Ika Igbo

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Ika is a dialect of the Igbo language spoken in Ika South and Ika North East Local Government Areas of Delta State and the Igbanke area of Edo State in Nigeria. It belongs to the Niger Igbo cluster of dialects (Ikekeonwu 1986) spoken in areas bordering the west of the River Niger; Nwaozuzu (2008) refers to these dialects as West Niger Group of Dialects. A word list of Ika, written by Williamson (1968), was one of the earliest works on Ika and she points out in that work that Ika (and Ukwuani), though regarded as dialects of Igbo, are treated as separate on purely linguistic grounds. Ika phonology differs from that of Standard Igbo and other Igbo dialects and this is why the study of Ika has been of major interest to Igbo linguists in recent years. There have been moves to grant Ika a language status, as seen in the assignment of a unique reference code to Ika: the ISO language code for Ika is ISO 639–3 ikk while that for Igbo is ISO 639–3 ibo. Standard Igbo has the same consonants as Ika though the latter has two consonants, /ʃ/and/ʒ/, which do not exist in the Standard dialect. However, the vocalic system of Ika is largely different from that of Standard and some Igbo dialects which have eight vowels. Ika has a nine-vowel system which includes the schwa, which is a variant of some vowels. Furthermore, it has nine nasal vowels; Standard Igbo and other dialects of Igbo have no nasal vowels. Ika manifests intonation in addition to lexical tone. Standard Igbo and other Igbo dialects do not manifest intonation in the same way as Ika does; that is, they do not express attitudes and emotions through intonation. They manifest only lexical tone. In an earlier study of Northern Igbo dialects, Ikekeonwu (1986) could only discover the existence of upstep in Abakaliki dialect. Okorji (1991) and Egbeji (1999) have studied the intonation of Umuchu, an inland West dialect of Igbo. Their findings, particularly Egbeji's, show that a declarative sentence can be changed to an interrogative one (repetitive question) by use of intonation. This is a syntactic function which can also be likened to what happens in Standard and most other Igbo dialects where the tone of the pronominal subject changes from high to low in the indication of interrogation. At present, therefore, there appears to be no evidence that attitudes and emotions can be expressed through intonation in Umuchu and other Igbo dialects as is observed in Ika.

Ikekeonwu (1999) gives a vivid description of the Standard Igbo tone system; these tones also feature in Ika. Thus, Ika stands out as a dialect in which intonation and tone interact and this interaction affects the tonal realizations (see Uguru 2000).

Ika also stands out from other dialects in other respects. To show their differences, the future marker in Igbo and Ika are shown below in the translations ofthe English declarative sentence 'I will go to the market'.

Ḿ   gà – èjé   áhị́á.   (Standard Igbo)
ḿ   gà   èʤé   á[↓]híá
1SG FUT go   market

Bé   ḿ   jé   á[↓]fị́á.   (Ika)
bé   ḿ   ʤé   á[↓]f´íá
FUT 1SG go   market

It can be observed that while in Standard Igbo, it immediately precedes the main verb in Ika the future marker is separated from the main verb.

Ika had been largely understudied but this is now changing. Uguru (2004) discusses how intonation is used in narrative discourse, Uguru (2005) discusses nasality in Ika, Uguru (2006) deals with the relationship between intonation and meaning, and Uguru (2007) discusses intonation variation and its acoustic effects. In 2010, the Holy Bible (New Testament) was translated into Ika. In writing this paper, the author, a fifty-year-old Ika female speaker read and recorded the Ika translation of the text 'The North Wind and the Sun' and the individual words used to exemplify the sounds of the dialect and the utterances illustrating the tone and intonation of the dialect. Phonemic transcription is what is mainly adopted in this Illustration.
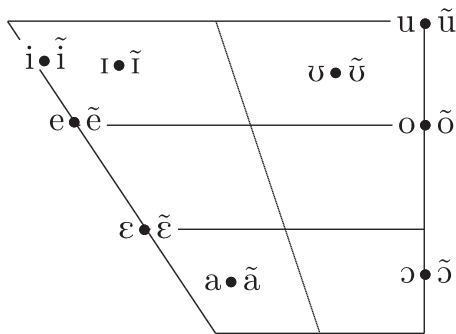
Consonants

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labial velar	Labialized velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b		t d			k g	kp gb	kʷ gʷ	
Nasal	m		n		ɲ	ŋ		ŋʷ	
Affricate				tʃ ʤ					
Fricative		f v	s z	ʃ ʒ		ɣ			ɦ
Approximant				ɻ	j		w		
Lateral approximant			l						

/p/   pá   /pá/   'carry'
/b/   bá   /bá/   'enter'
/t/   tá   /tá/   'chew'
/d/   dá   /dá/   'fall'
/k/   ká   /ká/   'to age'
/g/   gá   /gá/   'reprimand'
/kʷ/   kwá   /kʷá/   'cry'
/gʷ/   gwá   /gʷá/   'tell'
/kp/   kpá   /kpá/   'to talk'
/gb/   gbá   /gbá/   'run'
/f/   fá   /fá/   'humiliate'
/v/   vàm   /vàm/   'fast movement'
/s/   sáà   /sáà/   'sound for shooing animals away'
/z/   zá   /zá/   'sweep'
/ʃ/   shí   /ʃí/   'cook'
/ʒ/   zí   /ʒí /   'send' (on errand)
/ɣ/   ghá   /ɣá/   'broadcast'
/ɦ/   há   /ɦá/   'choose'
/tʃ/   chá   /tʃá/   'wash'
/ʤ/   já   /ʤá/   'chop'
/m/   má   /má/   'know'

/n/	ná	/ná/	'take'
/ɲ/	nyá	/ɲá/	'paste with gum'
/ŋ/	ṅá	/ŋá/	'warm with fire'
/ŋʷ/	nwá	/ŋʷá/	'child'
/ɻ/	rá	/ɻá/	'drink'
/l/	lá	/lá/	'go'
/j/	yá	/já/	'he/she/it'
/w/	wá	/wá/	'break'

The infinitive form is marked by the prefix /í-/ and the tone on the first syllable of verb root is usually downstepped high, rarely low and never a full high tone. The phoneme /v/ is not commonly used in Ika except in ideophones and onomatopoeia.

Vowels

| /i/ | tí | /tí/ | 'strike' |
/ɪ/	tị́	/tí/	'grow taller or longer'
/e/	té	/té/	'cook soup or paint wall or floor'
/ɛ/	tẹ́	/tɛ́/	'past perfect tense marker'
/a/	tá	/tá/	'chew'
/u/	tú	/tú/	'consider'
/ʊ/	tụ́	/tʊ́/	'overwhelm'
/o/	bó	/bó/	'wrongly accuse'
/ɔ/	tọ́	/tɔ́/	'be held fast to something or a place'
/ə/	bə́ (↓wé)	/bə́/	(they) 'will' – future tense marker (an allophone used for shortening such vowels like /ʊ e a/ and others)

In Ika, there are nine oral vowels (in addition to the schwa, which acts like an allophone to some vowels) and nine nasal vowels. The schwa /ə/ does not have a phonemic status hence it is not included in the vowel chart. It is used here in the orthography because of want of proper letter to represent it. Using the letter representing the phoneme it replaced could be confusing.

/ĩ/	fín	/fĩ́/	'wipe'
/ɪ̃/	fị́n	/fɪ̃́/	'tighten'
/ẽ/	dén	/dẽ́/	'rumble'
/ɛ̃/	dẹ́n	/dɛ̃́/	'soften'

/ã/	kwán	/kʷã́/	'cry'
/ũ/	kwún	/kʷṹ/	'swear'
/ʊ̃/	dʌ́n	/dʊ̃́/	'burn with fire'
/õ/	kwón	/kʷṍ/	'restrain somebody from doing something'
/ɔ̃/	dọ́n	/dɔ̃́/	'arrange'

Ika nasal vowels are indicated orthographically with word final alveolar nasal /n/, after the nasalized vowel (see Ika Bible Translation Committee 2010). Vowel nasality distinguishes minimal pairs in Ika (see Uguru 2005).

Vowel harmony is also a major feature in Ika.
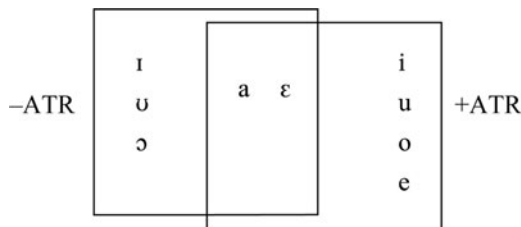
The above chart explains the vowels that can co-occur in a word. However, the two vowels, /a/ and /ɛ/, which are in the intersection, can co-occur with both sets of vowels. Even when they occur in the verb root, they can trigger vowels from either set of vowels though they tend to attract [–ATR] vowels more than [+ATR] ones.

Ika has a predominantly CV syllable structure, that is, V, CV. This can be seen in such words as ọ /ɔ́/ 'he/she/it' and yụ /jú/ 'you (SG)'. However, there can be some rare cases of CVC structure, as seen in the word vàm 'fast movement'. There are no consonant clusters in Ika.

Intonation system

Both tone (use of pitch variation in distinguishing words lexically or grammatically) and intonation (use of pitch variation mainly for expressing emotions and attitudes) feature in Ika. There are two major tones: high and low. The third, downstep, is not a major tone but a downstepped high.

High	/´/
Low	/`/
Downstep	/↓´/

Like in any tone language, tone distinguishes between words in Ika, as can be seen in the minimal sets below.

ḿbà	/ḿbà/	'no, city /town'
m̀bà	/m̀bà/	'faint'
m̀bá	/m̀bá/	'reprimand'

íʃí	/íʃí/	'head'
ìʃì	/ìʃì/	'blindness'
í↓ʃí	/í↓ʃí/	'to cook'

Negation is usually marked by the suffix /-nɪ/ and usually bears the downstep. Polarity is marked by a low-toned pronominal subject /ò/.

There are also six tunes (Uguru 2000). These are outlined below.

High Fall(HF)	–	(ˋ)	used for declarative statement with excitement
Low Fall(LF)	–	(ˌ)	used for declarative statement with indifference
High Rise(HR)	–	(ˊ)	used for surprise, asking question with excitement or surprise
Low Rise(LR)	–	(ˌ)	used for casual question, scepticism, listing items
Fall Rise(FR)	–	(ˇ)	used for scepticism, surprise, asking question
Rise Fall(RF)	–	(ˆ)	used for emphasis, disgust, warning for caution

Intonation is one of the major features in which Ika phonology differs from many Igbo dialects. Intonation involves the use of to express various meanings, for example attitudinal and emotional, and to mark syntactic form. Also, in the use of intonation, an utterance has only one prominent syllable (the nuclear syllable). These two features are observed in Ika but not in the Standard or other Igbo dialects. Of major importance is that intonation distinguishes between declaratives and interrogatives except in *wh*-questions. Thus, an utterance could have six distinct attitudinal meanings depending on the tune the speaker chooses to use. The examples below show this for the utterance, *Mbà* 'No'.

HF	–	/mˋba/	declarative statement (with excitement)
LF	–	/mˌba/	declarative statement (with indifference)
LR	–	/mˌba/	pause or casual question
HR	–	/mˊba/	excitement; question seeking repetition and showing surprise
FR	–	/mˇba/	surprise, surprise plus question
RF	–	/mˆba/	disgust

The difference between Ika Low Rise (LR) and Fall Rise (FR) can be appreciated more in the following utterances:

LR	–	ˌwe	/ˌwe/	'They?' (casual question)
FR	–	ˇwe	/ˇwe/	'They?' (interrogation and surprise)
FR	–	ˇwe	/ˇwe/	'Where are they?', 'What of them?'

Transcription of recorded passage Ufere gha ugwu lẹ enyanwu 'The North Wind and the Sun'
Annotations at syllable margins (rather than over vowels) indicate intonation while those over vowels mark tones. The tunes they represent are indicated in the translation. They are:

ˊ	–	HR
ˇ	–	FR
ˌ	–	LR

úfèɹè ɣá úgʷú lè ếɲá↓ŋʷʊ́ //ò ŋʷè ógè úfèɹè ɣá úgʷú lè ếɲá↓ŋʷʊ́ ɹáɲà íʃí óɲé káí↓ bé ↓wé// óɲé íʤè òhú nɔ̀ pùhá //ɔ̀ fùmà ékʷà á↓tʃʊ́ ó↓jí //wé èbʊ́ɔ̀ nɔ̀ kʷéɹí sí ní ójé kébú ʊ́zɔ̀ mé ójé íʤè fʊ́pʊ̀ ékʷà ó ʤì fʊ́ɹʊ́ ó ᴴᴿ/jí ní óɲé ŋʷá zènàfîn fiʊ́ èbɔ̀// ᶠᴿˇjá úfèɹè ɣá úgʷú nɔ̀ ʤí ńdʊ̀ á líí↓lé fékémé úfèɹè kání ɔ́ wéᴴᴿ/fé óɲé íʤè éwè ékʷà áfʊ́íkémé ó↓ŋʷé á// ò ɹú ìkpèà ᴸᴿ/zùn ńdù nɔ̀ gʷú úfèɹè ɣá úgʷú// ɔ́ nɔ̀ gbɔ́nín éfé // éŋʷʊ́ nɔ̀ mùmá éʒíén//òʒìgbó òʒìᶠᴿˇgbó óɲé íʤè nɔ̀ fʊ́pʊ̀ ékʷà // úfèɹè ɣá úgʷú nɔ̀ bíá bíá èkʷéɹí ní ếɲá↓ŋʷʊ́ kà ńdù èŋʷé ímé wé èbʊ́ɔ̀//

Orthographic version
Ufere gha ugwu lẹ ẹnyanwụ. O nwe oge ufere gha ugwu lẹ ẹnyanwụ ra-anya ishi onye ka ibe we, oye ije ohu nọ pụha. Ọ fụma ẹkwa achụ oyi. We ẹbụọ nọ kweri sị nị oye ka-ebu ụzọ me oye ije fụpụ ẹkwa o ji fụrụ oyi nị onye nwa zenahịn hụ ẹbọ. Ya, ufere gha ugwu nọ ji ndụ a liile fekeme ufere; kanị ọ wa-efe, onye ije ewe ẹkwa afụikeme onwe a o ru ikpeazụn, ndụ nọ gwụ ufere gha ugwu (ọ nọ gbọnịn efe). Ẹnwụ nọ mụma ezien. Ozigbo ozigbo, onye ije nọ fụpụ ẹkwa. Ufere gha ugwu nọ bịa bịa ekweri nị ẹnyanwụ ka ndụ enwe ime we ẹbụọ.

Interlinearized version

In this section, each segment consists of four lines: the first line is the original text in the orthographic form; the second line is the phonemic transcription, the third line is the interlinear gloss, and the fourth line is the English translation of the text.

Ufere   gha   ugwu   le   enyanwu
úfèɹè   ɣá   úgʷú   lè   ɛ́ɲá↓ŋʷʊ́
wind   from   north   CONJ   sun
'The North Wind and the Sun'

O   nwe   oge   ufere   gha   ugwu   le   enyanwu   ra-anya   ishi
ò   ŋʷè   ógè   úfèɹè   ɣá   úgʷú   lè   ɛ́ɲá↓ŋʷʊ́   ɹáɲà   íʃí
3SG   have   time   wind   from   north   CONJ   sun   PROG -boast   head
'There was a time when when the wind from the north and the Sun were boasting'

onye   ka   ibe   we,   oye   ije   ohu   no   puha.
óɲé   ká   í↓bé   ↓wé   óɲé   íʤè   òhú   nò   pùhá //
who   surpass   mate   3PL   person   travel   one   PST   come
'who would surpass the other, a traveller came by.'

O   fuma   ekwa   a   chu   oyi.   We   ebuo   no   kweri
ò   fùmà   ɛ́kʷà   á   ↓tʃú   ó↓jí //   wé   èbʊ́ɔ̀   nɔ̀   kʷɛ́ɹí
3SG   wrap   cloth   HAB   chase   cold   3PL   two   PST   agree
'He wrapped a cloth against the cold. The two agreed'

si   ni   oye   ka-ebu   uzo   me   oye   ije   fupu   ekwa
sí   ní   ójé   kébú   úzɔ̀   mé   ójé   íʤè   fʊ́pù   ɛ́kʷà
say   REL   person   FUT-take   first   make   person   travel   unwrap   cloth
'that the one who would first make the traveller unwrap the cloth'

o   ji   furu   oyi   ni   onye   nwa   zenahin   hu   ebo.
ó   ʤì   fʊ́ɹʊ́   ó/jí   ní   óɲé   ŋʷá   zènàfĩìn   fĩʊ́   èbɔ̀
3SG   held   wrap   cold   REL   person   DET   surpass   DET   other
'he used to ward off the cold, that one surpasses the other.'

Ya,   ufere   gha   ugwu   no   ji   ndu   a   liile   fekeme   ufere;
já   úfèɹè   ɣá   úgʷú   nɔ̀   ʤí   ńdʊ̀   á   líí↓lé   fékémé   úfèɹè
CONJ   wind   from   north   PST   take   power   POSS   all   blow   wind
'So, the wind from the north used all his might and blew;'

kani   o   wa-efe,   onye   ije   e   we   ekwa
kání   ɔ́   wé/fé   óɲé   íʤè   é   wè   ɛ́kʷà
CONJ   3SG   PROG-blow   person   travel   PROG   take   cloth
'but the more he blew, the more the traveller used the cloth'

a   fuikeme   onwe   a
á   fʊ́íkémé   ó↓ŋʷé   á
PROG   wrap.round   self   3SG
'and was wrapping himself'

o   ru   ikpeazun,   ndu   no   gwu   ufere   gha   ugwu
ò   ɹú   ìkpèà/zùn   ńdʊ̀   nɔ̀   gʷú   úfèɹè   ɣá   úgʷú
3SG   reach   last   strength   PST   finish   wind   from   north
'at last, the North Wind got tired'

(o   no   gbonin   efe).   Enwu   no   mu   ma   ezien.
ɔ́   nɔ̀   gbɔ́nín   éfé   ɛ́ŋʷʊ́   nɔ̀   mò   má   ɛ́ʒíén
3SG   PST   stop   blow   sun   PST   shine   PROG   much
'and stopped blowing. The Sun began shining brightly.'

Ozigbo	ozigbo,	onye	ije	nọ	fụpụ	ẹkwa.
òʒìgbó	òʒì˅gbó	óɲé	íʤè	nɔ̀	fʊ́pʊ̀	ɛ́kʷà
immediately	immediately	person	travel	PST	unwrap	cloth

'Immediately, the traveller unwrapped his cloth.'

Ufere	gha	ugwu	nọ	bịa	bịa	ekweri
úfèɹ̞è	ɣá	úgʷú	nɔ̀	bíá	bíá	èkʷéɹ̞í
wind	from	north	PST	come	PERF	agree

The North Wind then agreed

nị	enyanwụ	ka	ndụ	enwe	ime	we	ẹbụo.
ní	ɛ́ɲá↓ŋʷʊ́	kà	ńdʊ̀	èŋʷé	ímé	wé	èbʊ́ɔ́
that	sun	surpass	power	has	between	3PL	two

'that the Sun was the stronger of the two.'

Abbreviations

3PL	third person plural	PERF	perfective
3SG	third person singular	POSS	possessive
CONJ	conjunction	PROG	progressive
DET	determiner	PST	past
FUT	future	REL	relative
HAB	habitual		

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