

THE LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY OF IGBO FEMININE PRAISE

NAMES

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty for His guidance and also to my parents for their unending love and financial support.

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I sincerely express my heartfelt gratitude to God Almighty for seeing me through these academic years.

I am very thankful to my supervisor Dr. (Mrs) P. O. Solomom-Etefia for her guidance, patience, and unwavering commitments towards ensuring the completion of this work. I also extend my gratitude to my amiable lecturers Prof. M.S Agbo (Head of Department), late Dr. W. Aigbedo, Dr. John Onu, Dr. Evbuomwan, Mr. Odio James, Dr. I. N. George-Essien, Dr. (Mrs.) E. O Ikoyo-Eweto, Mr. A. Evbayiro, Dr. (Mrs.) O. R. Osewa, and other lecturers and Staff of the Department of Linguistics Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, I say thank you all for your care. May Almighty God richly bless you all.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined language ideology of Igbo feminine praise names. The research relied on the primary method of data collection. Competent speakers of Igbo who are well equipped with the different praise names in Igbo were met, with their ages between 35 – 50 years of age comprising both men and women. The data were extracted using oral interviews with these speakers. Also, the researcher, being born, raised and a competent speaker of the Igbo language used her intuitive knowledge of the language to provide some data which added up that gotten from other sources and was used for the data analysis. The data analysis was organized into five key components, which are: praise names for beauty, praise names for leadership/strength, praise names for character/attributes, praise names for wealth/prosperity, and lastly, praise names for family and relationships. The analysis was guided using the ideology theory framework. The findings revealed the complex role of women within the Igbo society, shaped by different ideologies. Praise names for beauty emphasized the importance of physical appearance, suggesting that a woman's value is often tied to her attractiveness. In contrast, praise names for leadership and strength highlight the growing recognition of women's leadership roles, challenging traditional gender norms and celebrating women's authority and power in both domestic and public spheres. Praise names for character and attributes reinforce the ideal of women as caretakers, nurturing their families and embodying virtues such as respect, loyalty, and responsibility. Praise names for wealth and prosperity acknowledge women as symbols of financial success and generational wealth, highlighting their contributions to economic and familial stability. Lastly, praise names reflecting family and relationships celebrate women as key figures in family structures, emphasizing their roles in maintaining social and moral order.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Praise names are honorary or ceremonial names used to praise or honor individuals, particularly in African cultures. They often highlight a person's virtues, achievements, or social status. These names are used in various contexts, including ceremonies, public addresses, or in informal settings, and can reflect the cultural values and traditions of the community (Oha, 2009; Solomon-Etefia & Ideh, 2019). In some cultures, praise names serve to enhance an individual's reputation or honor their contributions to the community.

The intersection between language ideology and feminine praise names highlights how cultural beliefs about gender influence the way women are honored in various communities. Feminine praise names often reflect cultural values and ideals related to women's roles, virtues, and contributions. These names can celebrate qualities such as beauty, strength, wisdom, or nurturing abilities, emphasizing how these traits are valued in a

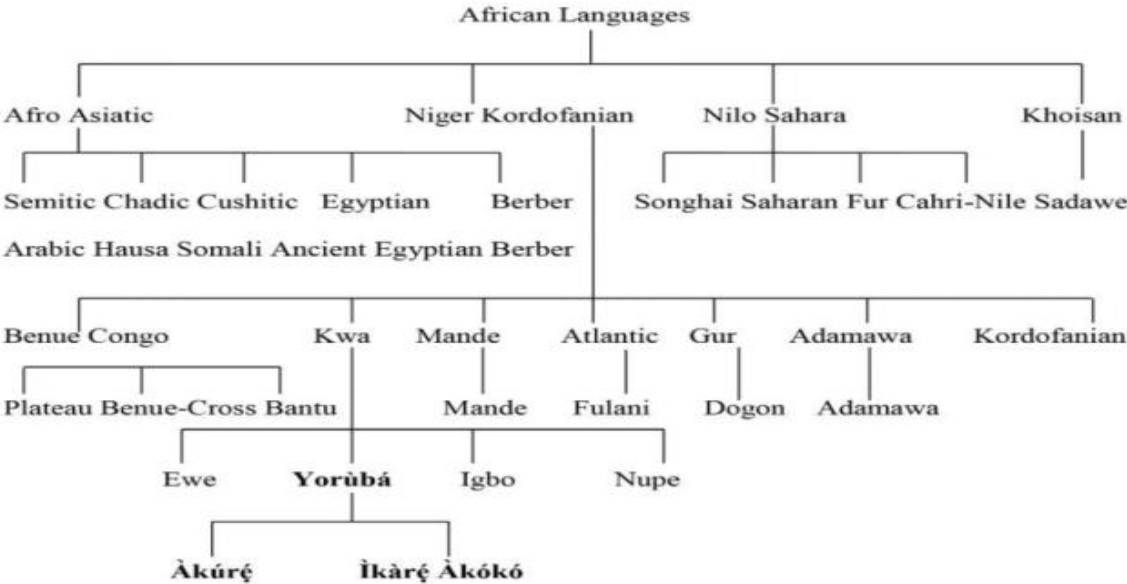
given society. The use of feminine praise names illustrates a language ideology that both acknowledges and reinforces the societal roles and expectations placed on women. It shows how language is employed to elevate and honor women, shaping their identity and social status within their communities. This intersection reveals how cultural attitudes towards gender are embedded in linguistic practices and how praise names can both reflect and reinforce gendered values.

This study seeks to examine the language ideology of Igbo feminine praise names, focusing on how these names reflect cultural beliefs and social values related to women in Igbo society. It will explore how feminine praise names highlight qualities such as resilience, beauty, and virtue, and how they shape and reinforce gender roles and expectations. By analyzing these names, the study aims to uncover how language both influences and reflects perceptions of femininity and women's status within the Igbo community.

1.1 IGBO LANGUAGE AND ITS SPEAKERS

According to Wikepadie, the Igbo language, historically known as "Ibo" in older texts, is part of the Niger-Congo language family and falls under the

Volta-Niger branch. It is mainly spoken by the Igbo people, one of Nigeria's largest ethnic groups, who predominantly reside in the southeastern region known as Igboland. According to the Ethnologue, a language database from the Summer Institute of Linguistics, about 45 million people speak Igbo in Nigeria and other parts of West Africa. The language is mainly found in five Nigerian states: Abia, Ebonyi, Anambra, Enugu, and Imo. Additionally, there are Igbo speakers in the southern parts of Delta and Rivers states, and in Equatorial Guinea, where it is one of the official languages.



Source: (Yusuf 2007: 124)

Figure 1: Genetic classification of African languages

The figure above shows how Igbo can be traced to the Mande language family of the Niger Kordofanian Proto language which is one of the four classification of African languages.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

In order to conduct a research on the language ideology of Igbo feminine praise names, the researcher used various instruments which includes oral interviews and intuitive knowledge. The research solely relied on the primary method of data collection. Competent speakers of Igbo who are well equipped with the different praise names in Igbo were met. The age range was between 35 - 50 years of age comprising both men and women. The data were extracted using various method such as oral interviews with these speakers (competent Igbo speakers) as earlier stated to inquire about the different Igbo feminine praise names. Also, the researcher, being born, raised and a competent speaker of the Igbo language used her intuitive knowledge of the language to provide some data which added up that gotten from other sources and was used for the data analysis.

The reason for adopting only the primary source of data collection is due to its clarification, authenticity and genuineness of the research as it was gotten directly from the source unlike the secondary method which could be untrue in some extent and could give room for bias. The data analysis is organized into five key components, which are: praise names for beauty, praise names for leadership/strength, praise names for character/attributes, praise names for wealth/prosperity, and lastly, praise names for family and relationships. The analysis was guided using the ideology theory framework.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore the language ideology surrounding Igbo feminine praise names, focusing on how these names reflect cultural values and gender roles within the Igbo community. By examining the linguistic and social significance of these names, the research seeks to uncover the ways in which praise names contribute to the construction and reinforcement of gender identities and social expectations.

The expected benefits of the study include a deeper understanding of the cultural and linguistic dynamics at play, which can inform both academic

scholarship and practical applications in cultural preservation and education. Additionally, the findings could help promote greater appreciation for the role of language in shaping and expressing cultural identity, particularly regarding the representation of women in Igbo society.

1.3.1 Aim and Objectives

This study examines the language ideology of Igbo feminine praise names.

Its specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the feminine praise names in Igbo.
2. Analyze how these feminine praise names reflect the language ideology of the Igbo speakers.
3. Explore the impact of feminine praise names on social interactions and cultural practices within Igbo communities.

1.3.2 Research Questions

The following are the research questions:

1. What are the feminine praise names in Igbo?

2. How do these feminine praise names reflect the language ideology of Igbo speakers?

3. What is the impact of feminine praise names on social interactions and cultural practices within Igbo communities?

1.3.3 Scope of the Study

The study will focus exclusively on Igbo feminine praise names and their role in reflecting language ideology and cultural practices. It will not examine masculine praise names or praise names from other languages or cultures. The research will be limited to contemporary and traditional contexts within Igbo communities, excluding broader comparative analyses or regional variations outside of Igbo-speaking areas.

1.3.4 Statement of the Problem

The research problem addresses the need to understand how Igbo feminine praise names function within the cultural and linguistic framework of the Igbo community. Despite their significance in reflecting cultural values and gender roles, there is limited comprehensive analysis of how these names embody the language ideology of Igbo speakers and their influence on social

interactions and cultural practices. This study aims to fill this gap by identifying these names, exploring their ideological reflections, and examining their impact on contemporary Igbo society.

1.3.5 Significance of the Study

The study is significant for the following reasons:

1. Academics and Researchers: Gain insights into the linguistic and cultural significance of Igbo feminine praise names and their role in language ideology.

2. Cultural Preservation: Understand how feminine praise names reflect and influence cultural values and gender roles, aiding in cultural preservation and education.

3. Cultural Practitioners: Use the findings to enrich their practices and teachings, promoting the appreciation of Igbo cultural heritage.

4. Language Educators: Develop more informed and culturally relevant Igbo curriculum and teaching materials to portray language and culture.

5. Policymakers: Acquire knowledge to support initiatives that

preserve and promote cultural identity and heritage within the Igbo community.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews previous scholarly works related to this research work. The chapter is divided into four sections: conceptual review or review of related concepts as may be called, previous study which gave rise to the motivation for this present studies, the concern of the present study, and a summary of the chapter.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

In this section, a review of concepts or basic terms related to this research work will be presented and explained. The reason for this is to give a deeper and better understanding of what this research is all about as it will disambiguate any form of ambiguity in the readers mind. Below are the concepts to be treated:

Language

Ideology

Language ideology

Praise names

2.1.1 Language

Language is a system for communication that employs symbols, such as spoken, written, or signed words, to express ideas and emotions (Evans & Levinson, 2009). It encompasses syntax, semantics, and grammar to organize and interpret messages within a linguistic community.

Graddol (2004) notes that languages change and diversify over time, and their evolution can be traced by comparing modern languages to infer the characteristics of their ancestral forms. Languages that derive from a common ancestor are known as language families, while languages with no known relationships to others are termed language isolates. Additionally, there are many unclassified languages whose relationships remain unclear, and some languages might not have existed at all.

Wikipedia suggests that academic consensus predicts that 50% to 90% of languages spoken at the start of the 21st century may be extinct by 2100.

Language is the main method through which humans communicate meaning,

whether spoken, signed, or written. Human language is notable for its cultural and historical variety, with considerable differences observed across cultures and time (Evans & Levinson, 2009). It is characterized by productivity and displacement, allowing for the creation of endless sentences and the ability to reference absent objects, events, or ideas. Language use is governed by social conventions and learned through education. Levi (2020) posits that language is crucial for communication and self-expression, shaping our understanding of reality and influencing our personal experiences.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2024) defines language as a systematic method of conveying ideas or feelings using conventional signs, sounds, gestures, or marks with understood meanings. This definition highlights language's systematic nature and its role in communication, covering both verbal and non-verbal elements and emphasizing the importance of shared understanding for effective interaction.

2.1.2 Ideology

Ideology refers to a set of beliefs, values, and ideas that shape how individuals or groups understand and interpret the world. To Marx and Engels (as cited by Martin, 2015), it was organized beliefs at a high level of abstraction; they used the term to indicate morality, religion, metaphysics, politics, law and judicial theory, and certainly speculative philosophy. While it is not the case that all beliefs are ideological, these ones are because they are idealized, universalized and detached expressions of actual social relations (Martin, 2015). For instance, Marx and Engels critiqued the notion of "freedom" prominent in German idealist philosophy, arguing that it represented an idealized reflection of the market-driven material relations defining nineteenth-century bourgeois society. Moreover, this concept was universalized to imply not just the freedom to buy and sell, but a more general freedom. Ultimately, this idea was abstracted from its material origins, with thinkers treating it as if it existed in a separate realm of ideal concepts rather than being rooted in those material conditions. Ideology is a doctrine that provides the guidance for certain actions to be carried out by individuals in anticipation of certain outcomes (Kumar, 2021). It often encompasses political, economic, social, and cultural views and guides

behavior and decision-making. Ideologies can influence a wide range of areas, including governance, social policies, and personal beliefs.

According to the *Merriam-Webster* Dictionary (2024), the term "ideology" has been part of the English language since the late 18th century, and its originator is known. Originally meaning the "science of ideas," it was quickly adopted into English. Although it began as a serious philosophical term, it gained connotations of impracticality within a few decades, partly due to Napoleon's use of it in a contemptuous way. While these negative connotations persist in some contexts, today the word is generally used in a neutral sense to describe a systematic set of ideas, particularly those associated with a specific group or political party.

2.1.3 Language Ideology

Language ideology refers to the beliefs and attitudes people have about language and its use in society. This concept encompasses the ways people perceive the relationship between language and identity, power, and social norms. It can influence how languages and dialects are valued, how language policies are shaped, and how speakers of different languages or

dialects interact. It often reflects broader social, cultural, and political dynamics.

According to Irvine (2012), language ideologies are conceptualizations about languages, speakers, and discursive practices. Like other kinds of ideologies, language ideologies are pervaded with political and moral interests and are shaped in a cultural setting. Studying language ideologies involves examining the intersection of language, culture, and politics. It means investigating how people perceive the role of language in their social and cultural contexts and how these perceptions are shaped by their social positions. This includes understanding how individuals view language itself, as well as the specific languages and speech patterns relevant to them. Language ideologies are inherently diverse: since they are influenced by their positions, there are always alternative viewpoints from which discursive practices can be interpreted differently. Their situated nature means that language ideologies are always incomplete, as they cannot cover all possible perspectives, yet they are actively engaged in the realm of human social action.

Language ideologies are the collective order, that is, the beliefs and attitudes that shape speakers' relationships to their own and others' languages, mediating between the social practice of language and the socio-economic and political structures within which it occurs (Cavanaugh, 2020).

This definition offers a succinct yet comprehensive overview of language ideologies, effectively capturing their essence and significance. It highlights how these ideologies represent a collective set of beliefs and attitudes that influence speakers' interactions with both their own and other languages. Furthermore, it emphasizes the mediating role of language ideologies between linguistic practices and broader socio-economic and political contexts.

However, it could benefit from an example or two to illustrate how these ideologies manifest in real-world contexts, providing a clearer picture of their impact on language use and social structures.

2.1.4 Praise Names

Praise names, also known as "praise epithets" are a form of name that reflects admiration, respect, or honor towards an individual. They often

describe a person's qualities, achievements, or virtues and are used to show esteem and acknowledge their positive attributes. Praise names are very important means through which individuals in the Igbo society generally articulate and express their ideologies, boast about their abilities and accomplishments, as well as criticize and subvert the visions of the Other (Oha, 2009). With particular reference to chieftaincy in the Igbo society, praise-naming as a pragma-semiotic act ties up with constructions and deconstructions of power, and so does have serious implications for the meanings attached to chieftaincy, as well as the roles of the chief in the postcolonial democratic system. Praise names are common in various cultures and can be found in both personal names and titles. In some cultures, just as Igbo, they play an important role in social interactions and ceremonies.

2.2 PREVIOUS STUDIES

This section highlights and discusses previous studies related to this research.

Oha (2009) paper discusses the semiotics of praise names in the contemporary Igbo society, drawing data from popular culture and

chieftaincy discourses. It addresses the interface between signification and politics (and the politics of signification) in Africa, arguing that change in the understanding and relevance of chieftaincy in postcolonial Africa calls for attention to how chieftaincy is (re)staged at the site of the sign.

Onumajuru (2016), investigated the semantic and pragmatic contents of personal names and naming in the Igbo language and culture. The objective of the paper was to examine the structure of Igbo names and analyse their semantic and pragmatic contents. The data were sourced from Igbo language speakers in the South Eastern States of Nigeria. The data cut across Standard and dialectal Igbo names. Selected personal names were grouped structurally according to their forms in the following order: lexical (or mono-morphemic) names, Noun-Noun phrasal names, Noun-Verb phrasal names, Noun-Verb Phrasal-Complement/Sentential names and Interrogation/Injunction names. The semantic and pragmatic analyses were made based on the structural data generated. The pragmatic analysis was handled by incorporating the context into the semantic contents. The findings showed that Igbo names structurally fall into three broad categories: lexical, phrasal and sentential. For *Ndigbo*, a name is not just a tag of identity or personal label but a story and an

expression of the events and circumstances surrounding the birth of the child as well as the parents' life experiences and world view.

Oyeka (2017) paper set investigated the changes and developments in marital names among the Igbo people of Nigeria. A qualitative approach was adopted and primary data were sourced through interviews. Thirty-seven adult male and female respondents from different Igbo communities were purposively sampled and interviewed. The Afrocentric theory was adopted for the analysis of this work. The findings revealed that Igbo marital names changed from that of the Lord-Servant to companionship names. The later trend in the marital names is completely devoid of Igbo language and culture. The noticed changes are as a result of language contact. This paper concluded by advocating that though changes in society and language are inevitable, the Igbo should not lose sight of their culture especially as it regards marriage. Moreso, the Igbo should preserve her identity through her language by using Igbo marital names.

Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2018) study argued that some of the current trends in naming stripe the names of their cultural, social, religious and political

relevance, and blot the identity of the bearers, while others violate the norms of naming in Igbo culture. To provide the bases for comparison, the researcher compiled regular and trending Igbo names from her personal contacts in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria, as well as from the social media, television and radio broadcasts, the internet and the print media for a descriptive analysis. Interview was also incorporated to obtain from the bearers of the name deeper insights into the motivation behind the names. It was observed that some Igbo names no longer have any meaning relationships with their derivatives, while others have experienced different levels of westernization. It was recommended that awareness campaigns should be deployed to educate the people on the interconnectivity of names, language, culture and identity so that they can place meaningfulness and relevance above fashion when it comes to personal names.

Solomon-Etefia and Ideh (2019) study focused on a sociolinguistic investigation of male praise names among members of the Awgbu Igbo community taking into account how the names are socially constructed to negotiate identity and authenticity. The discourse of praise names in Awgbu was analysed using the social identity theory framework, which maintains

that at the level of the self, a person may have multiple social identities, which widen circles of group membership, enact friendship and foster individual identity and collective belonging. They classified praise names based on relevant social categories that reflect Awgbu life experiences. The study concluded that praise names can create a platform for group members to bond socially by offering an alternate naming enterprise which provides bearers with interactional strategies for the discursive and ideological construction of power and dominance.

2.3 CONCERN OF PRESENT STUDY

After reviewing previous works, we can see that there is a clear demarcation between the focus of the previous study and this current study. The present study diverges from previous research in its specific focus and thematic approach. Oha (2009) explored the semiotics of praise names broadly, emphasizing their role in political and cultural contexts, but did not focus specifically on feminine praise names or their ideological aspects. Onumajuru (2016) investigated the structure and semantic-pragmatic content of various Igbo names, including both personal and praise names, without

concentrating on gender or the ideological implications of praise names. Oyeka (2017) studied the evolution of marital names within the Igbo community, focusing on shifts due to language contact and cultural changes, rather than on praise names or their gendered dimensions. Nnamdi-Eruchalu (2018) examined trends and western influences on Igbo names, highlighting changes in meaning and cultural relevance, but did not address the specific ideologies behind feminine praise names. Solomon-Etefia and Ideh (2019) analyzed male praise names and their social functions using social identity theory, but their study did not cover feminine praise names or their unique ideological roles. In contrast, the present study specifically addresses the language ideology surrounding Igbo feminine praise names, exploring how these names reflect and shape gender perceptions within the Igbo cultural framework. It seeks to fill the already existing gap in linguistic knowledge.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework for the research on Language ideology of Igbo feminine praise names. The theoretical framework to be employed for this research is the Language Ideology Theory propounded by Silverstein (1979) and was later developed by Woolard (1985) and Kroskrity (1993).

3.1 LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY THEORY

Language ideology theory explores how people's beliefs, assumptions, and values about language influence social behavior, power relations, and identity. It looks at how language shapes and is shaped by the social world, and how these perceptions often go unnoticed because they are taken for granted. Essentially, language ideologies are the ideas people hold about what language is, how it should be used, and which forms of language are considered "proper" or "correct." These ideologies can affect everything from education policies to social integration, affecting who gets to speak, how they are understood, and who holds power in communication.

The framework is grounded in the idea that language is not just a tool for communication, but a carrier of social meanings and a way of constructing social hierarchies. It highlights that people's ideas about language often reflect larger cultural, political, and historical contexts. For example, in many societies, certain languages or dialects are considered prestigious, while others may be seen as inferior or less sophisticated. These judgments often connect with wider power structures, where dominant groups use language to maintain their status and influence.

Working principles of the language ideology theory include the belief that language is not neutral. Every form of communication comes with a set of social and cultural expectations. For example, in a formal setting, a person who speaks "Standard English" might be seen as more educated or more professional, while someone who speaks a regional dialect may be dismissed as less capable. These ideas can have real consequences for people's opportunities in education, work, and even their daily lives. Another key principle is that language ideologies are not always consciously recognized or acknowledged. Many people take for granted certain language standards, assuming they are simply "normal" or "correct," when in fact these norms are shaped by historical and social forces.

Furthermore, language ideologies often involve the idea of "indexicality," where specific linguistic forms or accents are linked to particular social identities. For instance, a person's accent can signal where they are from, their social class, or even their ethnic background. These associations can contribute to stereotyping or bias, leading to judgments about an individual's worth or capabilities. Language ideologies also interact with power, as those

who control the dominant language or dialect in a society often have greater influence and control over social structures.

Finally, language ideologies are not static; they evolve over time. What is considered a "standard" or "correct" way of speaking can change with shifting social, political, and cultural trends. For example, in some places, non-standard dialects or multilingualism may become more accepted as society becomes more inclusive and diverse. This fluidity shows that language ideologies are not fixed, but are continually being shaped by ongoing interactions between language, society, and culture.

3.2 APPLICATION OF THE THEORY

The language ideology theory framework focuses on understanding how language reflects and influences social beliefs, values, and power relations. When applied to the study of "Language Ideology of Igbo Feminine Praise Names," this theory can help analyze how these names are not just linguistic expressions but carry deeper cultural and social meanings tied to gender, identity, and social roles. In Igbo culture, feminine praise names often emphasize qualities such as beauty, virtue, strength, and fertility. The belief

in the power of language to shape social reality is central here, as these names are used to affirm and elevate women's roles in the community, showcasing ideals of femininity.

From a language ideology perspective, these names reveal how language is used to both reflect and construct gender norms. Igbo praise names for women may emphasize qualities considered desirable or divine, and they reflect the community's expectations of women's behavior and roles. These names might also reinforce patriarchal views, where women are often praised for their connection to the family, motherhood, or beauty, while at the same time, their social status and identity are framed within these traditional roles.

The study could explore how speakers of Igbo language perceive the function of these praise names, how they are used in public and private settings, and whether they challenge or reinforce societal norms. These names also reveal the power dynamics within the society, where language is a tool for both expressing admiration and subtly controlling the representation of women.

The framework would also consider the role of historical and social context. Over time, the meanings and uses of praise names might shift, reflecting broader changes in society, such as changes in women's rights or social expectations. Thus, the language ideology theory would provide insights into how these praise names not only function as tools of expression but also as instruments of cultural transmission, reinforcing traditional gender norms while potentially allowing for subtle shifts in social perception. Through this lens, the study of Igbo feminine praise names becomes a way to understand the intersection of language, culture, and gender in Igbo society.

3.3 RELEVANCE/JUSTIFICATION OF THE THEORY

The language ideology theory is particularly relevant to the research on Igbo feminine praise names because it focuses on the social beliefs and cultural values embedded in language. In the case of Igbo praise names, the ideology reveals how language reflects and reinforces societal views on gender, identity, and power dynamics. Igbo feminine praise names are not just linguistic expressions; they carry deep cultural meanings tied to the roles and status of women in Igbo society. By examining language ideologies, the

research can uncover how these names are used to both empower women and reflect societal expectations. This approach is more fitting than other theories, like structuralism or generative grammar, which focus solely on the mechanics of language without considering its cultural or ideological dimensions. The language ideology framework allows for a deeper understanding of the social functions of these praise names and how they shape and are shaped by societal perceptions of femininity. It also offers insights into how language can be a tool for both upholding and challenging traditional gender norms. Thus, this theory is especially suitable for exploring the intersection of language, culture, and gender within the Igbo context.

Below is a sample data of Igbo feminine praise names showing how the theory fits into the analysis of the work

1. *Ézénwánnýì* "A strong woman"
2. *Àgbàrà Nwányị* "An elegant or powerful woman"

As seen from the above sample data, the names "*Ézénwánnýì*" (A strong woman) and "*Àgbàrà Nwányị*" (An elegant or powerful woman) embody

idealized perceptions of womanhood in Igbo culture. These names not only highlight traits like strength and elegance but also underscore the cultural reverence for women who embody these qualities. Language, through these praise names, shapes and reinforces societal expectations of women, positioning them as central figures of strength and dignity in Igbo society. Thus, the theory helps explain how language is tied to power structures and cultural norms surrounding femininity.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and discusses the data for the research on Language ideology of Igbo feminine praise names. The chapter is divided into three sections; data presentation, data analysis, and lastly, discussion of findings.

The analysis will be guided using the Ideology theory framework and will also reflect the research objectives.

4.1 DATA PRESENTATION

This section presents the data for the research as gotten from primary sources.

4.1.1 Praise Names (*Áhà ótútù*) for women across Igboland

1. *Omáóbídiyá* "A title mostly given to women who have mastered the act of respecting their husbands and making them feel like kings in their own homes"
2. *Ochiòrànwányiòrà* "A woman leader"
3. *Odu* "The women who wears white"
4. *Ádàózó* "The daughter of a titled man"
5. *Ósò díémè* "A woman that does with the husband"
6. *Ádàúgó* "Daughter of the eagle"
7. *Òjíúgó* "The cola of the eagle"

8. *Ómèribè* "She does for others"
9. *Áchálùgó nwányi* "Beautiful woman"
10. *Mkpúlú nmá* "Epitome of beauty"
11. *Ádà éjí éjée mbà* "A daughter that can be relied on in fireplaces"
12. *Ódí ìché* "She is different"
13. *Nwányi dí ochá* "A neat/clean woman"
14. *Úgògbè* "Mirror"
15. *Óchìrì ózó* "She takes and train"
16. *Nwányi má ùché dí yà* "A woman that knows the heart and respect the husband"
17. *Ídè nwányi* "A wealthy woman"
18. *Ásà* "A beautiful lady"
19. *Nmà* "Beauty"
20. *Óché èzé* "The throne of royalty"
21. *Údù àkó nmìrì* "An earthen pot that is always filled with water"

22. *Ómù* "Woman of the house"
23. *Égó óyíbo* "American currency"
24. *Úgò bú sọ nmà* "An eagle that is only beautiful"
25. *Ákwà* "Egg"
26. *Afọ ná àmú ndì omà* "A womb that gives birth to good children"
27. *Ọlàédò* "Gold"
28. *MPom pom nwányí* "A lady that her skin is fair"
29. *Nwányí diikàrú* "A woman that is good"
30. *Óshimànú nwányí* "A woman that cooks very well"
31. *Ádá mpáyítè oghènè* "A daughter that dances to oghene"
32. *Ógbó nà gódò* "A woman that kills a cow and horse for the father"
33. *Ọchía àkà ná àbúò* "A woman that kills two cow in her father's burial"
34. *Úbà bú nwàm nwányí* "Wealth is my daughter"
35. *Ómúmá àsá àhú* "A lady that takes care of herself well"

4.2 DATA DISCUSSION USING THE IDEOLOGY THEORY

This section discussed the data presented in (4.1) using the ideology theory framework. The data will be broken down into different categories based on their meanings or associations

4.2.1 Praise Names for Beauty

Praise Names for beauty refers to affectionate or admiring titles given to someone or something to highlight their attractiveness or appealing qualities.

- a. *Áchálùgó nwányi* "Beautiful woman"
- b. *Mkpúlú nmá* "Epitome of beauty"
- c. *Nmà* "Beauty"
- d. *Ógò bú sọ nmà* "An eagle that is only beautiful"
- e. *MPọm pọm nwányí* "A lady that her skin is fair"
- f. *Ásà* "A beautiful lady"

Each of these praise names demonstrates a distinct way in which beauty is perceived and celebrated in Igbo society. For example, "*Áchálùgó nwányi*"

(Beautiful woman) is a straightforward compliment that attributes beauty to the woman. This praise name shows that beauty is an essential and highly valued quality for women in Igbo culture, and it suggests that physical appearance is an important characteristic in shaping a woman's identity and social standing. The language ideology here is clear: the woman's worth, in part, is tied to her physical attractiveness. Similarly, "Mkpúlú nmá" (Epitome of beauty) elevates the concept of beauty to an idealized or perfected state, implying that the woman represents the highest form of beauty. This further reinforces the notion that beauty is an aspirational standard for women. The term suggests not just physical beauty, but the broader cultural understanding that a woman's value can be epitomized through her external appearance. The term "Nmà" (Beauty), although shorter, carries the same ideology of beauty being a central trait for women. It serves as a succinct yet powerful reminder of how beauty is a defining characteristic in the construction of femininity within the Igbo culture. This praise name simplifies the association between a woman's identity and her physical appeal, underscoring the significance of appearance in the social evaluation of women.

On the other hand, "Ugò bú sọ nmà" (An eagle that is only beautiful) introduces a more layered interpretation. The image of an eagle, typically associated with strength, power, and majesty, combined with beauty, suggests that the woman being described possesses not just beauty but a certain nobility or dignity. This praise name reveals a more complex ideology: it acknowledges beauty while also hinting at a deeper, more admirable quality. There is an expectation that women's beauty should not only be apparent but also possess qualities that elevate them above mere physicality. "MPòm pòm nwányí" (A lady whose skin is fair) focuses on a specific aspect of beauty: fairness of skin. This reflects an important societal value in many African cultures, including the Igbo, where lighter skin is often seen as a desirable trait. This term reveals the cultural preference for lighter skin tones and the way beauty standards can be influenced by such traits. The language ideology embedded here is one that ties beauty to color, which is a reminder of the historical and ongoing impact of colonial influences and the internalization of skin tone preferences. Finally, "Ásà" (A beautiful lady) is another praise name that highlights beauty, but it is slightly more abstract. It does not emphasize any particular aspect of beauty or

appearance; rather, it encapsulates the overall concept of a woman who is admired for her femininity and attractiveness. This term reflects an ideology that celebrates beauty as a holistic and general attribute that defines a woman, reinforcing the centrality of beauty to the identity of women in Igbo society.

4.2.2 Praise Names for Leadership/Strength

Praise names for leadership/strength are titles or epithets used to honor and recognize an individual's power, authority, or exceptional leadership qualities.

- a. *Ọchiọrànwányiọmà* "A woman leader"
- b. *Ódí ìché* "She is different"
- c. *Ójíúgó* "The cola of the eagle"
- d. *Óché èzè* "The throne of royalty"
- e. *Ádàózó* "The daughter of a titled man"
- f. *Ósò díémè* "A woman that does with the husband"
- g. *Óchìrì ózó* "She takes and trains"

In the examples above, names like "Ọchiọ̀rànwányiọ̀mà," meaning "A woman leader," directly convey a recognition of feminine power and leadership. This praise name challenges traditional stereotypes that often associate leadership roles primarily with men, aligning with a progressive language ideology that acknowledges women's capacity for leadership. It hints at a broader understanding within the Igbo community that women, too, can hold positions of influence and authority, whether in the family or the larger social structure. "Ódí ìché" or "She is different" speaks to the uniqueness of the woman, implying that she stands out from others because of her exceptional qualities, including leadership or strength. This phrase could be interpreted within an ideological framework that acknowledges the distinctiveness and value of women who take on non-traditional roles or exhibit extraordinary resilience and power. It reveals an ideological acceptance that leadership qualities are not exclusive to men and highlights women's special position in society. "Ójíúgọ̀," which means "The cola of the eagle," metaphorically positions the woman as a vital, strong figure, perhaps one who is both rare and revered, much like the cola nut in Igbo culture, which holds significant cultural and ceremonial importance. The eagle here

symbolizes strength and wisdom, implying that the woman is not only a symbol of nourishment but also one of immense leadership and stature. The praise name "Óché èzé," meaning "The throne of royalty," reinforces the idea of a woman as a powerful, central figure in governance and societal order. The throne is a symbol of sovereignty, signifying that this woman is an integral part of the leadership structure, capable of both guiding and leading with authority. This reflects a view within Igbo ideology where women's roles in leadership and governance are not only recognized but also respected. "Ádàózó," meaning "The daughter of a titled man," ties a woman's leadership and strength to her familial heritage, highlighting the importance of social status and lineage in Igbo society. The praise name reflects an ideological perspective that positions women's authority as inherently linked to their fathers' titles and societal standing, thus making their leadership role significant through their familial connections. It suggests that the strength of women can be traced to their lineage, thereby validating their right to power and influence. "Ósò díémè," which translates to "A woman that does with the husband," indicates a woman's strength in managing relationships, particularly within the marital context. This could

reflect an ideology where leadership and power within the family are seen as shared responsibilities, emphasizing the woman's role in navigating and maintaining harmony and strength within the domestic sphere. This name could reveal a cultural understanding of power as relational and collaborative, where women's strength is acknowledged in how they engage with and support their partners. Lastly, "Óchìrì ózó," meaning "She takes and trains," speaks to a woman's leadership in nurturing and guiding others. It places value on women as educators and mentors, signifying that their strength lies not only in their personal authority but in their ability to shape and cultivate the next generation. This reflects an ideological stance where women's leadership is appreciated in both familial and communal contexts, particularly in terms of raising, guiding, and empowering others.

4.2.3 Praise Names for Character/Attributes

Praise names for character/attributes are honorary titles or epithets that highlight and celebrate an individual's qualities, virtues, or achievements.

a. *Ọmáóbídìyá* "A title mostly given to women who have mastered the act of respecting their husbands and making them feel like kings in their homes"

- b. *Ómèribè* "She does for others"
- c. *Ádàéjéjèmbà* "A daughter that can be relied on in fireplaces"
- d. *Nwányi má ùché dí yà* "A woman that knows the heart and respects the husband"
- e. *Nwányi dí ọchá* "A neat/clean woman"
- f. *Údù àkó nmírí* "An earthen pot that is always filled with water"
- g. *Ómù* "Woman of the house"
- h. *Óshímànú nwányí* "A woman that cooks very well"
- i. *Ádà mpáyítè ọghènè* "A daughter that dances to oghene"
- j. *Ógbó nà gódò* "A woman that kills a cow and horse for the father"
- k. *Ọchía àkà ná àbúò* "A woman that kills two cows in her father's burial"
- l. *Ómúmá àsá àhú* "A lady that takes care of herself well"

The praise names presented here reflect a strong cultural emphasis on the virtues of women as caregivers, nurturers, and loyal companions, with a particular focus on their roles within the family structure. For instance,

names like *Ọmáóbídiyá* (A woman who respects her husband and treats him like a king) and *Nwányi má ùché dí yà* (A woman who understands and respects her husband's heart) reflect the societal ideal of the woman as a devoted wife who maintains harmony and respect in her marital relationship. These praise names highlight the cultural expectation that a woman's primary role is to support and elevate the man in the home, reinforcing traditional gender roles where the man is seen as the head of the household and the woman as his supportive partner. Praise names such as *Ómèribè* (She does for others) and *Ádàéjéjèmbà* (A daughter who can be relied on in fireplaces) emphasize the value of selflessness and communal responsibility. These names suggest that women are expected to serve others, particularly within the home, and their worth is often tied to their ability to care for and nurture their families. The emphasis on household chores, such as cooking (*Óshímànú nwányí* – A woman who cooks very well) and cleanliness (*Nwányi dí ọchá* – A neat/clean woman), further reinforces the traditional notion that a woman's primary role is within the domestic sphere. Names like *Údù àkó nmìrí* (An earthen pot that is always filled with water) and *Ómù* (Woman of the house) portray women as reliable and essential in the

home. The metaphor of the "earthen pot filled with water" suggests a woman who is always ready to provide and fulfill the needs of her family, while *Ómù* highlights the woman's centrality in the home, suggesting a role of authority and responsibility. Some of the praise names, such as *Ádà mpáyítè oghènè* (A daughter who dances to oghene) and *Ógbó nà gódò* (A woman who kills a cow and horse for her father), suggest a broader understanding of femininity beyond domestic duties. These names imply that women can also be celebrated for their contributions outside the home, such as in the realm of social rituals or family ceremonies, where they play significant roles in honoring family and cultural traditions. Names like *Ọchía àkà ná àbúò* (A woman who kills two cows in her father's burial) emphasize the responsibility women have to uphold their family's reputation and legacy, particularly during significant life events. The idea of a woman performing such substantial acts traditionally reserved for men points to the evolving recognition of women's roles in both domestic and public spheres. Finally, the name *Ómúmá àsá àhú* (A lady who takes care of herself well) underscores the societal expectation for women to maintain their physical

appearance and health, reflecting the importance placed on a woman's outward appearance as part of her societal value.

4.2.4 Praise Names for Wealth/Prosperity

Praise names for wealth/prosperity are celebratory or honorific titles used to acknowledge and extol an individual's or entity's success, abundance, or financial achievements.

a. *Ídè nwányi* "A wealthy woman"

b. *Úgògbè* "Mirror"

c. *Egó óyíbo* "American currency"

d. *Ákwà* "Egg"

e. *Afọ ná àmú ndì ọmà* "A womb that gives birth to good children"

f. *Ọlàédò* "Gold"

g. *Úbà bú nwàm nwányí* "Wealth is my daughter"

In the examples above, the praise name "*Ídè nwányi*," meaning "A wealthy woman," exemplifies the ideology of viewing women as embodiments of

wealth. This praise aligns with the cultural reverence for financial success and acknowledges the woman as a significant contributor to the family's prosperity. Similarly, "Úgògbè," meaning "Mirror," can be interpreted as a metaphorical reflection of a prosperous life or a woman who mirrors the success and progress of her community or family. The name "Egó óyíbó," which means "American currency," highlights the global connection between wealth and economic success. This reflects an ideological shift where Western financial symbols, such as the dollar, are seen as the ultimate representation of wealth. It suggests an alignment of the woman's identity with global financial power, marking her as someone whose worth transcends local economies. On the other hand, "Ákwà," meaning "Egg," draws on the metaphor of fertility and the potential for new life, equating a woman's role in nurturing and producing wealth with her ability to create and sustain life. It implies that wealth flows from a woman's capacity to sustain and nurture. "Afọ ná àmú ndì ọmà," or "A womb that gives birth to good children," also reinforces the gendered ideology where women are viewed not only as bearers of wealth but also as creators of future wealth. The focus is not just on financial wealth but also on human capital, with the

woman's reproductive capabilities positioned as vital to the prosperity of her family and community. "Ọlàédò," meaning "Gold," symbolizes both material wealth and intrinsic value, emphasizing that a woman's worth is akin to precious and rare commodities. This praise name further connects the idea of women to wealth, positioning them as valuable assets within society. Finally, "Úbà bú nwàm nwányí," or "Wealth is my daughter," reinforces the notion that wealth is inherited and passed down through generations, with the daughter serving as both a recipient and a symbol of continued prosperity.

4.2.5 Praise Names for Family and Relationships

Praise names for family and relationships are affectionate or honorific titles used to express admiration, respect, or love for individuals within a family or social group.

a. *Ádàúgó* "Daughter of the eagle"

b. *Nwányi diikàrú* "A woman that is good"

c. *Ádà éjí éjée mbà* "A daughter that can be relied on in fireplaces"

As seen in the examples above, *Ádàúgó*, which means "Daughter of the eagle," uses the eagle as a symbol of strength, resilience, and prominence. The eagle is often seen as a powerful and noble creature in many African cultures, so by associating a daughter with the eagle, the name elevates her status, highlighting the value placed on strength and leadership for women. This reveals an ideological belief in the potential for women to embody power and autonomy, even within traditionally patriarchal structures.

Nwányi díkàrú, translated as "A woman that is good," emphasizes the ideal of goodness and moral integrity in women. This reflects a cultural ideology where women's worth is often tied to their ability to embody virtue, nurturing roles, and moral values within the family and society. The term suggests that a woman's societal value is measured not only by her actions but by her inherent qualities of goodness, which are highly revered in Igbo communities.

Ádà éjí éjée mbà, which means "A daughter that can be relied on in fireplaces," carries with it an expectation of domesticity and responsibility. The "fireplace" in Igbo culture is symbolic of the home, warmth, and care. By associating a woman with the ability to be relied upon in such a setting, the name reaffirms the traditional role of women as

caretakers and nurturers within the family. This praise name embodies the cultural ideology that sees women primarily in domestic roles, emphasizing their nurturing capabilities and the importance of their presence in maintaining the familial and social structure.

4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The analysis of Igbo feminine praise names reveals the complex role of women within the Igbo society, shaped by different ideologies.

Praise Name for Beauty

Praise names for beauty emphasize the importance of physical appearance, suggesting that a woman's value is often tied to her attractiveness. These names reflect an ideology where beauty plays a central role in the social evaluation of women.

Praise names for leadership and strength

In contrast, praise names for leadership and strength highlight the growing recognition of women's leadership roles, challenging traditional gender norms and celebrating women's authority and power in both domestic and

public spheres. The inclusion of women in positions of leadership, as seen in names like "Ọchiọrànwányiọmà" (A woman leader), reflects a progressive shift in cultural perspectives.

Praise Names for Character/Attributes

Praise names for character and attributes reinforce the ideal of women as caretakers, nurturing their families and embodying virtues such as respect, loyalty, and responsibility. These names reveal an enduring expectation for women to maintain traditional familial roles.

Praise Names for Wealth/Prosperity

Additionally, praise names for wealth and prosperity acknowledge women as symbols of financial success and generational wealth, highlighting their contributions to economic and familial stability.

Praise Names for Family and Relationships

Lastly, praise names reflecting family and relationships celebrate women as key figures in family structures, emphasizing their roles in maintaining social and moral order.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes the previous chapters of the study on language ideology of Igbo feminine praise names, as well present the findings, draw some conclusions and recommendations.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This research study was designed to look into language ideology of Igbo feminine praise names. The first chapter of the study focused on the background of the study. It introduced the topic, language of discuss, as well as stating the aim and objectives of the study, research questions, the statement of the research problem, scope of the study, methodology, and the significance of the study. The second chapter reviewed some relevant literature. The chapter was divided into three main sections, they were: conceptual review, previous studies, and lastly, the concern of the present

study. The third chapter looked into the theoretical framework employed for the research which was the Ideology theory framework. The chapter discussed what the theory framework was all about including its working principles, application of the theory, relevance/justification of the theory to the research, and lastly, how the theory can be applied to the analysis of the present study looking at the strengths of the theory with some sample data from Igbo. The fourth chapter has as its main concern the data presentation and analysis. The chapter concerned itself with the presentation of the data, analysis of the data, and lastly, the discussion of findings.

5.2 FINDINGS

The findings revealed the complex role of women within the Igbo society, shaped by different ideologies. Praise names for beauty emphasized the importance of physical appearance, suggesting that a woman's value is often tied to her attractiveness. In contrast, praise names for leadership and strength highlight the growing recognition of women's leadership roles, challenging traditional gender norms and celebrating women's authority and power in both domestic and public spheres. Praise names for character and

attributes reinforce the ideal of women as caretakers, nurturing their families and embodying virtues such as respect, loyalty, and responsibility. Praise names for wealth and prosperity acknowledge women as symbols of financial success and generational wealth, highlighting their contributions to economic and familial stability. Lastly, praise names reflecting family and relationships celebrate women as key figures in family structures, emphasizing their roles in maintaining social and moral order.

5.3 CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Igbo feminine praise names serve as a dynamic reflection of societal ideologies regarding gender, identity, and the role of women. These names reveal both traditional and evolving perspectives on women's beauty, leadership, character, and economic contributions. While they continue to emphasize physical appearance and familial roles, they also highlight the growing recognition of women's leadership, strength, and economic agency. The analysis shows that praise names are not only linguistic expressions but also vehicles of social values, mirroring shifts in Igbo culture towards more inclusive and empowering roles for women.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends further studies in this particular area and other aspect like the morphological aspect and the semantic aspect not touched in this study, they should be treated by linguist, scholars or any other researchers who have interest in Igbo feminine praise names or any dialect of the language.

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