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ASPECTS OF IGBO DIALECTOLOGY:
A COMPARATIVE PHONOLOGICAL STUDY OF ONITSHA AND CENTRAL
IGBO DIALECTS

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This paper is a fairly comprehensive study of both the consonantal and vocalic phonemes of two rather "unorthodox" varieties of Igbo dialects. They are "unorthodox" in that they cannot be strictly said to belong to any particular regional group of Igbo speakers. Although the dialects termed Otu Onitsha Dialect (OOD) and Enyimba Central Igbo (ECI) are drawn from two main dialect groups of Igbo - Onitsha Igbo and Central Igbo respectively, the speakers are from various Igbo dialectal backgrounds.

The OOD and ECI have relatively simple phonological inventories. The former has twenty-six (26) consonantal phonemes while the latter has thirty-eight (38). These when compared with some regional Igbo dialects that have well over fifty (50) consonantal phonemes would be seen as extremely "simple".

The author is of the opinion that the 'potent factor in dialect levelling' which Ward (1941) lamented was 'missing in the Ibo country' may yet be found in such 'metropolitan or urban' varieties of Igbo as OOD and ECI. The potent factor may not be based on a "'capital"...predominant chief' or 'central authority, the language of which area acquires a political, social and practical value' as Ward suggests but on the socio-linguistic neutrality and phonological simplicity of such varieties as OOD and ECI.

Cette présentation est une étude d'ensemble des phonèmes de deux variétés "peu orthodoxes" des dialectes Igbo. Nous les qualifions de "peu orthodoxes" dans la mesure où on ne peut pas les assigner à un groupe régional déterminé. Bien que les dialectes dits "Otu Onitsha Dialect" (OOD) et "Enyimba Central Igbo" (ECI) relèvent de deux groupes dialectaux principaux --- Onitsha Igbo et Central Igbo respectivement -- ceux qui les parlent sont d'origines dialectales Igbo variées.

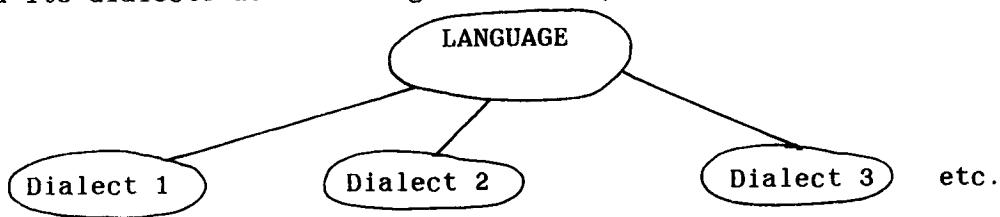
Les inventaires phonologiques du OOD et du ECI sont relativement simples. Alors que celui-ci compte trente-huit (38) phonèmes consonantiques, celui-là en compte vingt-six (26). Comparés à quelques dialectes régionaux Igbo, ces inventaires se révèlent extrêmement simples.

Nous sommes de l'avis que le 'facteur important dans le nivellement des dialectes' déclaré 'absent en pays Ibo' par Ward (1941) se trouve encore dans les variétés 'métropolitaines et urbaines' d'Igbo telles que OOD et ECI. Ce facteur puissant peut ne pas se baser sur 'une autorité capitale...prédominante, principale ou centrale, dont la langue se voit acquérir une valeur politique, sociale ou pratique' comme le prétend Ward: le facteur se base plutôt sur la neutralité socio-linguistique et sur la simplicité phonologique de telles variétés que OOD et ECI.

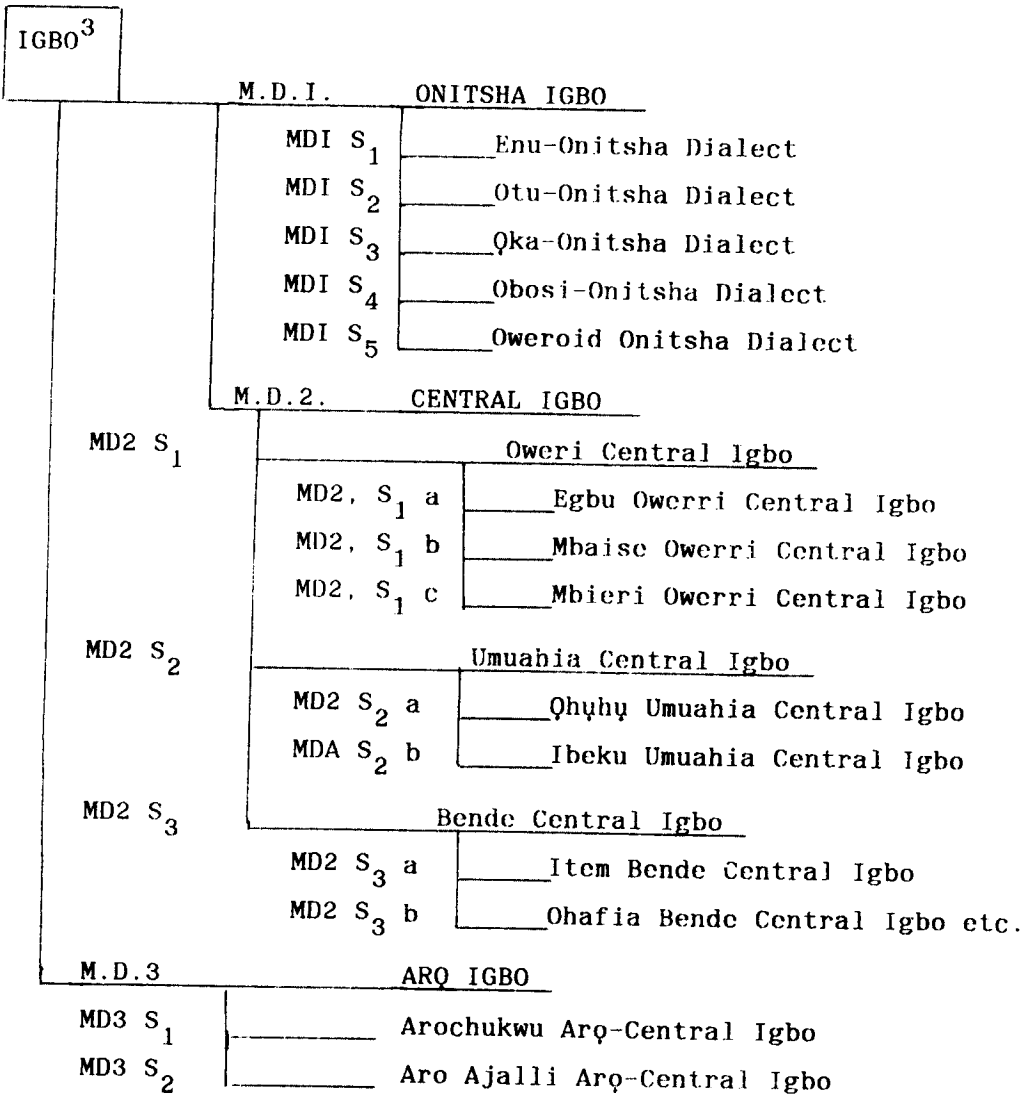
1.1 THE DIALECTS OF IGBO

A cursory look at the major dialects of Igbo¹ presents a rather complex picture of dialectal variations². Earlier lexicographic studies on Igbo notably (Swift et al 1962; Ogbalu 1962; Armstrong 1967; Williamson 1972) reveal, directly or indirectly, this great diversity of dialectal variations.

In Igbo language, we do not just have a situation of a language and its dialects as seen diagrammatically below:



Far from being the case in Igbo within each dialect there exist subdialects or what we would call in this paper "satellite dialects" (S_1 , S_2 etc.). The dialect scenery of Igbo language could be represented as follows:



(Fig. 2)

Williamson (1972) tries to capture this subtle dialectal differentiation by identifying which dialect of Onitsha Igbo the dictionary was based on. She states:

'The dialect of the present form of the dictionary may be described as a generalized form of Onitsha.'

1.2 THE VARIETIES OF ONITSHA IGBO AND CENTRAL IGBO DISCUSSED

The question therefore our readers may want to ask is "which Onitsha Igbo and which Central Igbo do they expect to be treated to in what promises to be a taxing treatment of a myriad of dialects?" It would, however, be refreshing to note that we have no intention of giving a study or treatment of all the components of this complex tapestry of dialects.⁴ We hope to concentrate on one variant each of the two main dialects (MD) - Onitsha and Central Igbo.

Our Onitsha Igbo here could be equated to Williamson's 'generalized form of Onitsha' but with a few differences. It is the form of Onitsha Igbo spoken within the town of Onitsha, largely by non-indigenes of Onitsha. We would like to distinguish between Onitsha dialect spoken mainly by Onitsha indigenes (i.e. the predominant inhabitants of the place called "Onitsha Inland Area") and that spoken predominantly by the non-indigenes (i.e. the predominant inhabitants of the "Onitsha Waterside Area"). The former we would refer to as the Enu-Onitsha dialect (EOD) and the latter Otu Onitsha dialect (OOD).

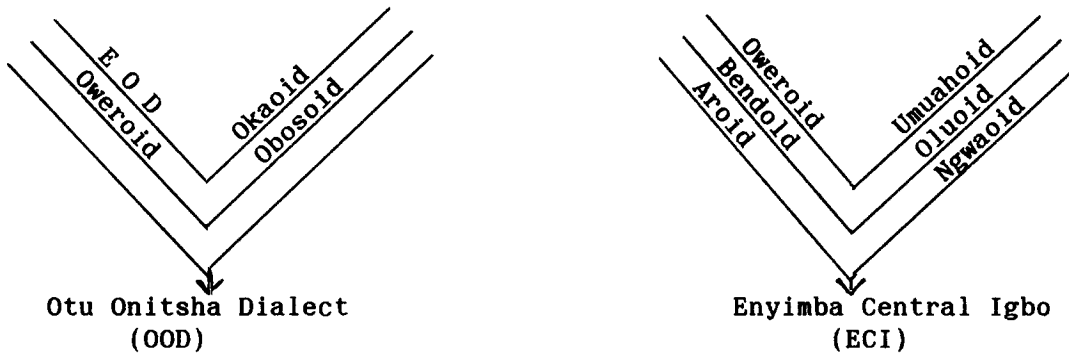
The title Otu Onitsha dialect (OOD) is based on the heterogeneity that is implicit in it. Otu is the name of the main Onitsha market which accommodates people from various other dialect areas of Igbo. Two of my informants are OOD speakers while one of them is an EOD speaker⁵. I have compared the texts and recordings of the interviews and identified some distinct patterns between OOD and EOD. This is not, however, our primary concern here.

Similarly, the dialect of Central Igbo studied here is that spoken predominantly within Aba town, again mostly by non-indigenes of Aba. We would for want of a better descriptive title call it Enyimba Central Igbo (ECI). Again two of my informants are speakers of the ECI while the third is a native speaker of Ngwa Igbo, i.e. the dialect of the indigenes of Aba and its environs⁶.

1.3 OTU-ONITSHA DIALECT AND ENYIMBA CENTRAL IGBO - THEIR SOCIO-LINGUISTIC NEUTRALITY.

The choice of these two rather maverick or unorthodox dialects of Igbo is based on their socio-linguistic neutrality. The speakers of these forms of Igbo, to a large extent subdue the regional, or local linguistic peculiarities, presumably in an

attempt to communicate effectively with their neighbors, peers or business associates. These two trading centers, Onitsha and Aba, therefore, form melting pots for Igbo dialectal variants from two main dialects (MD) of Igbo. OOD and ECI are, therefore, what could be regarded as heterogenous Igbo dialects.



(Fig. 3)

The word 'dialect' in this paper is used basically to refer to regional varieties found within Igbo languages. Unlike Hughes and Trudgill (1979) we have not tried to draw a distinction between dialects and accents. The reason is that in Igbo and many other tone languages not much is based on difference of accents.

2.1 CONSONANTAL PHONEMES OF OTU ONITSHA DIALECT

In Otu-Onitsha dialect there are twenty-six (26) consonantal phonemes. These are made up at the bilabial, labio-dental; dental, alveolar; palato-aveolar; palatal; velar and labio-velar places of articulation.

Bilabial

[p]	/ṹpḗ/	'small'
[b]	/báá/	'scold'
[m]	/mḗḗ/	'do' (to do something)

Labio-Dental

[f]	/fḗḗ/	'fly'
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Dental⁸

[t]	/tí/	'beat'
[d]	/dḗḗ/	'write'

Alveolar

[s]	/sḗḗ/	'draw' (eg. a diagram)
[z]	/zàá/	'sweep'
[n]	/nà/	'and'
[ɹ]	/ɹḗḗ/	'roast'
[r]	/írú/	'face/front'
[l]	/lí/	'eat'

Palato-Alveolar

[tʃ]	/tʃí/	'personal god'
[dʒ]	/dʒí/	'yam'

Palatal

[ɲ]	/áɲá/	'eyes'
[j]	/jí/	'resemble'

Velar

[k]	/òkè/	'share'
[g]	/góó/	'buy'
[ŋ]	/ŋóó/	'drink'
[ɣ]	/áɣá/	'war'

Labialized-Velar

[k ^w]	/kwá/	'sew'
[g ^w]	/gwá/	'tell'
[ŋ ^w]	/áŋwō/	'sun'

Labio-Velar

[kp]	/kpó/	'call'
[gb]	/gbú/	'kill'
[w]	/wè/	'take'

It is important to note here that certain phonemes which feature in OOD are absent in the EOD. Some of these include /ɲ/ the voiced velar nasal which as we have seen features in a word like /ŋóó/ 'drink'. This is presumably a borrowed element from neighboring Igbo dialects, like Oka, Nnewi and probably the Central Igbo dialects.

The voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ is also notably absent in the Enu-Onitsha dialect of Igbo. It is usually replaced by the voiced palatal fricative /j/ as in the following:

	<u>OOD</u>	<u>EOD</u>	
[ɣ]:	/áɣá/	/ájá/	'war'
	/ɣéé/	/jéé/	'fry'

Another important point to note in terms of difference between OOD and EOD is the existence of /v/ the voiced labio-dental fricative in EOD. In most of the environments where our OOD informants used /f/, the voiceless labio-dental fricative, our EOD informants used /v/. So, like many Central Igbo dialects, the EOD has /v/ in its phonological inventory. There is, however, a difference in the distinction of this phoneme in EOD and Central Igbo dialects.

	Bi-Labial		Labio-Dental		Dental	Alveolar		Palato-Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labialized Velar				
	p	b			t	d				k	g	k ^w	g ^w	kp	gb
Plosive															
Affricate								tʃ	dʒ						
Nasal							n		ɲ			ŋw			
Lateral (non-fricative)							l								
Rolled							ɻ								
Fricative						f	s	z	j		ɣ				
Frictionless continuants															w

Otu-Onitsha Dialect
(Fig. 4)

A major characteristic phonetic feature of the EOD is the labialized voiceless velar fricative [x^w]. This as Williamson (1972) points out is used in place of the labialized voiceless velar plosive /k^w/ as in:

<u>OOD</u>	<u>EOD</u>	
[kwá]	[x ^w á]	'sew'

The [x^w] has not been found in OOD.

2.2 CONSONANTAL PHONEMES OF ENYIMBA CENTRAL IGBO

The dialect of Central Igbo to be discussed here has been specified earlier. It is that dialect of Central Igbo spoken predominantly by non-indigenes of Aba town. In Enyimba Central Igbo (ECI) there are thirty-eight (38) consonantal phonemes produced as follows:

Bilabial

[p]	/pá/	'carry'
[p ^h]	/p ^h á/	'squeeze' (e.g. oil out of palm fiber)
[b]	/bà/	'soak'
[b ^h] ^a	/b ^h à/	'enter'
[m]	/mà/	'know'

Labio-Dental

[f]	/féé/	'fly'
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Dental

[t]	/téé/	'cook' (e.g. soup)
[t ^h]	/t ^h éé/	'wake'
[d]	/déé/	'write'
[d ^h]	/d ^h éé/	'arrange'

Alveolar

[s]	/sàá/	'spread out'
[š]	/šàá/	'wash'
[z]	/zùó/	'enough'
[ž]	/žùó/	'steal'
[r]	/ré/	'sell'
[f]	/fé/	'burn'
[l]	/léé/	'look'
[n]	/ánó/	'meat'

Palato-Alveolar

[tʃ]	/tʃí/	'personal god'
[dʒ]	/dʒí/	'yam'
[ʃ]	/ʃéé/	'draw'
[ʒ]	/éʒí/	'pig'

Palatal

[ɲ]	/áɲá/	'eyes'
[j]	/íjĩ/	'to resemble'

Velar

[k]	/kââ/	'make a mark' (e.g. on the ground)
[k ^h]	/k ^h ââ/	'sharpen'
[g]	/gá/	'go'
[ǵh]	/ǵha/	'to thread' (e.g. a needle)
[ŋ]	/áŋō/	'bee'
[ɣ]	/áɣá/	'war'

Labialized Velar

[k ^w]	/kwá/	'sew'
[gw]	/gwá/	'tell'
[ŋw]	/áŋwō/	'sun'

Labio-Velar

[kp]	/kp/	'call'
[gb]	/gbú/	'kill'
[w]	/wè/	'take'

Glottal

[h]	/óhú/	'twenty'
[ʔ]	/íʔú/	'face/front'

Before we attempt a fairly detailed comparison of the two consonantal systems viz OOD and ECI, it is important to point out a number of interesting features of the ECI. Many Central Igbo dialects have the voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ as seen below.

Mbaise

[ŋvɔ] ¹⁰	/ŋvɔ/	'finger nail'
[ʋòɔ]	/ʋòɔ/	'hatch'

Ngwa

[vɔ]	/vɔ/	'dig'
[ivu]	/ívu/	'load'

Ohuhu

[ívu]	/ívu/	'fatness/bigness'
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In the environments where some Central Igbo dialects have /v/, ECI substitutes a /b/.

	Bi-Labial		Labio-Dental		Dental		Alveolar		Palato-Alveolar		Palatal		Velar		Labialized Velar		Labio-Vebral		Glottal			
	p	b			t	d								k	g	kw	gw	kp	gb			
Plosive																						
Aspirated Plosives	p ^h	b ^h			t ^h	d ^h								k ^h	g ^h							
Affricate									tʃ	dʒ												
Nasal	m							n						ŋ		ŋw						
Lateral (non-fricative)								l														
Fricatives			f					s z ʃ ʒ		ʃ s					ʒ							h ʀ
Frictionless Continuants								r ʁ				j							w			

Enyimba Central Igbo

(Fig. 5)

ECI

[mb̩]	/mb̩/	'finger nail'
[b̩ ^h]	/b̩ ^h /	'hatch'
[b̩]	/b̩/	'dig'
[f̩]	/f̩/	'load'
[f̩̀]	/f̩̀/	'fatness/bigness'

In the case of the ECI word for 'hatch' above the /b/ is not only aspirated but also nasalized [b̩^h]. This distinguishes it from the /b/ in a word like /b̩/ 'dissect'. They both form a minimal pair:

/b̩^h/ 'hatch'
/b̩/ 'dissect'

The ECI also does not reflect many of the local peculiarities often associated with some Central Igbo dialects. For example, the replacement of the voiceless dental plosive /t/ by the glottal stop [ʔ] in Egbu dialect of Owerri:

<u>ECI</u>	<u>Owerri</u>	
[wètá]	[wèʔá]	'bring'

Similarly the occurrence of the lateral click [ɖ] in the same Egbu dialect as seen in the phrase,

[tɔ́ ɖɔ́] 'to be sweet'

is not in ECI which would render the same phrase as follows:

[tɔ́ ɔ́] 'to be sweet'

2.3 ECI AND OOD CONSONANTAL PHONEMES CONTRASTED

Two basic phonetic features play a major role in the realization of some of the consonantal phonemes of ECI. Aspiration and nasalization are phonemic in ECI unlike in OOD where they are largely absent, and where they occur are non-phonemic. In ECI we find such minimal pairs as:

[g̩ ^h á]	/g̩ ^h á/	'to thread'
[g̩á]	/g̩á/	'go'
[b̩é]	/b̩é/	'cry'
[b̩ ^h é]	/b̩ ^h é/	'to slice' (in tiny bits)
[árá]	/árá/	'madness'
[ářá]	/ářá/	'breast'

Apart from the fact that some features become phonemic in ECI, there are some phonological alternations between consonantal phonemes of OOD and those of ECI. The glottal fricative (both voiceless and voiced) alternates with /r/ in OOD:

Set 1i u
e oSet 2ɪ ɐ
a ɔ
ɛ

Vowels in Set 1 and 2 co-occur independently but not 1 and 2 together. It is of importance to note that the Set 2 vowels in OOD include the phoneme /ɛ/. Examples:

Set 1 Vowels

[ɪsɪ]	/ɪsɪ/	'head'
[ɪbú]	/ɪbú/	'load'
[éwú]	/éwú/	'goat'
[éɪɪɪɪ]	/éɪɪɪɪ/	'rope'

Set 2 Vowels

[ɔk ^w ɔ]	/ɔk ^w ɔ/	'feet'
[àkpà]	/àkpà/	'bag'
[ìtɔ]	/ìtɔ/	'three'
[édè]	/édè/	'cocoyam'
[ɔfɛ]	/ɔfɛ/	'soup'

3.2 ENYIMBA CENTRAL IGBO (ECI) VOCALIC PHONEMES

Here again two sets of harmonizing vowels are distinguished. They are:

Set 1i u
e oSet 2ɪ ɐ
a ɔ

Examples:

Set 1 Vowels

[ɪsɪ]	/ɪsɪ/	'head'
[úté]	/úté/	'mat'
[ɔkwú]	/ɔkwú/	'word'
[íwé]	/íwé/	'anger'

Set 2 Vowels

[ɪmì]	/ɪmì/	'to bear fruit'
[ɔtɪ]	/ɔtɪ/	'laughter'
[ɔkwɔ]	/ɔkwɔ/	'feet'
[àzɪzà]	/àzɪzà/	'broom'

The basic difference to notice is in the number of vowels involved in each of the dialects. While the OOD has an additional /ɛ/ among its Set 2 vowels, the ECI does not. Although /ɛ/ is grouped with the Set 2 vowels in OOD it can also occur with some Set 1 vowels especially /i/.

OOD

[ɔkɛ́]	/ɔkɛ́/	'rat'
[àfɛ̀]	/àfɛ̀/	'clothes'
[fɪɛ́]	/fɪɛ́/	'tongue'
[ídɛ̀]	/ídɛ̀/	'to become soft' (e.g. over boiled yam)

Also in OOD /a/ seems to be neutral to the vowel harmony rule.
Example:

[áìò]	/áìò/	'thought'
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The neutrality of /a/ is also exemplified in some Central Igbo dialects. Example.

Umuahia dialect (cited by Ward: 1936)

/lìtàrà/	'got up'
/zìtàrà/	'sent'

We have, however, not recorded any examples of single-root¹² morphemes in ECI with a non-harmonizing /a/. For the Umuahia example /lìtàrà/ the ECI speaker is likely to render it as /lìtārà/ thereby changing the /i/ to /ɪ/ and thereby forcing a harmonization of the vowels in the word. If they use the vowel /i/ they are likely to change the /a/ to /e/ so that we have /lìtèrè/ and /zìtèrè/ respectively. Our informants said the latter options were more likely for them than the first - /lìtàrà/ and /zìtàrà/. The informants also said another lexical item /bìlìrì/ could be used instead of /lìtàrà/.

Another important phenomenon often cited in connection with Onitsha and Central Igbo dialects is their varying representations of the perfective morpheme. ECI like many other Central Igbo dialects uses the suffix -la/-le whose vowel harmonizes with the vowel(s) of the verb stem.

Example:

/gáálá/	'has gone'
/ríéle/	'has eaten'

The OOD on the other hand has an invariable bound morpheme '-go' for indicating the perfective aspect.

Example:

/dʒégó/	'has gone'
/lígó/	'has eaten'

It is relevant to point out that while in the ECI there is an obligatory harmonizing vowel appended to the verb root before the -la/-le suffix, this is not so in OOD¹³. Thus in the above examples we have an additional /a/ to the verb root /ga/. So we have:

ga + a + la	/gáálá/
ri + e + le	/ríélé/

In OOD the pattern is simply the verb root + -go. So we have:

dʒe + go	/dʒégó/	and not	*/dʒeego/
li + go	/lígó/	and not	*/liego/

We note also that the vowel of '-go' does not necessarily harmonize with that or those of the verb root:

/dʒégó/	-	'has gone;
/lígó/	-	'has worked'

4. CONCLUSION

Having now gone through a fairly detailed description of aspects of the phonological systems of these two Igbo dialects a number of important deductions may be made.

The relative phonological simplicity of these urban or metropolitan dialects makes them remarkably 'different' from some Igbo dialects, especially Central Igbo, that may have over fifty (50) consonantal phonemes in their phonological inventories. (See Armstrong, 1967). As a result of this relative phonological simplicity, and also because of their wider currency the much sought after standard Igbo may be forged out of such varieties of Igbo dialects.

This would seem a reversal of what obtains in some Indo-European language communities - where the standard language and accent are often based on the language of the few elite. For example, the standard British English is patterned on the English of the Public-School trained Englishmen and women, and the accent, the RP (Received Pronunciation) is patterned on the speech of the educated Southern Englishmen and women. In fact only 3% of the English populace (see Hughes and Trudgill 1979) use the R.P.

It has often been argued that the absence of a central institutional authority could be responsible for the problems encountered in forging out a standard variety of Igbo. Ward (1949:9) laments:

$\begin{bmatrix} [h] \\ [ʔ] \end{bmatrix} \text{ -----> } [r]$			
<u>ECI</u>		<u>OOD</u>	
[hápə]	~	[rápə]	'leave'
[íáú]	~	[írú]	'face/front'

It is important to note here that this phonological alternation takes place when the glottal fricative precedes a back vowel. On the other hand when the glottal fricative occurs before a front vowel it alternates not with /r/ in OOD but with the voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/:

<u>ECI</u>		<u>OOD</u>	
[íáé]		[ífé]	'thing'
[úh ^j é]		[úf ^j é]	'red paint'
[éáí]		[éfí]	'cow'

These two areas of differences between OOD and ECI could then be formalized in simple phonological rules:

h -----> r	/ -	$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{voc} \\ +\text{Back} \end{bmatrix}$
h -----> f	/ -	$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{voc} \\ -\text{Back} \end{bmatrix}$

Similarly /r/ in ECI alternates with /l/ in OOD.

/r/ -----> /l/

<u>ECI</u>		<u>OOD</u>	
[réé]		[léé]	'sell'
[ríé]		[líé]	'eat'

This alternation is for all occurrences of /r/ except when preceded by a nasal:

<u>ECI</u>		<u>OOD</u>
[ńrí]		[ńní]

In the above example the ECI /r/ become /n/ in OOD. This is very likely to be the only example in OOD where the alternation is with /n/, rather than /l/ as in the previous examples.

3.1 OTU-ONITSHA DIALECT (OOD) VOCALIC PHONEMES

In most Igbo dialects two sets of vowels are identified along the lines of vowel harmony¹¹. The two sets in OOD are:

'One potent factor in dialect levelling as well as in establishing a dominate dialect is missing in Igbo country. There has been no 'capital' no predominant chief, no central authority, the language of which area acquires a political, social and practical value. This lack of "standardized" dialect has...held up the development of Igbo as a literary language.'

That was some four decades or so ago. Things have greatly changed on the Igbo linguistic scene and current trends show that the Igbo 'dialect - levelling' may come not through imitation of a specific Igbo dialect representative of an elitist or political group but through socially neutral dialectal variants like Otu-Onitsha dialect (OOD) and Enyimba Igbo (ECI).

Finally, it is hoped that this work has bridged, albeit in a little way, the yawning gap in the linguistic and analytical study of Igbo dialects. We also hope the work would serve as a stimulus to further intensive research in the area of Igbo dialectology.

NOTES

¹This study was aided by part of a grant from the Senate Research Council of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The assistance is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

²Dialects here would be used specifically to refer to regional variants. There is a further description of our use of the term dialect in 1.3 of this paper.

³This is by no means an exhaustive breakdown. The Central Igbo block encompasses many more subdialects or satellite dialects. Further details on the main dialects (MD) and their satellites would be forthcoming in an extensive research on Igbo dialects currently embarked upon by the author.

⁴It is important to note here that most Igbo dialects are mutually intelligible, although some have just partial or uni-directional intelligibility, for instance the Igbo dialects spoken by inhabitants of Itu-Mbauzo and those of the Bende people of Amaeke, or even Bende town.

⁵The two OOD speakers are

i. Adolson Ukeh. He is a native of Achi in Oji local government area. He was born and brought up at Onitsha. He is about 16 years old.

ii. Mr. M. Mgbemere. He is about forty years old and hails from Abba in Nkwerre-Isu local government area. He has spent 15 years at Onitsha as a petty trader.

iii. My EOD informant is one Mr. Chukwuemeka Obodoechina Okonkwo. He is an indigene of Onitsha, from the Agadagba family in Umwaroli, I would also like to mention briefly that one Mr. Onwuemeli, also an Indigene of Onitsha, gave me some useful information about Enu-Onitsha dialect and its speakers.

⁶My two ECI speakers are

i. Jemimah Iwuala, a sixteen year old girl who had been brought up at Aba. She is from Abba in Nkwerre-Isu local government area.

ii. Mr. Martin Uzohuo. He is from Anara in the Mbanu local government area. He has spent about twelve years in Aba as a petty trader.

iii. My Ngwa Igbo informant is one Vincent Ogbujor from Ogwe near Aba town.

⁷This is not to say that difference in accents is totally irrelevant to the discussion of dialects in Igbo. Some Igbo dialects, Umuchu dialect spoken in Aguata local government, and Izi spoken in Abakaliki are noted for their accentual patterns which sometimes give a 'foreign' (i.e. un-Igbo) flavor to them especially in the case of Izi.

⁸ Although most writers on Igbo would happily classify [t] and [d] as alveolar plosives, interviews conducted by the author have revealed that in many Igbo dialects the most commonly occurring allophones of [t] and [d] are the dental variants. The alveolar [t] and [d] only occur intervocallically between the Set 2 vowels e.g. in words like

[átə]	/átə/	'chewing stick'
[édà]	/édà/	'a local seasoning plant'

The widespread classification of [t] and [d] as alveolars in Igbo might simply be a carry-over from the classification of English [t] and [d].

⁹ The voiced aspirated phonemes are also almost invariably nasalized in ECI and many other Central Igbo dialects. This would seem to suggest an intrinsic phonetic relationship between aspiration and nasalization. The situation further raises a number of important theoretical questions. Are we dealing here with aspirated voiced plosives or simply murmured stops? (the sort we have in Hindi, for instance, see Ladefoged, 1975). If the latter is what we have, couldn't the associative breathiness characteristic of murmured stops be responsible for the 'nasalization' perceived?

¹⁰ [m] This is not phonemic in the dialect. It results from the influence of the voiced labio-dental fricative in the environment.

¹¹ Vowel harmony is said to exist when only certain vowels may co-occur in a lexical item. The co-occurring vowels often share certain phonetic features e.g. 'rounding', 'backness', 'height', etc. In Igbo the Set 2 vowels, unlike the Set 1 vowels, are produced with a certain amount of constriction in the vocal tract around the pharyngeal wall. There is also an amount of tongue root retraction involved in the production of Set 2 vowels.

¹² Single-root morphemes as against compound words e.g. 'Omenụkọ' /omenàko/ which combines four single morphemes O me na uko.

¹³ This vowel has often been referred to as the 'open vowel suffix' (see Green and Igwe, 1963). The author, however, prefers to refer to them as the single vowel suffixes for purely phonetic reasons as the vowels are not always open.

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