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## Humour in French and Igbo Versions of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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**A**bstr**act**  
Language, Literature and Translation are necessary for national development. African natural multilingualism compounded by colonial and religious factors has ensured that African literature can be expressed in African and non-African languages. No society can experience true development if it neglects its literary artists who through aesthetic use of language inform, instruct and entertain in such a way that the ideas expressed by them if properly harnessed, turn the weaknesses of the society into strengths that lead to development. The focus of this study is on humour in *Things Fall Apart* and its French and Igbo translations. *Le monde s'effondre* (1966), the first French version of *Things Fall Apart* translated by Michel Ligny and the Igbo version *Ihe Aghasaa* translated by Izuu Nwankwo (2008) will be the versions for the study. Our method of study will be analytical and comparative as humour shall be investigated in the source text and the two target texts. Our theoretical framework will be based on a communicative approach to translation in order to understand how Achebe's French and Igbo translators reproduced the humour in the original work in their translations. Our secondary sources for the study will include studies on translation notably Nida (1991, 2006), Simpson (2010), Ajunwa (2014), Baker (2014), studies on literary appreciation and humour such as Azodo (2014), Okoh (2015), Okugbe & Ekundayo (2015) and Mkpa (2017). The study reaffirms the entertainment and leisure aspect of literature and its implications for national development as it projects Achebe's original witty message and its rendering by his Igbo and French translators in their efforts to multiply Achebe's readership.

**Keywords:** Achebe, humour, translation, French, Igbo, National development

### Introduction

Humour, entertainment and leisure are indispensable ingredients in keeping the spirit, soul and body together. Every human endeavour is often geared towards meeting physical, mental or emotional needs by harnessing properly the flora and fauna in a given environment. Literary creativity seeks to educate, instruct, entertain and create beauty through the artistic use of language. Obi (2014: 103-104), points out that functions performed by fiction and other literary modes include giving us pleasure and using language in especially powerful ways, to tell us something and to delight us. World literature exists because the literatures of different lands and cultures are

exported to other lands and cultures through translation. The global impact of every literary work is multiplied whenever that literary work is translated into another language. According to Bellos (2011:283), "A relatively uncontentious way of saying what translation does is this: it provides for some community on an acceptable match for an utterance made in a foreign tongue." Writing "On African Cultures, Literatures and Languages": an Interview with Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo, Azodo (2014:367) notes that translation is "way forward in the development of African languages..." The study sets out to evaluate humour in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and its reproduction in the French version *Le monde s'effondre* translated by Michel Ligny (1966) and the Igbo version translated by Izuu Nwankwo (2008).

### Humour and Entertainment

Chambers 21<sup>st</sup> Century Dictionary (2004) states that the verb, 'entertain' means among other things, "to provide amusement or recreation for someone while the verb 'amuse' is 'to make someone laugh.'" Furthermore, a joke is defined in this Dictionary as "a humourous story or 'anything said or done in jest' while humour is defined as 'the quality of being amusing.'" In the same vein, Emezue (2012:86) presents a joke as any creative writing, the aim of which is to create humour and provoke laughter. Baruah & Jyoti (2015:194) note that the primary function of riddles is to obtain entertainment while Okugbe and Ekundayo (2015:111) indicate that "Nigerians use pidgin tropes to pass social comments, convey wisdom, criticize, express feelings and create humour". In the same vein, Egya (2010: 18) shows in his study of *A Harvest of Laughters*, that Remi Raji's 'metaphors of optimism for the suffering masses couched in several decibels of laughter are tender, healing and visionary'. Furthermore, (McGraw & Wamer (2011:1), writing on the importance of humour research, opines that "humor is everywhere, for example, laughter is one of the first things you do as a newborn, and, if all goes well, it will be one of the last things you do before you die.

Again, McGhee (2007), writing on how humour contributes to health, says "your sense of humor not only enriches life; it also promotes physical, mental and spiritual health." ([http://www.holisticonline.com/Humor\\_Therapy/humor\\_mcghee\\_article.htm](http://www.holisticonline.com/Humor_Therapy/humor_mcghee_article.htm)). Indeed, recent studies by Adams (2017) and DiSalvo (2017) highlight the therapeutic values of laughter based on scientific facts while Prados-Torreira (2017) draws attention to literary humour as a literary device that enables writers entertain as well as instruct readers on events in the society.

From the Bible, we read: "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." (Proverbs 22:17, NIV) and "a time to weep and a time to laugh" (Ecclesiastes 3:4, NIV). In addition, Mkpa (2017:54) presents humour as the "quality of being amusing, comical or funny" and

states that most effective teachers interject their lessons with humour. Literary artists know the recreational and therapeutic importance of humour or laughter and work assiduously to ensure that reading any literary work becomes a pleasurable activity. In what follows, humour and laughter will be used interchangeably as we evaluate the extent to which humour created by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* is reproduced in the French version *Le monde s'effondre* and the Igbo version *Ihe Aghasaa*. It is noteworthy that 'humour' and 'humor' appear in literature relevant to the study but 'humour' is used in our essay except in citations.

### Language, Humour, Translation and National Development

Writing on 'Languages in National Development...' Oyetade (2015:6), points out that "language is what has made possible the development and growth of culture." According to Onuekwusi (2013:11), "it is in literary creativity that man preserves historical and social facts, the remembrance of which may task human memory, through seeming entertainment". Citing Peggy Noonan, American presidential speechwriter, Metcalf (2013:90) writes that 'humour is the shock absorber of life; it helps us take the blows'. It is our view that Achebe's literary humour and other written thoughts geared towards entertainment and teaching of morals will have an increased domestic and national multiplier effect when translated into more indigenous Nigerian languages.

### Achebe in French and Igbo Translations

Okoh (2015:5) notes that Achebe is a true colossus who has exerted a great pioneering influence on modern African literature. Okon & Enang (2014:44), among others, note that *Things Fall Apart* alone, which has sold more than 20 million copies worldwide, has been translated into more than 50 languages, including Talan, Spanish, Slovene, Russian, Hebrew, French, Czech and Hungarian." It is noteworthy that Igbo is also one of the world languages into which *Things Fall Apart* has been translated. Our discussion hereafter will be limited to French and Igbo translations of *Things Fall Apart*. *Things Fall Apart* was first translated into French in 1966 by Michel Ligny. Studies by Iheanacho (1997), Aire (2002), Akakuru and Mkpa (1997), Chima (2012), Maduka (2006), Molley (2014) and Nkoro (2016) depict that *Things Fall Apart* and its French version *Le monde s'effondre* have contributed immensely to the development of translation studies, translation criticism, literary criticism and comparative literature. In 2008, Izuu Nwankwo translated *Things Fall Apart* into Igbo. It is noteworthy that the writer has not yet seen any studies on this Igbo version. The absence of comparative studies on the Igbo version motivated the writer to embark on the present study. Although translating humour, joke and pun from one European language into another, features prominently in studies such as Bellos (283-286), Simpson (2010:218), our

study expands this horizon through the inclusion of the Igbo version of *Things Fall Apart*, that is *Ihe Aghasaa*. In what follows, we shall try to show how the humour created by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* is reproduced in the French and Igbo versions chosen for the study.

### Sources of Humour or Laughter in *Things Fall Apart* and their Translation in *Le monde s'effondre* and *Ihe Aghasaa*

Writing on prose translation, Ajunwa (2014:103-104) recognizes narrative techniques such as proverb, pun and metaphor as literary techniques and stresses that the major concern of the literary translator will be to weave the target language, as much as possible, using the same literary techniques present in the theme. Furthermore, Bassnett (2014:108) points out the need to recognize that texts move as contexts change and can never remain static. Again, Vandaele (2010:149), in a study on translating humour, states that 'humor is known to challenge translators.' From a reader-response perspective, we observe that in many instances where Achebe's Characters laughed hilariously, the reader ends up laughing hilariously. Presented here after are some of the ways through which Achebe used words to create humour or laughter in *Things Fall Apart* and how his French and Igbo translators attempted to reproduce the humour or laughter in the source text, in the target texts. These ways are: proverbs, metaphor, comic actions, jocular language, entertainment and leisure, analogy, contrasts and pun or word play. In the presentation, TFA stands for *Things Fall Apart*, LMSF refers to *Le monde s'effondre* while AGHASAA stands for *Ihe Aghasaa*.

#### 1) Figurative language as source of laughter and its translation in French and Igbo

i) TFA: Amalinze the Cat (p.3, Chapter One).

LMSF: Amalinze le Chat (p.9, Chapitre Premier).

AGHASAA: Amalinze onye a na-akpo Nwaologbo (p.2, Isi Nke Mbụ).

ii) TFA: Nwoye... remembered how he had laughed... proper name for a corn-cob with a few scattered grains was Eze Agadi nwayi..., or the teeth of an old woman (p.28, Chapter Four).

LMSF: Nwoye...se rappelait même comme il avait ri...le nom approprié d'épis de maïs ne portant que quelques grains éparpillés était eze-agadinwayi, ou les dents d'une vieille femme (p.47, Chapitre IV)

AGHASAA: p.36 = Nwaoye... chetakwara etu o siri chja ochi ubochi... ezigbo aha a na-akpo oka enweghi mkpuru hie nne bu eze-agadi-nwaanyi (p.36, Isi Nke Anọ).

iii) TFA: Maduka vanished into the compound like lightening...everybody agreed that he was as sharp as a razor (PP.56-57, Chapter Eight)

LMSF: Maduka disparut dans le domane en un éclair...tout le monde s'accorda pour dire qu'il était comme un rasoir. (p.87, Chapitre VIII).

AGHASAA : Mmaduka fepuru ka amuma igwe...ha niile kwenyekwara na ya bu nwata na-atu nkọ ka aguba (P.72, Isi Nke Asatọ)

iv) TFA: Those who knew Amadi laughed. He was a leper, and the polite name for leprosy was 'the white skin' (p.59, Chapter Eight).

LMSF: Ceux qui connaissaient Amadi éclatèrent de rire. C'était un lépreux, et le nom poli pour la lèpre était 'la peau blanche' (p.91, Chapitre VIII)

AGHASAA: Ndi maara Amadi wee dapu n'ochi. Amadi bu ekpenta, ihe a na-akpokwa ekpenta ka o ghara ise okwu bu «oria ochi» (p.77, Isi Nke Asatọ).

#### 2) Proverbs as source of humour and their translation in French and Igbo

i) TFA: Unoka.. the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them (p.6, Chapter One).

LMSF: Unoka...le soleil brillera sur ceux qui sont debout avant de briller sur ceux qui sont - à genoux au dessus d'eux (p.14, Chapitre Premier).

AGHASAA: Ndi okenye kwuru na anwu na-eburu uzọ mukwasị ndi otọ tupu onweta ndi sekpu anị n'okpuru fa (p.7, Isi Nke Mbụ)

ii) TFA: When the moon is shining, the cripple becomes hungry for a walk (p.8, Chapter Two).

LMSF: Quand la lune brille, l'envie d'aller se promener démange les infirmes (p.18, Chapitre II).

AGHASAA: Onwa tiwe ije aguwa ngwurọ (p.10, Isi Nke Abụọ).

iii) TFA: A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing (p.16, Chapter Three)

LMSF: Un crapaud ne court pas en plein jour pour rien (p.30, Chapitre III)

AGHASAA: Awọ anaghị agba ọsọ efie na nkịti (p.20, Isi Nke Atọ).

iv) TFA: When mother-cow is chewing grass its young ones watch its mouth (p.56, Chapter Eight)).

LMSF: Quand la mère vache rumine, ses petits observant sa bouche (p.87, Chapitre VIII).

AGHASAA: Nne ewu na-ata agbara ụmụ ya ana-ene ya anya n'ọnyị. Ọọ gi ka Mmaduka neere anya (p.73, Isi Nke Asatọ).

### 3) Comic actions, jocular language and their translation in French and Igbo

i) TFA: Unoka was able to give an answer between fresh outbursts of mirth (p.6, Chapter One).

LMSF: A la fin, Unoka parvint à donner une réponse entrecoupée de nouvelles explosions de gaieté (p.14, Chapitre Premier).

AGHASAA: N'ikpeazu Ụnọka gbalisiri ike inye ya ụsà, ma ọchị na-enukwa ya enu (p.6, Isi Nke Mbụ)

ii) TFA: As soon as Unoka understood what his friend was driving at, he burst out laughing... (p.6, Chapter One)

LMSF: Des que Unoka eut compris ou son ami voulait en venir, il éclata de rire... (p.13, Chapitre Premier)

AGHASAA: Ozigbo Unoka ghọtara ebe enyi ya na-aga, ọ dapụrụ n'ochi... (p.6, Isi Nke Mbụ)

iii) TFA: Unoka...fresh outbursts of mirth (p.6, Chapter One).

LMSF: Unoka... il éclata de rire (pp.13-14, Chapitre Premier)

AGHASAA: P.6= Ụnọka...ma ọchị ka na-enukwa ya enu (p.6, Isi Nke Mbụ)

iv) TFA: Obiako has always been a strange one... "Ask my dead father if he ever had a fowl when he was alive". Everybody laughed heartily... (p.16, Chapter Three).

LMSF: Obiako a toujours été un drôle de corps... «Demandez à mon père défunt s'il a jamais eu un poulet à lui quand il était en vie. Tous rirent de bon coeur (p.30, Chapitre III).

AGHASAA: E nwesiri ka Obiakọ si eme... "Jụọ nna m nwurụ anwụ ma ọ dị ọkụkọ ọbuna o nwere mgbe ọn ndụ? » Onye ọbụla nọ n'ebe ahụ dapụrụ n'ọchị belu ọọsọ Okonkwọ onye nke jichara eze ya... (21, Isi Nke atọ).

### 4) Entertainment and Leisure (times, seasons, Festivals,) and their translation in French and Igbo

According to Uwadiogwu (2006: 2) "leisure time is free time whereas recreation refers to all activities people do that involve the use of discretionary time (leisure time). Recreation is a wholesome activity which is taken up for pleasure and nothing for pleasure." In addition, Akas (2016:203), notes that indigenous dance culturally provides a way for the whole community to meet together to enjoy themselves and evaluate themselves and their community while being entertained through dance movements. Presented hereafter are instances of entertainment and leisure (times, seasons, Festivals) in the original English texts and their rendering in French and Igbo versions.

i) TFA: Carefree Season (p.23, Chapter Four).

LMSF: ... la saison sans souc (p.40, Chapitre IV)

AGHASAA:... mgbe a ka na-ezu ike ọrụ ubi gara aga (p.30, Isi Nke Anọ).

ii) TFA: ... children singing... (p.28, Chapter Four).

LMSF: p.p.47=... les enfants ...en chantant (p.47, Chapitre IV)

AGHASAA: ... Ụmụaka... na-agụ egwu (pp.36-37, Isi Nke Anọ).

iii) TFA: The feast of the New Yam was approaching and Umuofa was in a festival mood (p.29, Chapter Five).

LMSF: La fête de la Nouvelle Igname approchait et une atmosphère de réjouissances emplissait Umuofa (p.49, Chapitre V)

AGHASAA: Emume iri ji ọhụrụ na-akpudewe nso, Ụmụọfịa niile na-akwadebekwa (p.38, Isi Nke Ise).

iv) TFA: ...the crowd roared and clapped (p.37, Chapter Six).

LMSF: ... la foule rugit et battit des mains (p.61, Chapitre VI).

AGHASAA: ... ụzụ tọọ... (p.48, Isi Nke Isii).



## 5) Analogy

i) TFA: Unoka.. He always said that whenever he saw a dead mnn's mouth he saw the folly of not eating what one had n one's lifetime (pp.3-4, Chapter One)

LMSF: Unoka... Il disait toujours que chaque fois qu'il voyait la bouche d'un mort il voyait la folie de ne pas ce qu'on possédait pendant qu'on était en vie (p.10, Chapitre Premier).

AGHASAA: Ụnọka... Ihe ọ na-ekwukari bụ na ọ na bụ ya lee onye nwurụ anwụ anya n'ọnụ na ihe ọ na-ahụ bụnzuzu nke dị na mmadụ ihapụ iri ihe ọ kpatara na ndụ (p.3, Isi Nke atọ)

ii) TFA: Looking at a king's mouth', said an old man, 'one would think he never sucked his mother's breasts (p.21, Chapter Four).

LMSF: "Quand on regarde la bouche d'un roi, disait un vieillard, on croirait qu'il n'a jamais sucé le sein de sa mère." (p.37, Chapitre IV)

AGHASAA: Otu agadi nwoke si na 'e lebe eze anya n'ọnụ ọ dị ka ọ ñughị ara nne ya' (p.27, Isi Nke Anọ).

iii) TFA: He was like the man in the song who had ten and one wives and not enough soup for his foo-foo (p.42, Chapter Seven).

LMSF: il était comme l'homme de la chanson qui avait dix et une femmes et pas assez de soupe pour son foo-foo (p.68, Chapitre VII).

AGHASAA: Onye ahụ dika onye ahụ a na-agụ n'egwu onye nwere nwunye iri na otu mana o nweghị ofe zuuru ya iji loo ụtara (p.55, Isi Nke Asaa)

iv) TFA: It is like Dimaragan who would not lend his knife for cutting up dog-meat because the dog was taboo to him, but offered to use his teeth (p.55, Chapter Eight).

LMSF: C'est comme Dmaragana, qui refusait de prêter son couteau pour couper la viande de chien parce que le chien était tabou pour lui, mais qui offrait de se servir de ses dents (p.86, Chapitre VIII).

AGHASAA: Ihe dika Dimaragana na-asọ anụ nkita, ma na o ji eze ekere ya ụmụaka (p.71, Isi Nke Asatọ).

v) TFA: ... These court messengers... They were called kotma, and because of their ash-coloured shorts they earned the additional name of Ashy-Buttocks (p.139, Chapter Twenty).

LMSF: p.211= ces messagers de la Cour. On les appelait kotma, et à cause de leurs shorts couleur de cendre, ils méritèrent le nom supplémentaire de Fesses-Cendrées (p.211, Chapitre XX).

AGHASAA: ... ndị oje ozi ụlọikpe ndị a... A na-akpọ ha kọtuma, n'ihì n'ikadintuntụ ha na-eyi, e jikwa maka ya akpọ ha ndi Ike Ntuntụ (p.174, Isi Nke Iri Abụọ).

## 6) Contrasts

i) TFA: ...Jigida and fire are not friends (p.56, Chapter Eight).

LMSF: ...la jigida et le feu ne sont pas amis (p.88, Chapitre VIII)

AGHASAA: ...ọkụ na Jigida adịrọ na mma (p.73, Isi Nke Asatọ)

ii) TFA: You grew your ears for decoration and not hearing (p.56, Chapter Eight)

LMSF: Tu t'es fait pousser des oreilles comme ornement, pas pour entendre (p.88, Chapitre VIII)

AGHASAA: ... Ntị gi bụnụ nke e ji chọọ gi mma ọ bụrọ nke e ji anụ ife (p.73, Isi Nke Asatọ)

iii) TFA: Male and female crime (p.99, Chapter Thirteen)

LMSF: Ce crime était de deux especes, mâle et femelle (p.152, Chapitre XIII)

AGHASAA: Ọchụ dị uzọ naabọ, nke oke na nke nwunye (p.128, Isi Nke Iri Na Atọ).

iv) TFA: Egonwanne... His sweet tongue can change fire into cold ash (p.159, Chapter Twenty Four).

LMSF: Egonwanne... Sa langue mielleuse peut changer le feu en cendre froide (p.243, Chapitre XXIV).

AGHASAA: Egonwanne... Ire uto ya nwere ike me ọkụ ka ọ ghọrọ ntụ juru oyi (p.200, isi Nke iri Abụọ Na Anọ).

## 7) Pun or Word play and its translation in French and Igbo

i) TFA: Many people laughed at his dialect... Instead of saying "myself" he always said "my buttocks" (p.116, Chapter Sixteen).

LMSF: Beaucoup riaient de son dialecte ... Au lieu de dire « moi-meme » il disait toujours « Mes fesses » (p.174, Chapitre XVI).

Aghasaa: Ọtụ ụ ndị chiri ọlu Igbo ya ọchị... Kama ikwu "mụ onwe m" ihe ọ na-ekwukari bụ "ike m" (p.146, Isi Nke iri Na Isii).

ii) TFA: "Your buttocks understand our language", said someone light-heartedly and the crowd laughed (p.116, Chapter Sixteen).

LMSF: "vos fesses comprennent notre langage", dit quelqu'un d'un ton léger...et la foule éclata de rire (p.175, Chapitre XVI).

AGHASAA: Otu onye ji njakiri si, «Ike unu na-aghota asusu anyi» Igwe mmadu ahu dapu n'ochi (p.147, Isi Nke iri Na Isii).

iii)TFA: "your buttocks said he had a son", said the joker (p.118, Chapter Sixteen)

LMSF: «vos fesses ont dit qu'il avait un fils», dit le plaisantin (p.177, Chapitre XVI).

AGHASAA: 149 = "Ike gi si ayi ngaa na o nwere opara," ka onye njakiri mbu ahu kwuru (p.149, Isi Nke iri Na Isii).

iv) TFA: "So he must have a wife and all of them must have buttocks." (p.118, Chapter Sixteen).

LMSF: "il doit donc avoir une femme et eux tous doivent avoir des fesses." (p.177, Chapitre XVI)

AGHASAA: "Ya mere ọ ga inweriri nwunye, ha dum ga inwesikwanu ike (p.149, Isi Nke iri Na Isii).

## Discussion

Our discussion of the data presented above will be guided by the communicative approach to translation which according to Nida (1991:25, 2006:14) considers the paralinguistic and extralinguistic features of the source and target texts and makes our world linguistically and culturally understandable. The data show an appreciable attempt by the French and

Igbo translators of Achebe to reproduce the humour and laughter in the source text in their translations by using equivalent realities. In numbers 1-6 of the data (metaphor, proverbs, comic actions, analogy, contrasts, entertainment and leisure), laughter is reproduced in the target texts essentially through identical linguistic realities except for the proverb "When mother cow..." where an equivalent reality 'ewu' is used in Igbo. The mental photographic picture created through the humorous use of words is successfully reproduced in the target texts in the above examples. However, No 7, that is the use of pun or word play, shows as pointed out by Ozbot (2016:293), certain information that could be savoured by a "domestic audience" could be lost in translation. Indeed, the word play on Igbo words 'ike m' (my buttocks) and the dialectal rendering of 'mụ, /mụ onwe m' (I, myself) as "ike m" which means 'my buttocks' in standard Igbo can only be appreciated fully by a domestic audience. The English source text and the French translation could be helped with notes explaining this pun caused by the use of the Igbo homonyms explained above, that is, words that have the same written or spoken form but different meanings (Agbede 2015:255).

## Conclusion

The purpose of the study is to examine the entertainment and leisure aspect of translated literature and its implications for national development. Specifically, humour is evaluated in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and its reproduction in the French version *Le monde s'effondre* translated by Michel Ligny (1966) and the Igbo version translated by Izuu Nwankwo (2008). It is observed that Achebe created human in the source text through the use of Figurative language, proverbs, Comic actions, jocular language, times, seasons, Festivals, analogy, contrasts and puns or wordplay. The French and Igbo translators attempted to recreate Achebe's humour in their translation through by adapting the same mechanisms to the target language and culture. Hence, our study shows that Achebe's contributions to the relaxation of his original English readers have also been extended to his French and Igbo readers. Indeed, we need to increase our humour or laughter dosage by reading original and translated literature as a natural antidote to daily stress. Indeed, humour or laughter creation must grow from the individual to the local community and from the local community to the national and international communities through domestic and intercultural writings and translations.

Though translation like most human activities involves a measure of loss especially in the aspect of translating certain sociolinguistic realities, the study shows that there may also be a gain even in translating humour. For instance, whereas the French translator like the author used literal translation in certain cases to create humour emerging from word play based on Igbo dialectology resulting in loss of phonic effects, the Igbo translator recreated

such humour precisely in the Igbo version. Considering the entertaining and pedagogical importance of humour, we recommend further research on humour translation by Sociolinguists, Anthropologists and other Social Scientists.

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## Harmony by Avoidance: An Emergent Account of Ikoma Tongue Root Harmony

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**Abstract**  
Ikoma, a Bantu language of Tanzania, exhibits a tongue root harmony system where a salient property of the system is to avoid potentially disharmonic sequences by removing the problematic vowels from the domain of harmony: Since the strictest part of the harmony system involves non-high vowels, potentially disharmonic mid vowels raise to high in prefixes. The harmonic system shows various intricacies when root properties, prefix properties and suffix properties are given a unified analysis. Our proposal for Ikoma is couched within an Emergent Phonology model, where grammatical generalizations are established by a data-driven consideration of co-occurrence patterns that hold between phonological sequences and between morphological items and the phonological sequences adjacent to them.

### 1 Introduction

Ikoma (Bantu, E.45; Tanzania) is generally considered to be part of a dialect cluster with Nata and Isenye (Lewis et al. 2015). The impetus for the present study of tongue root harmony is twofold. First, while sequences of mid vowels typically agree in tongue root values, Ikoma (Higgins 2011) exhibits an intriguing "avoidance strategy" for achieving forms that do not violate tongue root harmony. In many cases where the tongue root value of one morpheme might conflict with the tongue root value of an adjacent morpheme, Ikoma achieves harmony not through matching tongue root values but by using a vowel that is outside the domain of harmony, due to its height value, thereby avoiding a disharmonic sequence. Second, a detailed consideration of the patterns shows Ikoma to have a system that is quite different from that of the closely related Nata, despite there also being striking similarities (Johannes [Gambarage] 2007, Gambarage 2013, Gambarage & Pulleyblank 2017 on Nata). The Ikoma pattern warrants an independent treatment.

The avoidance strategy pattern is illustrated in 1. Roots with advanced vowels appear with a mid advanced prefix while roots with mid retracted vowels appear with a high advanced prefix, thereby avoiding a disharmonic advanced-retracted sequence of mid vowels.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The C# designation indicates noun class membership. Square brackets indicate the morphological stem. An acute accent indicates high tone; the absence of an accentual diacritic indicates low tone.