Vowels and the Igala Language Resources

Mahmud Mohammed Momoh
Prince Abubakar Audu University
P.M.B 1008, Anyigba, Nigeria
mahmoodmohammed19@yahoo.com

Abstract

The aim of this article is to provide some insight into the link between diacritic orthography and the implicit sounds in these orthographies that are applied in writing the Igala Language corpus. 30 vowels were identified (5 short vowels, and 25 mid to long vowels of different variety) plus 8 diphthongs. Examples in the form of sentences and interpretation were provided. The article combines up to seven diacritic forms in order to better tackle the oft encountered problem of pronouncing words in texts written in foreign language by non-native speakers and learners with supporting indicators provided to guide end users on how to pronounce the words using the diacritic forms and vocal representation of these forms that are herein provided in the double slash oral transcription of the words.

Keywords: vowels, Igala, Language, Resources

1. Introduction

The Igala language is mainly spoken in the East Senatorial District of Kogi State, Nigeria (Oguagha, 1980) within a geographical coordinate lying between 6 3^0 and 8^0 north of latitude and 6 3^0 and 7 4^0 east of longitude (Saleh and Yunusa, 2013). The people occupy an area that is roughly around 4,982 miles of the Niger-Benue rivers by-pass numbering over 2 million speakers of the language (Saleh and Yunusa, 2013). Wikipedia.com[1] pointed out that; "the Igala is Yoruboid branch of the Volta–Niger language family, spoken by the Igala, Agatu, Idoma, and Bassa people". In the same vein Obayemi, (1980) recognized Igala as being, "among the more conspicuous entities in the Niger-Benue confluence area.

In this study, the key priority is to point out some important vowels and lexicons applicable to day-to-day communication in Igala land. It should be emphasized that the words indicated in this work are by no means 'self-exhaustive', for this is but just a drop out of the ocean of words in existence within the Igala lexicographical system. The Latin letters with their associated phonetic symbols and sound were used as reference points.

2 Vowels and Words in Igala Language

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of English* defined lexicon as; "all the words and phrases used in a particular language or subject; all the words and phrases used and known by a particular person or group of people" (Hornby, 2015). With respect to the Igala as with other languages, lexical formation begins with conjoining strings of phones or alphabets to form morphemes from which words are created. Currently, no known homemade or standard alphabetical or orthographical system exists for writing the Igala language except for the esoteric signs and markings; usually on the floor, used by traditional witchdoctors, which is not known to the vast majority of the people and that also did not serve formal purposes within society. In the midst of this foibles induced by this lack of inbred phonemes, writers beginning from the modern era, are known to either select the Latin phonetic symbols or the Arabic phonemes to replicate or transcribe words of Igala origin, what is at times referred to in West Africa as a'jami or ajami (Mc Laughlin, 2017).

Notwithstanding the fact that Igala is a tone-based language (Rodriguez, 2014; Dawson et al. 2015; Adeniyi, 2016), while attempting to study the structure of the Igala language, most of the attention of scholars has been on parts of speech, without much effort been dedicated towards tones and sounds with the result that without a prior knowledge of the language words written are hard to pronounce, in some cases not even with the English translation of these provided, and as for those categories of writers who tried to express tones using diacritic orthographies, without a prior knowledge of diacritic by the readers, it is still hard for the readers to decipher what was written,

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[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/igala

besides, through occasional failures of writers to provide double slash transcription boxes or oral parenthesis of sounds represented by orthographic symbols in their works, the fact that these symbols produce certain sounds from place to place and from one writer to the other makes it very hard for readers to grasp with the sound frame being inferred by these writers.

Abraham (2017; 2019) as well as, Emah and Ojonugwa (2020) while using diacritic orthography to write words, partly to show how differences in pitch change word meanings as was once observed by Yip (2002), failed to provide double slash transcription of the sounds represented by the orthographic symbols incorporated. Kigalaonline.wordpress.com[2] made an attempt that came close to remedying the above stated shortcomings but ended up identifying just three form each for the five main vowels and two supplementary vowels (ó and é to sound /ó:/ and /é:/ [Sic] - or as in the more commonly recognized phonological form /eu/ and /ei/), which gave only seventeen vowels at the expense of the 30 vowels + 8 diphthongs recognized in this very paper. This shortcoming is not limited to the Igala language alone. Other likewise languages that are still plodding around the threshold of traditional education by the start of the 20th Century, mostly in respect of the low-resourced language groups in Africa are also faced with this very problem, a development Ken Lodge, observed thus:

> Traditional education largely ignores spoken languages… little attention is paid to the details of speech in an objective way. We therefore need a method of describing speech in objective, verifiable terms as opposed to the lay approaches which typically describes sound as ''hard'', ''soft'', ''sharp'', and so on which can only be understood by the person using such description (Lodge, 2009).

In the context of this particular paper thus, Latin alphabets were adopted for fashioning Igala sounds, words, and phrasal forms using diacritic symbols bearing phonemic modes similar to Blench (2011). All the English phonemes were adopted except the letters, Q, V, S, X, and Z which were discarded consonants for lack of relevance as it is with Yoruba (Kasali et al. 2021) while the letter 'c' is applied only in combination

with the letter 'h' to produce the digraph /tʃ/ that is used for writing words such as *ūchōnā* (somebody's name meaning 'creator' or just 'the creator' in a more general sense of the word), as can be had with English words as chicken and kitchen. More also, the letter 'c' is not used in writing /k/ sounding words that are often written with the letter 'c' such as can /kæn/, neither can it be devoted to writing a sound /s/ bearing word such as ceiling for this would have been *sílīni* /si:lini/ or actually *chilīni* /tʃi:lini/ because of the still the more total absence of the 's' consonant within the Igala lexical system. Similarly, rather than write the word quantity with the letter 'q', in our own Igala orthography, the spelling of quantity would appear as 'kwontity'.

Writing vowels during word formation often involves the embracement of any one out of some three alternative styles. The first is the exclusive use of plain alphabets in which case only vowels that are unadorned with glyphs would be put to use. This first form does not embody the use of diacritic in any way and if vowel are to be crafted, that would depend upon the efficacious amalgam of plain alphabets to produce words that are not delineated in the existing letter ordering as in the spelling of the word Igalaa in wiktionary.org[3] in which case the underlined double 'a' in that word Igalaa does not merely suggest a long vowel (i.e.; /a:/) but a repetition of the vowels as /a/ + /a/ to give a sound much like a gliding 'are are'. The second form of these on-hand modes which this author here assume to be actually impractical depend exclusively on the use of diacritic, if not in writing the plain orthographic characters but in the scrawling of the oral parenthesis of words as in the *Webster's II New College Dictionary*. The third style involves the commixing of the other two diametrical forms, i.e.; the adoption of both the plain vowels and the diacritic–based vowels. Any of these three forms is cogent enough provided they goose-step along the conventional morphophonemic norms. It is the third form of these approaches- that of mixing plain Latin alphabet with Latin diacritic symbols, that would be utilized in this particular work.

In the oral parenthesis provided in the *Webster's II New College Dictionary* and thesaraus.yourdictionary.com,[4] short vowels were represented with the application of the breve- a form of diacritic that is presented like the lower half of a cycle above the vowels, i.e.; ă, ĕ, ĭ, ŏ, ŭ,

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[2]

https://kigalaonline.wordpress.com/2017/

[3] https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Igalaa
[4] https://thesaraus.yourdictionary.com/

but in writing this work, rather than to vent these letters using the breve, they were written just as plain as possible, i.e.; 'a, e, i, o, u'. Be that said, the other point of departure concern the sounds the other diacritic orthographies used by these esteem dictionaries produced with respect to our own keys here. In the *Webster's II New College Dictionary* (1999), the macron was adopted to produce the unique form of the long vowels ō ∼ /eu/ as in the word old /ōld/ in much of a respect used by Dawson et al. (2015) and ā ∼ as in the word said /sād/, but in this work, moved by the peculiarity of the Igala language which partially sets it apart from English and the prima facie claim by Wells (2001) that the macron is ratified for initiating a middle locus between the short vowels and the long vowels.

Macrons were therefore used in this work, not for the production of the ā = /ei/ and ō = /eu/ sounds for these are in this work illustrated by the use of the letters 'o' and 'e' with dots on top of them (i.e.; ȯ = /eu/ and ė = /ei/). Although, there are a few improvements lately, most of the previous writings, following mainly from the recommendation of the 1984 Igala Orthographic Committee which recognized the under dotted ọ and ẹ for the low tones o ∼ /oɟ/ | e ∼ /eɟ/ (i.e.; as in the spelling of *ọjọ* /oɟjoɟ/ in Okwoli (1996) and Ahiaba (2015), and *ẹrẹ* /eɟreɟ/ in Ayegba et al. (2017) for sounding the falling /o/ and /e/ sounds, while the quartet reserved the plain forms of 'o' and 'e' alphabets for the rising and falling forms of /eu/ and /ei/ sounds as used for Yoruba in aroadedictionary.com, most of these scholars recognized only 7 vowels plus a so called 24 consonant sounds (Ojoaogwu, 2017) or 32 symbols in whole according to Miachi and Armstrong (1986), which meant they left out a number of vowels and therefore downplaying the use of the macron in the work of succeeding writers with the only exceptions being Omachonu (2011) and to an extent, Dawson et al. (2015) who either used it in much of a respect as done in this paper or as was done in the *Webster's II New College Dictionary*.

Thus, the use of the macron in this article follows a model that is similar to its use by Karshima (2012) in respect to the Tiv language or in respect to the Igala word *ìkpā* (bag) in Rodriguez (2014); not to be confused with *íkpa* (knock knees), in which *ā* = /æ/ as in the American English pronunciation of the words 'plan' and 'stand' in oxfordlearnersdictionary.com as an intermediate tone between the sound /a/ and /a:/ of the IPA sound system, *ē* = /ɛ/ as in the English word

'any', i.e.; an intermediate tone between the sound /e/ and /e:/ of the IPA sound system) as was used in respect to the word *ònēkèlē* in Rodriguez (2015) which the author of this very paper would here again rewrite as *ōnēkēlē* (male), *ī* = /i:/ > /x/ > /i/, i.e.; an intermediate tone between the sound /i/ and /i:/ of the IPA sound system, *ō* = /ɔ/ as in the cardinal mid-back rounded 'o' used in sounding the English word 'but' or the Igala word *ōkō* /ɔkɔ/ in respect to airplane or ship which is in contrast to *òkò* /oɟkoɟ/ (millipede) or *okā* /okæ/ (style, i.e.; acrobatic) or *ókō* /o:kɔ/ (money), with 'ō' being an intermediate tone between the sound /o/ and /o:/ of the IPA sound system, *ū* = /u:/ > /x/ > /u/ as in Lithuanian, Livonian, and Maori,[5] i.e.; an intermediate tone between the sound /u/ and /u:/ of the IPA sound system. The x in the oral parentheses represents the indefinite phonemic sound for the diacritic orthographies ī & ū ∼ x. Decision to jettison the breve in this paper has a twofold underling. First was to ensure the design of a coherent orthographic system with pure vowels used in their original orthographic forms as it is in most English language texts, notwithstanding whatever graphical modification or characterization that the addition of impending glyphs to the first letter thenceforth might confer. The second reason propped from the need to eschew the immanent supererogatory burden of having to write them with an added character when they could remain plain or without partial alteration and still maintain their functions as short vowels.

The desuetude towards the breve as done here was not a deliberate attempt to undo the merits of the *Webster's II New College Dictionary*, their discretion are still very valid, specifically with respect to the study of the English language. This writer is well abreast with the unequivocal fact that left with a vagaries of indicative keys to choose from, it is always incumbent upon each writer to cherry-pick both the phonotactical and the morphotactical forms that are amenable to the language being worked on (Pretorius and Bosch, 2009), it should however be noted that the use of ā = /ei/ and ō = /eu/, despite not being wrong in any sense, doesn't nonetheless conforms with the original phonological flow pattern enshrined in their root alphabet 'a' which produces the sounds /a/ and /a:/, and 'e' which produces the sounds /e/ and /e:/. Bearing in mind the fact that the middle tone is sometimes perceived to be a conflation of two vowels (i.e.; /e/ + /i/ = /ei/ and /e/ + /u/ = /eu/

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[5] https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ū

as it is in English), then it would not be totally wrong to say that the editors of the *Webster's II New College Dictionary* were right in their own right to have used the macron in the context they employed it, besides, language analyst do agree that, 'there is no such thing as a standard form when it comes to matters of language' (Laperre 2020) and as Szczegielniak laconically hinted, "spelling or orthography does not consistently represent the sounds of language".[6] Thus, in Igala language, middle tone implies is a position between a long vowel and a short vowel such as the middle sound between the high /a:/ and the low /a/, i.e.; an 'a' that has a higher tone than /a/ but yet is still less pitched than /a:/ represented as x > /a/ < /a:/.

This writer would have loved to have the alphabet *ė* which is hereby sounded /ei/ written as *ȧ*, but because most words in the language are already written with the letter 'e' to sound /ei/, as in words such as *ugbede* /ugbeidei/ or *ele* /eilei/, the author therefore chose to maintain the letter *ė* which comes closer to the now more popular tradition. The decision to use the alphabet *ȧ* instead of *ė* would have matched perfectly with the use of the over dotted 'o' (ȯ) to produce the sound /eu/. The use of the macron itself becomes vital considering the fact that, most words in the Igala language are sounded within this mid tone context.

As in writing the Yoruba language or French (Olufemi, 2022; Nolte et al. 2018), the acute and the grave forms of diacritic were also used although with a contrastive difference in phonation between the Igala words written here using this form that is different from French as regards to the word *café*, in which case, the *é* as in the French and in the form used by Rodriguez (2014) in relation to the word '*édʒú*' ~ /eidʒu:/ (face), is pronounced /ei/, more like the English word rake /reik/, whereas, the orthography *é* as it relates with the Igala and sometimes with the Yoruba; as with the word *òrɛ́* (friend) in (Oshodi, 2016) ~ /ɔlre:/, is nonetheless pronounced /e:/ as in English. Thus, we must agree with Cahill, (2019) that, in using diacritic tools, "the challenge is that the tone marks are usually not consistent among scholars", with the result that, a letter é that is pronounced as /e:/ in one instance or by one scholar is pronounced at another instance or by another scholar as /ei/ as in spelling of *wálɛ́* ~ /wa:lei/ (come home) in Dalamu (2019) which is at variance with Oshodi (2016)'s /e:/ above.

Here too, the grave accent (i.e.; *à, è, ì, ò, ù*) was used to indicate the low tones as was done in Yip (2002). The use of certain diacritic marks in this work might be counted as inappropriate as is now apparent with respect to how the macron is used here which is already in conflict with how it was used in the *Webster's II Dictionary* or how any of these marks are represented in other languages such as French, Dutch, Portuguese, Italian, and Mohawk[7] (Finegan, 2012).

A critic might ask to know why 'this author did not use the breve diacritic in writing the short vowels', which has already been reflected upon above. To cover any anomaly that emanates from how certain things are represented in this work, enabling tools with instructions regarding how to pronounce the diacritic forms is provided, with the hope that the writer of this piece and the readers might be on a common wavelength in comprehending what has been put down. Hence, words having these marks which as this writer suppose might not follow the existing methods in some languages, can be pronounced; if not so perfectly, it would be 'nearly perfect'.

The Igala vowels are still yet not limited to the above mentioned accent forms. In this study, it is revealed that some vowels are a combination of double sound of the same vowel either ways raised between short or long vowel and then pitched lowly or highly with the corresponding vowel (like a bend), as was done with respect to that closing tone in the word Igalaa.[8] For this category of vowels, the author came up with the idea of having orthographies with macrons on top of them that are further capped with a grave or the acute diacritic but only two of the short vowels è, é and ȍ, ȏ could meet this requirement, and so the author thought of remedying this problem with the use of the circumflex having either the acute or the grave diacritic mark on top of them, i.e.; ấ, ầ, but only the letter 'a' has this feature out of the other three still missing letters conveying the short vowels (a, i. and u). The next that could be done was to check for diacritic graphemes that have the features that can best solve the 'u' and the 'i' problem (regarding this category of sound), but this author once again stumbled upon the idea of using the 'u' dieresis capped with either the grave or the acute mark, i.e.; ǘ and ǜ, but the 'i' symbols was still missing, and so, the author thought of using the Greek small letter iota with psili and varia (ἲ) and ἴ small letter iota with psili and oxia

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[6] https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/adam

[7] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grave_

[8] https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Igalaa

which the author found as the only current fitting option for use here.

2.1 Contextual Usage of Vowels

In writing the orthographic forms of Igala vowels, one would thus have 30 of these, with each of the short vowels producing 5 variants each while from the glyph ò and è can be gotten an additional 8 diphthongs. In the *Webster's II New College Dictionary*, orthographic characters and phonetic sounds adhering or being inherent in the long vowels of the English language were written in the forms; /â/ or /ä/ = /a: /, /ê/ = /e: /, /ē/ = /i: /, /ô/ = /o: /, /û/ = /u: /, /ā/ = /ei/, and ō = /eu/. In this work the above 5 high tones were replicated as *á* = /a: /, *é* = /e: /, *í* = /i: /, *ó* = /o: /, *ú* = /u: /. Added to these long vowels are the 5 short vowels *a* = /a/, *e* = /e/, *i* = /i/, *o* = /o/, *u* = /u/. There are also 5 macron diacritic to produce the intermediate of these vowels, *ā, ē, ī, ō, ū*, whose vocal forms have been explained above.

There are 5 long vowels that are stressed with falling tones, i.e.; as in *à* = /a˩/, *è* = /e˩/, *ì* = /i˩/, *ò* = /o˩/, *ù* = /u˩/. With the exception of the orthographic symbol 'o' which is capped with the double grave and double acute accent (i.e.; ȍ /o˩˩/ and ő /o::/) used to express the extra-low and the extra-high accent of the /o/ sound, the other four orthographies bearing the primary vowels (a, e, i, and u) whose logographic form (as lone orthographies) expresses the pronouns '*a*' (me), '*e*' (you), '*i*' (s/he or it), and '*u*' (first person me) which do convey emphasis and mood, have dieresis-like rise-rise inflective sounds with one, the combine '*a*' (*â* = /a:a:/) having a circumflex on top of it with an acute glyph capping the circumflex. Others are, the combined '*e*' (*ế* = /e:e:/) which has a macron glyphs on top of it with an acute accents capping the macron, one other has a dieresis glyph with a grave accent on top of the glyph (*ű* = /u:u:/), and the fourth is the Greek iota with psili and varia with the combined '*i*' (*ῗ* = /i:i:/). Each of these 4 vowel begin with short forms of vowels that are succeeded by corresponding long vowels of the same sound bracket within given syllables, more like ending the sound flow in the middle but yet again stressing it forward (an intermittent break that is followed by a change in flow).

Following a reverse, there are also 4 fall-fall inflective sounds, 'a' (*ầ* = /a˩a˩/) took on a circumflex on top of it with a grave glyph on top of the circumflex, 'e' (*ề* = /e˩e˩/) has a macron glyph on top of it with a grave accents on top of

the macron, 'u' (*ǜ* = /u˩u˩/) has a dieresis glyph with a grave accent on top of the glyph, and the fourth is the Greek iota with psili and oxia 'i' (*ῒ* = /i˩i˩/), to make 4 of these, all having the sound of the pure vowels combined with the corresponding low tones within given syllables, more like ending the flow of the sound in the middle but yet again stressing it lower. Thus, this writer shall try to justify the assumption of the other 30 vowels as adduced.

For letter 'a';
á lōn (we didn't go), *a lò* (we went), *ā lòn* (let us not go), *à l* + (*ò capped with an acute diacritic accent* (?) (should we go?), *ắ lōn*? (won't we go?), *ầ lō*? (are we going?).

For letter 'e';
é wán (you didn't come), *e wā* (you came), *ē wān* (don't come), *è wā*? (will you come?), *ế wān*? (won't you come?), and *ề d'ōmō*? (will you be there?).

For letter 'i';
í wán (s/he didn't come), *i wā* (s/he came), *ī wān* (s/he should not come), *ì wā*? (should, she/he come?), *ῗ wān*? (shouldn't s/he come?), and *ῒ d'ōmō*? (is s/he there?).

For letter 'o';
óna (as for a man), *onā* (dream), *ōna* (road), *òkò* (millipede), *őgbá* (front), and *ȍgbā* (as demarcation of land).

For letter 'u';
ú kān (I didn't say), *u ka* (I said), *ū ka tān'* (let me not say yet), *ù ká*? (should I say?), *ű kān*? (won't I say?), *ǜ kān*? (should I not say?).

2.2 Diphthongs

In writing the Igala token, the 'mid-tones' 'ò' and 'è' with respect to the sounds /eu/ and /ei/ do not always remain the same for some of these sounds could be in context short, intermediate or long in tone, meaning that up to eight varieties of these two sounds can be gotten but in the main time, the author could only come about four glyphs for writing them, that being *ė* = /ei/, *ā̇* = /eiei/, *ȯ* = /eu/, and *ō̇* = /eueu/. These eight sounds are generated from the first vowels /e/ + /i/ = /ei/ and /e/ + /u/ = /eu/, out of which we have 8 diphthongs, although some of these are not currently portrayed by any orthographic symbol. There would thus be the need for additional symbols, i.e.; dotted '*ė*' or '*ȧ*' and *ȯ* orthographies with a grave or acute accents placed (either ways) on top of the dots on each to sound /eiei˩/ and /eueu˩/ or /eiei:/ and /eueu:/.

The author would take just one example on this in respect of the word ele as is currently spelt which could mean gift or python. Here, the author has spelt them èlè only as a matter of necessity for if they are to be spelt in their actual sense, the more fitting orthography for these could not all be gotten on the IPA list of symbols on Microsoft word, but this nonetheless (the act of writing them with dotted 'e', i.e.; èlè) brings one closer to not confusing the spelling of the word as merely ele to mean four, 'well fried', or the other two instances (gift and python). For if the author was to spell the word python correctly, that would probably be, (*ė with an acute on top of the dot*) or (*ė:*) + *lè*, while gift would be, (*ė with an acute on top of the dot*) or (*ė:*) + *l* + (*ė with an acute on top of the dot*) or (*ė:*), while palm kernel oil would just be *ėnė*, 'lies' would be (*ė with a grave on top of the dot*) or (*ė:l*) + *mī*, as leaf would be (*ė with an acute on top of the dot*) or (*ā*) + *nghmi*. The same applies to the letter ò where the fruit of the Palmyra palm ought to be *(ò with an acute on top of the dot) + d + (ò with an acute on top of the dot)*, *òbè* (ant hill), which ought to be *(ò with a grave on top of the dot) or (ė:)* + *bè*, while 'peep' would have been *ò + p + ė* or just '*òpè* as in the statement ''*kp'òpė kā g'ēnē ki yā wā*'' (make a peep let's see who's coming).

2.3 Elision and other forms of Vowel Combination

Since the Igala language 'somewhat' follows the 'French Lemon Rule' or the VCV (vowel – consonant – vowel) Rule for it is rare to have situation where vowels follow themselves concurrently during words formation. Even in one instance where this rule is broken as shall be demonstrated below, this is more the result of an elision of a corresponding consonant sound than a naturally fixed format for that word. The only known exception to this rule is in respect to the word *ābū* which means 'how' or 'what', or where', in which case, speakers tend to deliberately elicit the /b/ consonant or both the /b/ and and the succeeding /u/ vowels during communication for only the vowel /a/, or /a/ with /u/ in respect to the word *mà* (them) is educed so that when succeeded with the suffices *ū* (I or me), *ē* (you), *ā* (we), *ī* (she/he/it), and *mà* (them), the word becomes sounded as *ā'ū* (how or what did I, as in the sentence "*ā'ū kā*?" (how or what did I say), *ā'ē* (how or what did you, as in the sentence "*ā'ē mā*?" (how do you know), *ā'ā* (how or what did we, as in the statement, "*ā'ā chė*?" (how or

what did we do), *ā'ī* (how or where did she/he/it, as in the sentence, "*ā'ī lė*?" (how or where did she/he/it go), and *ā'ū mà* or *ā'mà* (how or what do they, as in the sentence "*ā'ū mà kō*" or "*ā'mā kō*?" (What or how did they write?). Although, these other forms are used as substitute for *ābū*, they don't however constitute a better alternative to *ābū* which is the actual form of how the word should be used for these are only corrupt versions of that word *ābū*.

More also, when writing sentences in the Igala language, certain letters are omitted from some words to avoid creepiness, muddiness or jumpiness and in the place of these omitted alphabets the apostrophe is used as a way of showing these elisions. The hyphen can be used to write certain words but for a writer who has a better understanding of the parts of speech, the use of the hyphen becomes almost unnecessary, but rather than committing the error of agglutinating the words or creating ambiguity problems in word usage as was observed by Malema et al. (2020), with a better understanding of inherent speech parts, it would have been preferable to have these words hyphenated. Since vowels are not re-echoed, the use of the umlaut or dieresis as is common with some Northern European languages or English is not common since there was no need for any two vowels to be cluttered to be vocalized. More so, since there are currently no homegrown phonemic orthographies at the moment or because the development of a standardized version of the Igala language is still an evolving process, there is the need to check against the practice in the English language sound system where vowels could produce multiple sounds or where certain sounds are repeated even when the repetition is almost nearly unnecessary, as one will have with the repetition of the letter 'l' in the word 'ball', or the repetition of the 'g' in 'egg'.

In English, letters as used in certain words do not usually follow a uniform pattern, i.e., letter 'a' (which could sound as /ei/ as in 'cake' or /æ/ as in 'can' /kæn/, or /o:/ as in ball and as in /a:/ in 'cart'), letter 'e' (which could sound as /e/ as in 'end' or /i/ as in 'elastic' or 'penis'), letter 'i' (which could pronounced as /i/ as in ink or /ai/ as in kite), letter 'o' (which could sound like /o/ as in on or /o:/ as in off, and as /u/ or /u:/ as in oops or ooze when repeated or as /ʌ/, /o/, or /u:/ when letter 'u' comes immediately in front of letter 'o' in a spelling as we have in the words coupling or thought or coup), letter 'u' (which could be pronounced as /u/ as in book or /u:/ as in boom or /ʌ/ as in umbrella, or as /3:/ as in urban when r is

placed after letter u). Like the Hungarian language or other languages that do not depend exclusively on the use of the plain alphabet but employs some measure of diacritic to widen the range of available alphabets so as to accommodate more letters that are produced distinctly, while writing the Igala language, we must not necessarily change the sound of a monophony by that mere rule that some words having similar spelling be pronounced differently, neither are additional phoneme added to a vowel or a consonant as a way of changing the sound that the carrying letter is supposed to produce into another phonetic sound as we have with the English words plough or bought, and fort and resort. This problem of pronunciation could pose some headache to a new learner of the English language.

3 Conclusion

This paper provides an overview of vowels used in the Igala language. Vowels are central to word formation and without them speech making becomes impossible. These vowels combine with the consonant sound to form words but this is not to say that without the consonant sounds, certain words cannot be verbalized or written as in the case of the Igala language where certain words can be written without the combination of consonant sounds with the consonant sounds as it applies to the four vowels, a, e. i, u which by standing alone means something. This is largely the result of the fact that, the Igala language has a wide ranging tone system.

4 Limitation of the Study

As an under-resourced indigenous language whose contextual study as a culture transmitting agent is relatively new (Ojoajogwu, 2017), approaches towards formalization of the Igala language in a more modern sense has been done scantily but also indiscriminately in ways that are devoid of any serious scientific consideration, more so that those who made attempt at writing the language are either not language specialist who understand scientific rudiments regarding the rules of language as it relates with grammar and tone pattern and structure, or were individuals who were too hasty in a way that deep thinking regarding the depth and breadth of both grammar and tones contained in the language were not attended to at great depth. It was therefore not surprising that among some of the available materials that contain words, sentences and meanings, one often see variations in diacritic forms used to demonstrate tones and pronunciation from scholar to scholar and in some cases certain diacritic orthographies that can represent some tones are left out. Added to this is also a variation with respect to accent and tribal differences in tones from one area to the other which has further influence the work output of the various writers. This factor therefore contribute to the first limitation of this very study, because understanding the inherent flaws regarding the inappropriate diacritic orthographies adopted by other writers, the very writer developed separate tools representing several tones, which while being scientifically logical, nonetheless, confine exclusively not to any previous methods used by the earlier writers.

Although, prior to this current work, no effort was made to study the oral form of the Igala language from the basic in a more comprehensive form, such as is done in this paper, a fact which accounted for the neglect of some vowel forms represented by special symbols as stated above. But vowels were not the only orthographies left out for even consonant orthographies that present a single symbol as a unit of consonant cluster such as the 'c' with an over dot, i.e.; ċ, or the caron or hacek as it is at times called; č, both of whom represent the sound /ch/ in other world languages, as with respect to the English word 'church', and the symbol ŋ which is supposed to represent a single unit of the cluster /ng/ as in the *word 'ānyīngā'* (finger nail) which ought to have been *'āɲīŋā'* or the 'ny' cluster (ɲ) is hardly used. While the non-use of these orthographies by previous writer posed some limitation with respect to how this very writer would have written syllables that should carry these orthographies, it was also a limitation of this study because this very writer failed to do otherwise from what has been held down for so long owing to English influence on the writing of the Igala language. While the tilde ñ which bear the /nn/ cluster and which is occasionally used by some of the earlier writers, albeit with some misconception here and there, in this work, words boiling around this very sign were not used and for that reason, the sign was bypassed, but in future attempt, it shall be treated with special consideration.

Added to the above two limitations is the fact that some orthographies representing vowels do not currently exist to exhibit these sounds on the IPA list of symbols on Microsoft word as pointed out in the body of the work, or perhaps these symbols exists but because of the limited knowledge of this author regarding how some of the symbols are

pronounced, they could not be accounted for by the author. This fact also poses a limitation of its own. Added to this missing vowels or undiscovered vowels by this author is the absence of a single symbol for the consonant clusters 'kw', 'kp', nw, and 'gh'. This writer is aware that the over dotted p (ṗ), is currently used with respect to writing the Yoruba language, a development that some writers of Igala language have become accustomed to with respect to writing the 'kp' cluster as one would have with the Yoruba name 'Tōṗē' which is pronounced as /topke/ or /tōkpē/, but this symbolization of the /kp/ sound with 'ṗ' calls for question since it is not the first phone on the cluster. Could it then be that this symbolization is the result of the fact that, there is no over dotted 'k' on the IPA list of symbols or because the 'p' in the combination forms a more voiced phoneme than the 'k' or it is because the people by choice, chose to write like that? As for the 'kw' cluster, should the under lined k̲ (the qaph) merely remain as ق as it is in the Arabic orthography or another use as a single unit for presenting the 'kw' cluster be found in it within the Latin orthographic symbols for those languages whose writing systems are still evolving?

5   Ethical Statement

While there is very little effort towards developing the Igala language into a formalized medium of written communication or the fact that effort towards its preservation should take preference over its deterioration or is key for undertaking a paper work such as the one undertaken here, extra care must be taken towards avoiding unnecessary abuse of content. That fact took a central stage in the consideration of this author while compiling this piece. This writer therefore takes responsibility for whatever infraction that might arise from the consumption or application of this work.

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