwu*. The addition of *okwu* differentiates spoken verity from verity as reality of being. To this effect, further explorations are needed on the morphological formation of this *ezi*. *Ezi* is compounded with two morphemes: *e* (an Igbo impersonal pronoun- *Nnochipersinna-enweghinru-aka*) and *Zi*, which has been established as the Igbo morpheme for perfectionist consciousness. When *e* is joined to *Zi*, it no longer plays the function of impersonal pronoun and thus a pronoun (*nnochiaha*). Instead, *eis* is an affirmative affix that follows *Zi* as either a prefix or suffix. For instance: E-zi, Zi-e as in OkwuZi-e: he then said, OmeZi-e: She then did, OdiZi-e: It then remained. *E* here is an assertive/affirmative morpheme- affix in *Ezi*, which jointly constructs its perfectionist consciousness role. This is also witnessed in some constructs of double affirmations as in: “Na ezie,” “ezie” (e-Zi-e). In this construct, a subtle disparity can be made between *eziandezie* (truth and truly or truly-truth) or as Jude Uwalaka would say “series of half-truths and non-truths to distort the true history.”³⁹

Ezi(e) means truth and true. It is an adjective. It is also the Igbo synonym of: Real, actual, suitable, convincing, genuine, authentic, standard, correct, exact, proper, acceptable, accurate, precise, perfect, paradigm, model, etc. Chidi Osuagwu extends the synonyms to include- Ordered, positive, array, rectitude, upright or valid.⁴⁰ When this *ezi(e)* (nkowa: adjective) is joined with *okwu*(aha: noun) as a co-morpheme, it forms the noun *eziokwu*-truth. Emmanuel Nlenanya Onwu on this rightly observed that “when *ezi* is used to qualify *okwu* which is Igbo word for *word* or *statement*, then *eziokwu* becomes what is valid, positive, genuine and truthful.”⁴¹ Like Chidi Osuagwu, Onwu also noted that “the Igbo picture of *ezi* is ordered, the truth. This truth is synonymous with order, hence its predictability.”⁴² Thus *eziokwu* is marked with straightforwardness (*i ga ziziriri, ikwuoto*), logicality (*ire kwuoto*), and it shows clarity (*idoanya*) and lacks confusions and nuances (*mgbanwojanya*), etc.

³⁷J.U.T Nzeako, *Omenala Ndi Igbo*. (Ikeja : Longman Nigeria Ltd, 1979), 67

³⁸Ajaeree, C.A. *Emume Di N'Ala Igbo I* (Akwukwo Maka Omenala Igbo). (Mbaitoli: Bestline Enterprises, 2003), 11

³⁹Jude Ndubeze Uwalaka, J. *The Struggle for an Inclusive Nigeria: Igbo to Be or Not to Be. A Treatise on Igbo Political Personality and Survival in Nigeria- To Nwaigbo*. (Enugu: SNAAP Press, 2003), 135

⁴⁰Chidi Osuagwu, *Truth and Chaos: Dynamics of Truth within Igbo Cosmology*. Owerri: African World Communication, 2003), 3

⁴¹Emmanuel Nlenanya Onwu, 2002 *Ahiajoku Lecture- UzoNdunaEziokwu : Towards an Understanding of Igbo Traditional Religious Life and Philosophy*. (Owerri: Ministry of Information and Culture, 2002), 27

⁴²Emmanuel Nlenanya Onwu, 2002 *Ahiajoku Lecture- UzoNdunaEziokwu* , 28

8. *Antonyms OfEziokwu*

As we have seen in the foregoing discussion, *ezi-okwu* (truth, true-word), is made up of the adjective (nkowa) *ezi* and the noun (aha)- *okwu*. *Ezi* as an adjective has *ajo* as contrariety, which can also be affixed to *okwu*: *Ajo-okwu*, *okwu-ajoo* (bad/ugly/unkind word). *Okwu-ajoo/ajo-okwu* is a denigrating speech or word. This does not bring out the real opposite of *eziokwu* in actual Igbo parlance, as it only points to the negation of *Nze'sezigbo*, which describes *truth* as a referent to substance and entities, and used to mean- Good, true or genuine. *Ugha* (lie) or *asi* (false, lie), are the opposites of *eziokwu* in Igbo language, though untruth or untrue can be said as *abughiezie/eziokwu* (not being true). Chidi Osuagwu traces the morphology of *ugha* (lie or falsehood) to *gha*. Accordingly, *ughais* compounded with two morphemes: The vowel (udaume) *u* and *gha* (the base word for *scatter, disorder and disruption*). This root-word *ghais* further compounded of the diphthong (mkpurumkpi/mgbochiumegbaramkpi) of negation- *gh* and a variant vowel- *a*. Like *Zi* in *Ezi*, which Igbo philosophers of language such as Chidi Osuagwu, Jerome I. Okonkwo, etc, see as a base morpheme for orderliness and rightness, *gh* is a diphthong that perhaps no Igbo linguistic or philosopher of language has observed or given considerable note as ontologically negating or portraying disorder and disintegration. It is the base-morpheme for disarray, and seeming or apparent chaos, which has been discussed extensively by F.O.C Njoku,⁴³ G.E. Ekwuru,⁴⁴ C. Osuagwu,⁴⁵ etc.

With the morpheme *gh*, several Igbo words that portray chaos are made, such as: *Yaghara* (scatter, spread), *ghaa* (scatter, pour), *agha* (war), *ghasa* (scatter, thrown apart), *ghaghasi* (littered, disperse), and *ugha* (false, lie), etc. *Gha* as the root morpheme of *ugha* accept two prefixes, in whichever combination it signifies falsehood: *U-gha* (false, lie) and *I-gha* (to lie). Both can also be used in a formation as: *Ighaugha-* to lie, to say falsehood. It is in this sense that Chidi Osuagwu rightly stated that “*Igha* means to scatter and also means to lie. To lie in the Igbo mind is to cause a thorough scattering. A mental disordering! Falsehood is Disorder! Falsehood is disorientation.”⁴⁶ He also concluded that “disorder is the Igbo picture of *Ugha*, falsehood. Only guesses can be made in an *Ugha system*, while the order in an *Ezi system* allows predictions.”⁴⁷

Ighaugha has a synonymous phrase: *Itu asi* or *Isi asi* (to lie or say falsehood). The morphological constructs of these two forms of saying *ugha* denies them of characteristic *loquens*. Though a locution and parlance, it is rarely used with the word- *ikwu* (to speak), except in referents and judgements. The common constructs are- *I-gha*, *I-tu*, *I-si* (used

⁴³Francis O.C. Njoku, “Truth and Chaos in Igbo Philosophy” in *Igwebuiké: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Accessed 26/04/2024 from Igwebuiké Research Institute.org, at <http://www.igwebuikererechercheinstitute.org>.

⁴⁴George Emeka Ekwuru, *The Pangs of an African Culture in Travail, Uwa Ndi Igbo Gharaghara*. (Owerri: Totan Publications Ltd, 1999).

⁴⁵Chidi Osuagwu, “Dynamics of Truth within Igbo Ontology” in T.I. Okere (ed.), *Religion in a World of Change: African Ancestral Religion, Islam and Christianity*. (Owerri: Whelan research Academy, 2002).

⁴⁶Osuagwu, C. “Dynamics of Truth within Igbo Ontology” in T.I. Okere (ed.), *Religion in a World of Change*, 334.

⁴⁷Chidi Osuagwu, “Dynamics of Truth within Igbo Ontology,” 335

interchangeably with *ughaandasi*) to portray scatter, throw, put out/say out. Christopher Agunobi Ajaeree defined *ituasi* (lying) as a situation where someone does not say the truth. He also noted that a liar is not a good person.⁴⁸ Chidi Osuagwu comes up with the aversion for *ituasi* and its adverse effects. For him, lying disposes listeners to guess and increases unpredictability,⁴⁹ which with “falsehood is equivalent to thermodynamic disorder.” Like Ajaeree, Osuagwu concluded that “a liar is an agent of social unpredictability.” This type of personality or liar for Madubuike is a hater.⁵⁰ On the contrary, truth-saying is considered honest. Honesty is not only a synonym of *eziokwu*, it is the abode of truth and truth-saying habit, as well as the hallmark of truth-saying person. Chukwuemeka Ekei sees *honesty* as what everyone in Igboland aspires, in fear of the destructive ravage of *Ofo* and its social justice.⁵¹ *Eziokwu* is the hallmark of leaders, especially of *ofo*-holders, which possession testifies new social and religious status. What interests this discussion most in the mention of *Ofo*, is its socio-ethical symbol of truth and justice.⁵² Tagbo Nzeako makes these symbols the epitome of an *Ofo-holder*, who says truth, executes justice and avoids undue oppression.⁵³

9. TRUTH-CONDITIONS AND TRUTH-DISCOVERY IN IGBO WORLDVIEW

The truth-conditions in Igbo worldview and language are not the same as in the English language truth-condition. Jerome Okonkwo elaborates more these samples of word-preconditioning maxims that aid the moderation of *eziokwu* 'truth' for the stances of Igbo 'truth-conditions. Examples of these maxims according to him are:

- a. *Speech quality*: *Okwu oma* (good word) and *okwuojoo* (bad word, as misuse of word), *okwummanya* (drunk's word) and *okwuonyeara* (words showing mental derailments);
- b. *Speech quantity*: *Okwu* (word) as *Ekwuriekwu* or *Nkwugheri* (verbiage, chattering, babblement);
- c. *Speech dialectics*: *Ihuokwu* (direct speech), *azuokwu* (indirect speech);
- d. *Speech manner*: *Onu mmiriokwu* (word-salivation), *mpu*, *Inyo*, etc.⁵⁴

These maxims and many more are fundamental in Igbo truth-condition. Yet, across other literatures, some authors advocate different truth-conditions that have perfection-consciousness as teleology. Let us examine few examples of these views.

There is the ideology that truth is deduced from inquiry. The Otu Odunke in their *Onukwube* brought *discussion*, *questioning* and *querying* as patterns to truth-discovery. But they made it a privilege of affinity or certain authoritative reliance.⁵⁵ Pita Nwana complemented this

⁴⁸ Christopher A. Ajaerre, *Emeume Di N'Ala Igbo 1 (Akwukwo Maka Omenala Igbo)*. (Mbaitoli: Bestline Enterprises, 2003), 10-11

⁴⁹ Chidi Osuagwu, “Dynamics of Truth within Igbo Cosmology,” 335

⁵⁰ I. Madubuike, “Asi m” in N. Emenanjo (ed). *Utara Nti*. (Ibadan: Evans Brothers Nig. Ltd), 32

⁵¹ Chukwuemeka Ekei, *Justice in Communalism: A Foundation of Ethics in African Philosophy*. (Surulere-Lagos: Realm Communications, 2001), 40

⁵² Bartholomew Abanuka, *Philosophy and the Igbo World*. (Nsukka: Spiritan Publications, 2004), 21, 25, 31, 87. Also, B. Abanuka, *Myth and the African Universe*. (Onitsha: Spiritan Publications, 1999), 55.

⁵³ J.U.T Nzeako, *Omenala Ndi Igbo*. (Ikeja : Longman Nigeria Ltd, 1979), 67

⁵⁴ Jerome I Okonkwo, *Zi*, 9

⁵⁵ Otu Odunke, *Onukwube*, 37

view with *certifying* and *verifiability principles* of asking questions or making independent discoveries of facts in the concerned society.⁵⁶ Another relevant view is the *under-covering method* of Chidi Osuagwu. He opted for *lie-detection methods* as two-way partition of truths from falsehoods. According to him, as “truth is equivalent to thermodynamic order,” its knowledge “should advance the science of lie-detection, and enhance the understanding of nature of truth and falsehood.”⁵⁷

Similarly, Bartholomew Abanuka lanced the theory of *ultimate knowledge*. This according to him is undertaken by the individual as a portion of the real or a part of the whole, and also by the Community by means of community's self-understanding.⁵⁸ With ultimate knowledge, “a particular thing is known as true when it is known in and for itself.” Thus, he noted that “when things are known as distinct from the knower or subject; they are known in and for itself.”⁵⁹ This Abanuka's theory seems only feasible with what Olufemi Taiwo called “A knowledge society”⁶⁰ or what Sandra Harding called “scientific community,”⁶¹ which precludes the unlettered, and thus great many local Igbo language users. To cap it all, Osuagwu would prefer the said society to enhance its orderliness, as the greater the social order, the greater the tendency of the citizens to say truth. In this notion, orderliness and truth-telling are symbolically impactful for the advancement of a modern Igbo African society.

Jerome Okonkwo deviates from these ideologies and makes a linguistic turn to figurative submissions. This turn functions with the reality of *adumbration* and its pre-presentation of truth as nudity. Accordingly, he notes that “for Ndi Igbo (Igbo people) and their language, truth is definitely defined as 'truth if and only if the word *okwu* appears and presents itself to Igbo consciousness in its nudity (I gbaokwuoto) which incidentally is the same with the Greek word *aletheia*.”⁶² It is only when *okwu* (word) is adumbrated (*gbaoto*) can it stand self-evidently and be logically knowable, knowledgeable and bedizened in and through the Igbo *Zi*-language consciousness.

CONCLUSION

The discussion so far has revealed the nature, denizen and conditions for *eziokwu* in Igbo language and worldview. It is an endeavour of linguistic philosophy to enhance indigenous studies in epistemology and thus help develop Igbo Philosophy. The paper raises some issues or claims that are prone for profound verification, and thus instigates further researches on the topic. Some of these claims as the ontic feature of *Zi* as depicting an

⁵⁶Nwana, P. *Omenuko*. (Ikeja: Longman, 1963), 40; 72

⁵⁷Chidi Osuagwu, “Dynamics of Truth within Igbo Ontology,” 339

⁵⁸Abanuka, B. *An Essay on African Philosophy*. (Nsukka: Spiritan Publications, 1994), 77

⁵⁹Bartholomew Abanuka, *An Essay on African Philosophy*, 82

⁶⁰Olufemi Taiwo, *Africa Must Be Modern. The Modern Imperative in Contemporary Africa: A Manifesto*. (Ibadan: Bookcraft, 2022), 81-121

⁶¹Harding Sandra, *Is Science Multicultural?: Post-colonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies* (Race, Gender, and Science). (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

⁶²Jerome I. Okonkwo, *Zi*, 110-112

ordered world, and of *Gh*, showing a disordered world, and both are apparent in Igbo words construed with the morphemes. Perhaps the orthographic originators of these morphemes never gave it this philosophical thought, but this discourse opens doors for more claims and clarifications within *eziokwu* and its cognate objects/terms, as well as its antonyms. They are the denizens for *eziokwu* and its antonym- *ugha* in Igbo philosophy. These constitute the knowledge gaps the work fills. The Igbo conception and conditionality of truth is that it must come out and be open without any coverage, like an adumbration or in nudity. This underscores Jerome Okonkwo's stand on Igbo truth-conditionality.