

CHILDREN'S GAMES FOR MODERN TEACHING OF THE IGBO LANGUAGE

DR. ANGELA ULOAKU NGOZI NWANKWERE

Linguistics Department, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

Email: au.nwankwere@unizik.edu.ng

Phone: +2348038851236

Abstract

Children's games are invaluable aspects of Igbo culture. Both adults and children employ their natural linguistic prowess in formulating/establishing them for activity/games purposes, entertainment, intellectual development and imparting the Igbo language and culture. The purpose of the study is to gather, document and preserve them, especially those that have been long forgotten. Also, there is need to showcase current ways of using them as invaluable supplementary materials in the Igbo language classroom. Data were collected from different sources within three months (November-December, 2023 to January, 2024): watching/listening, teaching and videoing children playing; using researcher's native instinct as one who participated in moonlight plays/games when young, since these games belong to the public domain. Descriptive analysis of *Nwa nnunu! Nwa nnunu nta!* was adopted to showcase an appropriate modern way of employing games in teaching Igbo. Findings include: games are replete with rich Igbo linguistic/stylistic repertoire: poetic devices- *n'ike n'ike* 'repetition', *zám zám* 'ideophone', *anya mmiri*, *pipirọ* 'idiom'; culture- *ose* is food ingredient, agricultural/economic seed, source of wealth; linguistics; phonology- *átù* HL (and *átú* HH) role of tone, grammar- sentence types: *Ì nò ébé áhù émé gíní?* (question), *Ánà m àtùrú nnè m ósè* (declarative). *Tùgódú/Tùkéné kà í sì átù* (imperative). This method will help promote zeal and speed in learning and use of Igbo, leading to optimal development. Eclectic teaching of Igbo, revitalizing and popularizing children's games through cartoons and video/audio and other media is paramount, as well as internet dissemination on Facebook, Tiktok, YouTube, etc., for Igbo diasporans.

Keywords: Children's games, documentation/preservation, modern Igbo language classroom, revitalization/popularization, internet dissemination

Motivation for the study

The study aims to promote/support the use of children's games as supplementary teaching materials in the Igbo language classroom, to activate the interest of Igbo learners which promotes rapid learning and communicative effectiveness.

For some years now the declaration by UNESCO (2003) has been in the air that Igbo will go into extinction by the year 2025 if adequate precautionary measures were not taken. We are now in the year 2025 and can confidently say that Igbo is alive and active due to the concerted efforts of very notable Igbo sons and daughters that have taken the lead and Igbo is being propelled ahead to greater heights. Notable among these prominent, progressive and right thinking Igbo people are Archbishop (Emeritus) Anthony John Valentine Chiedozie Obinna (O'deé: an Odenigbo Lecturer) of the Catholic Archdiocese of Owerri, Nigeria. He is the founder of the Odenigbo Lecture Series, an annual Igbo Lecture Series, which started in 1996 and takes place on every first Saturday of September. The fruits of Odenigbo are fast spreading to different parts of the world and are igniting new proactive spirit of Igboness in the Igbo people both home and abroad. A number of groups are erupting in readiness to establish themselves proactively and launch one programme or the other to support and promote the cause of the Igbo people, language and culture.

Notable among the proactive group is the **Igboekulie**, an international organisation that collaborates with West African Examination Council (WAEC) to organise a recognition and award giving ceremony in honour of the students, parents and schools of the best three results in Igbo as declared by WAEC annually. Not only that, Igboekulie has created online Igbo content platforms that showcase various aspects of teaching/learning and exhibition of the Igbo language and culture. Another proactive movement, a fruit of Odenigbo Lecture, is the **Otu Sùbakwa Igbo** founded by Professor Peter Ejiofor (O'deé) in Anambra State, Nigeria. As well, this group is making waves in launching different programmes geared towards the promotion of the Igbo language and culture. Likewise, another good fruit of Odenigbo is that the level of awareness is so high that numerous other groups as well as individuals have developed interest in creating online contents exhibiting the Igbo people, language and culture. A very good example, which is of high repute, is the Igbo Omenka App developed by Emma Asonye for online launching of all kinds of occasions showcasing activities on teaching and learning Igbo, Igbo people and their culture.

On the government and education sides, in 2009, the then Anambra State House of Assembly enacted a law enforcing the teaching, learning and use of Igbo in all schools and at all levels of education in the State. This singular act gave rise to the establishment of Igbo as a general course (Igbo for General Studies: Igbo GS) for ALL undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria, a condition that has made it impossible for any undergraduate student to graduate without scoring at least a pass in both first and second semester Igbo GS courses. See Nwankwere (2019) for details. Currently, the multiplier effect is that almost all, if not all, tertiary institutions in Igbo land have established their own Igbo GS courses. These accounts narrated here indicate that Igbo is seriously being revitalised and is out of the danger of extinction.

On this positive note, however, we want to state that the education aspect has not been properly aligned towards achieving optimal developmental goals for the Igbo L2/FL agenda. One of our major motivations for this paper is that in a Ph. D research (Nwankwere, 2019), our findings show that the first year undergraduate students in the Igbo GS class for students who are not of Igbo origin at all, and who are learning Igbo as a second language (Igbo L2/FL), identified that their needs for Igbo are not being met. They stated that they were not being taught to meet their needs to use Igbo effectively for communication with Igbo people; nor were they being trained to fit into settings that require their profuse use of Igbo: for higher education, employment, setting up business outfits, etc. Moreover, they identified their needs to learn and use Igbo through various technological means requiring their use of Igbo through various online and social media platforms. In this paper, we reiterate our observation that these learner needs require the use of more eclectic language teaching methods than the traditional method adopted in the programme. Eclectic method requires a teacher's use of techniques and activities from a range of language teaching approaches and methodologies (Rivers, 1968 and 1981).

The paper observes that the current situation of Igbo L2/FL project as identified by Igbo L2/FL learners is a clog in the wheel of the desired developmental processes of the Igbo language, which is envisaged to join the league of international/global languages in the nearest future. This impression persists because any language solely spoken by its owners remains stunted in growth, what more in the case of Igbo being abandoned by modern Igbo parents who prefer their children to acquire and use only English and other languages to the detriment of their mother tongue, Igbo. Scholars (e.g. Dudley-Evans, 2005 and Sasidharan, 2012) attest to the fact that it is only when speakers of other languages start to learn and use any language other than theirs (LOTT) will that language, being learnt and used by native speakers of other languages, be developed.

The paper, therefore, advocates the adoption of motivating pedagogical processes in delivering Igbo L2/FL to learners to foster the much needed developmental growth of the Igbo language; thus, positioning it for globalisation. In this regard, this paper is poised to showcase the use of children's games for pedagogical purposes as supplementary materials. The process promises to promote in the learners: communicative fluency, reflective thinking, creativity, role play, putting down one's thoughts in Igbo, satisfaction, etc. Adopting such a system will create awareness in both teachers and learners into the fact that children's games are replete with and purveyors of all Igbo linguistic and cultural milieu. It will introduce Igbo learners into various language learning techniques and strategies like: individual and group discovery learning and survey or field research methods, acting, newscasting, translation, identifying Igbo synonyms and antonyms. They will learn the role of tone in differentiating between pairs and sets of words (tonal rhymes) especially in similar words and tonal modulations in sentences, identifying the Igbo form classes and literary/poetic devices, etc.

Methodology

Data were collected descriptively from different sources within three months (November-December, 2023 to January, 2024). It started with observation of children at play in different places (watching and listening). Having arrived at the decision to embark on the fieldwork, some of the children were approached individually at different times and asked if they would like to be video-recorded. Having secured positive answers from each child approached, their various parents were visited and their consent sought for and received orally for the inclusion of their child/children.

A video man was approached and engaged; venue, date and time were fixed. Parents and their children were then notified of the venue, date and time. The children were invited for rehearsal with the researcher on two acceptable earlier dates. During these earlier dates, the researcher watched the children as they played their familiar games. The researcher gave them corrections on areas they were not getting well, and then taught them some old games they did not know.

On the appointed recording date, the children arrived earlier at the venue and were also briefed on what to do and how to do it. Immediately the video man came, important issues like scenes were selected and agreed on. He set up his equipment, and the games started, each at the selected scene, with the researcher and the video man choosing

NTỌSA/NTỤCHASI NSINANCHỌCHA DATA ANALYSIS

A. Ngalaba Igbo ndị a rụturu aka: Abụ, Ụdaasụsụ, Ụtọasụsụ, Omenala *Branches of Igbo that were illustrated include: Poetry, Phonology and Grammar, Culture*

B. Ụfọdụ Akanka e nwere ike iwebata na nkuzi Igbo site n'iji abụ ụmụaka a *Some classroom teaching techniques that can be employed in using this children's poem as a pedagogical material include: Nkọwasị Description/Explanation, Ajuju Questioning, Ntughari translation, Nchọcha Fieldwork, Edemede Written Assignments (classroom and take-home exercises), Ichọputagasi ụdị mkpuruokwu, ahiriokwu, dgz. Identifying Specific Word and Sentence Types from various Texts, etc.*

A1. A ʔbụ Poem

Akanka ntụle abụ *Stylistics*

Nkwughari/Nkwukwasa kenkebi(ahiri) *Phrasal repetition*

Line/A ʔhị ʔrị 1/2: Nwa' n' n'ụnụ! Nwa' n' n'ụnụ, zám' zám'

Line/A ʔhị ʔrị 8/: n' i'ke' n' i'ke'

Nkwughari/Nkwukwasa kemkpuruokwu *Word repetition*

Line/A ʔhị ʔrị 6/7/11-13: Tụ ụ' ụ! Tụ ụ' ụ

Nkwughari/Nkwukwasa keahiri(okwu) *Sentence/Structural repetition*

Line/A ʔhị ʔrị 8/9: Tụ nwo'kè n' i'ke' n' i'ke'!/ Ahiri 8: Tụ nwa' anyị n' i'ke' n' i'ke'!

Nkwughari/Nkwukwasa kenkebiokwu/nkejiokwu *Syllable/Syllabic repetition/doubling*

Line/A ʔhị ʔrị 10: pị' pị' in pị' pị'(rọ).

Nkwusiike *Empasizer/Emphasis*

Line/A ʔhị ʔrị 1: nwa' n' tã. The use of the two lay emphasis on the size of the bird.

Akpaalaokwu *Idiom*

Line/A ʔhị ʔrị 10: A' nya' m' mĩrĩ, pị' pị' rọ

The word **pị' pị' rọ** indicates the feeling one has when one takes peppery food/soup.

Here, the syllable **pị'** is repeated or doubled to indicate the quick reflex action of shutting the two eyes when pepper enters them. The action also depicts the act of going blind (**a' nya' i' pị' m' ma' dũ a person going blind**). It could also be said that the bird is insinuating its intension of putting pepper into the eyes of the child daring to question its activities. Or, the bird is threaten the child with blindness.

Mmemmadu *Personification*

The bird here is generally being given human attributes/characteristics, eg., talking, doing chores for the mother, etc.

Nsinuda *Ideophone*

Line/A ʔhị ʔrị 1/2: zám' zám' could indicate the swift/fast movement of the bird as it moves about.

Line/A ʔhị ʔrị 6/7: Tụ ụ! Tụ ụ!

Here, the sound of the pecking is illustrated.

Line/A ʔhị ʔrị 8/9: Tụ nwo'kè n' i'ke' n' i'ke'!/ Tụ nwa' anyị n' i'ke' n' i'ke'!

In Lines 8 and 9, reference is made to the fact that a bird can be offensive/aggressive/battle ready and can fight in its self defence by ferrociously (n'ike n'ike) pecking on human beings (man/male and woman/female), if it feels endangered.

Lin/A ʔhị ʔrị 10 = **pị' pị'** signifies the blinking of the eyes when pepper enters them.

As already said, the word **pị' pị' rọ** indicates the feeling one has when one takes peppery food/soup.

Here, the syllable **pị'** is repeated or doubled to indicate the quick reflex action of shutting the two eyes when pepper enters them. The action also depicts the act of going blind (**a' nya' i' pị' m' ma' dũ a person going blind**). It could also be insinuated that the bird is warning the child/person questioning it that they are in danger of being peppered or even blinded.

Egwuregwu *Pun (playing on word meaning/creating fun)*

Line/A ʔhị ʔrị 8/9: Tụ nwo'kè n' i'ke' n' i'ke'!/Tụ nwa' anyị n' i'ke' n' i'ke'!

Here, there would be word play by changing the tone of **n' i'ke' n' i'ke'** to give different meanings that could be used to create fun. Thus, in the case of: **n' i'kè n' i'kè!** *on the buttocks, on the buttocks/buttocks by buttocks*, for **Tụ nwo'kè n' i'kè n' i'kè!** (Line 8), children will run around, pinching their male friends (or enemies/rivals) on the buttocks. Whereas in the case of **Tụ nwa' anyị n' i'kè n' i'kè!** (Line 9), they will run around pinching their

female friends (or enemies/rivals) on the buttocks. A second aspect of the pun (creating fun) is changing the tone to:

n'íkè n'íkè! *in bunch, in bunch/bunch by bunch*. It is worthy to note that in Igbo, anything that a round shape is usually said to be **íkè**. Thus, **íkè a'kī** (a'kī) *coconut*, (**íkè**) **òròma'** *an orange* (Note that **a'kī òròma'** refers to an orange without water), **íkè n'kwū** (n'kwū) *a head/bunch of palmfruit*, **íkè ụ'kwà** *a head of breadfruit*, **íkè ụ'da'ra** *an African apple*, etc. To create fun here, the children will run around and collect/take anything they see that has a round shape, no matter the owner. The snag here is for the teacher/leader to ensure that the fun does not degenerate to crisis/quarrel/fight, etc.; and that each child returns whatever he/she collects/collected which belong(s) to another person. The negative aspect of such a situation is that mischievous children who understand/know the other meaning of the original expression would use the opportunity to pinch their classmates, especially the female ones, on the buttocks. Some may derogatorily start calling some girls **íkè a'kī** *flat/dried buttocks*. Thus, the teacher should be firm on instilling strict discipline.

(NB: There are tonal changes/assimilations in the underlined words/varieties of **a'kī**, in cases of tonal assimilation which usually occur in a phenomenon called tone in associative constructions).

2. Ngalaba Asụsụ: Ụdaasụsụ na Ụtoasụsụ *Branch of language: Phonology and Grammar*

2ai. Ụdaasụsụ *Phonology*

The words of the poem are seen to observe all the rules of using the Igbo alphabet letters. The eight Igbo vowels did not disobey the cooccurrence restriction rule. They obeyed the vowel harmony rule of cooccurrence and cooccurred well in each word. The Igbo language has two symmetrical sets of vowels: the four light vowels (**Aa, Ii, Oo, Uu**) and the four heavy ones (**Ee, Ii, Oo, Uu**). The vowel harmony rule states that the vowels in each set must only cooccur with members of their set. The same thing is applicable to the twenty eight consonants. Igbo has two sets of consonants: the nineteen monographs (**Bb, Dd, Ff, Gg, Hh, Jj, Kk, Ll, Mm, Nn, Ńn, Pp, Rr, Ss, Tt, Vv, Ww, Yy, Zz**) and the nine digraphs (**CHch, GBgb, GHbh, GWgw, KPkp, KWkw, NWnw, Nyny, SHsh**) which obeyed the rule of consonant homorganicity. The Igbo language has two/three syllabic nasals (**Mm, Nn** (and **Ńn**)) each of which selects its own group of consonants with which it can cooccur. These syllabic nasals differ from the nasals (**Mm, Nn, Ńn**), because unlike the nasals, they possess all characteristics and perform all functions of Igbo vowels.

2aii. Ụdaolu *Tone*

Line/Ahịrị 8/9: n'í'ke' n'í'ke'! *forcefully, forcefully*

A change in the tone of every Igbo word gives a different meaning. An Igbo word stands the chance of having a maximum of five tonal sets, each with a different meaning. The same expression: in Lines 8/9: **n'íkè n'íkè!**, as was seen in the case of pun above, can have the following meanings, when tone marked, each time the tones are changed. Thus:

n'í'kè n'í'kè! *on the buttocks, on the buttocks/buttocks by buttocks*

n'íkè n'íkè! *in bunch/head, in bunch/head or bunch/head by bunch/head or the whole thing*

Note that the teacher can turn the tonal variation/modulation into an interesting game for fun as seen in the illustrations under pun above.

Mgbawwe olu *Voice/Tonal modulations*

Line/ A hị'ri 13: Tụrụ ụ! Tụrụ ụ! Tụrụ ụ! Tụrụ zám'zám'tùrụzààà!

Line/A hị'ri 14: (ALL) Tụrụ zám'tùrụ zám'tùrụ zám'tùrụzààà!

Here, there is downward tonal modulation at both ends: low low low (LLL) which are different from what is obtained in the poem.

As well, there are tonal modulations in the highlighted words: high high (HH) and low low (LL) and then, HH/HH and LLLL. All these make the poem more rhythmic and interesting. The modulations indicate a tone of finality, the end of the poem.

2b. Ụtoasụsụ *Grammar*

i. Ụdị ahịrịokwu: nkebiahịrị *Sentence type: phrase*

Line/A hị'ri 1/2: Nwa' n'nụnụ! Nwa' n'nụnụ n't'a!

Line/A hị'ri 10: A'nya' m'miri, pị'pị'rọ!

ii. Ahirajujụ *Questions*

Line/A hị'ri 3: Ị nọ e'be' a'hụ ẹme' gị'ni?

Here, the question word/morpheme, gị'ni, occupies final/object position.

In another structure, the question word comes first, at the subject position. Thus:

Gị'ni ka ị' nọ e'be' a'hụ (na'-)ẹme'?

The auxiliary verb in bracket is optional.

Ahịrīnkwasara *Declarative sentence*

Line/A'hī'rij 4: A'na m' a'turū' n'ne m'ose.

A'hī'rintimiwu *Imperative sentence/Command*

Line/A'hī'rij 4: Turū'du/Tuke'ne' ka i' si a'tu.

A'hī'rimfe *Simple sentence (one verb)*

Line/A'hī'rij 8: Tu nwo'ke' n'i'ke' n'i'ke'.

Line/A'hī'rij 9: Tu nwa'anyị n'i'ke' n'i'ke'.

A'hī'riu'kwu' *Compound sentence (two verbs)*

Line/A'hī'rij 3: I no e'be' a'hū' eme' gī'ni? *You are there doing what?*

Line/A'hī'rij 4: A'na m' a'turū' n'ne m'ose. I am picking/pecking pepper for my mother.

Note that the structure in Line 4 is obtainable in standard Igbo and some dialects. But, the sentence can take another structure. Thus: **M na-aturū nne m ose.** The first person singular pronoun, **m**, now stands alone/independent as one can see/hear in many Igbo dialects.

Nkwuwa *Adverb*

Line/A'hī'rij 8/9: n'i'ke' n'i'ke'.

Uđi aha *Types of name/noun*

Aha igwe *Compound name/noun*

Line/A'hī'rij 1/2: nnunū

Line/A'hī'rij 4: nne, ose

Line/A'hī'rij 8/9: nwoke, nwaanyị

Line/A'hī'rij 10: anya mmiri

Aha nsinūda *Ideophone*

Line/A'hī'rij 10: pīpīrō

Njuaajuju *Question Word/marker/morpheme*

Line/A'hī'rij 3: gī'ni? *What?*

NB: Here, it is pertinent to teach Igbo L2/FL learners another/other ways of asking questions in Igbo. For example, they are supposed to know that the question in Line 3: **I nọ e'be' a'hū' eme' gī'ni?** *You are there doing what?*, can be put in other ways, like, **Gī'ni ka i nọ ebe ahū (na-) eme?** *What are you doing there?* Another question word/morpheme can also be used, thus: **Kedū ihe i nọ ebe ahū (na-)eme?** *What are you doing there?*

Nnọchiaha *Pronoun*

(Nnọchiaha) onye nke abụọ mkpọolu *second person singular pronoun*

Line/A'hī'rij 3: I (udamfe/udaumemfe *light vowel*) *You (subject of the sentence)*

Line/A'hī'rij 4: Note that in this Line 4, at the subject position, the first person singular pronoun (**Mm**) is dependent and the auxiliary verb takes a prefix (A-/a-), a different form from other pronouns in that position. This structure is maintained in the standard Igbo and some other dialects as explained above.

Line/A'hī'rij 5: i (udaaru/udaumearu *heavy vowel*) *you (subject of the sentence)*

(Nnọchiaha) onye nke mbụ mkpọolu *first person singular pronoun*

Line/A'hī'rij 4: **m** first person singular subject *I/i* and *my* first person singular possessive pronoun.

Nkọwaaha *adjective*

Line/Ahij 1/2: nwa

Line/Ahij 1/2: nta

Uđi ngwaa *types of verb*

Isingwaa/Ngwaa mfe *verb root/simple verb*

Line/Ahij 3: nọ

Line/Ahij 5: si

Line/Ahij 8/9: Tu

Nnyemaka ngwaa *auxiliary verb*

Line/Ahịrị 4: (A)na.

Line/Ahịrị 5: si

Omekangwaa *Participle*

Line/Ahịrị 3: eme

Line/Ahịrị 4: aturu

Line/Ahịrị 5: atụ

Mgbakwūnye *affixes*

Line/Ahịrị 2: A- in **Ana** is a prefix.

Line/Ahịrị 5: -kene/-godu *suffixes*

Ac. Omenala Igbo *Igbo Culture*

i. Agwa, dk, ije ozi, nrubeisi, dgz. Iji maa atụ:

Line/Ahịrị 4: Ana m aturu nne m ose.

NB: The children, led by the teacher, will enumerate the household chores and those who usually do them.

ii. Ngwa ofe ndị Igbo *Soup ingredients of the Igbo*

Line/Ahịrị 4: ose *pepper*

Line/Ahịrị 4: Ana m aturu nne m ose.

NB: The teacher will lead the children to enumerate the various soup ingredients used by Igbo people.

iii. Ụdị ofe ndị Igbo *Igbo indigenous types of soup*

Line/Ahịrị 4: Ana m aturu nne m ose, reminds one of types of Igbo soup and food.

NB: The teacher will lead the children to enumerate the different types of soup by which the Igbo are known. They will go further to explain how each of them is prepared and eaten.

iv. Ngwa nri ndị Igbo: ose *Food ingredients of the Igbo: pepper*

Line/Ahịrị 4: Ana m aturu nne m ose.

NB: As well, the teacher will lead the children to enumerate the different types of food ingredients by which the Igbo are known. They will go further to explain how each of them is prepared and used in cooking.

v. Ụdị nri ndị Igbo *Types of food eaten by Igbo people*.

NB: This time around, the learners could be directed by the teacher to enumerate indigenous food of the Igbo people they know and how each is prepared and eaten. The teacher then corrects them.

vi. Etu e si esi nri ndị Igbo dī icheiche *Ways of preparing/processing Igbo indigenous types of food*

NB: This would be explained in details by the teacher, using different techniques, e.g., questioning, elicitation, explanation, written exercises/assignment, fieldwork using questionnaire, wordlist, phototelling (see Nwankwere and Opara, 2016 for an example of phototelling technique) to guide the learners to participate and contribute their ideas and knowledge in order to learn effectively.

vii. Etu e si akoputa nri ndị Igbo dī icheiche *The cultivation methods of Igbo types of food will also be examined and revealed*. This will be explained in details by the teacher, using different techniques to guide the learners to participate and contribute their ideas and knowledge.

Akanka e nwere ike iji kuzie Igbo site n'iwere abụ a bụ 'Nwa Nnụnụ! Nwa nnụnụ nta' *Teaching techniques that can be used to teach the poem Nwa Nnụnụ! Nwa nnụnụ nta*

A good number of teaching techniques have been mentioned above. Here, we enlist and elucidate further.

Ụfọdụ akanka nkuzi gụnyere *Some teaching techniques include:*

a. Ajuju na azịza/osịsa *Question and answer*

Here, the teacher uses different questioning techniques and question words, etc., to motivate the learners and achieve effective learning. For example:

Question 1: Why are Lines 1 and 2 called phrases?

[1. Lines 1/2 = Nwa nnụnụ! Nwa nnụnụ nta!]

Question 2: What do you understand **pipirọ** to mean/be?

[Line 10: Anya mmiri, pipirọ.]

Question 3. What types of soup do Igbo people cook/prepare?

b. Enlisting and Pronunciation

1. Enlisting

The teacher can enlist orally and/or write on the white board, some names of different food ingredients of the Igbo. Learners will also be called upon to do same (orally and in writing).

2. Pronounce/Mention other ingredients that can go with pepper in cooking/preparing Igbo dishes.

ch. Writing is a very important technique for developing the teaching/learning skills.

Teacher asks learners to copy what are written on the white board. As well, they are called out one by one to write on the board. They are then instructed to write down what they see on the board in their books and to add more.

d. Fieldwork inculcates discovery learning.

The teacher will first prepare learners on how to go out in search of data, and lead them to prepare for different kinds of instruments; and, direct the learners to approach their mothers, grandmothers or any other person to teach them how to prepare the local soup by which their village/town/part of Igbo land they reside in is known.

They are also asked to watch the TV whenever a programme relating to a relevant topic is being relayed; as well, they would be asked to listen to the radio for such and watch online events and activities like that, each time taking important notes.

Language skills desired

1. Listening and hearing/understanding

Exercises

1. Listen to Igbo Times in/on the radio, TV, or any online platform when they are discussing/teaching types of Igbo indigenous foods, as well as all Igbo programmes.

2. Speaking/Oral presentation

2a. Mention one soup by which your village/town is known.

b. Enlist the ingredients by which it is prepared.

ch. Explain the step by step preparation of the soup.

3. Reading

Read the Igbo poem above and state how it has touched you. Read two (or more) other similar poems you have come across and make some comparison or critic, etc.

4. Writing

a. Write down one to three nouns/verbs/adverbs/adjective/question, etc., you can identify from the poem above.

b. Use each of the nouns/verbs/adverbs/adjective you can identify to make a sentence.

c. Write a short poem/song on any topic you like.

Forming Minimal Pairs/Sets and Assignment of Tones in Igbo

As stated earlier on, every Igbo word has a chance of generating a tonal set of five words. Igbo has three phonemic tones: high tone (H), downstep/step (S) and low tone (L). Using the musical notation, we get five minimal sets of two syllable words. The tonal combinations are: mm, mr, md, dm and dd. In two syllable words which give a good stepping ground/stone for studying tone, they can be represented by the following letters: HH (high tone and high tone); HS (high tone and downstep/step); HL (high tone and low tone); LH (low tone and high tone) and LL (low tone and low tone).

The teacher leads the class to do the needful, e.g.,

Table 1. Illustration of Minimal Pairs/Sets Formation

SN	Line	Number	Term	Minimal Pair/Set	Gloss
1.	8/9		ike	a. i'ke' (HH)	strength
				b. i'kẽ (HS)	to tie
				c. i'kẽ (HL)	buttocks
				d. ike' (LH)	???
				e. ikẽ (LL)	bunch

NB: It should be noted that some tonal sets may seem not to have a complete set of five words, unless a proper investigation is done throughout all Igbo dialects. In such a case a list of such tonemarked Igbo words could be made and the learners sent into the Igbo communities to see if the lexical gap(s) could be filled (see Nwankwere and Opara, 2016 for more illustrations.)

In conclusion, the study recommends an informed and purposeful drastic change from the sole traditional formalist teaching approach to current learner centered approaches. It is obvious that children's games which are relegated by modern Igbo people play a tremendous role in children's language acquisition and requires their profuse use in the Igbo language classroom, than scouting for teaching materials and exercises which are apparently scarce and farefetched. In addition to the invaluable benefits, doing so will checkmate the importation of foreign exercises, passages and materials into the Igbo classroom.

LINKS TO ONLINE PLATFORMS OF VARIOUS STAGES OF THE FIELD PROJECT

1. Ufodu egwuregwu umuaka na akuko ufe ndi Igbo: folklore.mp3.
<https://wettransfer.com/downloads/6a441c51682d38af401ac9a3a928c79620240109080035/b65e80886a631ed422f6f2c24b9bb7df20240109080127/7440fc>. Accessed on 11 February, 2025.
2. Egwu onwa: Storytelling the Igbo way. (cartoon form, stage 1). Accessed on February 11, 2025 on <https://youtu.be/nY103xVmjmM>.
3. Ufodu Egwuregwu umuaka ndi Igbo. A fieldwork videoed on 21st January, 2024 at m ikiri Ihita Ogada, Owerri North L. G. A., Imo State, Nigeria. VLC Media Player: i. VTS_01_1.VOB, accessible on Google Drive and accessed on 15th April, 2025; retrieved from https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OZOsnxtZABYX7f7wC-dXxlEqpifnIvcF/view?usp=drive_link.
ii. VTS_01_2.VOB, accessible on Google Drive and accessed on 15th April, 2025 and retrieved from https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Q6QsGaUFNtchAhpHu3KvTkxRW7sNe7QG/view?usp=drive_link
nk
iii. VTS_01_3.VOB, accessible on Google Drive and accessed on 15th April, 2025 and retrieved from https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XGfHzlD_foLKO3J7h0jILP_tLJmt7JPw/view?usp=drive_link.

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