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THREE 'KWA' LANGUAGES OF EASTERN NIGERIA

DAVID J. CLARK

THE PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND OF THIS STUDY

1. The purpose of this article is threefold: (i) to present a 100-word list for three related languages of the Niger Delta area of Nigeria; (ii) to make explicit some of the practical and theoretical problems encountered in the collection of such data; (iii) to discuss the usefulness of such data in basic comparative work. This is a revised form of a paper originally given in a seminar in the Department of Phonetics and Linguistics at the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1967.

The three languages are Ekpeye, Ogba and Ikwere, spelt Ekpeya, Oba and Ikwerri respectively by Forde and Jones. (The gb in 'Ogba' represents a voiced implosive bilabial stop ɓ. It is written gb to conform with the present orthographic conventions of Igbo.) They are all located in the south-west part of the former Eastern Region of Nigeria, on the eastern edges of the Niger Delta. Ekpeye, the language which formed the main subject of my own field-work,[1] is contiguous with both Ogba and Ikwere. Ikwere is spoken by more people than either Ogba or Ekpeye, though accurate statistics are unobtainable at present . In so far as they have been noticed at all, Ogba and Ikwere have been regarded as dialects of Igbo (e.g. by Westermann and Bryan).[2] Ekpeye is referred to by Forde and Jones[3] as a divergent dialect of Igbo, but is certainly to be recognised as a separate language, since it is not mutually intelligible with Igbo.

The data in the accompanying 100-word list was collected in 1966 at the request of the West Africa branch of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, of which my wife and I had temporary membership for the period of our field-work. For all three languages, the data is given in phonetic form, with the exception noted below (section 3.2). The data in the Ekpeye column has been supplemented from my wider study of the language, where this seemed relevant. Supplementary items are underlined in the list. In particular, elided vowels are shown, and synonymous or related words have been added when they seemed more comparable in form with words in Ogba and/or Ikwere. Words marked with an asterisk have their final vowel nasalised, but for typographical reasons, this cannot be shown.

THE LIST

2.	English	Ekpeye	Ikwere	Ogba
1	I	mɛ̂	mɛ́	mɔ́
2	you (sing.)	yô	jɪ́	ɪyɔ́
3	we	yée	áɪ̂	yée
4	this	ôm	kà	wɔ́ɔ
5	that	áwɛ̀	cáarɪ	ŋ́kâ

[1] Carried out with the aid of a grant from the Central Research Fund of the University of London.

[2] D. Westermann and M. A. Bryan, 'Languages of West Africa, Part II', HANDBOOK OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES (Oxford, 1952).

[3] D. Forde and G. I. Jones, 'The Ibo and Ibibio-speaking Peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria', ETHNOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF AFRICA—WESTERN AFRICA Part III (Oxford, 1950).

	English	Ekpeye	Ikwere	Ogba
6	who	ŋína/ŋwɔ́na/nyé	ɔ́búnê	ònyé
7	what	íyéla	kínɪ	kínɪ
8	no	ɛ́ɛ̀ɛ́	ńǹ	kɔ́dí
9	all	ɓélɛ́ɓɛlɛ	kpákárárá	ɔ̀sàwɔ́
10	many (things)	ìígil(i) íyê	ńtɔ́tɔ́	ɔ̀sàwɔ́
	(people)	ɔ́tɔ́tɔ́ èmènè		
11	one	ŋìné/ŋwɔ̀né	ótù	ŋwánɪ
12	two	ɓíbɔ́	èbɔ̀	ŋwébɔ̌
13	big	ékê	íbù	íbù
14	long	ɔ̀kànì ɔ̀ká	ógólógó	èkíka
15	small	ńtɔ́kɔ	ɔ̀hwā́ ŋkà	ŋwátĭì
16	woman	ùnyómà	ńnênyà	ìnyéŋwā̌
17	man	ùkómà	ńnérùkà	ìkéŋwā̌
18	person	mádɔ̀	bádɔ̀	mádɔ̀
19	fish	ɔ́kpá	ɔ́sɔ̄̀	ázɔ̀
20	bird	ɔ́nɔ̀	wɔ́nɔ̀nɔ̀	ńnɔ̀nɔ̀
21	dog	ákíta	ŋkíta	ŋ̀kíta
22	louse	úgwu	rúgwû	ígî
23	tree	úʃi	úsísi	òsísi
24	seed	ɔ́kpɔ́lɒ	ŋmkpɔ́rɒ	ŋmkpɔ̀rɔ̀
25	leaf	ɔ́hwɔ	ɔ́kwɔ́kwɔ	ŋ̀mkpérèkwɔ́kwɔ
26	root	égbélèjî	rɔ́kánɪ	m̀ɓɔ̀rɔ̀gɔ̀
27	bark	ɔ̀zɔ̂	ɔ́sɔ̂*	èkpérékpa
28	skin	ɔ́kpɔ́	ánɔ́kpɛ̂hyî	èhwɔ̂
29	flesh	úɗù	ánɔ́ èhyî	ńnɛhwɔ̀
			ɔ́mìnìmá èhyî	
30	blood	ɔ̀bàlà	ɔ̀fàrà	ɔ̀bàrà
31	bone	úkpo	ŋmkpíkpɪ	ɔ̀kpɔ́kpɒ
32	grease (oil)	ɔ̀gà/mɔ́nɔ̂	mɔ́nɔ̂	óhwûmɓò
33	egg (of hen)	ɔ̀kw(â) ɔ́nɔ̀	èkw(â) ánɔ̀nɔ̀	èkwá nɔ̀nɔ̀
34	horn	ùpè	ḿfû	m̀pè
35	tail	èwɔ̀lɔ̀/ɔ́dɔ̀	ɔ́dɔ̂*	ɔ̀kpàsî
36	feather	ábà	àfâ	èbɔ́bà
37	hair (of head)	ɔ́káze	ríkírize	èbɛ́rɛ́bísî
	hair (of arm)		rújî	ìdɔ̀rɔ̀
38	head	íʃî	rísî	ísî
39	ear	étè	ḿsî	ńtî
40	eye	ékpélénì/ényê	ányâ	ényâ
41	nose	émî	ímî	ímî
42	mouth	ɔ́nɒ	ɔ́nɒ	ɔ́nɒ
43	tooth	íze	íze	éze
44	tongue	íɗô	rílô	írê
45	fingernail	ɔ́bô	rúbárákâ	ḿbô
46	foot	úkó	ɔ́cí	ɔ́kwɔ́
47	knee	ùkpùnúko	ŋmkpɔ́rɔ́cɪ	ŋ̀mkpɔ̀rɔ́kwɒ
48	hand	ékâ	ákâ	ékâ

	English	Ekpeye	Ikwere	Ogba
49	stomach	ɑ́wɔ́	rɑ́hwɔ́	ɛ́hwɔ́
50	neck	úgwè ógólògò	úlî	òlù
51	chest	únúkwùmà	ŋmkpɑ́róbì	ŋ̀kìdìmà
52	heart	ékpémà/óbù	ŋmkpɑ́róbì	óbù
53	liver	ìmèlècî	m̀bɛ́ʃì	ùmóji
54	he drinks	ɔ̀ŋwɔ̀ mɛ́nyɛ̂ (palm-wine)	ɔ̀nɔ̀ ŋwɔ́	ɔ̀rà míni (water)
55	he eats (food)	ùɗì ɓíɗi	ònè rí	ɔ̀rì ř́
56	he bites	ɔ̀tàɗì énɑ̂	ɔ̀ná tă	ɔ̀tɛ̀ rɑ̂*
57	he sees	ùnyèt(ù) àɗì	ɔ̀nɔ̀ hwɑ̂*	ɔ́hwɑ́ zɔ̀
58	he hears	ɔ̀nɔ̀j(ì) étɛ̀ (with ear)	ɔ̀nɔ̀sì	ɔ̀nɔ̀ hɛ̂ (something)
59	he knows	ɔ̀màj(ì) àmájí	ɔ̀màgwɔ̀	ɔ̀mář́ǎ
60	he sleeps	ùnyì nyínà	ònè ʃí	ózú ř̃ǎ
61	he dies	ɔ̀ŋwɔ̀l(ɔ̀) ɔ̀ŋwɔ́lɔ́	ɔ̀nɔ̀ ŋwɔ́	ɔ̀ŋwɑ́ř́ɑ́mɛ́
62	he kills (a person)	ùgb(ù) ògbú ùgbù mádɔ̀	ònò gbú	ògbúwɛ́ mádɔ̀
63	he swims (in water)	ùgw(ù) ògwú ùgwù míni	ònó gwu	ògwù míni
64	it flies	ùw(è) èwé	ònè hwɛ̂	òhwùhwê
65	he walks	ɔ̀kàz(è) ízè	ònè sɛ́	ójíjíjè
66	he comes	ùj(à) èjá	ɔ̀nà vâ/bâ	ɔ̀byá hɛ̂
67	he lies down	ɔ̀n(à) àná	ɔ́dìnírílɛ́	ɔ́jɔ́jâ
68	he sits	ɔ̀nàʒ(ì) ɛ́ʒì	ɔ̀nɛ́ ǹzéré	ɔ̀nàdì ɔ́dɔ̀ (on bottom) (cf. 35)
69	he stands	ùnùz(ò) ònùzó	ógwúzógwû ònó gwùzórú	ògwùzùgwùzó
70	he gives	ùnèɗ(ì) ènèɗí	ɔ́ŋgásî	ɔ̀nìgá
71	he says	ɔ̀kà kpɔ́m̀/ùkwù ɔ̀kp(ɔ̀) ékpɔ́	ɔ́kárɑ̂	ɔ̀kwù
72	sun	èlɑ́ŋwɑ	èhwɛ́bɛ	ányɪ̃
73	moon	àdígwe	ɔ́ŋwɑ̀	ɔ́ŋwɑ̂
74	star	ópupɛnyɛnyɛ̂	ḿbɔ̀	ḿbɔ̀
75	water	míni	míni	míni
76	rain	míni	ólu	míni
77	stone	ígwû	rígwû	ákàràká
78	sand	ɑ́za	rɑ́sã (mud) ètɛ́jã (sand)	ɛ́ja
79	earth	ɑ́za/élɛ̀	èlì	àlì
80	cloud	ólígwe	ígwe	élu
81	smoke	ɑ́mélɛcɪ	rɑ́ŋwɔ̀rɔ̀	ɛ́ŋwɑ̀ř́ɑ̀
82	fire	écí	bɛ́kɑ́	ɔ́kɑ́
83	ash	éwécɪ	rɛ́tɑ́	ńtɑ́
84	it burns	ùŋw(ù) ɔ̀ŋwú	nɔ̀ŋwû	No response
85	path	ícakpà	àkpɑ̃́	ɑ́zɔ̀

	English	Ekpeye	Ikwere	Ogba
86	mountain	éɓú	úgwú	úgwu
87	red	ɷbàlà ɷmɔhwɷ	úhyé ɔnà cā̃ ɔfā̀rā̃	úhyé
88	green	ɷhw(ɔ́) éwe	ɔnà cā̃ né ɔ́kwɷ́kwɔ́ bɑ́dɷ	éht̄hyá óyì
89	yellow	ɔdɔ ɷs(à) ɷsá	ɔdɔ̃	ɔdɔ
90	night	àbàlì	àbàlì	àbàlì/ùcícè
91	hot	ékécí	békɑ̃ ɔnè rɛ̃ bɛ̀kɑ̃	ɔ́kɷ́
92	cold	ɷkáyɪ	úyi	óyi
93	full	ɔyúlúlɛ̂ ùyùl(ù) ɔyúlú	ɔjílé	ɔjújú
94	new	ɷwɷ̂	ùkɛ́	ɔhwɑ̃́rɑ̃
95	good	ɷmàn(ɷ) àmánɷ́	ɔbɷ̀rɷ̀ ɔ́ma	ɔmà ḿma ɔ́dí ɔkà
96	round	ɔgɔdɔ	ŋmgbùrùgbúrù	gbùrùgbúrù
97	dry	ɷkp(ɛ̀) ékpɛ̀	ɔkpɔ́lé	ɔkɔ́mɛ́rɛ́
98	name	éwà	réhwā̀	éhwā̀
99	white	ɷs(à) ɷsá	ɔnà cā̃ ɔrɔ	ɷcá
100	black	ùyî	ɔnè jí rùjì	ójí

PRACTICAL PROBLEMS IN THE COLLECTION OF SUCH DATA

3.1. The difficulties which arise to hinder the accurate sampling of languages by means of a list such as that shown above are rather elementary and obvious, yet they have not always been acknowledged.

The first problem is that of comprehension. The informant may not understand the English, or, perhaps worse, he may think he understands it when he does not. As an example of this situation, when the list was worked over for Ekpeye only with an informant in London (prior to field-work), a somewhat hesitant response was produced to no. 22, 'louse'. When the list was checked in the course of field-work, it transpired that the response word actually meant 'mouse'! If a howler of this kind can be perpetrated by a man who has lived in England for ten years, and has a very good knowledge of English, it would be surprising indeed if other errors did not lurk undetected in the Ogba or Ikwere data.

Another example of the same general type of problem is found at no. 84 in the Ogba list, where no response could be elicited. Either the informant failed to grasp the English, or else could not recall an appropriate response in Ogba. In this instance, he was honest enough to admit defeat, but human nature being what it is, there may be other instances where a wrong response is given in preference to an admission of failure.

There are two sides to any coin, however, and the investigator must not entertain illusions of his own infallibility. In the present lists, a comparison of nos. 30 and 87 in Ikwere reveals ɔfàrà in one and ɔfā̀rā̃ in the other. This is very probably the same word, and it is easier to conclude that the linguist has been inconsistent in his transcription than that there is some conditioning factor for the nasalisation in no. 87. This kind of error is all too easy to make in handling a language with which one is otherwise totally unfamiliar.

3.2. A second major kind of problem in recording data is that the linguist carries his previous linguistic experience over into the language under investigation. As a native speaker of English, my previous experience may have been carried over into any or all of the other three languages in ways undetected. As a student and analyst of Ekpeye, however, my previous experience has been deliberately carried over into the recording of the Ogba and Ikwere in one important respect. This is in the transcription of the vowels. Ekpeye has a nine-vowel system, and all nine of the Ekpeye vowel symbols have been used for both the other two languages. There is no proof that either has a nine-vowel system, but it was my impression that nine, and only nine, vowel symbols were needed to record the vowels of Ikwere and Ogba. This impression was surely influenced by the months of intensive study of Ekpeye that preceded the collection of data in the other two languages.

3.3. The third type of practical problem is concerned with word divisions. These are not infrequently a source of difficulty in West African languages even when the language is fairly well studied, so A FORTIORI they can be expected to give trouble in a list such as this. In a strict sense, there is no justification for any word divisions in the Ikwere or Ogba data, but some have been included, especially in the verbal examples, nos. 54–71. In some cases these are based on external evidence, such as the informant's slow repetition of the item, with breaks, and in other cases on internal evidence (however slim), such as the occurrence of a syllabic nasal suggesting a new word. None of the Ikwere or Ogba word divisions, however, can be said to be formally established. In the Ekpeye, on the other hand, wider study puts the word divisions on a much firmer footing, and elided vowels known from other studies have been indicated.

THEORETICAL PROBLEMS

4.1. These arise largely from the very fact of working with as small a language sample as a 100-word list. But when even a 100-word list is an advance on previous documentation of a language, such a limitation just has to be accepted. In the present data, distortion or misunderstanding can be observed in four different areas, phonemic, morphological, syntactic and lexical.

Phonemically, only the Ekpeye data can be checked by other studies. All the phonemes of Ekpeye are represented in the 100-word list except three rare palatalized stops, py, by, and ɗy. However, at one point, a false picture is given. This is in the case of the sounds ŋ and ŋw. As a general statement, labialized velar consonants in Ekpeye do not occur before the close front vowels i and ɩ. But in one dialect of the language, two words do so occur, leading to the loss of the labialization, and the consequent existence of a ŋ allophone of the ŋw phoneme. It so happens that the informant spoke the relevant dialect, and that both the words are in the list (nos. 6 and 11). Without the knowledge of the more common forms (given as alternatives in the list), it would have been justifiable to suppose that ŋ and ŋw were both full phonemes in Ekpeye. There is no means of knowing whether some such distortion has crept into the phonemic picture of Ikwere or Ogba as represented in this list.

4.2. Morphologically, the verbal forms (nos. 54–71, 84) may be a fruitful source of confusion. The English forms are all quoted in a present tense, and although all the Ekpeye responses are in the same tense, that tense is a general non-future tense whose meaning is by no means always equivalent to the English present. In the Ikwere responses, there is a high degree of consistency in form, which leads to the supposition that with the

exception of variant forms such as nos. 58, 59, 67, 70 and 71, the responses are in the same tense also. In the Ogba responses, on the other hand, there is little obvious uniformity, which almost certainly means that different tenses are represented among the replies. A truly helpful comparison between this aspect of the languages is thus necessarily hard to obtain in the face of such uncontrolled variation. Perhaps a past tense English stimulus would be easier for informants to give a consistent response to.

4.3. What may be called syntactic difficulties also arise largely in the verbal section (nos. 54–71). They come about from the linguistic naïveté of an informant, and his consequent inability to isolate and abstract from his own speech just that stretch which carries the same amount of meaning as the English stimulus. In nos. 54–58, 60, 62, 63, 65 and 71 the Ekpeye informant has added an object or other clause-rank item to the verb in his response. Although the Ikwere informant does not seem to have done this, the Ogba informant seems to have done so at least in nos. 54, 58, 62, 63, 66 and 68. It goes without saying that failure to recognize such additions would lead to a considerable distortion in the picture of verbs.

Another problem that may be loosely termed syntactic is the change of word class from the source to the target language. In this list, the change from adjective to verb has taken place in the Ekpeye responses at nos. 14, 89, 93, 95, 97 and 99. It seems probable that similar changes have taken place in the Ikwere at nos. 15, 28, 29, 87, 88, 91, 93, 95, 97, 99 and 100, and in the Ogba at nos. 93, 95 and 97. This kind of change is almost inevitable when the number and function of word classes varies so much from one language to another, but is nevertheless confusing if undetected.

4.4. Lexically, one set of problems arises from the mismatch between the source language and the various target languages either in inventory or in systemic contrasts. The source language may conceal distinctions which are made in one of the target languages (or vice-versa). Nos. 4 and 5 in English constitute a two-term system; although ready responses for these items were forthcoming from all three informants, Ekpeye has in fact a three-term system at this point, contrasting 'this', 'that (nearby)', and 'that (far off)'. Only the first and last of these appear in the list, and it is at least possible that a similar contrast has been missed in the other languages as well. In no. 10, the Ekpeye informant has pointed out a distinction relevant for his language but not for English. The failure of the other two informants to point out the same distinction leaves open the question whether this distinction is relevant in their languages. In no. 37, by contrast, the Ikwere and Ogba informants noted a distinction not indicated in the English, and not mentioned by the Ekpeye informant. In this case, however, wider study suggests that the distinction is not made in Ekpeye. Conversely, in nos. 75 and 76, the water/rain contrast of English is absent from Ekpeye and Ogba.

Again on the lexical level, homophony and synonymy can produce misunderstanding. In no. 6 the English word 'who' in isolation is ambiguous, and may be interrogative or relative. Whereas the Ekpeye informant has given an equivalent of the interrogative meaning, it seems probable that the Ogba informant has given the relative. At some points, the target language may contain two or more nearly synonymous words, any of which would serve as an adequate response to the English stimulus when not limited by a context. If such a choice exists in more than one language, informants may make different choices, with the effect of concealing the existence of etymologically comparable words. A situation akin to this is found in no. 78, where one of the two words offered by the Ikwere informant seems to resemble the Ekpeye response, and the other the Ogba

response. Had only one word been offered in Ikwere, one or other of the resemblances would have been lost. Where there were known to be Ekpeye words more obviously comparable in form with words in the other languages than those given by the Ekpeye informant, they have been added to the list. This has been done in nos. 6, 32, 35, 40, 52 and 71.

THE UTILITY OF THE DATA

5.1. At the very least, lists of this kind present a sample of the vocabulary of languages and/or dialects which are otherwise undocumented. The assumption which seems to underlie their collection is that they afford a basis for the comparison of the languages represented. The validity of this assumption depends on the languages chosen, and the type of comparison envisaged. For typological comparison, a 100-word list offers virtually nothing to go on, but for phonological comparison of the type pioneered by the nineteenth-century comparativists, it does provide an initial foothold, albeit a slippery one. The aim of such comparison is a genetic classification of languages, but where the amount of data available is so small, it is more useful if it relates to languages which are known or suspected to be fairly closely related to each other anyway. In the present instance, the decision to sample Ikwere and Ogba rather than other languages with which Ekpeye is contiguous was made on the basis of two factors, native reaction, and linguist's reaction. Native speakers of Ekpeye asserted that they could soon learn to 'hear' Ikwere or Ogba by staying for a relatively short time in the areas where these languages were spoken. Of two other contiguous languages, Engenni and Abua, they said it would take them much longer to learn to hear. It so happened that members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics were already studying both these languages, and the spontaneous reaction of workers from both areas on seeing Ekpeye word lists was that they were quite dissimilar from their own languages. Thus, not only was there a greater need to sample Ikwere and Ogba, but also a greater incentive in the probability of a genetic relationship with Ekpeye. The lists given above certainly do nothing to weaken this probability.

Comparison of such small amounts of data is bound to start in an impressionistic way, but even so, there are plenty of examples where at least two of the languages investigated show recognizably similar forms, and not a few where all three languages do. In view of all the pitfalls outlined in the two previous sections, it seems probable that the proportion of etymologically related words in the various languages is under-represented in a list of this kind. For instance, on first inspection, the responses elicited for no. 35 do not seem to bear much resemblance to each other. However, an Ekpeye word ɔ́dɔ̀, meaning 'bottom' rather than 'tail', bears a marked similarity to the Ikwere form ɔ́dɔ̂*; and in no. 68 in the Ogba, a form ɔ́dɔ̀ turns up again in a phrase meaning 'sit'. It is therefore not unlikely that all three languages possess a comparable form at this point, even if it is not immediately apparent.

Within the compass of the list, there is every grade of similarity between the languages represented, ranging from the identity of no. 75 to the total difference of no. 74. Neither of these extremes is much use for the basic task of phonological comparison, the search for regular sets of correspondences. There are, however, some examples of regular correspondences, and these are summarized below, dealing in turn with tone, vowels, and consonants.

5.2. In tone, the most common feature is an identity of pattern between at least two of the three languages. This happens with various patterns as listed below:

High Fall in nine examples (nos. 22, 32, 38, 40, 41, 44, 45, 48, 77)
High Mid in six examples (nos. 7, 42, 43, 75, 78, 92)
High Low in seven examples (nos. 13, 18, 19, 39, 52, 74, 98)
High High in five examples (nos. 46, 49, 82, 83, 87)
Low Low in two examples (nos. 34, 89)
High Low Low in two examples (nos. 20, 81)
Low Low Low in two examples (nos. 30, 90)

Tonally, the most interesting examples are nos. 21, 23, 25 and 31. In all four, the Ikwere shows the pattern High High Mid, and the Ogba the pattern Low High Mid. In no. 21 the Ekpeye is tonally identical with the Ikwere, but in the other three examples it is just High Mid. In each of nos. 23, 25 and 31 the first and second consonants in both the Ikwere and the Ogba are identical; it seems probable that in these circumstances syncope has taken place at some point in the history of Ekpeye. In no. 21, on the other hand, the two consonants are different, and no syncope has occurred. No. 24 also fits this general pattern as far as the Ekpeye and Ikwere go, but in this case the Ogba is different (cf. also no. 20). In general, it can be said that tone is a fairly stable feature, and does not exhibit any striking correspondence patterns.

5.3. In the vowels, as in the tones, the items which appear to be comparable show either identical vowels, or else differences attested in only one example, so that they can hardly be called regular systematic correspondences. There are, however, two groups of exceptions to this. In nos. 2, 31 and 46, a final -o in Ekpeye is matched by a final -ɪ in Ikwere and a final -ɷ in Ogba. Again, in nos. 30 and 42, an initial ɷ- in Ekpeye is matched by an initial ɔ- in Ikwere and Ogba. There are other examples where this latter pattern is broken, and an initial ɷ- in Ekpeye is matched by a syllabic homorganic nasal in the other languages, or by some vowel other than ɔ-. (See the discussion of consonants in section 5.4 below.)

It is possible to see a general pattern of vowel harmony emerging in all three languages. If the (supposed) nine vowels are divided into two groups of four—i, e, o and u, and ɪ, ɛ, ɔ and ɷ—with the remaining vowel a going with both groups, most of the words in all three lists draw all their vowels from one group or the other. That is to say, within a word, the vowels appear to harmonize on a 'raised' or 'lowered' basis. There are of course a few exceptions. In Ekpeye, further study has revealed seven other different vowel harmony systems operative at specific places in the grammar (for details, see section 9.2.2.1 of my thesis).[4] Similar complexities may also prove to exist in Ikwere and/or Ogba.

Turning to morphology, if indeed it can be dignified with this name, the verb section, nos. 54–71, contains a certain amount of evidence. In all three languages the initial vowel of the verb, which may be assumed to be a person or pronoun morpheme, shows two-way harmony with the following vowel. In most of the Ikwere examples a syllable nV occurs between the 'person' and the 'verb root'. This may be a tense morpheme, and it is interesting to see that it displays a four-, or more probably, five-way harmony system with the following vowel e/a/ɔ/o; ɛ is not attested, and in Ekpeye at least, this is very rare as a verb root vowel, so that it may be rare in Ikwere also.

5.4. In the consonants, once again there is usually either identity, or only single examples of correspondences. However, the following examples may give some indication of possible connexions. Ikwere shows an f where the others have a b in nos. 30, 36 and

[4] D. J. Clark, 'A grammatical study of Ekpeye', unpublished University of London Ph.D. thesis (1969).

perhaps 34 (where there is f for p). There tends to be a palatal consonant before a close front vowel, whichever language shows the close front vowel (see no. 22 in Ogba, no. 46 in Ikwere and no. 82 in Ekpeye). In no. 18 an initial b occurs in Ikwere for an m in the other two languages. It is just possible that this is because the Ikwere informant had a slight cold. This has not prevented m from being recognized in other Ikwere words, but it is yet another possible operational hazard in this kind of work. A w in Ekpeye corresponds to hw in Ikwere and Ogba in nos. 49, 64 and 98. In nine cases an initial homorganic syllabic nasal in either or both of Ikwere and Ogba is matched by an initial vowel in Ekpeye (nos. 10, 20, 21, 24, 31, 34, 39, 45, 47). In all except no. 34 the initial vowel of Ekpeye harmonizes on a back/front basis with the following vowel. Finally, under consonants, an initial r occurs in Ikwere where the others have an initial vowel in at least ten instances (nos. 22, 37, 38, 44, 45, 49, 77, 78, 81, 98, and probably 83 and 100 also). It is interesting to speculate in such words whether Ikwere has developed an extra consonant, or the other languages have lost one. The data gives no evidence.

5.5. Before summing up, it is worth while to examine nos. 16 and 17 in more detail. They show a tantalizing similarity combined with an irritating diversity. In Ekpeye and Ogba both words have the same tone pattern; if it is assumed that in Ikwere the words were originally bimorphemic, the 'man' word having an initial r in the second morpheme, and the 'woman' word not having it, then the tonal difference between 16 and 17 in Ikwere can be explained. If it is next assumed that the words were originally bimorphemic in the other two languages as well, it is then a short step to the suggestion that the truly comparable elements are the first morphemes of the Ekpeye and Ogba with the second morphemes of the Ikwere. This accounts for the constant occurrence of ny in 16 and k in 17, but leaves other hypothetical remaining morphemes about which nothing can be said. These examples epitomize both the fascination and the frustration of this kind of work.

5.6. To sum up, in the whole data, there are about 52 cases out of the 100 where all three languages seem to show related words. There are about 56 cases where Ekpeye and Ogba seem to show related words, about 61 cases for Ekpeye and Ikwere, and about 65 cases for Ikwere and Ogba. These figures suggest the very tentative conclusion that Ikwere and Ogba may be a little more closely related to each other than either is to Ekpeye. This would gain some support from native ideas about the languages, for both the Ikwere and Ogba informants claimed that their languages have a fairly high degree of mutual intelligibility with Igbo, whereas Ekpeye does not have this. Although Ekpeye should definitely be recognized as a distinct language from Igbo, the question remains open whether Ikwere and Ogba could justifiably be considered as merely divergent dialects of Igbo.

CONCLUSIONS

6. The first and most obvious conclusion is that a 100-word list is not an adequate basis for doing comparative linguistics. However, as has already been pointed out in section 4.1, when no other documentation exists for the languages under discussion, the choice is between working with an insufficient language sample and not working at all. A second conclusion is that it is also very useful if the linguist has a fuller knowledge of at least one of the languages under investigation, for this can serve to reveal trouble-spots and probable sources of error. And such recognition of the limitations of the data should curb any sweeping and unjustifiable linguistic conclusions the linguist may be tempted to draw.

It seems that one such conclusion is latent in the title of this paper—'Three "Kwa"

Languages of Eastern Nigeria'. The criteria for identifying a 'Kwa' language are set out on pages 90–94 of Part II of the HANDBOOK OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES, by Westermann and Bryan. They consist of a vague and randomly selected series of typological features. In an article on Word Classes in Igbo, J. Carnochan has suggested that these criteria are too loose and should be tightened up.[5] The investigation and conclusions given above in this article would lead to the more radical suggestion that unless and until detailed phonological comparison has been done on the Indo-European model, the label 'Kwa' is useless, at least if it purports to represent a genetic classification in the same category as for instance, 'Celtic' or 'Germanic'. Whatever the limitations, and these are admittedly considerable, the data and conclusions presented above are at least a step in the right direction.

[5] J. Carnochan, 'Word Classes—Igbo', LINGUA, vol. XVII (1967), pp. 1–23.