



SURNAME AS A FAMILY, ETHNIC AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES: UMUNZE AS A CASE STUDY

Patricia Eze

Department of English/Drama, Kaduna State University, Kaduna,

Email: patwillyeze@gmail.com Tel: +2347037765252

ABSTRACT: *Surnames are family names which people bear without an iota of regret. Due to civilization, Igbo surnames have started fading away to baptismal or Christians names, if not reversed would spell doom to our nation, Igbo and Umunze people in particular. This study examines the nature of Umunze surnames and their root words. The study explores the use of exotic surnames as a barrier to our nation, ethnic and family identity and their implications. Men from Umunze were interviewed so as to obtain concrete findings. Surnames are answered by people related by blood which act as bond between them. They act as markers of family, ethnic as well as national identity. Therefore, bearing foreign surnames would cause our heritage as a nation to go down the drain.*

KEYWORDS: Surname, Baptismal Name, Family Identity, Umunze, Ethnic Identity, National Identity, Exotic Surnames

INTRODUCTION

Umunze is one of the dialects in Igbo language which is in the South-eastern part of Nigeria. It is a town in Anambra State and the headquarters of Orumba South Local Government Area. Nigeria is made up of over 200 ethnic groups speaking more than 250 languages with varying customs and also with rich ethnic diversity. Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba are the major languages while others are the minorities. Each of these ethnic groups values their culture which is deeply rooted in its values, beliefs, ideology and aspirations. As a nation, our cultural heritage distinguishes us from other nations which the idea of giving surname is inclusive.

Surname constitutes family relationship as well as national and ethnic identities which concurs with the notion of Elias (1991) that, surnames are important in signalling “We” identities that is “we are family”. On the contrary, Beck-Gernsheim (2002:4-6) argues that, “Family name” may “no longer denote a family”. The bearers of surname are, however, people related by blood. Hence, they are family names inherited by blood. Surnames are aftermath of personal and baptismal names; they evolve in order to distinguish people into groups such as by origin, occupation, parentage and clan. On the origin of surname, Ogbonna (1972) noted that, with the spread of formal education and the spread of white-collar jobs in the twentieth century in Igbo land, surnames and inherited family names became a compulsory phenomenon. Initially people are made references to, by referring them to their personal names or father’s personal names such as ‘Ifeoma’ or ‘Ifeoma nwa Mazi Ikenna’ which means ‘Ifeoma’ or ‘Ifeoma, the daughter of Mr Ikenna’, when they become intricate,



baptismal names (idionyms) are adopted. With time, the necessity for the use of surnames arose; people are no longer made reference to their personal or baptismal names rather on their family names. Lawler (2008) submits that, like blood relation, surname acts as a symbol of family connections which signals to others in a family and kin connection between two or more people. The use of surnames then offers one window onto how family relationships are created and recreated, and displayed to others. It could be a connection to the immediate parents or to the grandfather or great grandfather. Either way, they link one to one's root. According to Davies (2011:565) surname "Acts as a visible link between a child and their sibling or a child and their father, the potential of surname as a signifier of heritage and as a way of locating the family and kin group in a wider web of relationships. It is a source of fascination in children's reflections on family". Similarly, ethnic surnames are a useful model for making links between language and individual identity, language and national identity, and the identification of the individual with the nation state (Scassa, 1996).

Some of these surnames are related to the events in the community such as the market days, deities and festivals etc. Harder (2008) asserts that, family name or surname can depict the occupation of the person's lineage, location and the person's parentage. In Igbo, it encompasses all of the above as well as ordinary things such as events, title and beings.

The pattern of surname in Igbo land is patronymic that is inherited from the father. Regional Organised Crime Information Center (2010) advocates that, in many countries of the world patrilineal and patronymic surnaming remain ubiquitous cultural traditions. Therefore, different countries in the world surnamed relating to their culture and tradition. It is abnormal, therefore, for an Igbo man to be surnamed 'Douglas' or 'Kenneth', however he can bear these names as a baptismal/Christian name but not as a surname. Consequently, it is women that change their surnames after marriage. Supporting this, A Comparative U.S/Russian Study by Boxer and Gritsenko (2005) remarked that, women change their surnames at the naming crises point of marriage for a variety of reasons such as to signal family connectedness or as a pragmatic means of avoiding confusion over disparate surnames in a family unit. This is not a matter of controversy whether women should be surnamed after their husband; moreover, children are surnamed after their fathers'. Initially, these surnames are answered with no iota of regret; no one oppugns their origin because they are our cultural heritage. Now, people have started inquiring in the use of our surnames thereby losing their content, hence this study.

Surnames as Ethnic and National Identities

Before now, surname is a name one supposed to bear with other extended family members, especially those related by blood. This is what distinguishes one ethnic group from another. We cannot but say that surname signifies our cultural, religious, ethnic and national heritage. It reflects who we are as well as where we are coming from. It sounds strange when an Hausa man bears 'Eze' (king) as a surname, more so, quite unusual when an Igbo man bears 'Hassan' as a surname; it is traceable when this occurs, maybe there is a change in religion. In fact, our nationality is embedded in our tradition and cultural practices. Emens (2007) posits that, surnaming practices are heavily constrained by tradi-cultural traditions. Sometimes, it could be directly the father's name or the grandfather's name or the great grandfather's name but of cultural values which later becomes the surname. Surname as one of the sub-divisions of anthroponomastics is an indicator of family connectivity, ethnic and national identities. According to Fishman (1972) in Fasold & Connor-Linton (2012:375)



ethnic groups “Are concerned primarily with their own local affairs and don’t have much interest in other social entities except possibly their closest neighbours”.

We cannot run away from the fact that it was colonialism that brought us together as a nation (Nigeria), but we have our cultural practices, beliefs and socio-cultural dynamics before they came in and one of such is our surnaming. People are connected to their roots through their surnames. According to Botolv (2014:52), “Surnames are normally transferred to children from the family to which they belong, if a person at a later stage wishes to change his or her surname, he or she is relatively free to do so”. The changed surname, however, must be linked with the socio-cultural orientation and the traditional dynamics of the people. Personal names just like surnames as the signal of socio-cultural orientation of the people cannot be overemphasised because of their importance, the Igbo nation hold their surnames in high esteem and are very careful in choosing them so as to relate to their origin. That’s why whenever people’s surnames are mentioned; they are pointer to their origin. Therefore, westernising one’s surname spells doom to one’s culture as well as one’s nation at large. Although the phenomenon of naming practices is universal, different cultures have different orders for giving names and surnames.

In western culture, given names precede family names. Louie in Moyo (2002:47) argues that, the “Practice of surname before first name is Chinese, Vietnamese, Hungarian and Romanian cultures. He further admits that people consider family more important than individual identity”. Nigeria, however, is not left out in the category of countries that practice surname first before given name. The prevailing issue is that children and youth of the younger generation no longer bear those generic names which every member of the same family related by blood rather they bear their immediate father or father’s foreign names that is their baptismal names which is disastrous to Igbo nation.

In view of the above, westernising our surname means loss of identity which would result in the loss of the people’s culture and language as well. In Igbo, their surname is patronymic as they do not have inheritance in their mother’s home unlike the westerners, most women retain their surnames. According to Anyachonkeya (2014:121) “We should love our language and live our language by giving our Igbo names, for our culture is our essence as a people”. Not only to identify with our Igbo names but also maintain our surnames for they are our cultural identity and heritage. We cannot do away with our surnames because they define us, our belief system, socio-cultural values and ethno-religious practices are embedded in them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Beider (2005) analysed a scientific approach to etymology of surnames. He attempts to provide an approach as well as answer basic questions in finding the etymological surnames. He avers that the etymological analysis claiming to be scientific must explain how the surname from its etymon was created. According to him, other basic questions of etymological research include; who chose the surname, where did it appear for the first time and when was the surname assigned. This present work differs from Beider’s work in that this study analyses the nature of Umunze’s surnames and their root words. Beider’s work is relevant to this present study in the area of etymology of surnames. Davies (2011) carried out a study on sharing surnames: children, family and kinship. He presents children’s



perspectives on contemporary surnaming practices. The study investigates naming as a family practice and as a way of displaying family and kinship. He asserts that the nature of shared surnames enhances the kinship significance of surname when families are becoming increasingly complex and family members are more often confronted with how to constitute or deny family and kin identities. He continues that surnames were experienced by the children as identifiers for others to interpret in making sense of which children were, and to whom they were related. This study is relevant to this present study in the area of sharing surnaming among family members and also differs on the basis that this present study investigates the nature of surname practices in Umunze and their root words. It examines exotic names which act as barriers to the use of our surnames and their implications.

Ibemesi (2011) investigated origin of Igbo surnames, past and present. She avers that, Igbo surnames started with the coming of Western Education and the development of White-collar jobs. She identifies the five different classes of surnames namely; patronymic, matronymic, occupational, toponymic and pseudonymic/nicknames. The study finds out that the reason for taking on family surnames is to reduce or possibly eliminate the confusion that existed among people answering similar personal names. She concludes that Igbo surnames show by their contents and contexts past and present. The gap between Ibemesi's work and this present study is that the latter attempts to examine exotic names as the cause of sociolinguistic tragedy of Igbo surnames and also both are related in the origin of surnames in Igbo land. Ikotun (2014) analysed surnames as markers of identity among the Yoruba of South-western Nigeria. The study distinguishes tradition-based names that are today surnames and also where the names can be found within the Yoruba sub-ethnic group. He argues that although the Yoruba people are linguistically and homogenous, Yoruba surnames are pointers to the different sub-ethnic group entities that comprise the Yoruba nation. He posits that, surnames which indicate Yoruba sub-ethnic group affinities are tradition-based personal names or a noun phrase and a simple clause. Noun phrases depict traditional religious or deities that were peculiar to each sub-ethnic group before the advent of Christianity while the simple clauses consist of lexical items that are also peculiar to each sub-ethnic group dialect. He argues that the introduction of Western or European address forms into Yoruba whereby the use of surnames is emphasised has helped in preserving the Yoruba religion thoughts, beliefs and variation in Yoruba dialects,

Scassa (1996) examined a national identity, ethnic surnames and the state. The study demonstrates how surname policies tend to reflect certain national identity objectives that are to assimilate or to segregate particular ethnic community or to engage in national building exercises around a shared ethnic identity. It illustrates how attitudes towards surnames reflect the inclusion or exclusion of particular communities from articulations of a national identity. She avers that, name-related policy seeks to maintain a linguistic homogeneity of the level of names a practice which bears disturbing similarities to desires to maintain an ethnically homogenous population. Bearing a foreign name, however, can lead to exclusion from institutions and benefits especially where it is established that certain names belong to the nation and others do not. In extreme cases, governments can assimilate individuals to the dominant group through massive name-change campaigns. This study is relevant to this present study in that it shows how surnames reflect ethnic surnames and national identity. This present study differs from Scassa's work in that it investigates the nature of Umunze surnames and their root words. It examines exotic names as barriers to family, ethnic as well as national identity and their implications.



Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study hinges on Bourdieu's community of practice theory which understand language in relation to other social practices. It is an interdisciplinary approach which incorporates other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and education. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999:185) define community of practice as groups "Whose joint engagement in some activity of enterprise is sufficiently intense to give rise over time to a repertoire of shared practices" certain linguistic (among other) practices are understood by the members to be more appropriate than others. From this, it can be deduced that surname is a cultural practice by the whole community which over time supposed to have become a norm or a repertoire of shared practices among people but rather fading away to foreign surnames. Personal names reflect an individual identity while surnames reflect family as well as ethnic identity which on the long run stand as our national identity. Bucholtz (1999) submits that speakers who embrace the identity of a particular community will engage in positive identity practices, while those who reject the identity will use negative identity practices to distance themselves from it. For Bourdieu (1991), the starting point of practice is habitus that is the sets of dispositions to act (eg eat, speak walk or read) are linked to particular social dimensions such as class and gender. Also, habitus is tied to the body via hexis, the individual's habitual and socially meaningful embodied stances and gestures, and through other aspects of physical self-presentation. Bourdieu concludes by saying that individual is more as a product of social structure than a free agent. From the foregoing, this theory is relevant to this study in that we are socially bound by the cultural practices of our community such as surnaming, if we do otherwise, it implies violating the norms which would spell doom for our community as well as nation at large.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study were collected from men from Umuze between ages 35- 75years, both literate and illiterate. Bearing in mind that we are of patronyms society where women and children bear the man's surname, therefore the choice is theirs. Older men were more informative about the local history of those surnames for they are custodians of the culture. But for the younger men, bearing of exotic names as surnames are rampant among them, therefore the question such as the rationale behind the answering of exotic surnames were obtained from them. From the interview, most of the speakers do not know the implication of their action; also, some of them do not know the meaning of the exotic surnames. The researcher as a native speaker is also an added advantage in the analysis.

Nature of Umuze Surnames

Different cultures have their different surnames. Umuze surnames are embedded in their cultures which have their root in Igbo.

Surnames that Depict Death (Ọnwụ)

Death is inevitable but everyone's wish is to live and die at a desired old age. Death is not the final end of man. After death, the soul 'nkpulobi' goes back to 'Chukwu' God. The after-life for the African is a life of continuing relationship with the living dead (Kanu, 2014). Achebe (2010:55) in his book *Things Fall Apart* expresses despair of how the Igbo suffers, in his



experiences of series of child mortality by the name he gives thus; “One of them was a pathetic cry, ‘Onwumbiko’, ‘death I implore you’. But death took no notice; Onwubiko died on fifteenth month. The next was a girl, Ozoemena, ‘may it not happen again’. She died on her eleventh month and two others after her. Ekwefi then became defiant and called her next child Onwuma, ‘death may please himself’. And it did”. When incessant death occurs in a family, the following personal names which will eventually emerge as surnames will be given as follows;

- 1) ‘Onwudiwe’ means death is wicked.
- 2) ‘Onwuemeagamnhe’ means ‘death has done a lot’
- 3) ‘Onwudunjo’ means ‘death is evil’
- 4) ‘Onwuhamaka’ means ‘death leave me alone’
- 5) ‘Onwuegbusi’ means ‘death don’t kill’
- 6) ‘Onwubiko’ means ‘death please’

An informant asserts that the mortality rate of infants was high in Umunze in old times due to non availability of health facilities; some are as a result of negligence by the parties involved which could have averted. The people believed by imploring death to stop, that their calamity and agony would end. Thus, the surname, ‘onwudiwe’ (death is wicked). Sometimes due to so much loss in some families, they feel by being assertive they can stop the death toll on them, ‘onwuemeagamnhe’ (death has done a lot to me). Mensah (2015) asserts that, where there is a high mortality rate, despicable and offensive names are given with the belief that the children might be rejected by the underworld spirits and be allowed to live.

Nevertheless, it is a price everyone must pay at appointed time but when it keeps occurring, hence the surname ‘onwudunjo’ (death is evil). In Umunze, the demise of a beloved one is a traumatic experience which brings emotional torture to the bereaved family which everyone abhors, ‘onwuhamaka’ (death leave me alone), and ‘onwuegbusi’ (death don’t kill) has a commanding tone but there is a shift to a plea in ‘onwubiko’ (death please). This plea is in compliance with the belief of the people on reincarnation as well as Africa at large.

Hence, Mensah (2015) affirms that, there is a connection between the physical and the spiritual realm, which implies that death is not the end of life but the beginning of a fresh embodiment in another realm. Abanuku (1999) concurs with Mensah when he says that, death does not end the life of an individual but only causes a change in his condition. It is deduced that these surnames are bore out of experiences by their bearers, although they do not mean well but dumping them for westernised surnames is disastrous to our culture, therefore they can be changed to a satisfactory one.

Surnames that Depict King (Eze)

Title name such as ‘eze’ (king) is a prestigious and an honourable position in Igbo land. The position of ‘Eze’ (king) or ‘Igwe’ (king) as notably called can be hereditary or by election. In Umunze, it transposes from one village to another. The king and his cabinet in Igbo land operate a democratic government that is government of the people by the people for the



people. When deliberations are made by the governing council, everybody concurs. The following surnames have 'eze' (king) as their root word;

- 7) 'Ezemkwere' means 'confirmed king'
- 8) 'Ezeagi' means 'king counted'
- 9) 'Ezewuezie' means 'king that has brought a change'
- 10) 'Ezendu' means 'life of a king'

These aforementioned names do not indicate people from a royal family, rather they are circumstantial names given to individuals which later become surnames. King is a distinguished position in Umunze which requires a man of integrity and sincerity. It signifies authority, power and tolerance. These names are given to people of honour and virtue. Then, for 'Ezemkwere' (confirmed king), a son is renamed after his father which his great grandchildren bear as their surname. Similarly, 'ezeagi' (king counted), 'ezewuzi' (king that has brought a change) and 'ezendu' (life of a king), are surnames inherited from their fathers.

Surnames that Associated with Breath (Ume)

Life is very essential for the existence of man. Then, 'ume' which is the root word is the breath itself which is the very essence of our living. Umunze people value life thus the following surnames inherited from our fathers.

- 11) 'Umendu' denotes 'breath of life'
- 12) 'Umejiaku' denotes 'breath holds wealth'
- 13) 'Umeoha' denotes 'breath of people'
- 14) 'Umeadi' denotes 'breath is free'

Every human endeavour revolves around 'life' but when compared with death, both which Igbo people hold at high esteem are fundamental to our daily living. It is in this regard that Ogugua (2003:60) states that, "Igbo people work towards acquiring life, strengthening this life even if it entails doing too difficult things like 'iga aguu asaa, igwu mmiri asaa', which means passing through seven thick forests invested with danger and swimming seven deep and deadly oceans", it does not matter to them. In Onukawa's view in Nkamigbo's (2019) 'ndu' is the life-giving force, not life itself but it is the activating principle sustaining all existence and also regulating all actions. It operates in all modes of existence. In essence, 'ume' which means 'breath' is life itself in which human beings who are the principal focus of the Igbo physical world live on. Without breath there is no life even in the midst of challenges, being alive is the ultimate. It is against this background that the following surnames emerge; 'umendu' (breath of life), 'umejiaku' (breath holds wealth), 'umeoha' (breath of people) and 'umeadi' (breath is free). This concurs with a common saying which says 'where there is life, there is hope'. Similarly, biblical counsel in Job 14:7 encourages same, 'for there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout up again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease'.



More so, change is inevitable for someone that has life in him such as in 'umejiaku' (breath holds wealth) that is tough time never last. Fig. 13 'umeoha' denotes 'breath of people'; therefore, 'oha' (people) for Umunze people is a symbol of strength and power, then fig. 14 'umeadi' denotes 'breath is free'. In fact, breath is a free gift from God.

Surnames that Relate to the Market Days

Igbos have four market days which are 'eke' (1st day), 'orie/oye' (2nd day), 'afọ' (3rd day) and 'nkwọ' (4th day). The main market day for the Umunze people is 'nkwọ' market day (the 4th day). People are surnamed on the basis of the whole four market days.

- 7) 'Okeke' means 'a male child born on eke market day'
- 8) 'Okoli' means 'a male child born on orie market day'
- 9) 'Okafo/Nwafọ' means 'a male child born on afọ market day'
- 10) 'Nwankwọ' means 'a male child born on nkwọ market day'
- 11) 'Okonkwọ' means 'a male child born on nkwọ market day'

Children born in any of these market days automatically bear the name of the specified market day, which turns out to become a surname someday. Nwigwe (2001:75) noted that, the "Names of the four market days in Igbo (Eke, Orie/oye, Afọ Nkwọ) derive their names from divinities and that a child born on any of these days automatically adopts the market day name as his/her natural or general name". Most of the female's names of the four market days such as 'mgbeke', 'ekemma' from 'eke' market day, 'mgborie' from 'orie' market day, 'mgboafọ' from 'afọ' market day and 'mgbankwọ' from 'nkwọ' market day are not adopted as surnames in Umunze.

Surnames That Depict Human Being (Mmadu)

Igbos lay emphasis on human beings, togetherness and multiplicity. To them, the human being is supreme in creation; the greatest asset one can possess (Ezezinne, 1995). Umunze people value human being that is why they encourage polygamy so as to have more hands on their farm land. Temples in Kanu (2014) argues that, the human force is a vital force endowed with intelligence and will. Although God is the source of vital force, mankind is the sovereign vital force in the world, ruling the land and all that abides in it. However, his fullness of being consists in his participation to a greater or less extent in the force of God. The root word 'mmadu' (human being) as a surname is significant in Igbo socio-cultural system as follows;

- 12) 'Mmadudebeonu' means 'human being be silent'
- 13) 'Mmadumere' means 'human being did it'
- 14) 'Mmaduchesi' means 'human being do not think about it'

Igbo people believe 'onye nwere mmadu ka onye nwere ego' which means 'one who has someone is greater than one who has money'. This expresses the indisputable and inevitable presence of the child in the family as well as the community at large. On account of one of the informants, 'mmadudebeonu' (human being be silent) as a surname points to a challenge



in child bearing encountered by a couple which later becomes history. Prior to the birth of a new born, tongue wags due to the worth the people placed on children.

Human beings are envisaged as epitome of wisdom, speech, strength and agility which no other creatures are. On the contrary, they also, can demean, humiliate and disgrace one another. According to Tempels in Kanu (2014:153), "Man is the supreme force, the most powerful among created beings". The problem, however, is that facing challenges is the very essence of man; the name admonishes people to concentrate on their own issues rather than on others. When confronted with challenges, consciously and unconsciously man thinks of it thus 'mmaduechesi' (human being do not think about it) to signify dependent on God. Another informant reflects the surname 'mmadumere' (human being did it) to mean some of the issues bedevilling man is manmade.

Surnames that Depict Road/Way/Path/Door (Uzo)

The root word 'uzo' represents an entrance. We cannot but affirm that the beehive of the activities of man is accomplished through a road or path. Man, as an agent of change must stride unavoidably through a path to fulfil his destiny.

15) 'Uzochukwu' means 'the way of God'

16) 'Uzoma' means 'good road'

17) 'Uzoeghe' means 'door open'

18) 'Uzozie' means 'right road'

To show the value Umunze traditional society places on 'uzo' (road), the youth of the community are given the mandate to work and repair their road mostly during festivity period, so as to make it accessible for commuters. The importance of road cannot be overemphasized by Umunze people as well as Igbo society as an accessible route to any destination. In other words, it acts as a unifying factor for every member of the community. 'Uzochukwu' (way of God) as a surname signifies that Umunze people are traditional worshippers before the advent of Christianity. They believed in a Supreme Being, Chukwu Abiama' (All-Knowing God) and his minor messengers, minor deities and ancestors says an informant. Other surnames such as 'uzoma' (good road), 'Uzoeghe' (door open) and 'uzozie' (right road) are meant for the well-being of the bearers.

Surnames that Indicate Remember (Cheta)

In our lives there are so much memories and events to reminisce such as; naming ceremony, wedding, funeral, yam festival, dancing competition, inter-house sports or an encounter with God. The root word 'cheta' is an action word which means 'remember' which is realised in the following surnames;

19) 'Chetachukwu' means 'remember God'

20) 'Chetankwo' means 'remember the nkwo market day'

'Nkwo' market day is a beehive of activities for the people of Umunze. Men and women from the neighbouring villages bring their wares to sell as well as buy their essentials.



Usually, it is a memorable day for the people of Umunze because of its uniqueness thus the surname ‘chetankwọ’ (remember the nkwo market day). For the family that bears ‘chetachukwu’ (remember God), the Umunze community before the arrival of the missionaries believed in Chukwu Abiama (All knowing God) and Chukwu Okike (God the creator) as noted by an informant. Ezezinne (1995:28) concurs to the view above when he says that the “Igbo Traditional Religion before the advent of Christianity believed in the Almighty nature of All-seeing God. The Igbo Traditional Religious nuance is that God (Chukwu) is transcendent and immanent. He is there keeping watch”.

Surnames that Depict Homestead (Ama)

We are not a loner rather we all have ancestry which we would want to continue but not to go extinct when we are no more. Igbo belief system advocates a patrilineal nature of surname where a man who does not have a male child is believed to have lost his homestead. Such a man therefore, is encouraged to go into polygamy in order to keep his posterity. The following surnames indicate fostering our homestead.

21) ‘Amaechina’ means ‘may homestead not go extinct’

22) ‘Amaefuna’ means ‘may homestead not lost’

Male children, however, keep the progeny of the family while females are believed to be visitors due to, they are expected to get married into another family. Therefore, it is the wish of every Umunze man to bear a male child for posterity or else a closure of family line. The surnames are declarative demanding the posterity of their family line.

Surnames that Depict Action Word ‘Eme’ (Doing, Acting)

The root word ‘eme’ is a verbal category which means ‘doing, acting’. The surnames which relate to the action word ‘doing or acting’ include;

23) ‘Emenike’ means ‘fortunes are not gotten by strength’

24) ‘Emeasuru’ means ‘acting in accordance’

25) ‘Emenajo’ means ‘do not indulge in bad deeds’

26) ‘Emere’ means ‘did you do’

27) ‘Emele’ means ‘act and watch’

The root word ‘eme’ (doing or acting) expresses an active participation of an individual which requires good deed in order to earn favour before God and man. Unfortunately, when an individual out of mischievousness decides to act otherwise will attract enmity around him. Umunze people believe in hard work because hard work pays and they do not forget that fortune and affluence are not gotten by strength and power but by the mercy of God, thus, the surname ‘emenike’ (fortunes are not gotten by strength). Positively, the root word ‘eme’ as envisaged in ‘emenike’ (fortunes are not gotten by strength), ‘emeasuru’ (acting in accordance) and ‘emenajo’ (do not indulge in bad deeds) boost the people’s morale to do the needful but on the contrary when the root word ‘me’ which means ‘do or act’ is employed to realise ‘menike’ (gotten by strength), and ‘menjo’ (indulge in bad deeds), they are not



adopted as surnames because Umunze society believes in ‘egbe bere ugo bere mana nke si ibe ya ebena, nku kwa ya’, which implies live and let’s live but whosoever objects to it should go down for others to live. These admonish men and women to co-exist with one another.

Surnames Relating to Conversation/Talk (Ụka)

By engaging in conversation, conflicts are resolved and tranquillities are established among individuals. Indeed, a conversation indicates great things to come in providing firm and lasting structures to the dynamic Igbo world vision (Njoku & Uzukwu, 2014). Conversation helps to produce harmony instead of cacophony in our community.

28) ‘Ụkagbara’ means ‘words of the deity’

29) ‘Ụkaṣha’ means ‘words of the people’

Words which act as vehicle in any conversation between individuals are valued both by the people and the deity but the word of the deity is weightier than the words of the people. Families heed to the instructions of the deity ‘agbara’ especially if it is a matter of great importance such as birth of a new baby, death, events and festivals. When such a child predicted is given birth to, he/she is named in accordance with the name of the deity, for example ‘ụkagbara’. Words are not just mere grammatical elements. Words possess some mystical powers (Crystal, 1987). Consequently, the words of the people are vital to the growth of the community.

Anglicised Surnames

Some of these surnames are anglicised thereby making them to lose their content especially for non-indigenes who do not know their meanings. Examples are; ‘emeasuru’ to ‘emeh’, ‘ezemkwere’ to ‘ezeh’, ‘ikedi’ to ‘ikeh’, ‘mmadudebeonụ’ to ‘mmadu’, ‘umeṣha’ to ‘umeh’, ‘ụkagbara’ to ‘ukah’, ‘nnaekunie’ to ‘nna’, ‘Ibegbunam’ to ‘Ibeh’, ‘uzoeghe’ to ‘uzo’ ‘amaechina’ to ‘ama’ and ‘onwudiwe’ to ‘onwu’. The glottal consonant sound /h/ is mostly used at the end of the anglicised name to indicate continuation.

Foreign Names

From the respondents, the following exotic surnames in use in place of Umunze surnames are; ‘Joseph’, ‘Thomas’, ‘Felix’, ‘Wilberforce’, ‘Lawrence’, ‘Williams’, ‘Dominic’, ‘Humphrey’, ‘Patrick’, ‘Kingsley’, ‘Frank’, ‘James’, ‘Ernest’, ‘Emmanuel’, ‘Ezekiel’, ‘Paul’ and ‘Ignatius’. The rationales behind bearing exotic surnames as gathered from the interviewees include; firstly, majority adopted foreign surnames due to their traditional surnames are not satisfactory. They tend to forget that some foreign names are unsatisfactory.

Reminiscing African names and surnames, however, one can attest that they are culturally and spiritually connected the bearers to their root. It is not absurd to change new surname but quite strange to change a surname unrelated to the bearer’s identity. Unfortunately, it is quite unusual to find a Westerner bearing an Igbo surname such as ‘Eze’ (king) or ‘Okoli’ (market day). Just as Ezekwonna (2005:73) researching among the Igbo puts it “A name is the first marker of personal identity in African communities without which meaning and value are impossible to discern and ascribe”. In essence, naming and surnaming makes our society worth living and meaningful.



Secondly, few respondents claim that adopting of foreign surnames was as a result of the legacy of pain and suffering left by the bearers of the surname. As we know, names are reflections of individual, ethnic as well as national identity, more so, socio-cultural values and ethno-religious practices of the people whether the bearers of the name are alive or dead. Ibemesi (2011) identifies five classification of Igbo surnames thus; patronymic, matronymic, occupational, toponymic and pseudo-surnames. She continues that patronymic could be derived from personal names, beliefs and rever to fathers as a source of strength, matronymic from the mother 'akunne' (mother's wealth), occupational could be from the things you do 'ogbuagu' (killer of lion), toponymic could be a place you live, 'ezeigbo' (king of Igbo) or pseudo-surname could be your nickname 'nzowaonono' (breaker of bottle). Whether the bearers are alive or not should not be the issue here because we will all die someday. Similarly, former bearers of exotic names, however, are no longer alive and some of them do not leave a good legacy.

The interviewees in this group say that the exotic surnames are adopted in order to immortalise their husbands' name. In this case, bearing their husbands' traditional names as surnames supposed to be the best option in order to keep the culture alive. The last group bears exotic names as surnames just to show off; thinking that they would make them look sophisticated rather they will lead to sociolinguistic tragedy if not reversed will spell doom to Igbo society.

Implication

Onah (2019) asserts that African societies have lost so much of their cultural heritage, communal worldviews, status defining parameters, socio-cultural expedition, proverbs, cultural rhetoric and intermediary links with the world of their ancestral spirit to colonization and globalization. We cannot but agree with Onah on the gradual loss of our cultural heritage to Western value system which includes linguistic and non-linguistic practices which form us as a nation. Naming, also, which constitutes our ethnic and national identity is not left out in this sociolinguistic tragedy. This is more disastrous to our nation due to the fact that naming and family name which reflect our individual identity and ethnic distinctiveness are being affected. The result is that our socio-cultural values, belief system and ethno-religious practices are at the verge of collapse which spell doom for the nation if not reversed.

Contrary to the views of these scholars such as Bujo (1997) who admits that, there are no family names in the Western sense, which are transmitted from father to son, Mbiti (1969:119) who argues that "There are no single family names shared by everybody in a given family" and Ayandele (1966) who submits that, Yoruba do not have family because of the sacred nature of one's father's name such that no younger members dare mention it even after a father's death. Harder (2008) argues that, last name indicates a person's family background, Lawler (2008) concurs with Harder that, surname acts as a symbol of family connections, Turnbull (2010) submits that, surname is an ancestral name while Davies (2011) affirms that, surname is a mark of family identification. In fact, we have a family name which every member of the family related by blood bear. Therefore, the danger lying ahead of us, is westernising our family name which would lead to loss of identity both ethnic and nation at large. The truth remains that we cannot be admitted into the Western culture no matter how we patronize it, even when we are nationalized, our root cannot be divorced from us.



In conclusion, let us continue bearing our names and surnames because that's our cultural heritage. In other words, names we bear reflect who we are and where we are coming from. On the importance of our traditional name, Ayandele (1966) admits that, such figures such as David. B. Vincent and George William Johnson relinquish their foreign names to bear Mojola Agebi and Oshokale Tejumade Johnson respectively due to the fact that foreign names remind them of their slavery experiences, such names culturally and spiritually separate them from their African people and cosmology.

RECOMMENDATION

Government should sensitive pregnant women especially during their ante-natal clinic; encourage them to give their children traditional Igbo names which reflect their origin. Not only women but also men should be encouraged by village heads and leaders in their various town meetings to do same. Both in school and at home, children must bear their traditional Igbo names even when their names and surnames are unsatisfactory, adopting another Igbo surname should be the best option. Those who wish to immortalise their husbands' name must choose their husbands' Igbo names as surnames. Above all, the implication of losing our traditional names and surnames to modernization and globalization should be made known to the people. According to Vande-Guma (2015) in Onah (2019:220), "...if a language is endangered then the survival of the various genres expressed through that language are susceptible to extinction". Igbo language is endangered in its naming system as well as Umunze dialect which make up the Igbo nation; urgency is needed to reverse the sociolinguistic catastrophe.

CONCLUSION

Surname is an indicator of family, ethnic and national identity. Indeed, they are reflections of who we are and where we are coming from. Leonard in Okere (1996) avers that, names are used to invoke, promise, threaten, praise, revive, satirise and sympathise, that in fact express and demonstrate all that is human, and that is, all that is best and worst in them. However, the gradual use of exotic names as surnames in place of our traditional surname in Umunze and our nation at large has resulted in the continual loss of our identity, if not reversed will lead to sociolinguistic tragedy. Even when our traditional surnames are not satisfactory, adopting another Igbo surname are the best option. Remember those names are reflections of our socio-cultural norms and values, beliefs and cultural practices. In other words, no man can be divorced from his culture. Therefore, these surnames do not occur in a vacuum rather they are names of people with an origin. The root words also employed are tangible and abstract derivatives the people of Umunze hold in high esteem. Such abstract root words include 'ume' (breath) and 'onwu' (death) while tangible root words include; 'eze' (king), 'uzo' (road), 'mmadu' (human being) and 'ibe' (fellow).

Suggestions for Further Research

This study attempts to examine the nature of Umunze surnames and their root words. It also focuses on the effect of bearing exotic surnames on Umunze surnames and their implications. There are, however, lots of topics yet to be divulged, therefore, this study suggests other



further studies on the following topics; a typology of Igbo surnames, a syntactic analysis of Umunze traditional names and a pragma-semantic analysis of Igbo surnames.

REFERENCES

- Abanuku, B. (1999). *The Philosophy of African Traditional Religion*. Onitsha. Success Publisher.
- Achebe, C. (2010). The African trilogy: *Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease, Arrow of God*. US: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Anyachonkeya, N. (2014). Naming in Igbo land: A linguistic and cultural study. *Mediterranean journal of social sciences*. 5(17), 113-122.
<https://journals.equinoxpub.com>
- Ayandele, E., A. (1966). The missionary impact on modern Nigeria 1842-1914: A political and social analysis. London: Longman.
- Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002). *Re-inventing the family: In search of new lifestyles*: Cambridge: Polity.
- Beider, A. (2005). Scientific approach to etymology of surnames. *Names: A journal of onomastics*, 1-27. Doi: 10.1179/nam.2005.53.1-2.79
- Botolv, H. (2014). The great onomastic divide in Norway: The standardizing problem of settlement (Farm) names after 400 years of Danish influence. In C., Hough & D., Izdebska (Eds.) *Names and their environment proceedings of the 25th International Congress of Onomastic Sciences Glasgow, 25-29 August 2014: Theory and methodology socio-onomastics*, (pp51-59), Glasgow: University of Glasgow.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Boxer, D. & Gritsenko, E. (2005). Women and last names across culture: Reconstituting identity in marriage. *Women and language*, 28, 1-11. <https://www.highbeam.com>
- Bucholtz, M. (1999). "Why be normal?": Language and identity practices in a community of Nerd Girls. *Language and society*, 28(2), 203-225.
- Bujo, B. (1997). *The ethnical dimension of community: The African Model and the dialogue between North and South*. Nairobi: Publications Africa.
- Crystal, D. (1987). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Davies, H. (2011). Sharing surnames: Children, family and kinship. *Sociology*. 45(4) 554-569. doi:10.1177/0038038511406600.
- Eckert, P., & McConnell-Ginet, S. (1999). New generalizations and explanations in language and gender research. *Language and society*, 28(2), 185-201.
- Elias, N. (1991). *The society of individuals*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Emens, E. (2007). Changing name changing: Framing rules and the future of marital names. *The University of Chicago Law Review*, 74(3), 761-863.
<http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclrev/vol74/iss3/1/>.
- Ezekwonna, F., C. (2005). *African communitarian ethic: The basis for the moral conscience and autonomy of the individual-Igbo culture as a case study*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Ezezinne, B., C. (1995). *Igbo tradition religion: A prelude to Christianity*. A dissertation submitted to the department of religion in the faculty of social sciences of University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in partial fulfilment of requirements for the award of Masters of Arts Degree in religion (African Traditional Religion), Published.



- Fasold, R & Connor-Linton, J. (2012). *An introduction to language and linguistics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Harder, K. (2008). Names. In Microsoft Encarta 2009 [DVD], Redmond WA: Microsoft Corporation.
- Ibemesi, F. N. (2011). Origin of Igbo surnames, past and present. *International journal of theology & reformed tradition*, 3 , 149-162.
- Ikotun, R., O. (2014). Surnames as markers of identity among the Yoruba sub-ethnic group members. *Open journal of modern linguistics*, 4, 307-316.
<http://www.scirp.org//journal/ojml>
- Kanu, I. A. (2014). Being and the categories of being in Igbo philosophy. *African journal of humanities Kaduna State University*, 1(1), 144-159.
- Lawler, S. (2008). *Identity: Sociological perspectives*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Mbiti, J.S. (1969). *African religions and philosophy*. London: Heinemann.
- Mensah, E. (2015). Personal names in language contact situations: A case of Cross River State, South-Eastern Nigeria. *Acta Academica*, 47(2), 102-138.
<http://www.ufs.ac.za/ActaAcademica>
- Moyo, T. (2002). Aspects of nicknames among the Tumbuka. *Nomina: Africana*.
- Njoku, A. K. & Uzukwu, E. (2014). *Interface between Igbo theology and Christianity*. U.K: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Nkamigbo, L. C. (2019). The sociolinguistics of Igbo personal names. *Journal of linguistics, language and culture*. 6(1), 158-178.
- Nwigwe, B. (2001). *Naming and being a philosophical investigation on names and objects with special reference to Igbo anthroponyms*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Ogbonna, C.O. (1972). *Names from Africa*. Chicago: Johnson Publishing.
- Okere, T. (1996). Names as building blocks of an African philosophy. In T. Okere (Ed.), *Identity and change*. (pp133-149). USA: Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication.
- Onah, P., E. (2019). Language endangerment: An examination of the shrinking domains of Idoma language. *Voices: A journal of English studies*. 3, 219-229.
- Regional Organised Crime Information Centre (2010). *Law enforcement guide to International names, special research report*. Nashville: ROCIC
<https://info.publicintelligence.net/ROCICInternationalNames>.
- Scassa, T. (1996). National identity, ethnic surnames and the State. *CJLS/RCDS*, 11(2), 167-191.
- Turnbull, J. (2010). *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English*. Oxford: Oxford