Igede Igbo Journal of Igbo Studies

Vol. 4, Number 1, 2019, 50 – 63

**A PERCEPTUAL COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ANAM AND STANDARD IGBO SOUNDS**

**Obiorah, Kenneth Ekezie**

Abstract

*Standard Igbo is the ideal needed to communicate across Igbo land. Anam is the dialect of Anam people of Anambra East, and West Local Government Area, of Amanbra State, Nigeria. No work perceptually compares the sound of Anam dialect with Standard Igbo. Consequently, this work focuses on the perceptual comparison of Anam and Standard Igbo Sounds, with the sole aim of discovering the peculiar sounds in Anam and comparing it with already known standard Igbo Sounds. Data for this study were gathered from Anam Speakers who reside in Anam while data for Standard Igbo were gathered from Igbo teachers at The University of Lagos, Nigeria. Data were subject to perceptual analysis. Results show that Standard Igbo and Anam share the same vowel sounds. The two dialects also share 22 consonants. However, 2 consonants were peculiar to Anam while 5 consonants were peculiar to Standard Igbo.*

 Key Words: Sounds, Anam, Standard Igbo, Dialects.

**Obiorah, Kenneth Ekezie**

Department of Linguistics, African and Asian Studies,

University of Lagos.

Kenobiora@unilag.edu.ng

**1.0 Introduction**

Dialect variation occurs among mutually intelligible speech form.There are several levels that dialects can vary. They include grammar, phonology and pronunciation. At the phonological level, dialect may differ in several sounds. The two dialects may also differ in status. Some are accorded greater status leading to the distinction between standard and native dialects. Studies in native and standard dialect are important to understanding the difference between a particular native dialect and a standardized dialect. This study centres on Anam and Standard Igbo dialect sounds. Igbo is a Kwa language spoken in Nigeria. Both Standard Igbo and Anam are varieties of the language but differ in their status. Standard Igbo has been studied extensively, unlike Anam. Exposing the differences and similarities in these two dialects will enhance the understanding of the nature of Anam dialect, which will, in turn, facilitate the study of Standard Igbo which is a variety used in public places.

The Anam dialect is a dialect of Igbo spoken by the Anam people who reside in some parts of Anambra East and Anambra West Local Government Area in Anambra State. The name Anam was formerly called Anagba which means the people who came from different places. According to oral history, the name Anam was given to a highly celebrated hunter that resides in the former enclave of Anagba. The name was later associated with everything about Anagba, and consequently, become the name for the people who lived in Anagba. The hunter who many believed to be the strongest hunter ever, came from a place called Nteje. Anam, as it stands today, has seven autonomous communities which are Umueze, Umudooro, Umuoba, Iyiora, Oroma, Mmiata and Umuikwu. Among these villages, Mmiata, Umudoro and Iyiora are referred to as IviteAnam while Umueze, Umudoro, Umuikwu, and Oroma are referred to as Ezianam. Anam people are largely farmers and fishermen. The Anam dialect is classified by Nwaozuzu2008:10) as belonging to East Niger Group of Igbo dialects. On the other hand, Standard Igbo dialect sounds are derived from many Igbo dialects. It is the standard form of Igbo language spoken in South-East and some part of the South-South of Nigeria. It is an ideal dialect required for communication across Igbo land. The population of speakers is approximately 25 million. Standard Igbo emerged after Isuama Igbo (1766 – 1900), Union Igbo (1990 – 1929) and Central Igbo 1929 – 1960). Central Igbo emerged after Ida Ward's linguistic tour of the Igbo community in 1939, while Union Igbo was a term used to describe literary dialect in which the first Igbo Bible was written (Nwachukwu 2004:5). Standard Igbo represents the mother of all Igbo speech variety in the sense that every Igbo speaker is expected to understand it (Emenanjo 2015). The current standard Igbo sounds were established in 1961. It has twenty-eight (28) consonants and eight (8) vowels. Standard Igbo sounds have been compared with sounds of other language such as Yoruba and Chinese language, but studies that compare Anam and Standard Igbo sounds are scarce. Consequently, this study is set to compare the sounds in these two dialects.

**2.0 Literature Review**

A few studies have attempted to compare Standard Igbo sounds and other languages. For example, Eme and Uba (2016) compared Standard Igbo and Yoruba sounds. The study discovered that Standard Igbo has thirty-six sounds while Yoruba has thirty, including consonant and vowels. The study showed that Yoruba language lack some consonant sounds which are attested in Igbo while Igbo lack nasal vowels ĩ, ɛ̃, ã,ɔ̃ ũ. Igbo is also discovered to have the vowel sound /i/ and ʊ which is said not to occur in Yoruba. Igbo also lacks the vowel sound /ɛ/ found in Yoruba. At the suprasegmental level, both Igbo and Yoruba share the same high and low tone, however, Yoruba has mid tone, Igbo has downstep.

As regards the difference between the Igbo and Chinese language sounds, Eme and Odinye (2008) studied the difference and similarity between Chinese and Igbo sounds. The study discovered that Chinese has twenty-one (21) consonants while Igbo has twenty consonants. The study noted that the difference in the number of consonants has pedagogical implication for Igbo learners of Chinese. The implication of the study by Eme and Odinye (2008) is that the presence and absence of a sound in one' language may affect the learning process of speaker of another language or dialect. Together, these two studies show that the difference in the number of phonemes in two languages and dialects has a pedagogical implication. Hence, a study in the difference between Standard Igbo and Anam will expose sound differences in the two dialects and lessen the problem encountered by Anam learners and speakers of Standard Igbo.

Turning now to the available study on Anam, Ude-Akpeh (2002) studied the phonology of Anam. The study recorded twenty-seven (27) consonants and nine vowels for Anam dialect. The consonants listed for Anam include /p b t d k g kpgbgw kw ʧ ʤ v s z h m ŋ ɲ l r w j/. The vowels are /a e ɛ i Io ɔ u ʊ/.Ude-Akpeh(2002:38) presented data that suggests thatAnam dialect sound alternate with standard Igbo. They are:

**Standard Igbo Anam English**

/afe/ /ave/ dress

 /iʃa/ /Iva/ cloth

 /iɣe/ /ive/ to fry

In the data above, /v/ alternates with /f/, and /ɣ/ alternates with /v/. Nwaozuzu (2008) also reported that few Anam sounds alternate with that of standard Igbo such as presented below:

**Standard Igbo Anam**

/nri/ /nli/ Food

/ʊlɔ/ /ʊnɔ/ house

/afɔ/ /avɔ/ stomach

/ihere/ /ivele/ share

/ahʊhʊ/ /aʊrʊ/ ant

/ero/ /elo/ suggestion

/ifere/ /ivele/ share

/efere/ /avele/ plat

/ahia/ /avia/ market

/ehi/ /evi/ cow

/aɤvɤɔ/ /awʊwɔ/ cunning

The data suggest that /r, l, f, h, r, and ɤ/ in standard Igbo alternate with /n, v, r, and w/ in Anam. Itappears to be many instances where the Standard Igbo sounds alternate with Anam, as shown below:

/bIawa/ /bIava/ be coming

/gaba/ /gava/ be going

/afe/ /ave/ cloth

 /mmadʊ/ /mmarʊ/ human being

 /ihe/ /ive/ something

/meɤe/ /mevo/ open

 /okwu/ /okwhu/ speech

From the above, /w, b, f, d, h, ɤ, and kw/ in Standard Igbo alternate with /v, r, and kwh/ in Anam. However, the alternation does not occur in all case. there are other instances where Anam dialect does not alternate with standard Igbo such as below:

/gosi/ show

/taa/ chew

/mee/ do

/sie/ cook

/zaa/ sweep

/pʊta/ come out

/ʤee/ go out

/dee/ write

/ʊzɔ/ door

In the examples above, the sounds do not change in the two dialects. This work is set to examine the sound differences between the two dialects. This work is significant because it will point out the sounds of standard Igbo that are not attested in Anam so that Anam speakers will pay attention to them when learning Standard Igbo.

**3.0 Methodology**

Data for Anam dialect were gathered from Anam people (3 male and 2 female) who have been living in Anam community since birth, and are above 50 years of agewhile the Standard Igbo data was gathered from the Igbo lecturers (3 male and 2 female) at the University of Lagos. Data were recorded with Sony digital recorder and later transferred to HP 255 computer for proper labelling and analysis. All sounds were analysed perceptually.

**4.0 Data and Results.**

The similarity and difference in the sounds of these two dialects are presented in a contrastive method. The consonants charts below are presented as a guide. The standard Igbo sounds as categorised above are following Uwalaka (2009). The first chart shows the sounds of Standard Igbo, while the second chart show the sounds in Anam.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| PlaceManner |  Bilabial | Labio- dental |  Alvoela r | Post Alveolar | Palatal | Velar | Labial Velar |  LabializedVelar | Glottal |
| Plosive | P b |  | t d |  |  | k g |  | kw  gw |  |
| implosive |  |  |  |  |  |  | kpgb |  |  |
| Nasal |  m |  | n |  | ɲ |  ŋ |  | nw |  |
| Fricatives |  | f v | s z | ʃ |  | ɣ |  |  |  h |
| Affricates |  |  |  | ʧʤ |  |  |  |  |  |
| Lateral  |  |  |  l |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Tril |  |  |  r |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Approximant |  |  |  |  | j |  |  | w |  |

Consonant Chart of Standard Igbo

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| PlaceManner | Bilabial | Labio-dental | Alvoelar | Post Alveolar | Palatal | Velar | Labial Velar | LabializedVelar |
| Plosive | P b |  | t d |  |  | k g |  | kw gw |
| implosive |  |  |  |  |  |  | kpgb |  |
| Nasal |  m |  | n |  | ɲ |  ŋ  |  | nw |
| Fricatives |  |  v | s z |  |  |  |  |  |
| Affricates |  |  |  | ʧ ʤ |  |  |  |  |
| Lateral  |  |  |  l |  |  |  |  |  |
| Tril |  |  |  r |  |  |  |  |  |
| Approximant |  |  |  |  |  j |  |  | w |

Consonant Chart of Anam

The chart above contains the sounds in the two dialects showing their place and manner of articulation. In the data that follows. the sound of standard Igbo comes first before Anam, followed by the English gloss. A dash is used to represent where a dialect lacks a particular sound.

 **Standard Igbo Sound Anam English**

 /p/ /pIa/ /pIa/ flog

 /b/ /bIa/ /bIa/ come

 /t/ /tie/ /tie/ beat

 /d/ /daa/ /daa/ fall

 /ʧ/ /ʧere/ /ʧere/ wait

 /ʤ/ /ʤIrI/ /ʤIrI/ take

 /k/ /kedʊ/ /kedʊ/ how are you

 /g/ /gere/ /geli/ listen

 /kw/ /kwere/ --- agree

 /kwh/ --- /kwheli/ agree

 /gw/ /gwa/ /gwa/ tell

**Implosives**

 /kp/ /kparIa/ /kpalIa/ insulted

 /gb/ /egbe/ /egbe/ gun

 **Fricatives**

 /f/ /ife/ --- something

 /v/ --- /avɔ/ belly

 /s/ /ise/ /ise/ five

 /z/ /Iza/ /Iza/ to sweep

 /ʃ/ /aʃI/ --- lie

 /ɣ/ /aɣa/ --- war

 /h/ /ahʊhʊ/ --- maggot

**Affricate**

 /ʤ/ /ʤe/ /ʤe/ go

 /tʃ/ /atʃi/ /atʃi/ hair

**Nasal**

 /m/ /mma/ /mma/ beauty

 /n/ /ɔnʊ/ /ɔnʊ/ mouth

 /ɲ/ /aɲa/ /aɲa/ eyes

 /ŋ/ /ɔŋʊ/ (Joy) /aŋa/ what is happening.

 /nw/ /nwere/ /nweli/ take

 **Tril**

 /r/ ara (madness) rapụ (leave)

**Lateral**

 /l/ /lie/ bury /lie/ eat

**Approximants**

 /j/ /mjɔ/ /mjɔ/ a sieve

 /w/ /awɔ/ /awɔ/ toad

**Vowels**

 /i/ /ise/ /ise/ five

 /I/ /Isaa/ /Isaa/ seven

 /e/ /ede/ /ede/ cocoyam

 /a/ /ala/ /anI/ land

 /o/ /oke/ /oke/ rat

 /ɔ/ /ɔkʊ/ /ɔkʊ/ fire

 /u/ /olu/ /onu/ neck

 /ɔ/ /ʊlɔ/ /ʊnɔ/

As presented, all plosives in Anam and Standard Igbo are the same except in the sound /kw/ and /kwh/. The two dialects share all plosives and implosives. In fricative sounds, the two dialect share /s/ and /z/ and differ in /f ʃ ɣ/ and /v/. /f, ɣ/ and /ʃ/ are seen in Standard Igbo while /v/ is attested in Anam. They both have the affricate /ʧ/ and /ʤ/. As regarding nasals, the two dialects share nasal /m n ŋ ɲ and nw/. The velar nasal has a very limited occurrence in Anam. They also share the /r/ and /l/ sound. As regards the vowel sounds, both dialects share eight vowels. These are the main differences in the sounds of these dialects. At this point, it is important to make some clarifications on the assumption of early studies. Ude-akpe (2002) assumes that there is a difference between the vowel sound /e/ in the word /ezi/ (road) and /egwu/ (play) and, the vowel sound /ɛ/ in /ɛkɛ/ (python) and /ɛdɛ/ (water yam) but this current study could not find any difference as pronounced by the Anam speakers. Consequently, this current study refutes this claim. What the early study assume to be /ɛkɛ/ (python) and /ɛdɛ/ is actually articulated as /eke/ (python) and /ede/ (water yam), just the same with the vowel /e/ sound in /ezi/ (road), and /egwu/ (play). There are also instances where Ude-Akpe (2002) did not fully represent what is obtained in Anam dialect. For instance, Ude-Akpa reported the following words in Anam:

/kwaba/ push into

 /kweni/ greeting

 /kwuo/ talk

 /akwa/ cloth

 /ukwe/ hymn

 /ukwa/ breadfruit

In reality, Anam speakers do not pronounce the sound /kw/ rather it is /kwh/; the aspirated voiceless labio-velar plosive. The right renditions of those words are:

 /kwhaba/ push into

 /kwheni/ greeting

 /kwhuo/ talk

 /akwha/ cloth

 /ukwhe/ hym

 /ukwha/ breadfruit

The voiceless labio-velar in Standard Igbo dialect is aspirated in Anam dialect. Uder-Akpeh (2002) also went further to state that the sound /h/ exists in Anam dialect. The examples cited by the author are /hààá/ (expression of surprise) and /hịahịa/ (what else have/done?). Apart from these two words, no other example was cited by the author. It is important to note that /hààá/ (expression of surprise) and /hịahịa/ (what else have/done?) are not just words but exclamations of different degrees. This makes the claim by the early studies to be very interesting. The correct rendition for the word /hààá/ (expression of surprise) is /àŋàá/ not /haaa/. As regard, /hịahịa/ (what else have/done?), Anam speakers produce /iyahya/ which cannot be contrasted with any word in the Anam dialect. For the fact that the author only provided two examples of words where /h/ occurred proves that the data is not sufficient to account for the presence of /h/ in Anam dialect. From the discussion of the data above, the following sounds are shared between Standard Igbo and Anam dialect:

1. [p] voiceless bilabial plosive

2. [b] voiced bilabial plosive

3. [t] voiceless alveolar plosive

4. [d] voiced alveolar plosive

5. [k] voiceless velar plosive

6. [g] voiced velar plosive

7. [gw] voiced labialized velar plosive

8. [kp] voiceless velarized bilabial implosive

9. [ɓ] voiced velarized bilabial implosive

10. [s] voiceless alveolar fricatives

11. [z] voiced alveolar fricatives

12. [ʧ] voiceless palate-alveolar fricative

13. [ʤ] voiced palate- alveolar fricative

14. [m] bilabial nasal

15. [n] alveolar nasal

16. [nw] labio-velar nasal

17. [ɲ] palatalised nasal

18. [ŋ] velar nasals

19. [l] alveolar lateral

20. [r] alveolar trill

21. [j] palatal approximant

22. [w] labio-velar approximant

It is also noticed that the following sounds are peculiar to Standard Igbo

1. [kw] voiceless labio-velar plosive

2. [f] voiceless labio dental fricative

3. [h] voiceless glottal fricative

4. [ʃ] voiceless palate-alveolar fricative.

5. [ɣ] voiced velar fricative.

The following sounds are unique to Anam dialects

1. [kwh] aspirated labio-velar fricative

2. [v] voiced labial dental fricative

From the above, it can be deduced that Standard Igbo and Anam share 22consonants and 8 vowels. 2 consonants are peculiar to Anam while 5 consonants are peculiar to Standard Igbo. In total the two dialects share thirty three sounds including the vowel sounds. As regards the alternation of sounds observed by Ude-Akpe (2002) and Nwaozuzu (2008), these sounds do not just alternate arbitrarily. For instance, In Anam voiced velar fricative does not just substitute. It is either replaced with an approximant or voiced labio-dental fricative in Standard Igbo. The labio-velar approximant /w/ in Standard Igbo replaces the voiced velar fricative /ɤ/ in Anam, when /ɤ/ occurs between or before round vowels; however /ɤ/ is replaced with /v/ anywhere else as shown in the examples below:

**Standard Igbo Anam**

/aɤuɤɔ/ becomes /awuwɔ/ Cunning

/ɤe/ /ve/ fry

/ɤara/ /veli/ left

/oɤere/ /ovele/ hole

/aɤara/ /avala/ miscreant

In Anam dialect, the voiced fricative /v/ is also substituted in the place of /h/ and /f/ in standard Igbo. There is a likely implicational relationship, between voiced fricatives and its voiceless ones in cognate words. Consider the following examples where /h/ a voiceless sound in standard Igbo alternates with /v/ a voiced sound in Anam:

/Ihe/ /ive/ light

/afa/ /ava/ divination

/aha/ /ava/ name

/ahʊ/ /avʊ/ burden

/ufu/ /uvu/ pain

The sound substitution follows an orderly pattern. There is a relationship between the two sounds that substitute for each other. Although the Anam is not derived from Standard Igbo, the data shows that the pattern of substitution appears to have phonological implication in Igbo language. There is also a pedagogical implication in the number of sounds that the two dialects share and lack. Standard Igbo is the variety of Igbo recommended for teaching Igbo in schools anywhere (Aniche2011). This implies that Anam speakers are expected to know the difference in the sounds in these two dialects to avoid interference when they (Anam speakers) use standard dialect in schools, news broadcast and other official gathering. There are other phonological differences between these two dialects. One of such frequent characteristics of the phonology of Anam is the deletion of consonants in words which is not common in standard Igbo data as in the examples below:

 **Standard Igbo Anam**

1 /osisi/ /oisi/ tree

2 /akwʊkwɔ/ /aʊkwɔ/ book

3 /ididere/ /iidere/ worm

4 /eʤiʤe/ /eiʤe/ drama

5 /aʤʊʤʊ/ /auʤʊ/ question

6 /okwukwe/ /oukwe/ faith

7 /aziza/ /aiza/ broom

8 /otito/ /oito/ praise

9 /oʤiʤe/ /oiʤe/ journey

The phonological characteristics seen in this work show that the two dialects differ in some ways which can be used to examine the phonology of the Standard Igbo. For instance, the data in this work show that in standard Igbo, the /v/ does not occur in standard Igbo. The implication is that the status of /v/ as a standard Igbo sound should be reconsidered. According to Aniche (201,3) Igbo has about 75 consonants including /v/, if /v/ which occurs marginally in standard Igbo is included as a standard Igbo sound, then the remaining dialectal sounds can as well be included as a standard Igbo sounds. Hence /v/ should be removed from standard Igbo sound because of its limited occurrence so that what is referred as Standard Igbo sounds would be in standard Igbo data always.

**Conclusion**

This paper has dealt with the comparison of sounds in Anam and Standard Igbo sounds. The comparison was necessary intervention knowing that standard Igbo drew some features from different dialects, hence the gaps in the sounds of these two dialects. With this preliminary study, more studies will be needed to determine the status of sounds in Anam such as the controversial /h/ and the behavior of tones in Anam which is not included in this study. A comprehensive work on the phonology of spoken standard Igbo is needed to properly place sounds of standard Igbo among varieties of Igbo dialect. The case of /v/ which has been pointed out in this work buttresses this point.

**Reference**

Nwachukwu .N.A (1983).*Towards an Igbo Literary standard*. Kegan Pual International PLC. USA

Emananjo E. N. (1978). *Elements of Morden Igbo Grammer*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press

Eme A. E. and Uba E. D (2016) Contrastive Study of the Phonology of Igbo and Yoruba. *UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Vol 17 No 1 (2016)

Eme and Odinye (2008). Phonology of Standard Chinese and Igbo: Implication for students learning Chinese. *Nkuzina Omumu Asusu (NKOA) Journal* 1, 26-37 2008

Hanbook of the Internation Phonetics: A guide to the use of International Alphabet 2001 Association 2001 Cambridge University, USA

Nwaozuzu, G.I.(2008). *Dailects of Igbo Lnaguage*. Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press Ltd

Ogbalu, F. (1974).*Standard Igbo: Parts to its development*. Onitsha: UPC limited

Aniche, O. C. (2013). *Igbo Speech Variety.* Abuja: Center for Igbo Arts and Culture.

Obiorah, K. E. (2017). Acoustics of Anam and Standard Igbo Sounds, M.A thesis, University of Ibadan

Onuorah, C. P. (2015).EmumeEchimechi Oba Anam. B.A Project. University of Lagos

Yul-Ifodi, S.(1995).*Basic Phonetics.* Port-Harcourt: University of Port-Harcourt Press.

Ude-Akpe, C. (2002). the Phonology of Anam. M.A Thesis University of Nigeria Nsuka

Uwalaka, M. A. (2009). *Igbo Grammer.* Ibadan: the Pen Service Ibadan.