



## Challenges Facing Students in Learning Igbo Poetry in Senior Secondary Schools in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State

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### Abstract

*This paper investigated the challenges students encounter in learning Igbo poetry in the senior secondary schools in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State. The design of the study was a descriptive survey research design. Four research questions formulated in line with the specific purposes of the study guided the study. The population of the study was 1,405 SS II students, while 140 students of the entire population were sampled for the study which represented 10% of the population. The instrument for data collection was Challenges Facing Students in Learning Igbo Poetry Questionnaire (CFSLIPQ) which has 30 items and was developed by the researcher. Data were collected by administering the instrument on the respondents with the help of research assistants while mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected. The findings of the study showed that students' negative attitude in learning Igbo poetry, diction, lack of instructional materials and teachers' incompetency were challenges facing students in Udi Education Zone of Enugu state in learning Igbo poetry. Some recommendations were made based on the findings of the study which include: that government should give award or scholarship to students who have interest in learning the Igbo poetry, that poets should use simple language in writing Igbo poetry among others.*

**Key Words:** Igbo, poetry, diction, attitude, instructional materials and incompetency.

### Introduction

In language learning or study, literature is one of the branches taught at all levels of education in Nigeria such that we have literature in English, literature in Igbo and literature in Yoruba. Literature is defined as printed information produced by people to create an effect or for a purpose. It is any work of art that has value. In consonance with the above definition, Ugwu (2002) defines literature as any work of art that has an enduring value and of universal interest, touching on themes such as religion, government, romance, politics, science and others. It is also seen as the stylistic use of words to achieve various literary purposes. Literature in Igbo has three genres which include: drama, prose and poetry. While drama is written in acts and scenes, prose is written in chapters and paragraphs and poetry is written in lines and stanzas (Ugwu, 2002). This means that each of the genres has distinctive

characteristic style in which it is written.

However, this study focuses on Igbo poetry. Igbo poetry is a piece of writing that expresses emotions, experiences, and ideas especially in short lines using Igbo words that rhyme. Maduakor (2001) sees poetry as charged utterance that people make when they are emotionally excited. In other words, poetry is any utterance triggered by people's emotional excitement. Ugwu (2002) sees poetry as the beautiful arrangement of words in lines. This means that such beautiful arrangement of words in lines is an aesthetic and stylistic way of writing a poem.

Igbo poetry exists in two forms which include oral and written poetry. Oral poetry is a poem composed of and communicated orally by oral poets while written poetry is poem put down or passed across in written form (Maduakor, 2001). Whether poetry is oral or written, the various kinds are: elegy, dirge, epic, epigram, ode, sonnet and didactic poems.

In teaching poetry, the above mentioned kinds of poems are taught to students in Igbo language. However, this aspect of Igbo literature is always problematic to students for they find it difficult to understand and equally attempt questions on it. In support of this, WAEC Chief Examiners' Report (2015) clearly states that most candidates avoided questions on Igbo poetry (Abu) either that they were not taught or that they did not understand what their teachers taught them. Again, WAEC Chief Examiners' Report (2013; 2014; 2015) state that questions were on translation of prose passage and poetry passages into Igbo and as usual, most candidates preferred the prose passage to poetry passages. The few that attempted the poetry passage, instead of translating it as poetry, changed the entire structure to prose which was wrong. As usual, the above statement by WAEC chief examiners' report shows that poetry has been a problem to students which could have been caused by some problems. Therefore, students inability to understand and answer questions on Igbo poetry with ease could have been for the following challenges facing them in learning it: teachers' incompetency in the teaching of Igbo poetry, students' attitude towards the learning of Igbo poetry, diction and lack of instructional materials.

Nwadike (1990) observes that the teaching of Igbo poetry has collapsed in both primary and secondary schools. He notes that many teachers do not teach Igbo poetry because they lack sound knowledge of the language and thoughts in Igbo poetry. While in other places or schools where Igbo poetry is taught, it is not taught well. This means that some teachers are not competent enough to teach Igbo poetry hence, there are problems associated with the teaching and learning of Igbo poetry in schools. To this end, the major thrust of this study is to investigate the challenges facing students in learning Igbo poetry in the senior secondary schools in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Most often a time students show distaste in the study of Igbo poetry. They feel uncomfortable at the mention of poetry (Abu) because it deals more on imagination. In Igbo poetry, students are required to realize and appreciate the richness of each Igbo words, that is, to enter into emotional experience with the poet and use their imagination to the fullest. But it is always difficult to students which could be as a result of diction of such poems. On the other hand, most teachers prefer teaching other genres of literature to teaching poetry. These made some students' performances in Igbo poetry to be poor over the years while most of them avoid attempting questions on it. WAEC (2015) states that most candidates avoided questions on Igbo poetry either that they were not taught or that they did not understand what



their teachers taught them. To this end, the problem of this study put in form of a question is: what are challenges facing students in learning Igbo poetry in senior secondary schools in Udi Education Zone of Enugu state?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of this study is to find out the challenges facing students in learning Igbo poetry in senior secondary schools in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State.

Specifically, the study intends to:

1. find out the extent to which students' attitude poses challenges in the learning of Igbo poetry.
2. examine the extent to which diction poses challenge to the learning of Igbo poetry.
3. find out the extent to which teacher's incompetency poses challenges to students in learning Igbo poetry.
4. find out the extent to which lack of instructional materials affect students in learning Igbo poetry.

### **Research Questions**

The following research question were formulated to guide the study:

1. To what extent does students' attitude pose challenges to the learning of Igbo poetry?
2. To what extent does diction pose a challenge to students in learning Igbo poetry?
3. To what extent does teacher's incompetency pose challenges to students in learning Igbo poetry?
4. To what extent does lack of instructional materials affect students in learning Igbo poetry?

### **Methodology**

The design of the study is descriptive survey design. A survey design is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representation of the entire group (Nworgu, 2006). The choice of this design helped the researcher to collect information and opinions of respondents on the challenges facing students in Learning Igbo poetry in Udi Educational Zone of Enugu State. The area of the study is Udi Educational Zone of Enugu state. The zone is made up of two local government areas which include: Ezeagu L.G.A. and Udi L.G.A. The zone has its headquarters at Ngwo. There are twenty-four (24) public secondary schools in the zone. The researcher chose the area because it was observed that students in the area have not been doing well in Igbo poetry. The population of the study was 1, 405 SS II students in 2016/17 academic session in 24 public schools in Udi Education Zone. The researcher chose SS II students since they will take SSCE in 2017. The figure was collected from PPSM, statistics unit of Udi Educational Zone, Ngwo. The researcher randomly selected a sample population of 140 students representing 10% of the total population of 1,405 SS II students. The instrument used for the study was Challenges Facing Students in Learning Igbo Poetry Questionnaire (CFSLIPQ). The instrument was developed by the researcher and it has 30 items. The instrument was designed to take care of the four research questions that guided the study. The instrument was designed on a four-point rating scales of: Very Great Extent (VGE) = 4 points, Great Extent (GE) = 3 points, Low Extent (LE) = 2 points, and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1 point. The researcher administered the instrument on SS II students who were asked to tick any option

of their choice. The researcher employed the services of research assistants who were Igbo teachers in the schools used for the study. Mean and standard deviation were used by the researcher to analyze the data collected for the study. The criterion mean for acceptance was 2.50 while any item with mean score less than 2.50 was rejected.

## Results

The results of this study are presented in tables as follows according to the 4 research questions that guided the study:

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does students' poor attitude pose challenges to students in learning Igbo poetry?

**Table 1:** The extent to which students' poor attitude poses challenges in learning Igbo poetry.

S/N	Item Statement	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	$\bar{X}$	STD	Decision
1	I do not have interest in learning Igbo poetry	70	30	25	15	3.10	1.050	Accepted
2	I always have phobia for Igbo poetry.	85	40	15	5	3.51	0.683	Accepted
3	Though, I like studying Igbo language but I do not like the poetry aspect.	60	35	25	20	2.92	1.088	Accepted
4	I do not see the relevance of learning Igbo poetry for that I do not have interest in learning it.	45	50	20	25	2.81	1.074	Accepted
5	Making efforts to learn Igbo poetry is a waste of time.	56	48	27	9	3.00	0.921	Accepted
6	I do not see Igbo poetry as a difficult aspect of Igbo literature.	10	20	40	70	1.76	0.940	Not Accepted
7	I am always happy whenever our Igbo teacher is teaching poetry	15	25	20	50	1.82	1.074	Not Accepted
8	I do not have textbooks on Igbo poetry for the fact that I lack interest in learning it.	40	45	25	30	2.65	1.074	Accepted
9	Though, I have Igbo poetry textbooks but I do not have interest in reading them.	62	38	10	30	2.91	1.173	Accepted
10	I do not like attending Igbo lessons	50	20	30	40	2.50	1.241	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>2.60</b>		<b>Accepted</b>

Table one above shows that students' poor attitude in learning Igbo poetry poses a problem to them in learning it. Thus items 1 – 5 and 8 – 10 had mean scores of 3.1, 3.5, 2.9, 2.8; 3.0, 2.6, 2.9 and 2.5 with corresponding standard deviation of 1.050, 0.683, 1.088, 1.074, 0.921, 1.074, 1.173 and 1.241 respectively. The above mean scores are greater than the criterion mean of 2.50 which shows that



students' poor attitude poses a challenge in their learning of Igbo poetry in secondary schools. On the other hand, only items 6 and 7 had mean scores of 1.7 and 1.8 respectively.

However, the grand mean score was 2.60 which was greater than 2.50 being the criterion mean. This also shows that poor attitude in poetry on the part of the students poses a challenge in the learning of Igbo poetry.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does Diction Pose Challenges to Students in Learning Igbo Poetry?

**Table 2:** The Extent to which Diction of Igbo Poetry Poses Challenges to Students in Learning Igbo Poetry

S/N	Item Statement	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	$\bar{X}$	STD	Decision
1.	The stanza nature or patterning of writing Igbo poetry makes it difficult for me to learn poetry.	80	20	26	14	3.11	1.063	Accepted
2.	The idiomatic expression of ideas in poems makes it difficult for me to understand Igbo poetry.	85	15	25	15	3.21	1.084	Accepted
3.	The irregular syntactic arrangement of poems affects my understanding of Igbo poetry.	60	35	28	17	2.90	1.059	Accepted
4.	I find it difficult to understand Igbo poetry because of the figures of speech used by poets in writing Igbo poetry.	57	43	30	10	3.055	0.954	Accepted
5.	I do not understand Igbo poetry because of the unconventional languages used by Igbo poets in writing Igbo poetry.	45	60	35	-	3.03	0.755	Accepted
6.	Some Igbo poets use their dialect in writing Igbo poems which makes the understanding difficult.	58	42	28	12	3.04	0.980	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>3.02</b>		

The above table shows the mean and standard deviation of the items therein. All the items from 11 – 16 had mean scores of 3.1, 3.2, 2.9, 3.0, 3.0 and 3.0 respectively with corresponding standard deviation of 1.063, 1.084, 1.059, 0.954, 0.755 and 0.980. The above mean scores were greater than 2.5 which was the criterion mean of acceptance or rejection. Also the table had a grand mean of 3.0 which shows that diction is a challenge to students in learning Igbo poetry.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent does teacher's incompetency pose challenges to students in learning Igbo poetry?

**Table 3:** The extent to which teacher's incompetency in teaching Igbo poetry poses challenges to students in learning Igbo Poetry

S/N	Item Statement	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	$\bar{X}$	STD	Decision
7.	Our teacher is incompetent in teaching Igbo poetry.	40	50	25	25	2.71	1.060	Accepted
8.	I do not understand our Igbo teacher while teaching Igbo poetry because he is not fluent.	43	46	27	24	2.73	1.068	Accepted
9.	Our Igbo teacher is highly competent in teaching other aspects of Igbo language.	12	16	50	62	1.88	0.938	Accepted
10.	Our Igbo teacher finds it difficult to explain poetic passages or poems to us.	63	44	13	20	3.01	1.056	Not Accepted
11.	Our teacher usually introduces the themes of poems without making out time to explain the body/content.	44	58	26	12	2.92	0.920	Accepted
12.	I usually fail poetry because our teacher does not teach well.	51	37	19	33	2.70	1.180	Accepted
13.	Our Igbo teacher has good knowledge about Igbo poetry.	14	18	70	38	2.01	0.895	Not Accepted
14.	Our Igbo teacher uses English language in teaching us Igbo poetry.	66	33	18	23	3.05	1.125	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>2.60</b>		

Table three (3) above indicates that items 23, 24, 26, 27, 28 and 30 had mean scores of 2.7, 2.7, 3.0, 2.9, 2.7 and 3.0 with corresponding standard deviation of 1.060, 1.068, 1.056, 0.920, 1.180 and 1.125 respectively. The table also shows that the grand mean was 2.60. The above mean scores were greater than the criterion mean of 2.50 an indication that teacher's incompetency is a challenge to the learning of Igbo poetry among students. However, only items 25 and 29 had mean scores of 1.8 and 2.0 respectively hence they are not significant.

**Research Question 4:** To what extent does lack of instructional materials affect students in learning Igbo poetry?



**Table 4:** The extent to which Lack of Instructional Materials affect Students in Learning Igbo Poetry

S/N	Item Statement	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	$\bar{X}$	STD	Decision
15.	Our Igbo teacher does not use instructional materials in teaching us Igbo poetry.	40	67	13	20	2.90	0.973	Accepted
16.	Our Igbo teacher always emphasize non-availability of instructional materials for learning Igbo poetry.	59	37	24	20	2.92	1.082	Accepted
17.	Availability of instructional materials will help me in learning Igbo poetry.	63	28	30	19	2.91	1.102	Accepted
18.	There is dearth or scarcity of textbooks on learning Igbo poetry.	38	52	22	28	2.73	1.740	Accepted
19.	Our Igbo teacher always tell us in the class that Government does not provide instructional materials for teaching Igbo poetry.	42	47	21	30	2.74	1.112	Accepted
20.	Instructional materials are not necessary for the learning of Igbo poetry.	-	25	35	80	1.60	0.774	Not Accepted
Grand Mean						2.60		

Table four shows that lack of instructional material, is a problem or challenge facing students in learning Igbo poetry. Thus, items 17 – 21 had mean scores of 2.9, 2.9, 2.9, 2.7, 2.7 with standard deviation of 0.973, 1.082, 1.102, 1.74 and 1.112 respectively. Only item 22 had a mean score of 1.60 and standard deviation of 0.774. The grand mean was 2.6 which showed that lack of instructional material was a problem or challenge in learning Igbo poetry among senior secondary school students in Udi Education Zone.

### Discussion on Results

The findings of the study showed that students' poor attitude in learning Igbo poetry posed problem to the learning of Igbo poetry. This is in agreement with WAEC Chief Examiners Report (2015) which states that student avoided the question on poetry and preferred the prose passage, though, the poetry passage appeared easier which apparently was due to an already inbuilt feeling that poetry is very difficult to translate into passage. This means that, for the students to prefer Igbo prose to Igbo poetry, it shows that they do not have positive attitude towards Igbo poetry and this continues to be a problem in learning the Igbo poetry.

Again, the findings also showed that diction, lack of instructional materials and teacher's incompetency are challenges facing students in learning Igbo poetry. This is in line with Nwadike (1990) who observed that the teaching of Igbo poetry has collapsed in both primary and secondary schools since many teachers do not teach Igbo poetry because they lacked sound knowledge of poetry, the language of poetry and thoughts in Igbo poetry while in schools where Igbo poetry is taught it is not

taught well. The observation of Nwadike shows that the language of poetry which is diction makes the understanding of Igbo poetry difficult to teachers hence diction will equally impede students' understanding of Igbo poetry. Again, that teachers lacked sound knowledge of Igbo poetry according to Nwadike (1990) showed teacher's incompetency in teaching Igbo poetry. Besides, that Igbo poetry was not taught well in some schools according to Nwadike could be that there were no instructional materials for the teaching of Igbo poetry.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study has shown that students are faced with some challenges in learning Igbo poetry. Such challenges include: students' poor/negative attitude towards the learning of Igbo poetry, diction, lack of instructional material and teacher's incompetency in teaching Igbo poetry.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers hereby recommend the following:

- that government should give award and scholarship to students who have interest in learning Igbo poetry.
- that poets should use simple and soft languages in writing Igbo poetry.
- that government should release money to procure/buy instructional materials needed for the learning of Igbo poetry.
- that Igbo language teachers should be sent on training specifically on how to teach Igbo poetry.

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