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A Sociophonological Model for Orthographies in the New World Democracy by C.U.C. Ugorji

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Abstract

This paper proposes the new direction for orthography construction and reforms in a democratized society. It is directed towards the implementation of the new world democratic ideologies, reduction in inter and intra-lingual suspicion and conflicts as well as reduction in language and dialect attrition. Notably, the Universal Declaration of Human rights1948, the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights1996, the Declaration of Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities1992, among others, specify the linguistic and cultural ideologies of the new world democracy which seek to assert the linguistic rights of individuals and communities. In pursuit of this ideology, dominant research efforts, among other things,

are directed towards identifying and vitalising endangered linguistic species. Although research addressing the implementation of these ideals is fast growing, little or no concern for orthographies in particular, is demonstrated in this paper; it demonstrates how the requirements of the new world democratic ideologies may be implemented in orthography development and management and reforms; in overt regard for the ethnolinguistic sensibilities of individuals and communities.

To achieve this, a sociophonological framework for orthographies is proposed in contradistinction to the traditional phonemic approach, based on the African experience. In this conception, we suggest contrastive social meaning as a basis for characterizing the significant sounds, the candidates for the graphisation, in place of sound-meaning contrast. It thus accounts for all properties of speech that bear significant social meaning, including socio-cultural identity for given dialect communities. It is considered that the sociolinguistically significant units of language encode contrastive social meaning, within which all essential grammatically significant units are automatically inclusive. In other words, addressing those elements which in pronunciation enable a listener to identify the speaker as a member of a given historic regional community includes at the same time those which may be contrastive within the traditional minimal pair test. With language and dialect communities as its domain, its outcome is democratic orthographies for the world's languages which are designed as close as possible to the spoken forms of language varieties and sociolinguistic equity, among others.

Keywords: orthography, graphization, sociophonological model, dialect, community

1.   Introduction

Orthography refers to the systems constructed to make the writing of languages possible. It results from language planning or engineering efforts and includes writing rules as well. Thus, the primary concern of such planning is generally for the corpus of linguistic materials. It may be directed towards the development of a given language resources to

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achieve literacy, vernacularisation, indigenisation, internationalisation, modernisation, etc. depending on the policy of a given government. Stated generally, orthography for a language is part of the basic resources of a language which is created through a rational language development initiative usually by experts and the political class, in more ideal circumstances. It involves assigning alphabets or symbols to speech sounds or features to enable literacy in a given language or its varieties guided by certain principles (see Williamson1984). It may also be referred to as a process of graphisation; that is, evolving a writing system. As part of language planning and management initiative, corpus planning is at one and the same time coordinated with status or function planning; and thus, may be directed towards establishing or altering the functions of languages or their varieties in given nations, solving communication problems, or problems associated with language use in given domains or simply as part of the maintenance and management of language when considered part of socio-economic resources and equitable distribution of such resources for maximum benefits. It therefore has implications for the esteem of linguistic groups (cf.Fishman1980), the linguistic rights of minorities as well as speakers of major languages; namely, it can promote or prevent the use of a language or its varieties, discourage or encourage and empower speakers or otherwise by according higher status to favoured varieties and hence their speakers and lower status to unfavoured varieties and their speakers. But bearing in mind that language loyalty may be stronger than national loyalty (Ugorji2005a, Emenanjo2002, Lutz1995, etc.), language planning must respect equity and the linguistic rights of individuals and communities in the new world democracy.

Auspiciously, the new world democracy is an expression of faith in fundamental human rights. The Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996) considers linguistic rights as human rights. It includes directing actions towards preserving linguistic diversities so as to permit effective participation of language communities in the new growth model, and fostering sustainable development based on the participation of all and on respect for the ecological balance of societies and for equitable relationships among all languages and cultures. Such requires that language policies should show sensitivity to the demands for those procedures which emphasize freedom, equality,

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accommodation, enthronement of fundamental human and linguistic rights and the dignity of humans. The declaration of linguistic rights is informed by the following facts:

> that language communities are currently under pressure from dangers arising from a lack of self-government…uncodified language, or a cultural model opposed to the dominant one, which make it impossible for many languages to survive and develop unless the following basic goals are taken into account:
>
> - In a political perspective, the goal of conceiving a way of organising linguistic diversity so as to permit the effective participation of language communities in the new growth model…
> - In an economic perspective, the goal of fostering sustainable development based on the participation of all and on respect for the ecological balance of societies and for equitable relationships between all languages and cultures.

Its point of departure is language communities, not nations. The policies must also be sensitive to the fact that in plural polity, all languages are equal; and all dialects are equal, and should therefore make no room for dispossessing any individual or group (cf. Emenanjo2002). These democratic requirements are clearly enunciated in the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights 1996, the Declaration of Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities1992, among others. Whereas the former stresses linguistic rights as human rights in tandem with the Universal Declaration of Human rights1948, the latter emphasises equitable relationships between all languages and cultures. Important to this perspective is the Universal Declaration of the Collective Rights of Peoples1990, which declared that all peoples have the right to express and develop their culture, language and rules of organization and to this end, to adopt political, educational, communications and governmental structures of their own within different political frameworks.

This democracy arouses self-consciousness in individuals, people groups and nations and spurs them to assert themselves and their independence towards stronger

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cohesion, cultural integration and unity among peoples. This is considered to constitute part of successful resistance to cultural and linguistic imperialism worldwide, and part of the need to promote democratic and egalitarian ideals in language use. In the new world democratic sensibility then, recognition for ethno-linguistic loyalty is an imperative; and at its base are the cultural, sub-cultural, linguistic and sub- linguistic (or dialect) entities which constitute the aggregate macro ethno-linguistic and socio-cultural characteristics of given people or community groups (Ugorji, forthcoming).

2.0   The Traditional Paradigm in Orthography Development

2.1   Phonemic Approach

As a fundamental goal in language planning and development, orthography construction generates the set of symbols or letters (usually sourced from the Latin alphabets) which constitute the system of alphabets or graphemes for the given language. This represents the convention adopted for African and European languages (cf.Williamson1984, Mountford1990). In such alphabet systems, the phoneme is the basic unit of representation (Comrie2005). The principle in general is to use the spoken form as a guide to isolate the sounds of a language through a minimal-pair test. All the sounds that are found distinctive or contrastive within such minimal environments qualify for representation in the alphabet system constituting the normative inventory. Those that do not qualify are often discarded. It represents at one and the same time a search for a normative inventory, particularly for pedagogic purposes. This search for the normative inventory may be based on a given regional variety of the language, a range of regional dialects, an amalgam of dialects which may be non-contiguous or an idealized or (near-) artificial variety, which enable literacy in a variety often distant from the regional ones. Just as sounds that fail the minimal-pair test may be discarded, the dialects not favoured in the selection are disregarded; and are instead made pupils for literacy in the normative alphabets and the dialect that forms its base. This norm generally assumes permanence over time if no reforms arise.

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The implication of this approach is that speakers of the varieties that are disregarded are themselves disregarded and when discarded sounds or features mark regional varieties, lexical items from such dialect communities bearing such unrecognised sounds may not be 'preservable' in writing or may be documented as far as the orthography permits with some makeshift symbols which are readable in the dialect that forms the base of the orthography but not in the one from where it is sourced. As writing systems express meaning through visual means, one part of such meaning relates to the structural part while the other is socio-cultural, relating meaning to identity. A language community's identity might be at stake when orthography construction fails to accord its sounds due recognition. We also note that sounds or features that fail the phonemicity test may either be those in free variation or complementary distribution or simply allophonic variants. These disqualified elements of the sound system may however contain information on the community from where the lexical items containing them are sourced and/or more crucially, the social or ethnic background of the speakers. Another important factor in orthography development is its institutional backing. It is usually a joint concern of linguists, language educators and governments. The outcome of the orthography engagement constitutes part of the standards which are institutionally imposed (see also Przedlacka2001). This links the enterprise with power and authority such that the polity may not be given room to negotiate her involvement or otherwise, as may be desired. People are thus made to cultivate such orthography by education or related institutions. These undermine the need to promote democratic and egalitarian ideologies in language use within a multilingual or multidialectal polity. Moreover, its association with prestige compels shifts towards it on pragmatic grounds. This prevalent approach is judged inadequate in the community or people oriented democratic perspective of the present study. Some of these inadequacies are summarised in the outline that follows:

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2.2   Some Shortcomings

In multilingual and hence pluri-cultural situations, the traditional phonemic approach proves unsatisfactory in view of democratic ideologies for the following reasons, among others:

- It induces shift from people's dialects which as language constitute communities' socio-cultural heritage; thus dispossessing them.

- It fails to permit literacy in those dialects resulting in a consequent underdevelopment or attrition of those varieties.

- It compels writing of regional dialect data only in the 'standard' orthography which may distort information or make it difficult to associate the written material with the dialect from which it was sourced.

- It implies that regional varieties are substandard forms and their speakers are associated with low esteem as a result, demeaning their ethnolinguistic sensibilities.

- It violates the rights of regional variety speakers to communicate (in writing) in their God-given linguistic heritage; making pejorative their sense of dialect loyalty which is a property of cultures and communities; and as Viereck (2006) points out, to enslave a people one only had to shatter its cultural pride; and one most effective way to do this is to disturb the people's linguistic confidence.

- For early literacy, the imposition of the standard variety through the orthography may be thought a little short of teaching the child in a foreign language. This contradicts the ideologies of bi-lingualism and bi-dialectalism in education (Trudgill1974, Fishman1980, and Mmadike2000).

- It diminishes oral data or makes inaccessible some dialect data or some subtle features thereof which may be crucial to literary research

- Given that an orthography system carries social identity for the language community thereof, communities suffer loss of identity or confused identity when

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their speech forms are processed through the speech of another language or dialect community favoured by the orthography.

- It reduces linguistic resources as dialects may merge with the standard one over time or die out of disuse and/ or non-codification.

- It fails to respect the new world democratic requirements in preserving the linguistic ideology of communities, individuals and human rights in general, as well as linguistic diversities when language is considered part of bio-diversity.

Most obviously, the traditional approach with its base on a phonemic schema for generating the grapheme inventory of languages is defective, particularly for its lack of relevant capacity for the preservation of cultural and linguistic ideologies which are of the essence in the new world democracy. There is no doubt however that this paradigm has served an important purpose in enabling literacy in the first place; but in view of the democratic ideologies of modern times, it is simply not productive; hence the new paradigm which we now propose.

3.0   Paradigm Shift: A Sociophonological Model

In view of the inadequacies of the traditional paradigm, a paradigm shift is now proposed. It is a sociophonological model. The basic units of this model are sociolinguistically defined to include all elements of spoken language which mark grammatical and social meaning in language use as linguistic meaning. Whereas grammatical distinctiveness may refer to structural meaning, social meaning is suggested by those elements which may be associated with sociocultural identity in language use.

It's basic assumptions include that the universal norm is neither monolingualism nor monoculturism but multilingualism and multiculturism or cultural and political pluralism; and as there is a symbiotic relationship between human language and culture so is there between '(sub)languages' or dialects and subcultures; and what affects a language and its culture(s) also affects its varieties (dialects) and its subcultures. Dialects, like languages, are viewed as peoples' heritage. A concern for dialects and the people

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who speak them as well as the (sub)cultures they express is ethical and an imperative in the new world democracy(Ugorji2005b). It assumes also a democratised society and targets the implementation of the new world democratic ideologies. Its domain is language and dialect communities; where 'dialect' is defined in its narrow sense as any regional variety of a language and 'community' refers to a minimum of historic people dwellers. We also stress that the concern of this model is for language as a social phenomenon. The latter stands in contrast to the traditional paradigm which is schemed within the theoretical frames of the then dominant Classical and Generative schools, to who the concern of linguistics and language should be with grammar or language structure (see Uwajeh2002), not as a social entity.

The traditional paradigm in orthography construction which aims to develop phonemic orthographies along the lines of sound-meaning contrasts is in the viewpoint of the present study inadequate. What we propose is contrastive social meaning as a basis for characterizing the significant sounds, the candidates for the graphisation which we here propose to include all properties of speech that bear social meaning, including socio-cultural identity for given dialect communities. In other words, in addition to those sounds which may be contrastive within the traditional minimal pair test, we also have those which in pronunciation enable a listener to identify the speaker as a member of a given historic regional community. This kind of social identification through pronunciation should now be possible in writing when a writer chooses to write his dialect or some other dialect he wishes to identify or be identified with. It should also be noted that as a speaker makes a choice among the languages or dialects he possesses proficiency in during interaction, so one is free to write (in) any dialect in which he has proficiency. Within this conception, sound-meaning contrast is a basic part of contrastive social meaning. Whereas the former is narrow and restrictive, the latter is holistic, encapsulating sociolinguistic features in addition, which characterize language or dialect as a people's socio-cultural heritage, for which any undue restrictions amount to a deprivation of a people or socio-cultural violence. In other words, the democratic orthography in its principle provides for all phonological (or socio-phonological) features which characterise given dialect communities such that any linguistic materials drawn

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from them and written may readily be identifiable as a linguistic property of the dialect community from which it is sourced.

Our sociophonological model therefore considers all sociolinguistically significant elements of the phonology of a given language salient to a graphisation enterprise in a democratised polity. Generally, since it is given that a good orthography is one that derives from the spoken language (cf.Williamson1984), spoken forms of a language, including its dialects, remain crucial to a graphisation enterprise (cf. Viereck2006).

3.1 An African Language Illustration

We may now consider further the merits of the sociophonological model by demonstrating the defects of the traditional approach using an African language example which I have studied (Ugorji, forthcoming); it appears typical. The language is Igbo. The Igbo constitute one of the most populous ethno-linguistic groups in Nigeria; and Igbo language is one of the three major national languages in Nigeria. It is characterized by numerous dialects with associated subcultures and linguistic peculiarities; and dialect loyalty is quite real among the dialect groups (see Uwalaka2001, Ugorji2005a, etc.). The main dialect groups are found in Abia, Anambra, Bayelsa, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Enugu, Imo and Rivers states of Nigeria. Igbo language belongs to the New Benue-Congo phylum (Williamson and Blench2000). The land, the people and the language are corporately and severally referred to as Igbo, pronounced [ìg͡bò]. The standard variety on which the orthography is based lacks a specifiable regional community. It is an elite variety associated with education for those whose literacy includes Igbo; and used in pan-Igbo fora, news broadcasts, Igbo textbooks, and as a medium of instruction in lower primary school levels, Igbo grammar and literature lessons or courses, among others.

The standard Igbo orthography recognises 26 consonants and these are <b ch d f g gb gh gw h j k kp kw l m n ṅ nw ny p r sh t w y z>. All lexical resources of the language are as a rule required to be written by means of these consonants and a limited set of vowels, which are <i e o u> and <ị a ọ ụ>, in two harmony groups. Questions then arise

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as to how lexical items from some dialects may be written where no symbols are provided them in the grapheme inventory. Let us consider some of such cases using sample dialects, beginning with consonants:

3.1.1   Consonants

1.   In Mbieri, a central Igbo dialect community, there is a preponderance of a voiceless alveolar stop made with an ingressive airstream. It is a distinguishing feature of this dialect such that one is readily identified as a member of this dialect community once this feature characterises one's speech. It is readily analysable as a dialect variant of the <t>. Consider the following data (the ingressive stop is here represented by a sub-dotted <t>):

àṭó   'three'

ṭaa   'bite/chew'

ùṭọ́   'sweetness'

ọ̀ṭụ̂mà   'delight'

ùṭó   'growth'

éṭíṭó   'boils'

óṭù   'one'

This feature is also shared by other dialects around Owerri (Owere) and Mbaise. In these dialects, the occurrence of the ingressive <t> may be associated with lexical items involving the [-ATR] vowels but in Mbieri the occurrence is not constrained by vowel harmony.

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2.Another common widely recognised consonantal feature of Mbieri, Owere and adjoining communities is the occurrence of the glottal stop, [ʔ]. We represent it here with <q> in the following Mbieri/ Owere data:

    nwáqàkị́rị́   'child'
    wèqá   'bring'
    pụ̀qá   'come out'
    ụ̀kwàqá   'back'
    qáqị̀ị̀!   'an exclamation (for regret/shock)'

It is also important to note that in these communities, <q> may represent a morpheme which marks phrase-initial positions and/or emphasis at the syntactic level; it is often followed by the vowel [a] on a low tone, as shown below:

    qà nhwe gala biaṭa abiaṭaa 'things/events are yet to unfold' (Mbaise dialect)

    qà maa gi ga-akwụ 'both of us are going together' (Mbieri dialect)

    qà athụrụ nnụ agbalagara 'your sheep has ran away' (Mbieri dialect)

    qà kpa ị rị arịgh mị mma 'you don't look good to me the way you are' (Owere)

    qà̀ he ụwa ahana qa enyi 'so-so' (Owere)

    qà obi akaala gi nna 'you have a strong heart, dear' (Owere)

    qà kẹẹ wụ anya! 'quite an age!' (Mbieri)

3. Many dialect communities, north and south of the Igbo nation, make extensive use of the voiced labiodental fricative, [v]; but the standard orthography does not overtly recognise this. In Owere, among others, the following are illustrative:

    èvùlà   'ram'
    ívú   'load'
    àvù   'place name'

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m̄vọ́   'finger nail'

èvù   'wasp'

4.   In the central Igbo communities, as well as Ikwere, Ngwa, Ogba, Ẹkpẹyẹ and adjoining communities, nasality on consonants is very widely occurring and may be contrastive, a phenomenon often analysed as a feature of the syllable as a whole (cf. Williamson1984, among others). A capital <N> represents it here in the following Mbieri (a central Igbo community) data:

   a. íhwNú   'face'
   b. íhwNérē   'shame'
   c. ọ̀hNà   'the public'

   d. kpụ́   'mould'
       kpNụ́   'drag'

   e. árá   'madness'
       árNá   'breast'

   f. ọ́rụ́   'injury'
       ọ́rNụ́   'work'

   g. ísNụ̄   'to clear (bush)'

       ísụ̄   'to pound'

5. In the northern dialect communities, there are other peculiarities crucial to language community identity, which have no recognition in Igbo orthography. The following are some examples:

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a) ts/dz, alveolar affricates:

Ikwo: mádzə   'person'

 ódzə   'corps'

 ŭtsə   'morning'

 ńtse   'near'

 údzúmìnì   'rainy season'

Similar data are common in Nsuka (see also Ugwu1987), Izii, Ezaa, among others.

b) the 'whistle fricative', produced with an apical alveolar contact in which the tongue tip forms a groove against the alveolar and air passes with friction, comparable to the soft sound of gentle whistling. Here, a sub-dotted <sw> represents the sound. It is also a widely occurring sound in the northern dialect communities. The following data are drawn from Nsuka:

nwὸṣwá   'now'

áṣwá   'market'

éṣwí   'cow'

áṣwəṣwá   'leaf'

ὲṣwə́   'body'

6. Also worthy of note is the extensive occurrence of the voiced palatal fricative, [ʒ], across the dialects, including some central dialects, the Abankaleke dialect clusters, the Abam clusters, Echie, Ẹkpẹyẹ, etc. In Mbieri, it may occur with some nasal colouring, shown as <N>. We represent the palatal fricative with a dotted <z> in the following comparative data:

Mbieri	Echie	Ẹkpẹyẹ	gloss
żNí	żé	żí	show/teach

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úžNɛ́rNē	íżèlíżìè	?	sneeze
ɔ̀žNɪ̀ ímì	ɔ̀żɪ̀ ímì	?	nose bleeding
ɔ̀žNá	ɔ̀żíá	?	type of cricket that destroys root crops
úžNí	úżí	?	a tree
žNíɛ ímì	?	ži émí	blow nose
ɛ́žNɛ̀	?	éží	pig
žì	?	žì	send on errand

3.1.2   Vowels

The standard Igbo orthography recognises eight vowels, which fall into two harmony groups, [+ATR] and [-ATR]: <i e o u> and <i̱ a o̱ u̱> respectively. The vowel, <a>, may however be neutral to harmony. Also, <e> may stand for both [e] and [ɛ]. Evidence from dialect communities, including Onicha, Ogba, Ɛ̣kpɛ̣yɛ̣ Abo, Nnewi, etc. suggests that some may characteristically select one and not the other; the latter is represented here with <ɛ̣>. Consider for example the comparison between Uraa̱ṭa and Mbieri, two contiguous Central Igbo varieties around Owerri City:

6.   Uraa̱ṭa   Mbieri   Gloss

        èkèlé   ɛ̀kɛ̀lɛ́   greeting

        égbè   ɛ́gbɛ̀   gun

        égō   ɛ́gɛ̄   money

        úté   úṭē   mat

         òkwè   ɔ̀kwɛ̀   a game

        nwókē   nwɔ́kh(ɛ̀)   male/man

        ókpéré   ɛ̀kpɛ́rɛ́   prayer/a church

7.   Consider also the following data from Nnewi dialect:

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ẹ́nẹ́   'antelope'

ùdẹ̀nẹ̀   'vulture'

ẹ́kẹ́   'python'

ávẹ́lẹ́   'plate'

èlèlè   'benefit/favour'

ẹ́gbẹ̀   'gun'

The schwa is widely occurring in the northern dialects, including Abankaleke, Nkalagu, Ogwu, Izii, ikwo, etc.; and might be contrastive in Nsuka and its environs (Nwachukw1983, Ohiri-Aniche1985 and Mba2003). The following examples are drawn from Nsuka (see also Ugwu1987):

8.   dә́   'lead'

      dә́   'exist'

      vә́   'carry'

      vә́   'split'

      ẹ́kә̀kә́   'side'

      ọ́kә́   'fire'

3.1.3   Tones

The standard orthography provides for three level tones, High [́], Low [̀] and Mid [̄], interpreted as Downstep, at lexical levels. However, a number of dialects, including Nsuka, Ikwo, Ikwere, Ẹkpẹyẹ etc. show evidence for dynamic tones which may be contrastive. These include Rising [̆] and Falling tones [̂]. Consider the following data:

9.   Ikwo:

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a.   ộnyạ̀   'friend'

ọ́nyà   'sore'

ọ̌nyà   'trap'

b.   ḿkf(ə) 'palm tree'

m̂kf   'jump'

c.   ẹ́kà   'bed bug'

ệkạ̀   'hand'

d.   ộgə̀   'war'

ọ̌g(ə)   'hoe'

10.   Mbieri:

a.   thá: 'blame'

thâ   'today'

b.   ká   'mature'

kâ   'plea'

kà   'engrave/mark'

c.   ógbù   'deaf mute'

ògbú   'killer'

ògbû   'envy'

3.1.4   Syllables

The standard orthography recognises only open syllables. Closed syllables and consonant clusters are not recognised in the system; and no provision is made for any of such to be

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written. However, consonant clusters and closed syllables are common properties of a number of dialect communities. The following are illustrations:

11.   Ezeagu (see also Ngwuta1988) :

     èbnə̀   'ram'

     àkfụ̀   'strong palmwine'

     ábdə̀   'chimpanzee'

12.   Nkalagu:

     ókfú   'talk'

     ógvū   'thorns'

     ọ́gvụ̀   'medicine'

13.   Nsuka:

     ọ́trə́   'key'

     ụ́tfụ́   'bat'

     ọ́dvụ̀   'tail'

14.   Ikwo:

     ókrékf   'rat'

     ókpr   'pond'

     ụ́bọ̀k   'day'

     kàkfrə kàkfrə 'clumsy'

According to our sociophonological model therefore, all such sounds or features which convey identity for a historic regional dialect community are to be assigned symbols in orthography construction, whether they are mere optional variants, contrastive variants or mutually exclusive variants in phonemic considerations. It may however not permit needless redundancies, especially involving allophonic variations. In this way,

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orthography achieves faithfulness to the sociophonological systems of languages and their regional dialects. Similarly, writing rules are to permit all peculiarities that convey identity for any given dialect community. While the standard dialect, for example, may not permit consonant clusters, geminates and closed syllables, they should be permitted for dialects that exhibit them to be so written, if the identity of such dialect communities should be retained and the rights of the speakers preserved. We remain mindful, in the perspective of the present study, that regional varieties have constituted part of the socialisation and personality composition of individuals and communities who own them as a God-given heritage; and they are conscious of this make-up. Consequent upon this viewpoint, issues involving language and dialect conflicts or suspicion can be resolved and the vitality of linguistic varieties are sustained in their diversities, coordinated with their being assigned relevant roles in the management process (see Ugorji2005b for further details).

It is therefore important to note that the requirement for the reforms due to orthography systems that share inadequacies similar to the Igbo type involves a review to incorporate all sociophonemes. Such a review may possibly yield a larger grapheme inventory as observed in the Igbo case. However, in view of the fact that the existing graphemes are designed for the standard or normative variety, it may be pedagogically more convenient to group the new set as a supplementary set, which may also facilitate its learnability. Thus, the 'main' set may be associated with the standard or normative variety, while the subset is made up of letters or symbols from which items may be selected when writing in the regional varieties. This may be similar to the organisation of symbols in the International Phonetic Alphabet, for example.

4. Concluding Notes

The present study has proposed the recommended approach to orthography construction and reforms in a democratised polity. It is in pursuit of the implementation of the new world ideologies which represent faith in democracy, in its demand for conscious recognition of linguistic and cultural rights as human rights, in view of which policies are

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to pursue egalitarianism in language development and use. The implementation of this is necessary in orthography construction as shown because of the implications it has for language and dialect communities and their speakers. It is an alternative to the traditional phoneme-based approach to orthography development which is not sensitive to the democratic ideals of modern society, as shown; and cannot be, especially in multilingual and multidialectal polities. The phonemic approach to orthography construction directs efforts towards sounds and features of given languages to select those which may be associated with structural meaning contrast as candidates for the grapheme inventory. This scheme can however not effectively support these ideologies of democracy in its present form; it simply lacks the needed capacity. Constrained by its being dependent on formal grammatical contrasts for isolating the sounds which qualify as candidates for given language's grapheme inventory (a scheme which discards phonological materials that carry social and cultural information), as well as its tendency to favour one variety or the other, among others, indicate that the traditional paradigm in inherently incapable of satisfying the democratic demands on graphisation in the democratised polity of modern times. Given the forgoing, this traditional paradigm appears irremediable, as an amendment seems impossible. Invariably then, the paradigm shift we propose is not an expansion or extension of the phonemic grammar schema, but a sociolinguistic one which first views language as a socio-cultural phenomenon, and proposes sociolinguistically significant segments as candidates for the grapheme inventory of given human languages. In other words, since the sociolinguistically significant units of language encode contrastive social meaning, as noted, all essential grammatically significant units are automatically inclusive in our new schema; hence the traditional reliance on classical phonemic information for orthography construction is no longer needful.

Thus, what may be required for a graphisation enterprise are not phonemes but sociophonemes, defined as all properties of spoken language which bear sociolinguistic significance for language or dialect communities. Proposing a sociophonological paradigm is therefore necessary as it shows capacity for effectively satisfying the democratic requirements for orthography development. Its target is all properties of

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spoken language which characterise them as properties of given language or dialect communities. This is based on language and dialect vitality and endorsed in egalitarian multilingualism, bilingualism in education and bi-dialectalism. Its concern is for the rights of languages and dialects as sociocultural resources and for those who own them as God-given heritage.

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