

**GENDER AS A SOCIAL FACTOR OF LANGUAGE VARIATION IN  
IGBO SOCIETY**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A BACHELOR OF ARTS  
DEGREE (B.A) FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS  
STUDIES, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN.**

**DECEMBER 2022**

**CERTIFICATION**

I, **Victoria Uchechukwu CHUKWU**, an undergraduate student in the Department of Linguistics Studies of the University of Benin, with the matriculation number **ART1701248** have completed the requirements for course work and research for Bachelor of Art degree Linguistics.

The work embodied in this project is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other degree or diploma programme of this or any other University or Institution.

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**Dr. (Mrs) E.O. Ikoyo-Eweto**  
**(Project Supervisor)**

**Date.....**

.....  
**Dr. M.S AGBO**  
**(Head of Department)**

**Date.....**

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**External Examiner**  
**Date: .....**

## PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATION PAGE

I, **Victoria Uchechukwu CHUKWU** with Matriculation Number **ART1701248** declare that this work titled '**GENDER AS A SOCIAL FACTOR OF LANGUAGE VARIATION IN IGBO SOCIETY**' has successfully passed the anti-plagiarism test and so does not violate any copyright regulations.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Victoria Uchechukwu CHUKWU**

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to God Almighty for his ever sufficient grace towards me and for the gift of life.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My greatest gratitude goes to God Almighty for the patience and endurance to come this far.

To my always supportive supervisor, Dr. (Mrs.) Ikoyo-Eweto, my sincere gratitude Ma, I can't thank you enough for making this work a success, this would have not be possible without your help , it is all because of your guidance.

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Cover Page	i
Title Page	ii
Certification	iii
Anti-Plagiarism Page	iv
Dedication	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	vii
Abstract	ix
<b>CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY</b>	
1.0 Introduction	1
1.2 The Igbo Language and People	3
1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study	4
1.4 Significance of the Study	5
1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study	6
1.6 Methodology	6
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
2.0 Introduction	8
2.1 Conceptual Reviews of Literature	8
2.1.2 Language and Gender	9
2.2 Theories of Language and Gender	13

2.2.1	Deficit Approach	14
2.2.2	Dominance Approach	15
2.2.3	Difference Approach	15
2.2.4	Discursive Approach	16
2.3	Previous Studies	17
2.3.1	Gender Differences in Language Use	17
2.3.2	Reasons for Gender Differences in Language Use	21
2.4	The Concern of the Present Study	23
<b>CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b>		
3.1	Introduction	24
3.2	The Theoretical Framework	24
3.3	The Basic Linguistic Theory	27
3.4	Relevance of the Basic Linguistic Theory to the Present Study	31
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS</b>		
4.1	Introduction	33
4.2	Discussion and Findings	43
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION</b>		
5.0	Summary	50
5.1	Conclusion	51
<b>REFERENCES</b>		<b>53</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b>		<b>56</b>

## **ABSTRACT**

*Gender variation in language use has become a very common issue in everyday discourses of our life. When we use language frequently, we generally make differences from each other. The differences mainly occur among male and female. Now days, a variety of language use are occurring mostly among the young people of the Igbo society. This paper examines the common difference and reasons behind variation of language use among the native speakers of the Igbo language. Questionnaires were administered to thirty respondents consisting of a targeted combination of fifteen males and fifteen females respectively. It was found that the speakers have multiple reasons behind the variation of language use between male and female. So, this prompted for the drafting out of a questionnaire consisting of multiple-choice item, the questionnaires included fifteen multiple choice questions consisting of two options. In each of the questions students had to choose one specific answer.*

## **CHAPTER ONE**

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

### **2.0 Introduction**

This project focuses on investigating gender as a social factor of language variation in Igbo society. It specifically attempts to find out if the disparity that occurs when it comes to language use by male and female in Igbo society, the relationship existing among both based on their differences and the impact or effect it has on language and society. The motivation for this work is to create awareness to the researcher's fellow Igbo speakers on what really plays out in their language as it affects each and every one of them one way or the other. The goal of the study is to analyze the visibility of the variation in the use of language of males and females in the Igbo society and to investigate how the disparity between both genders has been affecting their way of communicating in the Igbo society.

The Value of the research to the Igbo society is empirical and assumed from the beginning. Thus, this work would be useful for both speakers of the Igbo language and linguists who would find the work useful. This becomes relevant in the face of increase in efforts at creating ethnic pride in the new generation of Igbo indigenes with focus on their culture and language.

Several controversial arguments on works related to this area of study have been held in the general world view on how gender really affects language use. This study would add value to these efforts. To Linguistics studies is improving the

linguistic knowledge of researchers who would wish to write on this language forming a base for the study of the language .it would aid in the teachings as well as for documentation purposes

## **Language**

Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntary produced symbols (Sapir, 1921:8). David Crystal (1989:252) further affirms that language is referred to as human a vocal noise or the graphic representation of this noise in rewriting used systematically and conventionally by a community for purpose of communication. Generally speaking, language is a basic tool of socio-cultural communication. With language we carry out our day to day activities In essence we cannot do anything without language.

## **Gender**

Gender refers to the cultural and social characteristics attributed to men and women on the basis of perceived biological differences. There is no referenced linguistic definition of the term gender however google scholar defines the term gender as a sexual identity and orientation of an individual.

### **1.3 The Igbo Language and People**

The Igbo language is one of the official languages of the occupants of the south eastern region of Nigeria in West Africa. Some parts of the mid-western part of Nigeria are also occupied by the Igbo natives. The Igbo people belongs to the Kwa group. The Igbo people are sometimes referred to as the “Ibo” people (Ndi Igbo). The Igbo speakers are one of the most popular people in the whole of Nigeria. Although the Igbo people live in scattered groups of villages and states, they are known to speak one language though with different dialect.

The Igbo people are widely known for their nature of being industrious, independent and adventurous. There are various values that the Igbo people are known for. One of which will be discussed in this research, which is the use of proverbs in communication. Other values are;

- a. The varieties of good food the Igbo people are known for good delicacies such as Nsala soup, Oha soup, Olugbo soup, these soups are made from vegetables that can be seen around an environment.
- b. The Igbo people are known for conferring titles on deserving individuals. The title is known as the “ozo” title which is a chieftain title.
- c. The Igbo society is known for their versatility in music and use of traditional musical instruments such as Udu, Ekwe, Ogene to make good music. The popular highlife genre is known to has taken part of its origin from the Igbo culture.

- d. The Igbo people are also known for their elegant dressing. The Isiagu is a very colorful attire that has the head of the lion printed on it with red and white colored beads and it is worn by the men for special occasions.

The Igbo tribe is also the leading tribe for the famous Omugwo culture that is practiced in various parts of Nigeria. The Omugwo is a traditional practice that allows the mother of nursing parents to come and take care of a new born baby for a period of about three months.

### **1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

Following what surrounds this research work, it has been observed that there seem to be a clear disparity between men and women in Igbo society and this has some ways affected the usage of language in such society. The study aims to carry out a sociolinguistics analysis of language variation in relation to gender as a social factor in Igbo society.

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To examine language variation in relation to gender in Igbo societies.
2. To analyse the visibility of the variation in the use of language of males and females of Igbo language.
3. To investigate on whether male and female really use language differently.

4. To investigate on the aspect in which the both gender use language differently.
5. To investigate the common differences among both genders.
6. To investigate on the impact or effects of the change in communication.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this work is to improve the linguistic knowledge of various researchers who will wish to write on this language, forming a base for further study of the language.

This study will also aid in the teaching of the language and for documentation purpose.

This study is clearly important as it evaluates the effects disparity has between men and women in Igbo societies as this area of study is wrapped and taken care under sociolinguistics as an applied linguistics to resolving such language issue in present day.

#### **1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

This research will be confined within the realm of language variation in sociolinguistics as regards to how male and female use of language varies. In essence, we would be centralizing our study base on just on vital factor of language variation. There are many more factors that seem to affect the way people talk and all but this study is just focusing on gender as a social index of language variation in Igbo societies.

## **1.6 Methodology**

The finding of this study was carried out through survey. A small scale of both quantitative and qualitative research, we can say the mixed method is used in the collection of data from the concerned subjects. The participants of the research were 30 persons, 15 males and 15 females and they are all adults of 30 years and above. Printed forms of questionnaires consisting 15 multiple choice questions having two options in which the speakers had to choose one answer respectively. The questionnaires were distributed among them and all the questions were made understandable to them by the researcher. At the end of the day, all the copies of the questionnaires issued were compiled and duly returned. To test the validity of the sampled data,. The data were re-subjected to discussion, through participatory observation method.

Through the face-to-face interaction with the participants, the researcher could identify the important points related to the gender serving as a social factor to language variation which brought about proverbs pertaining to the language.

The data was analysed through descriptive analysis technique, by so doing the analyses were being worked on descriptively with help of the linguistic knowledge possessed by the researcher. . By using this method, we tried to evaluate the meaning of each answer to our questions gotten from our respondents.

The research questionnaire were analysed and the percentage score for each questionnaire item was obtained by multiplying the frequency of each response on each category with the total number of participants and dividing by the appropriate nominal value 100. The formula used for this analysis is shown below;

$$\frac{\text{No of Frequency}}{\text{No of participants}} \times 100$$

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to identify relevant literature review to this study and the essence of this review is to facilitate the identification of previous study and previous related work in the research areas and focus that serve as a solid background for the current context to be built on.

## **2.1 Conceptual Reviews of Literature**

Here I have been able to produce the summary of the knowledge gathered from the history and significance of the literature. My writings begin with a brief consideration about language and gender. Then the writing will extend into the four key approaches of language and gender: Deficit, Dominance, Difference and Discursive (White, 2004). The focus will then move to the difference in the language as used by male and female individuals in the Igbo Society. Relevant literature on these concepts is reviewed extensively in this chapter. However, before conducting a conceptual review of the concepts above, the term sociolinguistics will be highlighted.

### **2.1.2 Language and Gender**

Language and gender are an area of study within socio-linguistics, applied linguistics and related fields that investigate varieties of speech associated with a particular gender of social norms. A variety of speech or sociolect associated with a particular gender is sometimes called “genderlect” (Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia). Language and gender basically explore two basic issues which

are the representations of gender in language and the conversational characteristics of men and women. Cross-linguistic examinations have revealed a number of key areas of grammar and vocabulary where gender is displayed or indicated in various ways, other studies have identified symmetric male-female difference in many languages, these ranges from differences in vocabulary, difference in linguistic forms e.g., Phonology, morphology and syntax, to difference communication styles, politeness and directness in language.

The major thing that distinguishes human beings from animals is basically our way to communicate with each other by using language. We have words for specific things, emotions, and expressions. In each language, words are constructed in a certain way and the way of expressing those words has become different. Through time society has gone through great changes which have influenced our languages. New vocabularies have been added and at the same time old-fashioned words have been replaced. Each language has its characteristics which reflect the society in a great extent. Gender difference has entered into English studies as a linguistic variable for a long time. The relation between language and gender has become one of the major issues in sociolinguistics since early 1970s. In our modern society, it would appear that women are equal with men. However, the harsh reality tells us that women are not provided with an equal opportunity even for discussions. Now the two sexes respectively command different communication styles. In other words, the

language used by women is different from the language used by men. The use of language is different between men and women in case of vocabulary, in voice and tone, in syntactic structure and style and in conversational style. In each of the single part gender differs in a great extent. In every sphere of our life the difference is being noticed while using a language. In the context of our country, the gender difference is noticeable in a very wide range. Here, in using language men differ from women in a great extent which is noteworthy. Among all the people of the Igbo society, the difference of language uses of adult is considered greatly. Language Variation in relation to gender as a social factor is a thing of sociolinguistics where the relationship between language and society is being observed, we will get a very clear view about the gender difference in language use.

Sociolinguistics variation is the study of the way language varies and changes in community of speakers and concentrates on the interaction of social factors such as a speaker's gender, age, ethnicity etc. and linguistic structure such as sounds, words, introduction feature, grammatical structure etc.

“Between the speakers of any language there is a variation in the way they use the language. This variation is seen through linguistic differences in terms of phonetics and grammar. There might be only slight variations between forms of languages such as minor pronunciation of words or a slight change of grammatical structure that do not inhibit inter group communication” (Sil 2015).

Studies of language variation and its correlation with sociological factors such as Williams Labov's (1963) papers "The Social Motivation of a Sound Change", led to the foundation of sociolinguistics as a subfield of linguistics. Although contemporary sociolinguistics includes other topics, language variation and change remain an important issue at the heart of the field.

Although these effects were largely consistent across different contexts, the pattern of variation suggests that gender differences are larger on tasks that place fewer constraints on language use.

When we talk about society in linguistics, we refer to the speech community where a particular language is being spoken. For instance, when I make mention of Igbo society as a speech community, what is being referred to is the people who live together and share the same language (in this case, Igbo language) because they belong to the same local community. The way people who stay in such community utilize their language in communication and all is determined by a conventional agreement by the people themselves. So that, when someone who claims to emerge from such community is not on the track with the usage of the language, the person can be regarded as a non-indigene of such community. So, it suffices to say that, languages spoken in respective speech community is part of the identity of people who claim to be from such community.

Language and society are intertwined in a way that one can't actually survive without the other. My central focus here is not on the general factors that tend to affect language usage but basically on the gender effect on language, Igbo society as a case study. Men and women interact as social beings. Language is an important tool for the people. As mankind has gender difference, language has the same. There are certain differences when it comes to language use by men and women. The study of how gender is reflected in language is a recent branch of linguistics; it has developed research findings in the early 1960s. The research on the relationship between language and gender developed on some levels:

- 1) The gender difference in language form and structure
- 2) The gender difference in utterance style and
- 3) The reasons for gender difference in language.

Within our culture there remains a deep rooted belief about how men and women behave and are supposed to behave. A major part of this is based upon how we speak and it has developed into the field of "folk linguistics". (Broadbridge, 2003). In order to find some possible answers about gender differences in language use one has to go back in time and look at the historical background. Old letters, novels, diaries and poems provide us with evidence of folk linguistic beliefs regarding gender differences in language. To get more evidence about the gender differences in language use it is important to discuss about the approaches which will actually give a certain result.

## **2.2 Theories of Language and Gender**

Some well-known linguists like Lakoff, Taneen, Cameron explores the reflect of gender differences in pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary and discourse style from the perspective of sociolinguistics research, and analyse the latest reasons of these differences and Differences in Language Use in Igbo Society by the two different genders. Besides, some well-known writers like Robin Lakoff, Deborah Taneen have given their own point of view about the theories of language and gender based on some approaches. Among the writers, Robin Lakoff is a renowned writer who has discussed four approaches regarding language and gender. With the Deficit, Dominance, Difference and Discursive approaches linguists have engaged in writing, in order to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the works of their respective authors, and to offer a personal perspective on the most useful approach. So, the aim is to discuss elaborately those approaches and to point out the main strengths and weaknesses of those approaches based on their authors point of view.

### **2.2.1 Deficit Approach**

The Deficit Approach by Robin Lakoff (1975) describes male language as stronger, more prestigious and more desirable. She argues that women are socialized into behaving like ‘ladies’ (linguistically and in other ways too) and that this in turn keeps them in their place because ‘ladylike’ precludes being “powerful” in our culture (transcript of the deficit model). The first approach of the language and gender is the ‘deficit’ approach. Initiated in the early 1970s,

“This approach sees women as disadvantaged as language users, with their language conflicting from an implicit male norm”. The main protagonist of this theory was Robin Lakoff. Her work is discussed by Finch (2003:137):

The overall pictures which emerge from Lakoff study is that women’s speech is generally inferior to men’s and reflect their sense of personal and social inferiority.

Lakoff describes the way women’s speech style includes features which are ‘expressive of uncertainty, lack of confidence and excessive deference or politeness’ (Lakoff in Finch: 2003:137). These features include tag questions, rising intonation and hedges.

### **2.2.2 Dominance Approach**

Robin Tolmach Lakoff presented *Language and Woman’s Place* (1975) ‘less as the final word... than as a goad to further research’ (Lakoff 1975:40). In this she prompted the ‘Dominance’ approach, which assigns language variances between men and women to the dominance of men within society. The second approach of language and gender is the ‘dominance approach’. Talbot (1998:131) criticized this approach as ‘manifestations of a patriarchal social order’. Talbot (1998:132) concluded that this approach can be sighted along with the different approach and both of them ‘provided an early model for the analysis of language and gender in the social sciences.

### **2.2.3 Difference Approach**

Tannen undertook this further study and so popularized the ‘Difference’ approach with *You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (1990). This approach develops the ‘two-culture’ model of ‘men’ and ‘women’, where children are socialized within two separate groups. A situation which Tannen suggests engenders ‘mis-communication’. Tannen distances herself from the Dominance approach by eliminating blame: ‘Taking a cross-cultural approach to male-female conversations... without accusing anyone of being wrong or crazy’ (Tannen 1990:47). Moreover, she claimed six points for male and female language. Those six points are:

- Status vs. Support
- Independence vs. Intimacy
- Advice vs. Understanding
- Information vs. Feelings
- Orders vs. Proposals
- Conflicts vs. Compromise

Talbot (1998:131) claimed that ‘behavior previously perceived as men’s efforts to dominate women is reinterpreted as a ‘cross-cultural’ phenomenon’. According to Johnson and Meinhof (1997:9), the difference approach can be criticized because it ‘fails to address why women and men belong to different subcultures. According to Crawford (1995:1), ‘men and women... are fated to misunderstand each other unless they recognize their deeply socialized differences’. Crawford describes how the ‘fundamental differences between

women and men shape the way they talk'. The main emphasis on this approach is on the way in which men and women develop themselves in different subcultures.

#### **2.2.4 Discursive Approach**

Deborah Cameron, a linguist within the 'Discursive' field of language and gender studies, demonstrates (from a feminist perspective) how versions of gender stereotypes can change according to responses to shifts in the economic climate. She shows how these shifts are interpreted and by whom influences the reproduction of patriarchal ideology. Power structures inherent within patriarchy create gender behaviours which are explained by that power; as Sattel explains: 'the starting point for understanding masculinity lies, not in its contrast with femininity, but in the asymmetrical dominance and prestige which accrues to males in this society' (Sattel in Thorne et al 1983:119). Sattel's statement reveals the 'discursive' element to the reading of gender; a move away from the binary and towards a broader conversation.

The three approaches: 'Deficit', 'Dominance' and 'Difference', consider how gender variances expressed through language were visible within the physical manifestations of gender: of 'men' and of 'women'. The more recent 'Discursive' approach looks at how gender is constructed through language within a cultural framework.

### **2.3 Previous Studies**

#### **2.3.1 Gender Differences in Language Use**

In our modern society, it would consequently come into view that women are equal with men. Yet the harsh reality is women are not considered as equal as men. Moreover, they do not get an equal chance even for discussion. That is because the two sexes respectively command different communication styles. In other words, it can be said that the language which is used by women is different from the language used by men. In the following part, differences in how they use their language and how they behave in conversational interactions will be discussed in details. Vocabulary is the most active element in language. So, the vocabulary difference manifests the relationship between gender difference and language use. According to Wenjing (2012), “there is no rule for female in English pronunciation rules, vocabulary structure and syntax, but the male and female differences in vocabulary is often encountered in daily life, and also overlooked”. Robin Lakoff (1975) suggests as an explanation that in this society woman spend much more of their time on colour-related activities such as choosing clothes than men do.

They prefer to use colour terms borrowed from French, such as azure (blue), mauve (lavender), aquamarine (blue-green) etc. These words are not familiar to them but they can show their elegance. These words are unfamiliar for men.

According to Wenjing (2012), “women always use a word with exaggerated significance, such as gorgeous, lovely, cute, divine, adorable, darling, precious, sweet, charming, and so on. For example, your dress is

adorable. While men use the plain words to enhance the effect, like good, very, really and so on". Jerperson (1992) found that women use "so" to enhance tone and express attitude more than men. For example: It was so interesting.

Moreover, Lakoff (1975) found that female use more intensifiers than male, such as "so", "awfully", "pretty", "terribly", "quite" and so on. Labov (1966), Levine & Crockett (1966) and Trudgil (1972) have speculated that men use more slang expressions than women. According to Wenjing (2012), "women pay more attention to language elegance". The expression like Shit! / The damned weather! / The hell with him! These are avoided by women. They don't use abusive words in conversation. According to Lakoff (1975), women use more tag questions than men. Women use more hedges than men do.

According to Wenjing (2012), "in pronunciation, women speak more standard than men. That means standard form and elegant accent come from women's mouths instead of men". Women keep sensitivity on speaking, so they usually use the standard and authoritative manner of articulation. On the other hand, men use non-standard forms of voice more than women. Moreover, female tone is higher than males. After analysing many language materials, Linguists found that women often use the interrogative tone. In addition, comparing with men it is found that women use the reverse stress, which means that men often put the highest pitch on the most important word. On the other hand, women use the lowest pitch on the most important word.

According to Ning & Dai (2010), men and women are also found different in topic selection. For example, politics and economics are major topics selected by male. On the other hand, education and family are the major topics selected by women. Just as Lydie Meunier (1996) states in his article “The topics such as sports, politics and cars which are seen as “serious” are preserved for men only, the choice for women are the topics such as child-bearing and personal relationships which are labelled as “trivial”.

The amount of talk is another field where men and women display the difference in their language. According to Ning & Dai (2010), “usually men talk much more than women in public communication”. On the other hand, women talk much more in their family than men do.

There exist some differences in the syntactic structure of choice between men and women. Wenjing (2012) stated that, ”women like to use tag questions most in syntactically. They use rising tone which is used to express consult and the uncertain tone. On the other hand, men prefer to speak directly and that is why they always select declarative and imperative sentences to express the tone of orders and requests”.

According to Karlsson (2007), there is a discussion about the characters uses by female and male. The characters are given below:

The female character uses:

- Intensifiers: so, such
- Hedges: I think, you know, I really, I mean, I suppose

- Tag questions: You didn't- did you?
- Minimal responses: yeah, mhm, right
- Words which are supposed to be used more frequently by women than men:  
oh, my goodness
- Polite language: please
- Formal language: I cannot....

The male character uses:

- Strategy in order to control the conversation
- Minimal responses in order to let the woman know he is not interested in what she has to say
- Taboo words: the man uses taboo words which are supposed to be more frequently used among males than females. The words are: Shit! God damn it!
- Commands: 'give me some paper!', 'Hand me the sport magazine by the sofa!'

### **2.3.2 Reasons for Gender Differences in Language Use**

According to Wenjing (2012), "the language of gender differences is an extremely complex social, cultural, psychological and physiological phenomenon, which involves the language of politics, ideology, social status, roles, relationships, language, attitude, level of education, social interaction and many other factors".

Lakoff (1975) thought that the differences of language between men and women are caused by social factors, not the language itself. These social factors are discussed below:

1. “Men and women’s social role is different. Because of the sex difference, men and women carry out different social responsibilities in social activities”. At the beginning of Bible, one thing is certain that women’s social status is governed and dominated by men. In all, women speak without confidence because they have low social status and have no power (Lakoff, 1975).

2. The society is men-centred. “Women are derived from men”. People reach an agreement that men are superior to women. The women are considered in a lower status.

3. Value is another element. “Value is the core of culture”. Different values also influence men and women’s vocabulary selection.

4. According to the physiological factors, it is stated that “innate biological differences between men and women decide men and women are different”. According to the latest medical research, from the development of language skills the women’s left hemisphere develop early than men. So, the girl speaks more frequently and emotional than boy from the beginning. On the other hand, the latest voice experiment proved that “the male and female voice on the resonance peak is very different voice tone quality because of their

gender. Moreover. Women vocal cords are shorter, thinner and relaxer then the men's". (Wenjing, 2012).

#### **2.4 The Concern of the Present Study**

After works of several scholars has been reviewed it is evident that the issue of language and gender relations as it affects the way males and females' conversate in Igbo lands is not strange to the linguistic world. This is evident in the various literatures we have explored above. Literature has it that most of the previous studies have focused largely on the concept of language and gender.

The primary concern of this study is to investigate on how the disparity between both genders has been affecting their way of communicating, the analysis of the study will be done using the basic linguistic theory of Dixon, the descriptive theory.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.2 Introduction**

This chapter centers on the theoretical framework for this study. This study employs the basic linguistic theory which is categorized under descriptive linguistic theories for the analysis of this work. In this chapter, description, proponents, aims as well as the relevance of this theory to the present study shall be presented.

### **3.2 The Theoretical Framework**

*The theoretical framework adopted in this work is Dixon Basic Linguistic Theory of (1997). It provides a fundamental characterization of the nature of human languages and a comprehensive guide to their description and analysis. In crystal-clear prose, Dixon describes how to go about doing linguistics. The theory shows how grammatical structures and rules may be worked out on the basis of inductive generalizations, and explains the steps by which an attested grammar and lexicon can build up from observed utterances.*

The theory also champions the course on how the grammars and vocabulary of one language may be compared to others of the same or different families. It also explains the methods involved in cross-linguistic parametric analyses, and shows how to interpret the results. The expression “basic linguistic theory” refers to the theoretical framework that is most widely employed in language description, particularly grammatical descriptions of entire languages. It is also the framework assumed by most work in linguistic typology. Basic linguistic

theory differs from many other theoretical frameworks in that it is not a formal theory but an informal theory. That is, many grammatical phenomena can generally be characterized with sufficient precision without the use of formalism. As noted by Dixon 1997:128) “The term Basic Linguistic Theory has recently come into use for the fundamental theoretical concepts that underlie all work in language description and change, and the postulation of general properties of human languages.” Basic linguistics theory belongs to the class of Descriptive theories in linguistics. Descriptive theories are theories about what languages are like. They are theories about what tools we need in order to provide adequate descriptions of individual languages. Originally, the term descriptive was coined to express the distinction between historical or comparative linguistics, which dominated much of 19th century linguistics, and the emerging Structuralist paradigm with its emphasis on the notion of a synchronic system. Structuralist linguistics was also eager to emphasize the impartial and objective nature of its approach to language, refraining from taking a stand in matters of linguistic style and 'good usage. Descriptive is thus also opposed to the tradition of prescriptive grammars and dictionaries which emerged during the formative period of the modern national languages in Europe. It was only in the sixties, during the rise of generative grammar, that descriptive was used in a third contrast pair, i.e., in contrast to generative, explanatory, or formal, the characterizing attributes of the Chomskyan enterprise.

The label 'descriptive' was applied primarily to the work of Bloomfield and his followers, but the term was then later also extended to cover any non-historical, non-prescriptive work outside the generative paradigm. By way of this extension, the term descriptive has come to be associated with the concept of a generally informal statement of the 'facts' of a given language. The concept of descriptive analysis (in any of the three senses) is, in principle, applicable to any set of data, provided that these data represent the actual usage at a given time in a given speech community. The important point to be noted here is that the descriptive approach is not restricted to little-known languages nor is such languages its central concern. Its central concern is the of a given synchronic, non-prescriptive statement of the system language. The fact that descriptive linguistics is currently closely associated with work on little known languages is primarily due to the following two factors: First, descriptive techniques have been found highly useful and effective when working on little-known languages.

Consequently, most work done on these languages is done within the descriptive framework. This, however does not mean that the descriptive approach is the only approach possible when working on little-known languages, because of the association of descriptive linguistics with work on little-known languages, descriptive linguistics is also deemed to be competent for, and 'in charge of the data collection and handling procedures necessary when working on little-known languages. A further extension of this view, then,

leads to the widespread belief that 'describing a language' is — in the case of previously unrecorded languages -- more or less synonymous with 'documenting a language'. (Himmelman 1995:2-4).

This present study employs the basic linguistic theory which is a descriptive theory.

### **3.3 The Basic Linguistic Theory**

Dryer (2006:3) argues that... A single descriptive theoretical framework has emerged as the dominant theory assumed in descriptive grammars. Dixon (1997) refers to this theoretical framework as "basic linguistic theory. "Basic linguistic theory differs most sharply from other contemporary theoretical frameworks in what might be described as its conservativeness: unlike many theoretical frameworks that assume previous ideas only to a limited extent and freely assume many novel concepts, basic linguistic theory takes as much as possible from earlier traditions and only as much as necessary from new traditions. It can thus be roughly described as traditional grammar, minus its bad features (such as a tendency to describe all languages in terms of concepts motivated for European languages), plus necessary concepts absent from traditional grammar. It has supplemented traditional grammar with a variety of ideas from structuralism, generative grammar (especially pre-1975 generative grammar and relational grammar), and typology. Basic linguistic theory differs from traditional grammar most strikingly in its attempt to describe each

language in its own terms, rather than trying to force the language into a model based on European languages. Conversely, the attempt to describe each language in its own terms reflects a major contribution of structuralism to basic linguistic theory. Another example of a major contribution of structuralism to basic linguistic theory is the notion of the phoneme. Various concepts from generative grammar, such as secondary predication, have made their way into basic linguistic theory. Such notions as ergativity, split intransitivity, internally-headed relative clauses, and evidentiality are notions that have become central to basic linguistic theory and which are referred to frequently in descriptive grammars. Recurrent phenomena that had not been explicitly observed before continue to come up in the literature, such as the notion of mirativity (DeLancey 1997), and thus become added to the substantive concepts of basic linguistic theory.

Most descriptive grammars written within the past ten or fifteen years can be described as employing basic linguistic theory as their theoretical framework. Basic linguistic theory is traditional grammar modified in various ways by other theoretical traditions over the years, it is therefore an overall theoretical framework encompassing different points of view, and criticisms of specific practices within basic linguistic theory can often be constructed as theory-internal disagreements as easily as criticisms of basic linguistic theory itself. The improvements in basic linguistic theory over the past twenty-five

years have not been prompted by specific attempts to improve it, since most linguists have failed to recognize its status as a theoretical framework. Developments have been the side effect of work in typology, and there is every reason to believe that further developments will continue in coming decades, both because of work in typology and quite possibly from new ideas from some other quarter. However, further improvements might develop if more functional, typological, or descriptive linguists recognized the status of basic linguistic theory as a theory.

The basic linguistic theory has emerged as the dominant theoretical framework for describing languages although there is a widespread failure of linguists to recognize its status as a theoretical framework. There are many ways, however, in which the field has suffered from this failure to recognize basic linguistic theory as a theoretical framework and to recognize the need for both descriptive theories and explanatory theories. Givón (2001:15), in an apparent retreat from his position in some of his earlier work, emphasizes the need to recognize linguistic structure independent of function; if there are functional explanations for why languages are the way they are, we need to have some way of describing the things that are being explained.

There is another negative consequence of the failure to distinguish descriptive theory from explanatory theory and to recognize basic linguistic theory as a theory. Because of the false contrast many linguists see between

description and theory, and because of the higher prestige associated with what is called theory, work in basic linguistic theory is often dismissed as "merely" descriptive. Thus, if a linguist analyzes a set of data using some transient theory like Minimalism, or Optimality Theory, or Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar, the analysis will be characterized as "theoretical", but if a linguist analyses a set of data using basic linguistic theory, the analysis will be characterized as descriptive. But this is simply confusing. The analysis assuming basic linguistic theory is just as theoretical in the sense that it assumes a theoretical framework, just like the other analyses. And the analysis in the transient theory is also descriptive in that it provides a description of the data. Now it is true that analyses in other theoretical frameworks often do more than describe the data, but make some additional theoretical point that the facts they are describing bear on. But this is usually because the transient theory is not only intended as a descriptive theory but as an explanatory theory as well, and the additional theoretical point being made is at least partly of significance to the explanatory goals of the theory. In addition, the theoretical point involves pointing to the need for some modification to the theory. But the analog happens with descriptions in basic linguistic theory: some theoretical significance is drawn from the facts being described.

### **3.5 Relevance of the Basic Linguistic Theory to the Present Study**

It has been argued that what Dixon (1997) calls "basic linguistic theory serves

as a descriptive theory which is adopted for the present study. It is posited in Dixon (1997:3) that "the basic linguistic theory differs from traditional grammar most strikingly in its attempt to describe each language in its own terms, rather than trying to force the language into a model based on European languages. Basic linguistic theory differs most sharply from other descriptive theoretical frameworks in what may be described as its conservativeness: unlike many descriptive frameworks that assume previous ideas limitedly and freely assume novel ones, basic linguistic theory borrows as much as is needed from earlier methods and as much as necessary from new(er) methods. It can therefore be argued that it is descriptively traditional grammar excluding the 'bad features' (such as a tendency to describe all languages in terms of concepts motivated for European languages) and including innovative terms absent from traditional grammar. Basic linguistic theory therefore supplements its traditional grammar 'descriptivism' (as against 'prescriptivism') with a variety of ideas from structuralism, generative grammar, relational grammar and typology (Dryer 2006:3).

This present study is a discussion on the language differences between male and female speakers of Igbo language i.e., gender as a social factor of language variation in Igbo society. This is a sociolinguistic issue in which appropriate description and discussions of the data collected and presented for this study is needed. Therefore, the choice for this theory and its relevance to the present study lies in the fact that it is a flexible framework that allows the researcher to

stay focused on the data at hand and keep to as much as possible traditional grammar concepts for describing linguistic data and also allows for the 'borrowing' of concepts from explanatory theoretical frameworks for the purpose of data analysis.

As shown above, the model of descriptive linguistics adopted for this work is the basic linguistic theory (Dixon 1997).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter contains the presentation and analysis of the data collected for the study. The presentation of data is immediately followed by the analysis of the data collected for the study. The presentation of data is immediately followed by the analysis through discussions as guided by the theoretical framework utilized for this study. Thirty native speakers (fifteen males and

fifteen females) were administered questionnaires. The reason for this was to have a balanced view from both genders.

**Table 1:**

**In conversation, what type of language do you use?**

Data	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Formal language	4 (26.7%)	10 (66.7%)	46.7%
Informal language	11 (73.3%)	5 (33.3%)	53.3%

In table 1, we can see that 46.7 percent of the respondents use formal language with others. Among them males are 26.7 percent and females are 66.7 percent. On the other hand, we can see that 53.3 percent of the respondents use informal language with others. Among the males are 73.3 percent and females are 33.3 percent. The result of the table shows the extensive use of formal and informal language among the males and females of Igbo language.

**Table 2:**

**In conversation, how is your tone of speaking?**

Data	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Talk loudly	9 (60%)	10 (66.7%)	63.4%
Talk softly	6 (40%)	5 (33.3%)	36.7%

In table 2, we can see that 63.4 percent of the total respondents talk loudly. Among them males are 60% percent and females are 10 percent. On the other hand, 36.7 percent of the total respondents talk softly. Among the males are 40 percent and females are 33.3 percent. The result of the table shows the extensive use of talking loudly among the males and females of Igbo language.

**Table 3:**

**How is your manner of approach to a conversation?**

Data	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Authoritative/Confident	10 (66.7%)	4 (26.7%)	46.7%
Defensive/Polite	5 (33.3%)	11 (73.3%)	53.3%

In table 3, we can see that 46.7 percent of the total respondents are always confident in their manner of approach towards a conversation. Among them males are 66.7% percent and females are 26.7 percent. On the other hand, 53.3 percent of the total respondents are always polite in their manner of approach towards a conversation. Among the males are 33.3 percent and females are 73.3 percent. The result of the table shows the exact manner of approach males and females of Igbo language have when engaged in conversations among themselves or with other persons of different cultural background. This suffice to say that the they talk among themselves become part and parcel them to the extent that they behave in such manner towards persons of different background who is not an Igbo speaker.

**Table 4:**

**Are there restrictions to words in your language?**

Data	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Yes	2 (13.3%)	15 (100%)	56.7%
No	13 (86.7%)	0%	43.4%

In table 4, we can see that 56.7 percent of the total respondents affirmed to having restrictions on the way they talk with language (Igbo language in this case). Among them males are 13.3 percent and females are 100 percent. On the other hand, 43.4 percent of the total respondents declaimed to having restrictions on the way they talk with language (Igbo language in this case). Among the males are 86.7 percent and females are nulled on this. The result of the table shows that.

**Table 5:**

**Do you make use of tag questions?**

Data	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Yes	6 (40%)	8 (53.3%)	46.7%
No	9 (60%)	7 (46.7%)	53.4%

In table 5 above, we can see that 46.7 percent of the total respondents utilize tag questions during conversations. Among them males are 40 percent and females are 60 percent. On the other hand, 53.4 percent of the total respondents who

make use of tag questions when engaged in a conversation. Among the male speakers are 53.3 percent and female speakers are 46.7 percent. The result of the table shows the extensive use of tag questions among the male and female speakers of Igbo language.

**Table 6:**

**Do you make use of taboo words?**

Data	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Yes	13 (86%)	15 (100%)	93.4%
No	2 (13.3%)	0%	6.7%

In table 6 above, we can see that 6.7 percent of the total respondents utilize taboo words during conversations. Among the males are 13.3 percent and females are 86.7 percent. On the other hand, 93.4 percent of the total respondents who make use of taboo words when engaged in a conversation. Among the male speakers are 86.7 percent and female speakers are 46.7 percent. The result of the table shows the extensive use of taboo words among the male and female speakers of Igbo language.

**Table 7:**

**Do you make use of minimal responses in speech e.g., hmmm, ooo?**

Data	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Yes	12 (80%)	8 (53.3%)	66.7%
No	3 (20%)	7 (46.7%)	33.4%

In table 7 above, we can see that 66.7 percent of the total respondents utilize the use of minimal responses during conversations. Among them males are 80 percent and females are 20 percent. On the other hand, 33.4 percent of the total respondents who make use of minimal responses when engaged in a conversation. Among the male speakers are 53.3 percent and female speakers are 46.7 percent. The result of the table shows the extensive use of minimal responses among the male and female speakers of Igbo language.

**Table 8:**

**Do you make use of supportive language when speaking?**

Data	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Yes	3 (20%)	10 (66.7%)	43.4%
No	12 (80%)	5 (33.3%)	56.7%

In table 8 above, we can see that 43.4 percent of the total respondents use supportive language when speaking. Among them males are 20 percent and females are 66.7 percent. On the other hand, 56.7 percent of the total respondents who make use of supportive language when speaking. Among the

male speakers are 80 percent and female speakers are 33.3 percent. The result of the table shows the extensive use of supportive language when speaking among the male and female speakers of Igbo language.

**Table 9:**

**Do you make use of slangs in your conversations?**

Data	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Yes	13 (86.7%)	5 (33.3%)	60%
No	2 (13.3%)	10 (66.7%)	40%

In table 9 above, we can see that 60 percent of the total respondents utilize slangs during conversations. Among them males are 86.7 percent and females are 33.3 percent. On the other hand, 40 percent of the total respondents who make use of slangs when engaged in a conversation. Among the male speakers are 13.3 percent and female speakers are 66.7 percent. The result of the table shows the extensive use of slangs among the male and female speakers of Igbo language.

**Table 10:**

**Do you interrupt during conversations?**

Data	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Yes	11 (73.3%)	3 (20%)	46.7%
No	4 (26.7%)	12 (80%)	53.4%

In table 10 above, we can see that 46.7 percent of the total respondents admit to interrupt during conversations. Among them males are 73.3 percent and females are 20 percent. On the other hand, 53.4 percent of the total respondents who interrupt when engaged in a conversation. Among the male speakers are 26.7 percent and female speakers are 53.4 percent. The result of the table shows the extensive use of interruption among the male and female speakers of Igbo language during conversation.

**Table 11:**

**Do you make use of adjectives like ‘orna’, ‘uto’ in connection?**

Data	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Yes	6 (40%)	12 (80%)	60%
No	9 (60%)	3 (20%)	40%

In table 11 above, we can see that 60 percent of the total respondents utilize adjectives like ‘orna’ and ‘uto’ in connection during conversations. Among them males are 40 percent and females are 80 percent. On the other hand, 40 percent of the total respondents who make use adjectives like ‘orna’ and ‘uto’ in connection when engaged in a conversation. Among the male speakers are 60 percent and female speakers are 20 percent. The result of the table shows the extensive use of adjectives like ‘orna’ and ‘uto’ in connection among the male and female speakers of Igbo language.

**Table 12:**

### **Do you exaggerate words when speaking?**

Data	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Yes	4 (26.7)	11 (73.3)	50%
No	11 (73.3)	4 (26.7)	50%

In table 12 above, we can see that 50 percent of the total respondents exaggerate words during conversations. Among them males are 26.7 percent and females are 73.3 percent. On the other hand, 50 percent of the total respondents who exaggerate words when engaged in a conversation. Among the male speakers are 73.3 percent and female speakers are 26.7 percent. The result of the table shows the extensive use of exaggeration among the male and female speakers of Igbo language during conversation.

### **Table 13:**

**Do you make use of intensifiers e.g., ‘ewo’, ‘ayayaya mhhmm’ in a conversation?**

Data	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Yes	13 (86.7)	15 (100%)	93.4
No	2 (13.3)	0	6.7

In table 13 above, we can see that 93.4 percent of the total respondents utilize intensifiers during conversations. Among them males are 86.7 percent and females are 93.4 percent. On the other hand, 6.7 percent of the total respondents

who make use of intensifiers when engaged in a conversation. Among the male speakers are 13.3 percent and female speakers are zero percent. The result of the table shows the extensive use of intensifiers among the male and female speakers of Igbo language during conversations.

**Table 14:**

**Which of these topics would you rather discuss?**

Data	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Politics	12 (80%)	0	40%
Family	3 (20%)	15 (100%)	60%

In table 14 above, we can see that 40 percent of the total respondents would rather engage in conversations that has to do with politics. Among them males are 80 percent and females are 20 percent. On the other hand, 60 percent of the total respondents who would engage in conversations that has to do with Family. Among the male speakers are 20 percent and female speakers are zero percent. The result of the table shows the extensive view of individual speakers of Igbo language who would rather engage conversations that has to do with politics and family respectively.

**Table 15:**

**You would speak more on which of these settings?**

Data	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
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Family gathering	8 (53.3)	15 (100%)	76.7
Social/Public gathering	7 (46.7)	0	23.4

In table 15 above, we can see that 76.7 percent of the total respondents would speak more in a family gathering setting. Among them males are 53.3 percent and females are 100 percent. On the other hand, 76.7 percent of the total respondents who would speak more in a social/public gathering setting. Among the male speakers are 46.7 percent and female speakers are zero percent. The result of the table shows engagement of the male and female speakers of Igbo language in conversations that has to do with family and social gathering settings.

#### **4.2 Discussion and Findings**

The focus of the researcher was to find out the gender difference in language use among the speakers of Igbo language. From the very beginning of the research including the responses of the respondents, it has been found that while using a language in a conversation, 46.7% of the total respondents use formal language. On the other hand, 53.3% of the total respondents use informal language. Here, in the case of using formal language majority are females and in the case of using informal language majority are males. So, from this point of view it can be said that there is gender difference while using a language in a

conversation and the use of informal language is increasing day by day among Igbo speakers.

With reference to the tone of talk in using a language the research shows that 63.4% of the total respondents talks loudly. Among them 60% are males and 66.7% are females. On the other hand, only 36.7% of the total respondents talks softly. Among the males are 40% and girls are 33.3%. From this study, the result says that there is a huge difference between males and females regarding talking loudly.

Concerning the manner of approach to which men and women in Igbo language address each other, it is observed that men are generally more authoritative and confident than females in their use of language during conversations. The evidence of the study shows that 46.7% of the total respondents use authoritative language while having a conversation. Among them males are 66.7% and females are only 26.7%. On the other hand, 53.3% of the total respondents use polite language while in a conversation. Among them females are 73.3% and males are only 33.3%. The result shows that there is a huge gender difference in manner of approach among Igbo speakers which reflects the statement truly.

As regards to the restrictions placed on words on some specific areas of life, it is observed that there are more constraints on the things uttered out publicly by female Igbo speakers. These areas of restrictions could be on categories under sexuality terms, excrement, death, morally related taboos and

euphemism and so on. The evidence of the study shows that 56.7% of the total respondents claim to have restrictions on the use of words in Igbo language. Among them males are 13.3% and females are 100%. On the other hand, 43.4% of the total respondents use disclaimed to have restrictions. Among them females are just 0% and males are only 86.7%. The result shows that there is a huge gender difference on the restrictions placed on the use of language (agreed upon conventionally) among Igbo speakers which reflects the statement truly.

In respect of tag questions, Holmes (1993) found out that certain types of tag questions are used more by men than by women, i.e., modal tags, and certain types are used by women, i.e., facilitative tags (Nemati & Bayer, 2007). Here, facilitative tags are addressee-oriented which expresses the speaker's solidarity or positive attitude to the addressee. On the other hand, modal tags are speaker-oriented and signal speaker's desire for confirmation. The research study shows that 46.7% of the total respondents use tag questions. Among them 40% are males and 53.3% are females. On the other hand, only 53.4% of the total respondents do not use tag question. The result indicates that the use of tag questions creates gender differences among the respondents.

Men used more vulgar terms (Broadbridge, 2003). The evidence of the study shows that 93.4% of the total respondents use taboo words and slang. Among them, males are 86% and females are 13.3%. On the other hand, only 6.7% of the total respondents do not use taboo words and slang. The result

shows that nowadays the use of taboo words and slang is increasing and the percentage shows the gender difference of the use.

The evidence of the study shows that 66.7% of the total participants use minimal responses like “mmh”, “Yeah”, “right”. Among them 80% are males and 53.3% are females. On the other hand, only 33.4% of the total participants do not use minimal responses while using a language. The result of the study shows that the use of minimal responses reflects gender difference in language use.

Slang is a kind of language variety that shouldn't causes and disparity because anybody can actually use slangy expressions as a choice to feel among or for easy communication, so slight differences is expected to occur among males and females use on this aspect. Regarding the use of slangs, it is evident that 60% of the total respondents use slangy expressions most of the time in their day-to-day interactions. Among them 86.7% are males and 33.3% are females. On the other hand, 40% of the total participants do not use slangs. The result of the study shows that the uses of slangs show a very slight gender difference among Igbo speakers.

Respecting use of supportive language, it is stated that “women are more supportive than men” (Haas,1979). The study shows that 43.4% of the total participants use supportive language. Among them males are 20% and girls are 66.7%. On the other hand, only 56.7% of the total participants do not use supportive language where males are 80% and girls are 33.3%. The result shows

that there is a great gender difference among the participants and the statement reflects the results truly.

In terms of interruption the evidence of the study shows that 46.7% of the total participants interrupt while using Igbo language in conversation. Among them males are 73.3% and females are 20%. On the other hand, only 53.4% of the total respondents do not interrupt. The result of the study shows that males interrupt more than females and it indicates the gender difference among them.

Concerning the use of some specific adjective words like “orna” and ‘uto’-the evidence of the study shows that 60% of the total participants use those words. Among them 40% are males and 80% are females. On the other hand, 40% of the total participants do not use those words. The result of the study shows that the uses of those words create gender difference among Igbo speakers.

With reference to the usage of exaggerate words used by Igbo speakers. It was discovered that the usage is on a balance equation in the sense that both genders actually utilize exaggerate words during conversations. The study shows the extensive use of exaggeration among the male and female speakers of Igbo language during conversation and that both genders use them.

As to usage of intensifiers, there is a sharp difference in its usage among the males and females Igbo speakers. The study shows the extensive use of intensifiers among the male and female speakers of Igbo language during conversations. The evidence of the study shows that 93.4% of the total

participants use those words indicated in question 13 of the data analysis. Among them males are 86.7% and females are 100%. On the other hand, only 6.7% of the total respondents do not interrupt. The result of the study shows that females utilize this aspect of language use in conversations more than males and it indicates the gender difference among them.

Igbo women have always showed political apathy right from the time of colonization where the indirect rule system was being adopted as it only favoured men and secluded women to some extent. Women have always been looked down on when it comes to politics. The result of the table shows the extensive view of individual speakers (in this case, the female of Igbo language) who would or hardly engage in anything that has to do with politics conversations that has to do with politics and family respectively. Among them males are 80% and females are 0%. On the other hand, only 60% of the total respondents. The result of the study shows that males utilize this aspect of language use in conversations more than females.

As for the settings that has to do with family gathering and social or problem. It was discovered that females are more interested in matters that has to do with family gathering than men and vice versa. In the analysis, we can see that 76.7 percent of the total respondents would speak more in a family gathering setting. Among the males are 53.3 percent and females are 100 percent. On the other hand, 76.7 percent of the total respondents who would speak more in a social/public gathering setting. Among the male speakers are

46.7 percent and female speakers are zero percent. The result of the analysis shows engagement of the male and female speakers of Igbo language in conversations that has to do with family and social gathering settings.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.0 Summary**

This project set out to investigate gender as a social factor of language variation in Igbo language and the impact of this language change among speakers. The study has examined language use among males and females in the Igbo society.

The research commences with the background of the study which covers the meaning of the variables, the speakers information, methodology and the significance followed by reviewed works of notable scholars in the field to the theoretical framework used in analysis of the data presentation in the next section.

This chapter entails the summary and conclusion of the entire work. The conclusion of this research work shows that both gender uses different speech patterns due to cultural and environmental factors which are said to be the major factors facilitating this disparity and inequality among both genders in Igbo society. These disparities bring about miscommunication and misinterpretations in the process of interactions and conversations that exist among interlocutors in any speech event they find themselves and this goes against the most paramount function to language to communicate information and ideas. Language also contributes to at least two other important but less often recognised functions which are to establish social relationships and to express and create the social identity of speakers. If this disparity continues to occur in Igbo lands and the whole world at large, there will continue to be disagreement among both genders who utilise respective natural languages.

## **5.1 Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated that in our society and others like it, is affected by so many factors, this study has been able to pinpoint on one of the factors amongst others like age, class, social group and the like. As regards gender as a factor, they do not use completely different forms but different quantities or frequencies of the same form. In a society where gender plays a major role, language also has a key role to perform in the contribution of that role. Differences in gender roles, identities of both genders, hierarchical nature

of gender relations and the dominance of male constitute the factors that contribute to the differences in language use.

There can be no difference in any language itself. But language can be used by people to achieve a particular purpose which reflects the personal or social values. Restriction of the use of language because of the social environment creates gender difference mostly.

From the research work it is clear that male and female languages are quite different. This difference occurs mostly in vocabulary use, voice and tone, syntactic structure and style of using language. Moreover, there are some common differences and some common similarities in using language. The research work shows that in recent time the youth are practicing these differences in a large extent. While uttering a language their different ways of using language reflects the gender difference. The using of language differently also creates many variations in communication.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the way is still endless for researchers to disclose more and more detailed difference between male and female language.

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## APPENDIX

### QUESTIONNAIRE /SURVEY

**NAME:**

**GENDER:**

### QUESTIONNAIRE ON GENDER AS A SOCIAL FACTOR OF LANGUAGE VARIATION IN IGBO SOCIETY

The research is a survey on the relationship between language and gender and the impact it is on language variation in the Igbo society. The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure participant's opinions on their daily language use for a statistical data analysis in the study.

1. In a conversation what type of language do you make use of
  - a. Formal language
  - b. Informal language
2. In a conversation how is your tone of speaking
  - a. Talk loudly
  - b. Talk softly
3. How is your manner of approach to a conversation
  - a. Authoritative | confident
  - b. Defensive | Polite
4. In your language do you often have hedges/ restrictions / limitations to what you can say
  - a. Yes.
  - b. No
5. Do you make use of tag questions when speaking
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. Do you make use of taboo words when speaking
  - a. Yes.
  - b. No
7. Do you make use of slangs when speaking
  - a. Yes.
  - b. No
8. Do you make use of a supportive language when speaking eg; adding english
  - a. Yes.
  - b. No

9. Do you make use of minimal responses when speaking.

a. Yes.

b.No

10 Is there occurrences of interruption by opposite sex in your language

a. Yes.

b. No

11 Do you make use of adjectives like

“Nma “, “uto”, etc

a. Yes.

b. No

12 Do you tend to exaggerate words in speech

a. Yes.

b. No

13. Do you use intensifiers when speaking eg “ewooooo”. “mhmmtmm”

“ayayayaya”

a. Yes.

b.No

14 What topics would you rather discuss about

a. Politics.

b. Family

15 You would speak more in which of the following settings

a. Public settings.

b.Family gatherings