

Documentation of traditional Igbo children games: Towards a revitalization of Igbo oral genres**

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Abstract

The prediction that the Igbo language is endangered is controversial. While many believe that the endangerment is farce, many others have taken it seriously. The fact that there are about 29 million speakers of the language supports strongly those who take the prediction as untrue. However, it is obvious that some aspects of the language are endangered largely because they are no longer functionally represented in the use of the language. The aspects of the language that are mainly affected are the oral genres: folktales have been replaced by movies and cartoons, lullabies and birth songs have been replaced by hip-hops, and religious hymns, traditional games have been replaced by electronic and computer games, etc. This observation is palpable even with the attendant negative attitude of many speakers of the language to the language: a factor that has driven the establishment Otu Subakwa Igbo pioneered by Prof. Pita Ejiofor. The need to answer the following questions has therefore arisen: 'What can be done to recover and preserve the endangered Igbo oral genres?' and 'How can the negative attitude of the speakers to the language be handled?' The present pilot project targets opening the frontiers for answering the questions. It adopts the language documentation approach to collect and annotate children games in Mgbakwu, Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra State. This approach, according to Lehmann

(2001), involves the activity, which gathers, processes and exhibits a sample of language data that is representative of its linguistic structure and gives a fair impression of how and for what purposes the language is used. A successful documentation of the games would provide a framework for replication of the project from one Igbo speaking area to another and grant the impetus for the documentation of other genres. Consequently, the endangered Igbo oral genres would be recovered and preserved. Moreover, the language documentation approach emphasizes multimedia projects. The multimedia projects would include the Internet enabled children Igbo games and CD copies of the games: these would count as materials for the revitalization of the games and would contribute immensely in breaking the barriers of negative attitude to the language by providing proof to children that what looked impossible in and with the language is possible after all.

Keywords: Children games, documentation, revitalization, endangerment

Introduction

Mbagwu and Obiamalu (2009) adopt Mbat (2005) interpretation of globalization as neo-colonialism, a system with socio-economic cover equipped to destroy the remnants of African cultural and linguistic identity left by colonialism. As noted by Mbagwu and Obiamalu, the enchanting feature of globalization is Information and Communication Technology (ICT) with the Internet as its chief instrument. As it is common knowledge, there is hardly any African, nay Nigerian local language, which is represented above average

in the Internet information facilities and other computer communication facilities. The direct impact of this is decrease in the functional use of the local languages in information procurement, processing and dissemination. This is a major factor concerning predictions of the death of the local languages. Strengthening this factor is, in the case of our dear country, absence of a language policy. What is appropriated as the nation's language policy is the combination of the stipulations for language in the National Policy of Education (NPE) and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This policy supports more clearly the three major languages. Unfortunately, this support is in principle and not in practice. For instance, none of the languages is used in the business of the National House or in any of the States' House of Assembly. This is because adequate arrangements have not been made (see Section 55 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria). Moreover, there is no proven example of the teaching and learning of the major languages in all the secondary schools in the country, especially the state-owned schools as specified for in the NPE. The case with the private schools is more serious and these schools are multiplying by the day with overwhelming patronage. In the face of this fact, salvaging the local languages through documentation of aspects of the languages more grossly affected to suffer atrophy becomes imperative.

The aspects of the Igbo language that deserve documentation are the oral genres. As palpably evident, folktales have been replaced by movies and cartoons, lullabies and birth songs have been replaced by hip-hops, and religious hymns, traditional games have been replaced by electronic and computer games, etc. and all of these are run in the English language. With the teeming youths and

children involved in this, the situation of a negative attitude of Igbo speakers to the Igbo language is manifested. Of course, this is driven by the value and prestige English has acquired by its status not only as an official language, the language of economic and political power but more importantly the language of ICT. The Internet and the cable network have assorted programmes and facilities that have displaced or as already mentioned replaced oral traditions in the language. Worse still, the breakout of insecurity and communal clashes in most parts of the Igbo land, has violated the serenity required for the representation, practice and performance of the oral traditions. The result is that the oral traditions are endangered and that they are endangered is a fact about the precarious state of the life of the language, which accounts for the prediction about the death of the language in 50 years to come. To recover them and preserve the historical, cultural and linguistic values they are carriers of and produce materials that would serve as veritable instruments for the revitalization of the language towards cancelling the death prediction, a systematic procedure is required and language documentation provides this procedure. In other words, the language documentation that applies to this study is the documentation of the oral tradition of Igbo children games. It covers Igbo children games in Mgbakwu, one of the largest communities in Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

The project area

Mgbakwu is an agrarian community in Awka North LGA of Anambra State. It has seven villages: Amaezike, Amaede, Achalaumana, Uruotulu/Uruonaga, Amamkpu, Amaeze, Akamanato. It covers an area of 1.347 km². Being one of the

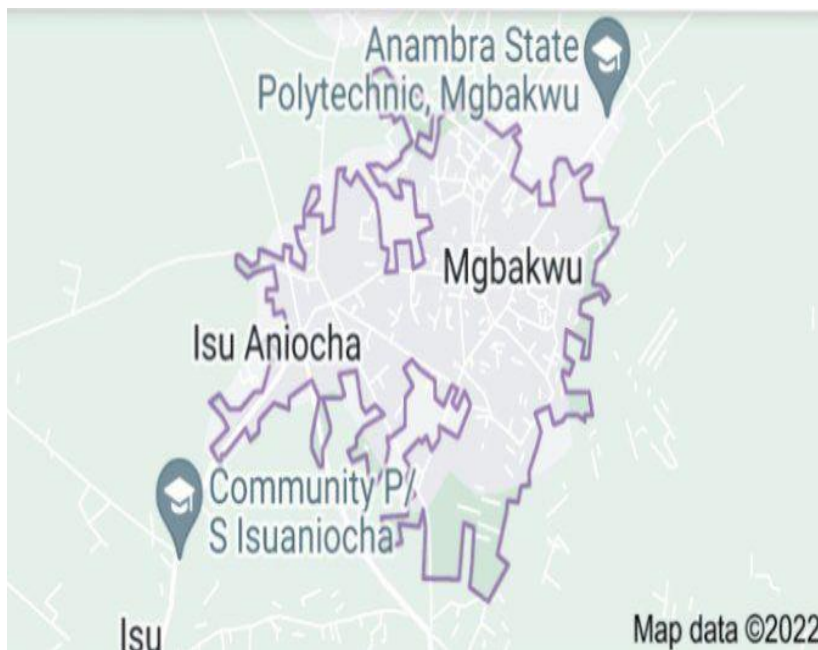
communities on the outskirts of Awka, the capital city of Anambra State, it is experiencing influx of residents from other parts of Anambra State and the Igboland, who work or do businesses in Awka. Moreover, it hosts some notable government establishments, for instance, Purity FM, an FRCN station and the Anambra State Polytechnic. By this, it is gradually transforming into a semi-urban area.

The villages are peacefully co-existing and have a community head, President General (PG). This office is rotational among the villages. At present the PG of the community is from Amaeze and is committed to the unity and welfare of the community. His cooperation facilitated access to the children of the community who have participated in the games and have been recorded for the actualization of the project.

There are four (4) government schools, serving all the villages in Mgbakwu. Two are in Amaezike: they are, Central School Mgbakwu and Abogu Primary School, Mgbakwu. The other two are at Achalaumana and they are: Unity Primary School, Mgbakwu and Community Primary School, Mgbakwu. These four schools have served as the setting for the recording of the children games.

Mgbakwu has a major market, Nkwo Mgbakwu where farm products are sold in large quantities in representation of the agrarian life of the community. This market is located at Amaezike and attracts buyers from different parts of Anambra State.

Fig. 1 below is the map of Mgbakwu:



Purpose of the project

This project is to provide a practical and workable framework for preserving aspects of the Igbo language that are endangered with the goal of ruling out the prediction of the death of the language. Evidently, the movement and advocacy of *Suwakwa Igbo* ‘Speak the Igbo language’ is not enough in the face of the fact that many of the Igbo linguistic practices that were sometime functional in the use of the language have been replaced with the Internet-supported practices, ICT facilities and modern ways of life, and more recently hindered and constrained by insecurity.

The project will:

- Identify the number of Igbo children games which are in functional use in Mgbakwu of Awka South Local Government Area;
- Record the identified Igbo children games ;
- Provide a multi-tiered annotation of the lyrics of the Igbo children games;
- Produce computer and the Internet enabled video clips of the Igbo children games, comprising the multi-tiered annotation to provide linguistic data on the games for other linguistic analyses and stimulate productive pedagogic applications.

Conceptual framework of the study

Language documentation: The evidence that many languages of the world at one time or the other stopped existing (died) and that their exit is the loss of historical, cultural and linguistic values they represented, led to the evolution and advancement of language documentation. It is an approach that involves collection of linguistic and extra-linguistic data, using multimedia apparatus and analysis of the data, using computer-assisted software. Its main goal is to preserve endangered languages, languages that have strong indications of going extinct in the near or distant future.

Revitalization: Languages lack vitality when they lose grounds in functional use. Usually, lack of vitality is a factor of endangerment. Revitalization is therefore a process of restoring the functions of a language in areas where it lost grounds of use in communication. An important use of the

output of language documentation is in revitalization.

Annotation: The data collected in language documentation is given multilevel analysis and this is what, in the parlance of the approach, is called annotation. All the levels of linguistic analysis are equally emphasized and extra-linguistic data is also given attention, especially to account for cultural and historical facts which linguistic signals are redundant in conveying.

Oral tradition: Ethnic nationalities are identified by their own oral traditions. The oral tradition constitutes an important instrument of entertainment and informal education. Examples of oral tradition are folktales, folk dance, folk songs, satires, dirges, lullabies, children games, etc. The disappearance or endangerment of a people's oral tradition is the disappearance and endangerment of an important aspect of the people's identity and the language of the people since language is the carrier of the oral tradition.

Children games: There are games which are associated with children. Many of the games have song accompaniment. Some of the games are associated with particular times of the day (for instance, moonlight games) and some others are connected with cultural events like masquerade festival, new yam festival, traditional marriage ceremonies, etc

In this project, the above concepts and ideas are applied in the full dimensions of what they represent in their original domains.

Literature review

Wurm (2003) identifies five classes of endangerment. They are potentially endangered, endangered, seriously endangered, terminally endangered and dead or extinct. The languages in the first class are learnt imperfectly by child speakers of the language because of the overriding interest in a dominant language; in the second class, there are very few child speakers; the third class comprises languages with middle-aged or past middle-aged speakers as their youngest speakers; the fourth class has languages with few elderly speakers while languages in the fifth class have no speakers at all. The parametric control factors of measurement here are age and number of speakers. We are not interested in proving that the Igbo language is endangered but Mbagwu and Obiamalu (2009) have argued that globalization particularly has negative effects on African languages. According to them, African languages in the safer classes of endangerment will soon jump into the unsafe classes and in their words, “on and on Africa will lose all her languages for the big languages of the world”.

The Igbo language is an African language. Even though its being endangered is queried by many linguists, the facts as evident in Wurm’s classification call attention for a rethink. Moreover, the indications are stronger with the situation described here about the Igbo oral tradition, which as a result of the factor of ICT driven by the Internet and the cable networks, is terminally endangered if not extinct. Having noted the threat ICT has posed, we acknowledge the fact that it has the capacity that could be harnessed to revitalize endangered languages. Here, we target at this with the documentation of children games in Igbo.

Documentation affords greater facilities for revitalization. The basic format of language documentation as shown by Himmelmann (2006) makes this very clear in the following table:

Table 1: Basic format of language documentation

Primary data	Apparatus	
recordings/records of observable linguistic behavior and metalinguistic knowledge (possible basic formats: session and lexical database)	Per session	For documentation as a whole
	<p><i>Metadata</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - time and location recording - participants - recording team - recording equipment - content descriptors ... <p><i>Annotation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - transcription - translation - further linguistic and ethnographic 	<p><i>Metadata</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - location of documented community - project team(s) contributing to documentation - participants in documentation - acknowledgements ... <p><i>General access resources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - introduction - orthographical conventions - ethnographic sketch - sketch grammar

	glossing and commentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - indices - links to other resources ...
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The primary data in this project is Igbo children games. The recording of the games would afford session and lexical database which could be applied to revitalize the use of the games and the deployment of the lexical contents of the games for pedagogic purposes and lexicological and lexicographical development in the language. The workability and practicability of this is evident in the format of a language documentation which comprises three basic kinds of content:

(1) *Communicative events*: texts, etc. including all the naturally occurring aspects (location, artifacts, gestures, etc.), speaker meta-linguistic commentary;

(2) *Lists*: Taxonomies, etc. that will never appear fully manifest in communicative events, such as paradigms, list of artifacts in various domains, flora & fauna);

(3) *Analytic matters*: Commentary and information supplied by speakers.

Each type of content should be accompanied by: *raw data* (video, audio); *translation* (word-by-word and/or free); *commentary* (metadata about the event) (cf. Himmelmann,

<http://www.hrelp.org/events/workshops/eldp2005/reading/himmelmann.pdf>

By facts from the foregoing, the language documentation format is technically data-driven. More particularly, no primary data is taken to be “not relevant” and presentation is organized around the documents. Moreover, grammar patterns and other systems are given multi-tier annotation which accounts for all aspects of linguistic practices including a representation of the deep knowledge of culture. This is what Dimmendaal (2010) captures in stating, ‘The audio-visual documentation of language corpora provides new opportunities for the analysis of languages in their cultural context’.

It is important to conclude this section, giving attention to the question, ‘Why do we have to worry about endangerment?’ Simons (2008) answers this question in line with scientific significance and social significance. Under the scientific significance, he points out:

- Huge loss of data for typology, reconstruction; and
- Unique knowledge is lost (e.g. ethnobotanical);

And under the social significance, he states:

- When we lose a language and culture, we lose a significant window on human experience;
- As a people’s identity and cultural knowledge are eroded by language loss, the fabric of society begins to unravel
- People in the process of losing their language often have a higher incidence of social problems

Methodology

The project is guided by the language documentation model as proposed by Himmelmann (2006). Basically, data from the natural setting is sought. Research assistants are deployed to facilitate the recording of data. The chief consultant is the President General of the town. Survey interviews are conducted to determine the true situation about the children games. The result is that none of the games is functionally a part of life and living in the community. However, there is the observation that children in the public primary schools play some of the games at school. This is the confirmation that certain factors have displaced the games. That there is a domain where the games apply is heartwarming. The four primary schools in the community are therefore selected for the recording of the songs. The children participants are all natives of Mgbakwu and they are allowed to play the games during break, which is usually the time they play them at school. Even though this setting does not represent the original traditional setting the games require, it has become acceptable being where the games currently find expression.

Each of the schools has a separate session of recording. The location of recording in the schools is selected to represent a typical village arena and the pupils are instructed to put on mufti to create a more informal village life scenario. The children are allowed to organize themselves and naturally express themselves in the games at each session. The services of a professional cameraman have been hired for the recording. Four video recordings result and the lyrics of the

game songs are transcribed orthographically and phonemically. The other levels of annotation are syntactic which captures morphological description and the full English gloss to represent the semantic content of the lyrical lines. To provide a basis for further understanding of the lyrics of the games a philosophical, particularly hermeneutic annotation is given.

We have used hermeneutic annotation here to refer to the interpretation of the lyrical text of the game songs by recourse to the basic assumption of hermeneutics: (i) that humans experience the world through language; and (ii) that language provides both understanding and knowledge, (cf. Byrne, 2001:968). In other words, for each of the game songs, the sociocultural implications would be accounted for towards establishing the Igbo worldview about children and the cultural strategies for introducing them to what they should know and the responses required of them to certain cultural stimuli.

Excerpts of the documentation

A total of 36 game songs are recorded: 8 are recorded at Central Primary School (CPS), 10 at Abogu Primary School (ABS), 6 at Unity Primary School (UPS) and 12 at Community Primary School (CoPS). They are **ÉGWÚÒGÒDÒ ÒGÒDÒ, NZÒGBÚ NZÒGBÚ, TÓÓ TÓ K'ÒLÒMÁ, ÒNYÉ ÉNĒNĀ ÁNYÁ N'ÀZÚ, ÒNYÉ GÀ-ÀBÚ ÒYÌ M?, KPAKPAŃGÒLÒ, ÒNYÉ NÀ-ÁKÒ ÉDÈ?, KPÚKPÚMKPÚ ÒGĒLĒ** (from CPS); **KPÁKPÁNKÒLÒ, ÒNYÉ ÉNĒNĀ ÁNYÁ N'ÀZÚ, ÒNYÉ GÀ-ÀGBÁ ÉGWŪ?, KÙÒLÚNÙ NWÁ ÑGWÈLĒ ÁKÁ, ÒGÒDÒ DÒKÁÁ ÁNYÌ ÁKWÁCHÍÉ, TÓÓ K'ÒLÒMÁ, ÒNYÉ NÀ-ÁKÒ**

ÉDÈ?, ÑZÒGBÚ ÑZÒGBÚ, KÉDÚ ÓNYÉ GÁ-ÁBŪ ÒYÌ M?, ÒKÉRÉKĒ ÒKÉRÉKĒ (from APS); KPÁKPÁNKŌLŌ, ÛNŌ ĀNYĪ ÈPÈRÌ MPE?, ÉLÉLÉ MPŌLÍSĀ, NĪ ÉGWŪ, EGWÚÒGŌDŌ, ÒKÉRÉKĒ ÒKÉRÉKĒ, Ó GBĀJÍÉ M ÁKÁ (from UPS); ÛNŌ ĀNYĪ ÈPÈRÌ MPE?, ÓGŌ M MICHAEL, ÓNYÉ GBĀĀ KÀ NNE YĀ SĪ YĀ GBĀ, ÛWÀ BŪ NĪDŌLĪ NĪDŌLĪ, ÉGWŪ ÒGŌDŌ, QUEEN QUEEN QUEEN, ÒKŪKŪ ÒCHĀ, KPŪKPŪ ÒKWĒ, ÒNYÉ GĀ-ÀGBĀ ÉGWŪ?, CHELEELE MBEM, JÌM LĒLĒLĒLĒ (fromCoPS).

As could be seen, some of the songs are repeated in the different schools. They are no doubt the more common game songs in the community. More particularly, **ÉGWÚÒGŌDŌ ÒGŌDŌ** is repeated in the four schools while **KPÁKPÁNKŌLŌ** is repeated in three of the schools. **NZÒGBÚ NZÒGBÚ, TÓÓ TÓ K'ŌLŌMÁ, ÒNYÉ ÉNĒNĀ ĀNYĀ N'ĀZŪ, ÒNYÉ GĀ-ÁBŪ ÒYÌ M?, ÒNYÉ NĀ-ÁKŌ ÉDÈ?, ÒNYÉ GĀ-ÀGBĀ ÉGWŪ?, ÒKÉRÉKĒ ÒKÉRÉKĒ** and **ÛNŌ ĀNYĪ ÈPÈRÌ MPE?** are repeated in two schools; 13 of the songs are not repeated. This reveals how much freedom the children participants have been allowed to express themselves in organizing themselves and performing the game songs. Overall therefore 23 game songs have been recorded and annotated.

Presented here are four samples of the annotated game songs: **ÉGWÚÒGŌDŌ ÒGŌDŌ**, which is common to the four groups; **KPÁKPÁNKŌLŌ**, which appears in three of the groups, **NZÒGBÚ NZÒGBÚ**, which represents the songs that appear two groups and **KPŪKPŪMŪKPŪ ÒGĒLĒ** which that represents the songs that appear in only one of the groups.

(1) ÉGWÚÒGÒDỌ ÒGÒDỌ**Leader**

Egwú ògòdọ ògòdọ
/égwú ògòdò ògòdò/
dance wrapper wrapper
Dance with uniform

Chorus

éé èhéè èhé èhé
/éé èhéè èhé èhé/

Yá jèé gòtá ògòdọ
/já ɖjèé gòtá ògòdò/
2P-OBJ go-OVS buy.for(oneself) wrapper
Let the person go and get the uniform

éé èhéè èhé èhé
/éé èhéè èhé èhé/

ògòdọ dɔkǎá
/ògòdò dókáá/
wrapper draw.be-torn-OVS
If the uniform tears

Ànyị àkwáchíé 4x
/ànyị kwáfíé/
we VP-sew.cover-OVS
We stitch it

Egwú ògòdọ ògòdọ
/égwú ògòdò ògòdò/
dance wrapper wrapper
Dance with uniform

éé èhéè èhé èhé
/éé èhéè èhé èhé/

Egwú ògòdọ ògòdọ
/égwú ògòdò ògòdò/
dance wrapper wrapper
Dance with uniform

éé èhéè èhé èhé
/éé èhéè èhé èhé/

Ónyé nā-énwēlọ ògòdọ
/óné nēéɲwēlō ògòdò/
Who AUX-VP-own-NEG wrapper
If you don't have the uniform

éé èhéè èhé èhé
/éé èhéè èhé èhé/

Yá jèé gòtá ògòdọ
/já ɖjèé gòtá ògòdò/
2P go-OVS buy.for wrapper
Let the person go and get the uniform

éé èhéè èhé èhé
/éé èhéè èhé èhé/

ògòdò dǫkaa
 /ògòdò dǫkǎá/
 wrapper draw.be-torn-OVS
 If the uniform tears

Ànyì àkwáčí é 3x
 /ànì àkwáǫí é/
 we VP-stitch it
 We stitch it

Philosophical annotation: This game song emphasizes the importance of a dress as a covering to check nudity especially in cases of playing as in a dance. Hence, any participant in the play must be well-covered and the event of a tear, the dress must be stitched. The children participants are by this aware of the importance of a dress.

(2) KPAKPAÁNGŌLŌ

Leader

Kpákpáńgōlō
 /kpákpáńgōlō/
 weave.weave.circle
 Make a circle

Chorus

kpáńgōlō
 /kpáńgōlō/
 weave.circle
 make a circle

Ọyì m'ó
 /òjì m'ó/
 friend me EXCL
 My Friend

ògéné
 /ògéné/
 metal gong

Ọyì m'ó
 /òjì m'ó/
 friend me EXCL
 My Friend

ògéné
 /ògéné/
 metal gong

Ónyé ọ mārā
 /óné ọ mārā/
 Person it hold-APP
 whose turn it is (whose turn it is take a turn and do same like others)

Dùdù yá yá yá dùdù yáà!
 /dùdù já já já dùdù jáà/
 Rhythm

Kpákpáńgōlō
/kpákpáńgōlō/
weave.weave.circle
Make a circle

kpáńgōlō
/kpáńgōlō/
weave.circle
make a circle

Philosophical annotation: A circle does not have gaps. Making a circle therefore requires joining of hands by a group of persons. This brings to fore the belief that no man is an island. People need others to achieve one thing or the other.

(3) ÑZÒGBÚ ÑZÒGBÚ

Nzògbú ñzògbú
/ñzògbú ñzògbú/
NP-march.kill NP-march-kill
Destroy destroy

Ényím̀bà ényí
/éńím̀bà éńí/
elephant.nation elephant
Rhythm: elephant-pride of a nation

Nzògbú
/ñzògbú/
NP-march-kill
Destroy

Ényím̀bà ényí
/éńím̀bà éńí/
elephant.nation elephant
Rhythm: elephant-pride of a nation

Zògbúé nwókē
/zògbúé ñwókē/
NP-march-kill-OVS man
Destroyman

Ényím̀bà ényí
/éńím̀bà éńí/
elephant.nation elephant
Rhythm: elephant-pride of a nation

Zògbúé nwááányà
/zògbúé ñwááányà/
NP-march-kill-OVS woman
Destroywoman

Ényím̀bà ényí
/éńím̀bà éńí/
elephant.nation elephant
Rhythm: elephant-pride of a nation

Nzògbú
/ñzògbú/
NP-march-kill
Destroy

Ényím̀bà ényí
/éńím̀bà éńí/
elephant.nation elephant
Rhythm: elephant-pride of a nation

Nzògbú	Nzògbú	Ényím̀bà	ényí
/̀nzògbú	̀nzògbú/	/é̀nyím̀bà	é̀ní/
NP-march.kill	NP-march-kill	elephant.nation	elephant
Destroy	destroy	Rhythm: elephant-pride of a nation	

Nzògbú		Ényím̀bà	ényí
/̀nzògbú/		/é̀nyím̀bà	é̀ní/
NP-march-kill		elephant.nation	elephant
Destroy		Rhythm: elephant-pride of a nation	

Nzògbú	Nzògbú	Ényím̀bà	ényí
/̀nzògbú	̀nzògbú/	/é̀nyím̀bà	é̀ní/
NP-march.kill	NP-march-kill	elephant.nation	elephant
Destroy	destroy	Rhythm: elephant-pride of a nation	

Zògbúé	òkúkò	Ényím̀bà	ényí
/zògbúé	òkúkò/	/é̀nyím̀bà	é̀ní/
NP-march-kill-OVS	chicken	elephant.nation	elephant
Destroy	a chicken		Rhythm: elephant-pride of a nation

Ázògbùnà	nwókē	Ényím̀bà	ényí
/á̀zògbùnà	̀nwókē/	/é̀nyím̀bà	é̀ní/
VP-march-NEG	man	elephant.nation	elephant
Destroy	a man	Rhythm: elephant-pride of a nation	

Philosophical annotation: This game song demonstrates the energy and seriousness that war demands. The participants stamp their feet to show destruction and damage, which is represented in the movement of the elephant: anything in its way is destroyed.

(4)KPÚKPÚMKPÚ ŌĠĒĒ**Leader**

Kpúkpúm̀kpúōġēĒ

/kpúkpúm̀kpúōġēĒ/

hide.hide-IntFix-hide ogele(an ant) Rhythm(formed from ogele)

Move backward like an antlion

Chorus

ÓġēĒōġēġéġé

/óġēĒōġēġéġé/

Ōnyé nà-àchó ōġēĒ?

/ònyé nààtʃó ōġēĒ/

Who AUX-OVS-find ogele

Who is searching for the antlion?

ÓġēĒōġēġéġé

/óġēĒōġēġéġé/

Rhythm (formed from ogele)

Ōnyé nà-àchó ōġēĒ?

/ònyé nààtʃó ōġēĒ/

Who AUX-OVS-find ogele

Who is searching for the antlion?

ÓġēĒōġēġéġé

/óġēĒōġēġéġé/

Rhythm (formed from ogele)

Kpúkpúm̀kpúōġēĒ

/kpúkpúm̀kpúōġēĒ/

hide.hide-IntFix-hide ogele(an ant) Rhythm(formed from ogele)

Move backward like an antlion

ÓġēĒōġēġéġé

/óġēĒōġēġéġé/

Ōnyé nà-àchó ōġēĒ?

/ònyé nààtʃó ōġēĒ/

Who AUX-OVS-find ogele

Who is searching for the antlion?

ÓġēĒōġēġéġé

/óġēĒōġēġéġé/

Rhythm (formed from ogele)

Kpúkpúm̀kpúōġēĒ

/kpúkpúm̀kpúōġēĒ/

hide.hide-IntFix-hide ogele(an ant) Rhythm(formed from ogele)

Move backward like an antlion

ÓġēĒōġēġéġé

/óġēĒōġēġéġé/

Ōnyé nà-àchó ōġēĒ?

/ònyé nààtʃó ōġēĒ/

Who AUX-OVS-find ogele

Who is searching for the antlion?

ÓġēĒōġēġéġé

/óġēĒōġēġéġé/

Rhythm (formed from ogele)

Ònyé nà-àchó	ōgēlē?	Ógēlēògélégé
/ònyé nààfʃ	ōgēlē/	/ógēlēògélégé/
Who AUX-OVS-find ogele		Rhythm (formed from ogele)
Who is searching for the antlion?		Rhythm

Ûúúùhhhh àààhhhh	Ógēlē ògélégé
/ùúúù ààà/	/ógēlē ògélégé/
Rhythm	Rhythm(formed from ogele)

Philosophical annotation: Ogele is an ant which moves back upon sensing any attack. A child participant in a group moves back rhythmically as the song goes on in the manner of an antlion. Moving back highlights taking flight into safety and affording one the opportunity of determining the direction of attack.

Remarks

Each excerpt here does not cover all the lines in the instance of its performance by the children, being that the game songs are poetic and characteristically patterned by repetitive lines and words. In other words, the presentation simply accounts for most part of the game songs, which adequately incorporates the basic constituting lines.

In addition to the feature of line and word repetition, there are copious manifestations of the phonostylistic pattern, assonance. This of course emphasizes the premium position of vowels in the Igbo language. More so, to achieve quality musical configuration, the lines enhanced by repetition create regular and irregular rhyme patterns. Another common feature is strings of sounds which lack state-able semantic content, applied to promote rhythm. Evidently, the game songs are rich in stylistic features. They are therefore veritable pedagogic resources in the Igbo language.

Conclusion

That the Igbo oral genres are endangered is a fact. As we have pointed out folktales have been replaced by movies and cartoons, lullabies and birth songs have been replaced by hip-hops, and religious hymns, traditional games have been replaced by electronic and computer games. In other words, modern day facilities and ways of living affect the oral traditions negatively. Worse still, the outbreak of insecurity has destroyed moonlight tradition of children gathering at community squares to meet for different end-of-day oral-traditional activities.

The case of Mgbakwu makes it clearer. The Mgbakwu children are only privileged to engage in the oral tradition of children game songs at school. It is good to note that this is possible because public schools are involved. It would be difficult to find private schools that would promote or allow such. Of course, space, population of pupils and a homogenous group of pupils would be limiting factors. The present situation calls for a documentation intervention. And, this is what this project has done.

The anticipation with the project is that having identified the negative effect of certain factors games on the game songs, the documentation material would be deployed to creating electronic clips for children in the Igbo area and the diaspora for the purpose of stimulating revitalization of the game songs. Moreover, as observed, the documentation material is huge pedagogic resource. Certain stylistic exemplifications such as assonance, rhyme and rhythm are copiously available. More importantly, the sociocultural constructs that qualify the Igbo society are adequately

incorporated in the songs such that they are strategically equipped for exposing the children to the world around them.

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