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Introduction to Ịzọ̀n Language and Culture

Abstract

This paper aims to introduce Ịzọ̀n to the world audience. We note the status of Ịzọ̀n as a “main” language, the geographical location of the Ịzọ̀n people in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, the occupations of the Ịzọ̀n, the consonants, vowels, vowel harmony and nasalized vowels in Ịzọ̀n. We observe that in Ịzọ̀n a vowel becomes nasalized when it occurs in the environment of a nasal; that a high tone marked (´), and a low tone marked (̀) perform both lexical and grammatical functions in Ịzọ̀n; that Ịzọ̀n has S-O-V word order; that each word category is written separately; that the negative *gha* is marked on the verb; and that borrowed words, names of places and languages are nativised. We throw some light on the Ịzọ̀n numerical system, namely: the traditional cardinal numbers such as *óyí* (10), *sí* (20), *andé/òndé* (400) and *andérimandé/òndérimòndé* (160,000); the modern standardized numbers such as 100 *òdòzò*, 1000 *ogízí*, 1,000,000 *ipámú* and 1,000,000,000,000 *èndéří* and the ordinal numbers, *bùlọ̀* 1st and *mamú karamọ̀* 2nd. Next we look at the kinship, persons, religious, colour, body parts, cooking, occupational and other terminology in the lexicon of Ịzọ̀n. Finally we observe some salient aspects of Ịzọ̀n culture such as their dressing, religion, food, festivals, dances, traditions, and customs.

Keywords: Ịzọ̀n, vowel harmony, nasalized vowels, tones, *sí*.

Introduction: The Ịzọ̀n people and language

Nigeria has over 150 million people who speak 521 languages. In terms of number of speakers, the three “major” languages are Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. The six “main” languages are Ịzọ̀n, Fulfulde, Tiv, Kanuri, Efik/Ibibio, and Edo. All others are termed “minor.” Ịzọ̀n is a Niger-Congo language. Ịzọ̀n refers both to the people and to the language. It is the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria, and has a population of

over three million people who speak 27 different dialects. The language is endangered by the attitude of its people who prefer to use English rather than Ịzọn, for economic reasons.

The main occupations of the Ịzọn are fishing, palm-wine tapping, gin-making, canoe-carving, net making, thatch making, basket weaving, harvesting palm fruits, farming and trading along the rivers, creeks and coastlines of the Niger Delta.

Ịzọn means "truth" and connotes honesty, trustworthiness, intelligence, courage, and eloquence. The Ịzọn people in Nigeria spread from Bayelsa and Rivers State in the East to Ondo state in the West, and from the coast of the Atlantic Ocean in the South to Elemebiri on the River Niger in the North (Donwa-Ifode 2005). Ịzọn is therefore a cluster of dialects spread over a wide geo-political area known as the South-South Geo-Political Zone. Although mutual intelligibility decreases in some cases over wide geographic areas and across dialectal boundaries, the people are ethnically one.

Ịzọn is currently spoken, used in broadcasting on radio and television, studied as a subject, and used as a medium of instruction in Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Ondo and Rivers State in Nigeria. It is the main language of Yenagoa, Southern Ijaw, Kolokuma/Opokuma, Sagbama and Ekeremor Local Government Areas (LGA) of Bayelsa State; Burutu, Bomadi, Patani and Warri North LGAs of Delta State; the Ovia South West LGA of Edo State; the Ese-Odo LGA of Ondo state, and the riverine LGAs in Rivers State bordering Bayelsa State.

Apọj, Bassan, Biseni, Bụmọ, Egbema, Ekpetiama, Fụrụpagha, Gbarain, Ikibiri, Kolokuma, Kọ, Kumbọ, Ogboin, Ọkọdja, Olodiana, Operemọ, Oporoma, Oyiakiri, Seimbiri, Tarakiri and Tungbo dialects are spoken in Bayelsa State. Iduwini, Isaba, Kabu, Ọbọtebe, Ogbe-Ijọh, Ogulagha, Oporoza (Gbaranmatu), Mein and Tuomo are spoken in Delta State. Apọj and Arogbo are the only Ịzọn dialects that are spoken in Ondo State, a majority Yoruba-speaking State.

For further introduction and discussion on Ịzọn dialects, see also Prezi (2014b: 262–275), Agbegha (2009: 91–103) and Okaba (2008: 9–10).

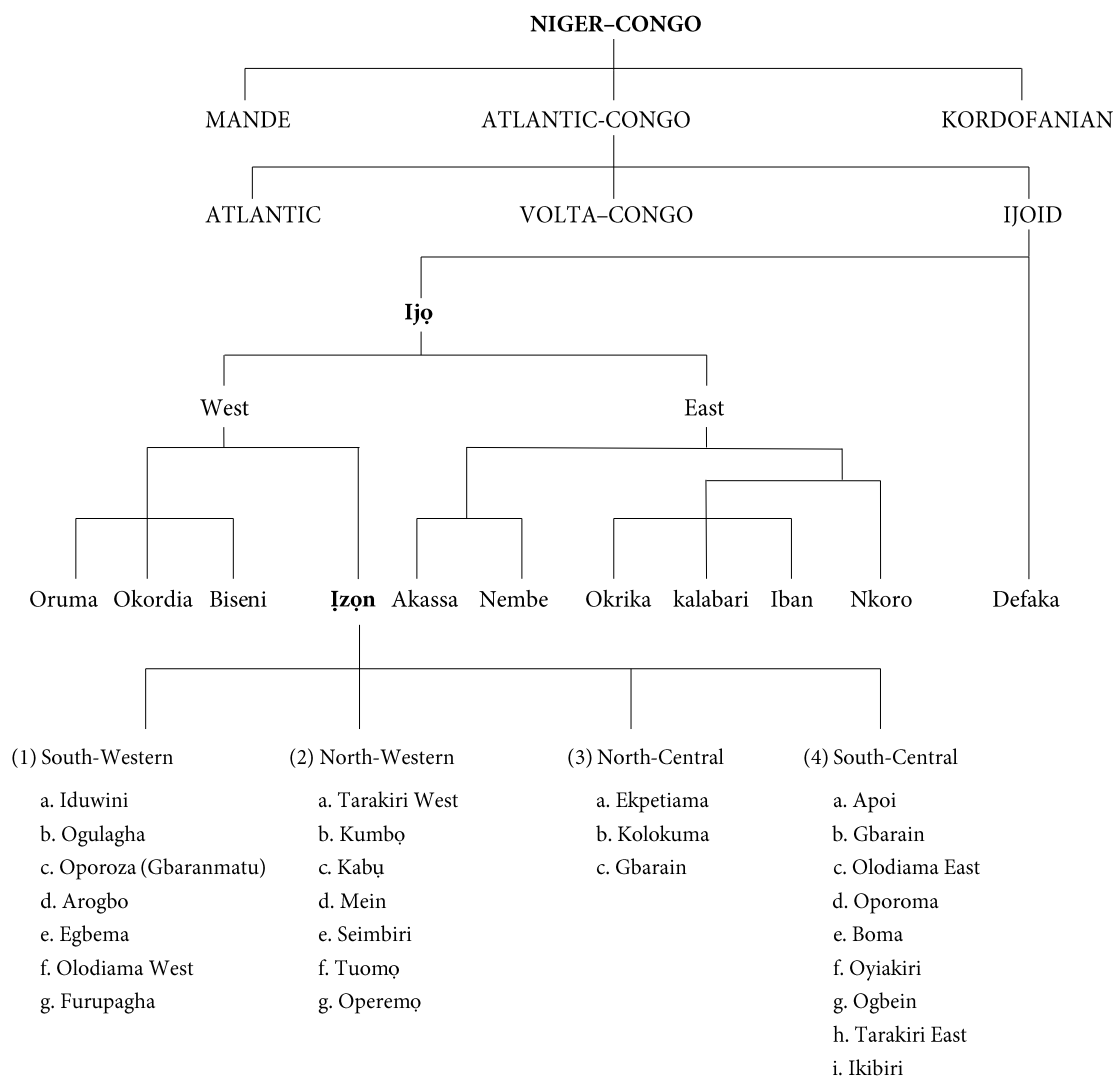


Figure 1. Chart showing the place of Western and Eastern Tarakiri, Izon, Ijo and Ijoid, in a genetic tree of Niger-Congo. Adapted from: Jenewari (1980), Williamson (1989b), Lee & Williamson (1990) and Williamson & Blench (2000: 22).

1. The phonemes of Izon

1.1. The consonants of Izon

The following are the phonemic consonants of Izon and examples of words which contain them, along with their glosses in English.

		Example	English gloss
1.	/p/ p	<i>paa</i> <i>paan</i> <i>piri</i> <i>péré</i>	'appear; go out' 'to denigrate by hooting at' 'give' 'rich/wealthy'
2.	/b/ b	<i>ba</i> <i>béré</i> <i>bẹlẹ</i>	'kill' 'to complain' 'pot'
3.	/t/ t	<i>tín</i> <i>tubou</i> <i>tukpa</i>	'tree' 'child' 'lamp'
4.	/d/ d	<i>dada</i> <i>dawai</i> <i>dii</i> <i>dumoun</i> <i>dumu</i>	'father' 'to dream' 'rope' 'hair' 'spear'
5.	/k/ k	<i>ka</i> <i>koro</i> <i>kiri</i> <i>kára</i> <i>kiri</i> <i>kóró</i> <i>konowei</i>	'mature' 'to fall; alight' 'ground' 'to carve' 'to chop finely' 'rafia palm tree' 'leopard'
6.	/g/ g	<i>ga</i> <i>goo</i> <i>gidẹ</i>	'worship' 'to read' 'fish basket'
7.	/m/ m	<i>mọ</i> <i>moun</i> <i>maamu</i>	'and' 'hunger' 'two'
8.	/n/ n	<i>nana</i> <i>nini</i> <i>noun</i>	'possess' 'nose' 'needle'
9.	/ŋ/ ng	<i>angi</i> <i>noun</i>	'egg' 'needle'
10.	/f/ f	<i>fa</i> <i>firi</i> <i>furu</i> <i>fanu</i>	'lost' 'work' 'smell' 'fence'
11.	/v/ v	<i>vumuye</i> <i>vinmọ</i> <i>aviinviin</i>	'catapult' 'to quench' 'dragonfly'
12.	/s/ s	<i>sara</i> <i>sango</i> <i>sibiri</i>	'funnel' 'demijohn (glass jar)' 'alligator'

		Example	English gloss	
13.	/z/	z	<i>zuye</i>	'type of fish trap'
			<i>zii</i>	'to give birth'
			<i>azuzu</i>	'fan'
14.	/kp/	kp	<i>kpapuye</i>	'scissors'
			<i>akpa</i>	'bag'
15.	/gb/	gb	<i>agbuka</i>	'shoes'
			<i>gbabu</i>	'narrow'
			<i>gboro</i>	'plant' v.
			<i>egbelegbele</i>	'horn'
16.	/j/	y	<i>yoweji</i>	'paddle'
			<i>yiin</i>	'mother'
			<i>yabasi</i>	'onion'
17.	/w/	w	<i>wari</i>	'house'
			<i>weri</i>	'to abuse'
18.	/l/	l	<i>la</i> (verb)	'to reach'
			<i>loq</i>	'to massage'
			<i>ololo</i>	'bottle'
19.	/r/	r	<i>raga</i>	'fish trap'
			<i>ariri</i>	'fishing net'
			<i>aru</i>	'canoe'
20.	/ʎ/	gh	<i>gha</i>	'not'
			<i>bogha</i>	'did not come'
			<i>agbegha</i>	'it does not fit'
21.	/h/	h	<i>haan</i>	'rallying cry or call'
				Note that 'gh' is extremely weak in pronunciation
				Note that 'h' is used only in exclamations and ideophones
22.	/ny/	ngh	<i>akanghan</i>	'hornbill'

See also Prezi (2011a, 2011b, 2014a, 2014b: 262–275) and Agbegha *et al.* (2011: 6) for further discussion.

1.2. Izon vowels

1.2.1. Oral vowels

There are nine phonemic oral vowels in Izon: /a, e, i, o, u, ε, ɪ, ɔ, ʊ/, *i.e.* a, e, i, o, u, ε, ɪ, ɔ, ʊ. The first set of vowels: /a, e, i, o, u/ a, e, i, o, u are wide vowels while the second set /ε, ɪ, ɔ, ʊ/ ε, ɪ, ɔ, ʊ are narrow vowels. There is vowel harmony of the eight non-open (non-low) vowels in Izon so that only narrow or wide vowels normally occur together in a simple word. Wide vowels and narrow vowels do not co-occur in a simple word. However, the low (open) vowel /a/ is neutral to vowel harmony and co-occurs with either set.

		Example	English gloss	
1.	/a/	a	<i>aba</i>	'fish species'
			<i>aka</i>	'tooth, maize'
			<i>ada</i>	'paint'
			<i>agurá</i>	'star'
			<i>aré</i>	'name'
			<i>akpa</i>	'bag'

		Example	English gloss
2.	/e/ e	<i>ele</i> <i>epelé</i> <i>esé</i>	'gorilla' 'draughts' 'trouble'
3.	/i/ i	<i>nini</i> <i>bi</i> <i>di</i> <i>sibiri</i> <i>diri</i>	'nose' 'ask' 'look' 'alligator' 'medicine'
4.	/o/ o	<i>obori</i> <i>ofoni</i> <i>koro</i> <i>ogboó</i> <i>ologbo</i>	'goat' 'bird, fowl' 'fall' 'land, union' 'cat'
5.	/u/ u	<i>oku</i> <i>furu</i> <i>burú</i>	'heavy' 'steal' 'yam'
6.	/ɛ/ ɛ	<i>ɛfɛɛ</i> <i>pele</i> <i>perɛ</i> <i>ɛkɛɛ</i>	'enamel' 'cut, stop' 'king, rich' 'fishing basket'
7.	/ɪ/ ɪ	<i>kimɪ</i> <i>fɪ</i> <i>firi</i> <i>iginá</i> <i>dɪ</i>	'person' 'eat, die' 'work' 'pepper' 'skill'
8.	/ɔ; ɔ/ ɔ	<i>kɔɔ</i> <i>tɔɔ</i> <i>lɔsɪ</i>	'raphia palm' 'pick up an object' 'head gear'
9.	/ʊ/ ʊ	<i>furu'</i> <i>aru</i> <i>bʊ</i> <i>bʊɔʊ</i>	'smell, odour' 'canoe' 'pond' 'fireplace'

For further discussion on oral vowels see also Prezi (2011a, 2014a, 2014b: 262–275) and Agbegha *et al.* (2011: 4–5).

1.2.2. Nasalized vowels

There are nine phonemic nasalized vowels in Iẏon, represented orthographically as: *ã*, *ẽ*, *ẽ̃*, *ĩ*, *ĩ̃*, *õ*, *õ̃*, *ũ*, *ũ̃*. In Iẏon, when a vowel occurs in the environment of a nasal, the vowel becomes nasalized. When two vowels occur in a word before the final nasal, both vowels are affected by the nasalization. Usually, in the orthography, nasalised vowels are shown by writing the consonant “n” at the end of the syllable or at the end of the word as illustrated below.

	Example	English gloss		Example	English gloss	
1.	ã	<i>kan</i>	'tear'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>ka</i>	'mature'
		<i>saan</i>	'urinate'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>saa</i>	'debt'
		<i>fan</i>	'twist'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>fa</i>	'finish, unavailable'
		<i>tan</i>	'gather, pack'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>ta</i>	'wife'
		<i>paan</i>	'to denigrate by hooting at'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>paa</i>	'appear; go out'
2.	ẽ	<i>geen</i>	'brightly-light'			
		<i>egēni</i>	'visitor'			
3.	ẽ	<i>seɛn</i>	'shave'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>seɛ</i>	'all, scrape'
4.	ĩ	<i>piin</i>	'crowded'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>pii</i>	'deny'
		<i>siin</i>	'vomit'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>sii</i>	'go fishing'
5.	ĩ	<i>pɪn</i>	'tap (palm wine)'			
		<i>fɪn</i>	'ringworm'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>fɪi</i>	'die, death'
		<i>tɪn</i>	'tree; wood'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>tɪi</i>	'plead; beg'
6.	õ	<i>goon</i>	'be extra bright, of light'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>goo</i>	'read'
		<i>ondo</i>	'last long'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>odo</i>	'pride'
7.	õ	<i>tɔn</i>	'measure'			
		<i>kɔɔn</i>	'take'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>kɔɔ</i>	'remain'
8.	ũ	<i>fũn</i>	'book'			
		<i>tun</i>	'hat/cap'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>tu</i>	'reason'
9.	ũ	<i>sun</i>	'stretch'			
		<i>fɯn</i>	'ashes'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>sɯ</i>	'fight'
		<i>kɯn</i>	'to pull'	<i>cf.</i>	<i>fɯu</i>	'caustic potash'

See also Prezi (2011a, 2014a: 38, 2014b: 262–275) and Agbegha *et al.* (2011: 3–4) for further discussion on the topic.

1.3. Tone in Iẓon

Tone, according to Williamson (1989a: 253–278), is the pitch of the voice that makes a difference in the meaning of the words which have the same segmental phonemes. Egberipou and Williamson (1994) also give further insights into the tone patterns in Iẓon.

There are two basic tones in Iẓon, high and low. These two tones perform both lexical and grammatical functions in Iẓon. High tone is marked (´) as in *bára* 'hand.' The low tone (˘) is usually left unmarked for the sake of convenience as in *eni* 'my.'

When a long series of high tones occur in a word, we usually mark the first high tone (´) to show continuing high. Thus, *amánánaówéí* could be simply marked *amánanaowei*.

Tone in Iẓon performs both lexical and grammatical functions.

1.3.1. Lexical tone

The pitch of the voice can make a difference to the meaning of words whose segmental composition is the same. The following minimal pairs contrast:

1. Low tone:		2. High tone:	
<i>Ado</i>	'Edo, Bini'	<i>Adó</i>	'basket'
<i>Abo</i>	'a kind of bag woven from raffia or leaves of screwpine'	<i>Abó</i>	'canal'
<i>Áma</i>	'you!' (used in addressing a woman whose name is not known)	<i>Amá</i>	'right side'
<i>Àri/emene</i>	'I' (Pron.)	<i>Arí/éméné</i>	'you' (Pron.)
<i>Agbada</i>	'bridge, raised platform or one of the ribs'	<i>Abá</i>	'a species of fresh water fish'

1.3.2. Grammatical tone

Tone plays a significant grammatical role in the grammar of Ịzọ̀n. In addition to distinguishing the meaning of lexical items, as in the examples above, tone also distinguishes the meanings of sentences, such as statements and questions (*cf.* 1 and 2) below:

1. *emìní eye femìní* 'I am eating'
1sgS sg. PRES.PROG.-eat
2. *émìní eye fémìní* 'you (sg) are eating'
2sgS sg. PRES.PROG.-eat

For further discussion on tone in Ịzọ̀n see also Prezi (2014b: 270–271) and Agbegha *et al.* (2011: 10).

2. The word order of Ịzọ̀n

Ịzọ̀n is an SOV language, *e.g.* *Kìmìmì obori bamì*
Man-the goat killed
'The man killed the goat'

2.1. Morphology

Each word category is written separately. The negative *gha* is marked on the verb. Borrowed words, names of places and languages are nativised. For further discussion on the morphology of Ịzọ̀n see Prezi (2011b) and Agbegha *et al.* (2011: 7–12).

3. The numeral system of Ịzọ̀n

The Ịzọ̀n use both the traditional and modern counting systems. As Evilewuru (2008: 52–56) observes, two important terms, *féní* which means 'remainder' or 'extra' and *mọ* which is the conjunction 'and' dominate the counting system. Most numbers Ịzọ̀n are made up of two parts: first, the counting bundle (called *kìen pou*); second, an extra or remaining part which is not up to another complete bundle, to which the term *féní* is applied. The traditional major counting bundles (*pou*) in Ịzọ̀n are *oyi* 'ten' (10), *sí* 'twenty' (20), *andé* 'four hundred' (400) and *andérimandé* which is one hundred and sixty thousand (160,000).

3.1. The cardinal numbers

The cardinal numbers in Iẏon are:

- 1 *kenĩ*
- 2 *maamũ*
- 3 *táárũ*
- 4 *neín*
- 5 *sòònròń*
- 6 *sóndié*
- 7 *sòńọma*
- 8 *níina*
- 9 *isé*
- 10 *óyí*
- 11 *óyí / óí kenĩ feni* (ten and one)
- 12 *óyí maamũ feni* (ten and two)
- 13 *óyí táárũ feni*
- 14 *óyí neín feni*
- 15 *óyí sòònròń feni* (also, die)
- 16 *óyí sóndié feni*
- 17 *óyí sòńọma feni*
- 18 *óyí níina feni*
- 19 *óyí isé*
- 20 *sí*
- 30 *sí óyí feni*
- 40 *ma sí / maa sí* (two twenties)
- 50 *ma sí mọ óyí mọ*
- 60 *tára sí*
- 70 *tára sí mọ óyí mọ*
- 80 *nía sí*
- 90 *nía sí mọ óyí mọ*
- 100 *sòònrán sí*
- 110 *sòònrán sí mọ óyí mọ*
- 120 *sóndía sí*
- 130 *sóndía sí mọ óyí mọ*
- 140 *sòńọma sí*
- 160 *níina sí*
- 180 *iséna sí*
- 190 *iséna sí mọ óyí mọ*
- 200 *óyía sí*
- 220 *óyí kenĩ sí feni*
- 250 *óyí ma sí feni mọ óyí mọ*
- 300 *óyí sòònrán sí feni* (*dia sí*)
- 399 *óyí iséna sí feni mọ óyí isé feni mọ* (i.e. 380 and 19 = 399)

400	<i>andé' / ɔndé'</i> (also, <i>sía sí</i>)
500	<i>andé' mọ sọ̀nran sí mọ</i> (also, <i>sí sọ̀nran sí feni</i>)
600	<i>andé' mọ oyia sí mọ</i> (<i>sí oyia sí feni</i>); (<i>andé' mọ ekise mọ</i> , i.e. one and a half 400s)
700	<i>andé' mọ dia sí mọ</i> (<i>sí oyi sọ̀nran sí feni</i>); (<i>sí dia sí feni</i>)
800	<i>ma andé'</i> (also, <i>sí ma sí feni</i>)
900	<i>ma andé' mọ sọ̀nran sí mọ</i>
1000	<i>ma andé' mọ oyia sí mọ</i> (<i>ma andé' mọ ekise mọ</i> , i.e. two and a half 400s)
1200	<i>tará andé'</i>
1600	<i>níá andé'</i>
2000	<i>sọ̀nran andé'</i>
10,000	<i>sí sọ̀nran andé' feni</i> (twenty-five 400s)
100,000	<i>andé' oyi ma sí feni mọ óyí mọ</i> (two hundred and fifty 400s: 400 in 250 places)
160,000	<i>andé'rimandé' / ɔndé'rimɔndé'</i> (four hundred 400s: i.e. 400 into 400 places)
1,000,000	<i>sondia andé'rimandé' mọ andé' sọ̀nran sí mọ</i> (six 160,000s and a hundred 400s)
2,000,000	<i>oyi ma andé'rimandé' feni mọ andé' oyia sí mọ</i> (twelve 160,000s and two hundred 400s)

3.2. The standardized counting system

Introduced by Williamson *et al.* (1990), the standardized counting system makes use of the terms for the cardinal numbers written against them.

100	<i>ɔdɔ́zɔ'</i>
1000	<i>ɔgí'zí'</i>
1,000,000	<i>ípámú'</i>
1,000,000,000,000	<i>ɛndé'í'</i>

3.3. The ordinal numbers

The ordinal numbers, excluding the one denoting 'first,' are formed by combining the cardinal numerals with *karamọ* 'taking' or 'coming' to form phrases. In these phrases, the cardinal number comes first, and it is followed by *karamọ*. For example, *mamụ karamọ* means 'taking or coming number two.'

1st	<i>bụlọ</i>
2nd	<i>mamụ karamọ</i>
3rd	<i>taárụ karamọ</i>
4th	<i>nein karamọ</i>
5th	<i>sọ̀nrọn karamọ</i>

For a more detailed discussion on the numeral system of Iẓọn, see especially Prezi (2013: 245–257), Evilewuru (2008: 52–56) and Williamson *et al.* (1990).

4. The lexicon of İzon

Without being exhaustive and going into detailed discussion, the following are the equivalent words found in the lexicon of İzon.

4.1. Kinship terminology

Parents, elders

father	<i>dau</i>
grandfather	<i>opu dau</i> [from <i>opu</i> ‘big’ and <i>dau</i> ‘father’]
mother	<i>yin</i>
grandmother	<i>opu yin</i> [from <i>opu</i> ‘big’ and <i>yin</i> ‘mother’]

Siblings, spouses, extended family relations

husband	<i>yei</i>
wife	<i>ta</i>
co-wife	<i>yanfaran</i>
child	<i>tubou</i>
foster child	<i>sibe tubou</i>
son	<i>yai</i>
daughter	<i>embau</i>
grandchild	<i>tau / tau-tubou</i>
uncle (mother’s brother)	<i>yabi</i>

By marriage

father-in-law (one’s husband’s father)	<i>yei-dau</i>
mother-in-law (one’s wife’s mother)	<i>yaforo</i>
(one’s husband’s mother)	<i>yei-yin</i>
brother-in-law	<i>ago-owei</i>
sister-in-law	<i>ago-arau</i>
wife of one’s brother, or a brother or sister of one’s husband	<i>yado</i> *ambiguous

Relation	<i>bina bo</i>
brother	<i>bina owei</i>
older brother	<i>okosu owei</i>
younger brother	<i>tu owei</i>
sister	<i>bina arau</i>
older sister	<i>okosu arau</i>
younger sister	<i>tu arau</i>

4.2. Persons

human being	<i>kimi</i>
man	<i>oweikimi</i>
woman	<i>eyorokimi; eyoro-ere</i>

male	<i>owe</i>
female	<i>eyoro</i>
child / offspring	<i>tubou</i>
male child / boy	<i>oweitubou</i>
female child / girl	<i>eyorotubou</i>
new-born baby	<i>ayapidi / ayatubou</i>
infant / very young child	<i>kalatubou</i>
old man / elderly man	<i>okosukimi</i>
old woman / elderly woman	<i>okosuere</i>
slave-wife	<i>bira-ere</i>
regularly married wife	<i>ekiye-ere</i>

4.3. Religious terminology

christian	<i>tamarau kari kimi</i>
christianity	<i>tamarau kari buo</i>
pagan	<i>oru kari kimi</i>
paganism / idolatory	<i>oru kari buo</i>
priest	<i>kari owe / ekian sin owe</i>

4.4. Colour terminology

red	<i>kuekue; wowo; yereyere</i> (conspicuously red)
orange	<i>iselebeni</i>
green	<i>ago; vilii</i>
yellow	<i>balabala; odoon; ope</i>
blue	<i>nou; bulo (bulo)</i>
black	<i>dirimo; kpilikpili</i> (very black)
white	<i>pina; alo</i> (white cloth)
brown	<i>kele kele; dakii</i>
pink	<i>kimi ebimo erein</i>
grey	<i>founburubeni</i>
purple	<i>agun-agun</i>

4.5. Body parts terminology

body	<i>ango</i>
hair	<i>tibi dumoun</i> (head); <i>etemem</i> (body)
head	<i>tibi</i>
face	<i>andi</i>
eye	<i>tory</i>
ear	<i>beri</i>
nose	<i>nini</i>
mouth	<i>bibi</i>
lip	<i>bibi-apiran</i> (also <i>bibi-odu</i>)
tooth / teeth	<i>aka</i>
tongue	<i>mulo; molo</i>
neck	<i>kun; koon</i>

shoulder	<i>apele</i>
chest	<i>agbobu; akpu</i>
arm	<i>bira; birabiri</i>
hand	<i>bira; bira-bulo</i>
finger	<i>bira-imbisa; bira-esangbala</i>
leg	<i>buo</i>
knee	<i>emgbele</i>
foot	<i>buo-kubu; buwo-abo</i>
toe	<i>buo-emgbisa</i>

4.6. Bodily fluids, wastes

blood	<i>asijn</i>
urine	<i>saan dinaya</i>

4.7. Cooking terminology

cook	<i>tu</i>
boil	<i>tajm</i>
fry	<i>gbana</i>
slice	<i>ker; ke</i>
chop	<i>pele</i>
pound	<i>temi; titi</i>
peel	<i>kara</i>
butcher	<i>baa</i>
grind	<i>san</i>

4.8. Utensils

pot	<i>bele</i>
knife	<i>adein</i>
spoon	<i>koyere; engasi</i>
fork	<i>foku</i>
plate	<i>kpamanku; panu</i>

4.9. Names of some animals

crocodile	<i>egere</i>
dog	<i>obiri</i>
elephant	<i>opuobori</i>
fish	<i>endi</i>
lamb	<i>anana</i>
lion	<i>adaka</i>
pig	<i>oporopo</i>
shark	<i>afurum</i>
snake	<i>seiye; kiriwei</i>
tiger	<i>kunwei / konwei</i>

4.10. Vehicles and accessories

bicycle	<i>azigere</i>
canoe	<i>aru</i>
bus; car; train	<i>ogboyoaru / ogboaru</i>
aeroplane	<i>efin bekearu / efin-aru</i>

4.11. Parts of a house

door	<i>ogige</i>
bedroom	<i>okpo</i>
sitting-room (parlour)	<i>warikiri</i>

4.12. Clothing / clothes and ornaments

bag	<i>akpa</i>
brassiere	<i>endouserimoye(-muyeye)</i>
cap / hat	<i>tun</i>
cloth or wrapper	<i>bide</i>
eye-glasses	<i>toru-tuaye</i>
gold	<i>golu</i>
head-tie	<i>loji</i>
pant	<i>kolukapa</i>
shirt	<i>aru</i>
shoe	<i>agbuka</i>
shorts	<i>afu</i>
silver	<i>siliva</i>
trousers	<i>saka</i>

4.13. Cardinal points (directions)

North	<i>konokoku</i>
South	<i>amabira aku or amaku</i>
East	<i>dumaku (du) or tubuaku</i>
West	<i>tamu aku or tamu</i>

4.14. Diseases / illnesses

cough	<i>alou</i>
cold	<i>odidi</i>
catarrh	<i>niniyai</i>

4.15. Occupations / professions

fishing	<i>endi baa</i>
farming	<i>kiri gboro</i>
palm-wine tapping	<i>koro pijin</i>
teaching	<i>tolumo</i>
carving	<i>eyi kara</i>
blacksmith	<i>asima-owe</i>

The information given on the lexicon of Iẓon in section 4 is extracted from an unpublished work by the present author.

5. Salient aspects of Iẓon culture

According to Bouchard (1998: 19–39), the three fundamental features of the ethnic identity are race, language, and religion. The Iẓon language serves as an identity to the Iẓon people. It is among the first things a child learns in Iẓonland. The Iẓon culture is transmitted to the child through a gradual socialization process. Thus, the Iẓon child acquires or learns various useful skills such as building of mud/thatch houses, story-telling (at moonlight), and any other art or cultural activities from their parents, guardians and elders in society. See also Prezi (2014b: 265).

The natural identity of the Iẓon is in their language and dressing. Iẓon people dress decently. Traditionally, the Iẓon man normally wears a long-sleeve shirt on his body, wears an expensive cap called *Atakala* or a bowler hat on his head, ties a big George wrapper of six yards called *igburu* (*egburu*) *bide* on his waist, wears shoes on his feet, and carries a good walking-stick (called *akolo*) in his hand as his dressing. Sometimes the men wear “up and down” ashoke, with a costly cap or hat and beautiful beads known as *ebolo*. The Iẓon woman, on the other hand, normally ties two well-designed Hollandaise wrappers on her waist, the outer one is tied shorter (*i.e.* tied up to the knees – middle of the leg), the inner one is tied longer than the other (*i.e.* tied downward to the ankles), and she wears shoes. She wears a blouse on top of the wrappers, and wears beautiful beads or necklaces on the neck, and earrings on the ears. She plaits her hair and wears a head-gear (called head-tie or scarf) to cover her head. Traditionally, Iẓon ladies were expected to dress decently. There is a kind of dressing expected of a father, mother, young girl, young boy and elderly man or woman in different situations, *e.g.* when going for a burial ceremony, marriage ceremony, and so on.

The traditional Iẓon man is expected to stand for the truth at all times, and talk with confidence and dignity. He loves peace and lives a peaceful life. He loves festivals such as fishing festival, masquerade festival, dance festival, *etc.*

The traditional Iẓon man values women, marries many wives, and consequently has many children who assist him in the business of distilling gin. Although polygamous, he tries to love his wives equally as much as possible. He pays the dowry (bride-price) on each of his wives. He does an introduction on which occasion he pays the love fee, and later does a traditional marriage for each wife. Increasingly nowadays, however, the youth do church wedding and many additionally register their marriages in court.

The Iẓon man eats ample food. He settles near rivers and engages in fishing. Owing to the hard works the Iẓon people engage themselves in, they usually eat foods that contain carbohydrates and other energy-giving foods. The favourite foods of the Iẓon are palm fruit (*banga*) soup, oil soup, pepper soup and plantain. He usually eats in a group with his sons, especially the grown ones. He loves to have a lot of pepper in his food. That is why he loves pepper soup so much. Before and after meals, they wash their hands according to age-seniority. Drinks, meals, fish and meat are always shared according to seniority.

Iẓon men eat alligator pepper and kola nuts when they take their favourite hot alcoholic drinks such as native gin, Schnapps, Bertola, *etc.* They also drink a lot of the palm wine which they tap.

In ancient times, the Iẓon worshipped idols, gods and deities (*oru*) such as *Benikurukuru* – the chief deity (*Amananaoru*), *Obudou* – the producer of fog for protection, *Ingozu* and *Anumu* – the gods of

wealth, *Osun* – the god of thunder, *amadasu*, *Mamiwata* – the god of the waters, *Opuogula*, *Onanaowei*, *Gbanagha*, *aluta bubaou*, *odele*, and *egbesu* the god of war. They also used to make masquerades such as *awouziowu* “giver of children”, *Burutu-ogbo* and *okelẹkẹ*. Nowadays majority of the Iẓon are Christians and no longer participate in the worship of idols.

The Iẓon people have chiefs of families, compounds or quarters (*egede*) called *Alaowei*, and they have kings (*Pẹrẹ*) who preside over clans made up of several towns and villages.

The favourite pastimes of the Iẓon are story-telling in moonlit nights and wrestling after processions to both ends of the community, especially during the dry season.

The best known Iẓon musicians are late King Robert Ebizimor, Chief I. K. Belemu, Barrister S. Smooth and Bestman Doupere. The Iẓon culture and people have different types of dances such as *Ungu sei*, in which they use water pots and other materials to produce music for the dancers. The Iẓon culture also has *Owigiri* as one of the major cultural dances.

When an Iẓon man sees his fellow Iẓon man, they greet each other. The younger person shows a sign of respect to the elder person by kneeling down or by genuflecting. The younger person (whether male or female) greets the senior and announces *ukoidẹ* meaning ‘I am on my knees’; ‘I kneel’; genuflection – sign of respect to the elder person. The elder person then says *seri* or *seri tiẹ* meaning ‘rise or get up.’

The ethical practices and other useful traditional skills and knowledge are deliberately transmitted to younger generations through myths, proverbs, pithy-sayings and ceremonies.

Some forbidden things in Iẓon tradition are as follows:

1. An Iẓon man does not have sexual relations with a woman who is under her menstruation. The Iẓon claim it weakens a man’s spirit, but this may also be due to unhealthiness of a menstrual flow.
2. An Iẓon man does not pass under women’s clothes when they are spread to dry. The Iẓon claim it weakens the man’s spirit.
3. An Iẓon man is not expected to see the placenta and afterbirth when a woman delivers a child. This is a superstitious belief.
4. Iẓon persons do not use the left hand to take, give or pass on something. The Iẓon feel it is disrespectful.
5. An Iẓon man does not have sexual relations with a woman during the period of war. The Iẓon claim it weakens the man’s spirit, and could result in the untimely death of the man if he goes as a soldier to the war front.
6. An Iẓon man does not use a bathing bucket or basin to fetch drinking water or store food items. This may be due to traditional wisdom concerning the unhealthiness of using such bath items because germs and bacteria could be contained therein.
7. When a war-boat or war-canoe sets out from its community for its destination, it is not expected to berth at any other community. The Iẓon claim it dampens the morale of the soldiers. Additionally, the men could be dissuaded from proceeding to the battlefield.

See also Evilewuru (2008), Okaba (2008) and Prezi (2014b) for further discussions on Iẓon culture.

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