

## IKWERE HEALTH TERMS

By

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### **Abstract**

*Every domain has its peculiar terms. Term helps to properly describe things. It has been difficult for instance for health workers especially in rural Ikwerre community areas to communicate with patients in need due to lack of the knowledge of appropriate terms to call or use to describe some medical phenomena in the mother tongue. English Language creates communication barrier between the health workers and their patients who are non-native speakers but pragmatically incompetent learners and illiterates. This paper tries to reveal some appropriate health terms in Ikwerre. This venture will enhance the impact of rural health workers, learners and teachers in the Ikwerre speaking communities and Local Government Areas of Rivers State Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Health terms, Ikwerre language, Iwhuruohna mother tongue

### **Introduction**

Terminology is the study of terms and its principles, theoretical and methodical foundations. In creating terms, linguistic gap and lack of concept or object can lead to cultural divergences. Creating terms helps eliminate ambiguities in communication between scientific, technical and systemic formations of terms thus avoiding divergence but providing needed equivalence. "The culture of a language may condition the construction and perception of concepts thereby making it evident that culture is implicated in the creation of terms." (Okeogu 2019). Terminology is virtually a new area especially to us in this part of the world. This is because we are used to dictionaries, glossaries, encyclopedias and thesaurus. All these have not been able to adequately describe features. The need for proper nomenclature and documentation gave rise to terminology. A term can stand independently in meaning and context. A term bank is the collection of created terms. It is required as a resort for future use or reference. According to Okeogu (2006:76),

Dictionaries, glossaries and related documents are not enough because they are limited to words and terms and are often not in context hence a documentary and terminological research is necessary. Every translator would be interested in producing a good translation and so would not only want to use the appropriate terms, but would equally employ the correct phraseology. Translating specialized texts involves terminological and documentary research. This exercise facilitates the work and makes it easier to transmit the desired information since it sheds more light on the text to be translated.

Unfortunately, the development of health terms is a neglected area by many researchers in Ikwerre even though traditionally we use them in our day to day communications. No language is perfect as every language borrows and adapts borrowed words. Even the English language is still evolving after borrowing from Latin, French and others. That is why they update their dictionaries and

periodically declare some words as ‘Old English’ after invention or importation of new words. It is interesting to know that some words in Nigerian Languages are now found in the global English encyclopedias. For instance, ‘Wayo’ (Cun / Trickster), ‘Ada’ (First Daughter), ‘Naira’ (Nigeria, used to refer to money) etc. can now be found in some dictionaries (Ikwerre-Meka 2018, 6:6). In as much as the Tower of Babel is described in Genesis (11:1-9) as the origin of multiple world languages; that is also believed to be the source of Ikwere, and other minority languages from antiquity prior to migrations. In this work, we took these facts into view and created our terms having the cultural value of the Ikwere language at heart.

### **Ikwere Language**

When referring to the language it is written ‘IKWERE’. That is; it is spelt with one ‘R’. But, double ‘R’ is used to refer to the tribe or place.

Ikwere is the language of the Ikwerre people, also known as **Ele Iwhuruḡhna**, the largest ethnic nationality in Rivers State Nigeria (Census 2010). As a distinct entity, she has her own standard orthography approved by the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1985 (Nduka 1993:14). It is unfortunate that *Linguistic Politics* as described in Ore (2006:137) makes some ignorant people see Ikwere as a dialect of Igbo. Ikwere has over 14 dialects. A dialect cannot have such variant subs or dialects of a dialect, with intelligibility. It is not possible to have dialects of another dialect. The classification of Ikwere as Igboid does not in anyway make it an Igbo language of the Kwa domain nor dialect of Igbo of the Lower Niger Group. Williamson described it well in Nduka (1993:159) as:

The name of the linguistic group to which Ikwere belongs. In 1973 I proposed the name ‘Lower Niger’ for the whole group, following the linguistic tradition of using names of geographical features for language groups. This name has, however, some problems. First, it is often misunderstood by students to refer to all the languages spoken on the Lower Niger, including the Ijo (Ijaw) languages. Secondly, there are too many linguistic names which already include ‘Niger’, so that it becomes difficult for linguists as well as ordinary people to remember which is referred to. This problem has risen with many groups of languages, and after discussion a group of linguists has recommended that geographical names be used only at higher levels of classification, while groups of more closely related languages be referred to by adding the suffix ‘-oid’ to the name of the largest member of the group. Thus we already have Bantoid, Edoid, Yoruboid etc. Ikwerre becomes Igboid, meaning the group of languages which has Igbo as its largest member.

In fact, the worst language of Ikwere adopted by trade affinity with Igbos is merely 15 percent Igbo while the original is maintained. Ikwerre’s foremost professor G. O. M. Tasié reported of one Bishop (in Tasié 1993), who discovered and queried that if Ikwerre was part of Igbo why do they force them (the Ikwerre people) to learn and struggle to understand the Ibo language? Emeritus Professor Otonti Nduka the Ḣchi Ḣhna Ikwerre XI reveals in Nduka (1993:19);

... whereas the putative affinity (identity?) of Ibo and Ikwerre had been one of the main grounds for the assimilation of the Ikwerre to the Ibos, paradoxically the first doubts about this assimilation were indirectly raised in 1913 by the Right Rev.

Herbert Tugwell, the then Anglican Bishop on the Niger. When on the second decade of this century the Union Ibo Bible Nso was being introduced for use in Ibo land. Bishop Tugwell undertook an experimentation tour of Ikwerre towns and villages, assumed to be Ibo-speaking; of course. As reported by Tasie, “Tugwell discovered from the tests he carried out that although the Ikwerre were often regarded as Ibo...the Union Ibo Bible translation, surprisingly, was not easily understood by the Ikwerre.” It is, as is all well known, in the nature of human affairs that such inconvenient piece of evidence is usually swept under the carpet, especially when powerful forces and interests are at work.

### Some Ikwerre Health Terms

As a people with distinct culture, the Ikwerres from origin had their own terms used to describe ailments and got herbal remedies to the challenging issues related to their health. The documentation of health terms in Ikwerre was hitherto neglected due to the passion which led to the shift in patronage of orthodox medical practices via colonialism. Thus, many words got forgotten, lost or anglicized. Therefore, this term bank as product of technical/specialized translation, is developed accordingly from the original names, usage and purpose as long as health remains indispensable to man. We will take a look at 35 wordlists in the Ikwerre health term bank. Most of them were developed by coinage in addition to age-long traditional knowledge. **Coinage** or **Neologism**, according to Ndimele (1999:16) is a morphological process of creating new words to name previously non-existent objects or phenomena which result from cultural contact.

### Ikwerre Word Formation

English	Ikwerre/Iwhuruoḥna	Coinage
1. Stroke	Ngworo/Okponwuehni	Noun(N)/Verb(V)+Noun(N)
2. Eczema	Rugwo/Ngwugwo	Noun
3. Diarrhoea	Opnoruwho	Verb+Noun
4. Sickness	Ahnjakwu/Nrjria	Noun+Noun
5. Malaria	Akom	Noun
6. Death	Enwu/Anwu	Noun
7. Surgery	Qwama Ehnj/Qwehni	Verb+Noun
8. Doctor	Nyendigbaa/Dokita	Adjective+Noun
9. Nurse	Nye Nhnkwa/ Ohnekwaehnj/Nosi	Noun+Verb+Adjective
10. Hospital	Qroodigbaa	Noun + Adjective
11. Health Worker	Nye Ernu Egwnumisi/ Nyernuegwnu	Noun
12. Drug	Egwnumisi	Noun
13. Injection	Wandu/Wondu	Noun
14. Drug Abuse	Qlayime Egwnumisi/Ntughariegwnu	Verb+Noun
15. Pregnancy	Ruwhorime	Noun+Adjective
16. Delivery	Qmunno	Verb+Noun
17. Antenatal	Olekota Rime	Verb+Noun
18. Postnatal	Olekwa Nnwọ	Verb+Noun
19. Pharmacy	Qro Egwnumisi	Noun+Noun
20. First Aid	Ndigbaa Mbom	VerbNoun
21. Recuperation	Qgbakneru Ehnj	Verb+Noun

22. Bed Rest	Ozukwa Inwe	Verb+Adjective
23. Immunization	Osiknenu Ehni/Tagidne	Verb+Noun+Adjective
24. Immunity	Tagidne/Osiknenuehni	Noun/Adjective
25. HIV/AIDS	Nrija Ogbu Wohnernehne	Noun+Verb+Adjective
26. Cough	Okwa	Noun
27. Typhoid	Nrija Ntakwnu/ Ehnjekwnu Taayifodu	Noun+Adjective
28. Dizziness	Anyanji	Noun+Adjective
29. Loss of Memory	Orimarna	Noun
30. Symptoms	Ogbaama	Verb+Noun
31. Signs	Ngesi	Noun
32. Treatment	Ndigbaa	Noun
33. Urinalysis	Nlekwu Monyo	Adjective+Noun
34. Laboratory	Oro Nyoko	Noun+Noun
35. Theatre	Oro Owahni	Noun+Adjective

### Strategies in Term Creation

Our strategies in the creation of the Ikwere Health terms are in line with that of Plag (200:27) cited in Okegu (2017:144) which focuses on derivation (affixation and compounding).

The aim of terminologists is to create specialized vocabularies to enrich whichever language they are working with. This can only be done through the creation of terms in the language. Knowledge of such language is necessary because, according to (Ijioma 2006), 'it is not an all-comers affair'. And, since terminology is at the centre of specialized or technical translation, it is part of the professional life of the translator of specialized texts in researching as the texts are expressed in particular ways and in the special languages of the areas concerned.

We are of the opinion that these terms we created are in conformity with the morphology, spelling and pronunciation conventions of Ikwere language. The meaning of each term is independent of the context and in consonance with guideline of the International Association of Terminology (1982).

### Conclusion/Recommendations

The health terminologies in Ikwere as an indigenous language cannot be neglected. Because of its importance for the purpose of communication with the natives in need, it is necessary that:

- WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) should adopt our Ikwere health terms and produce localized information for health awareness and pharmaceutical products.
- The Government of Rivers State should support and sponsor the expansion and creation of more terms in other areas through our Ikwere Language School and Rivers Language Academy.
- The Federal Government should sponsor Researchers across the over 250 tribes with over 500 indigenous languages via the National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN) Aba.
- Ogbakor Ikwere Cultural Organization Worldwide should enforce the use of our 'Ikwuonu Iwhuruohna' across the Ikwere-speaking Local Government Areas, even in legislation, media, judiciary and education.

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