

# Formation, Types and Processes of Questions in Bekwarra Language of Northern Cross River

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## Abstract

The knowledge of question formation in Bekwara language has been laid bare over the years, for which most speakers and learners of the language remain ignorant of it. Poised to bridging this knowledge gap, this study scholarly explores and describes, with ample examples, the existent questions in the language. These are the O-words questions, Polar (Yes/No) questions, Alternate questions, Rhetorical questions, Tag questions, Emphatic/Sarcastic questions and Lexical expo-narrative questions. Pronouns and auxiliary verbs are predominantly used in the formation of questions in Bekwarra Language. The study also reveals that there are distinct question markers in the language. In the formation of questions, some phonemes and, at times, morphemes are inserted into and/or deleted from at least a word in the question statements. In a few cases across the question types, some morphemes are reduplicated. It relied solely on primary data, oral sources and intuition, along with a few secondary data of closely related textual materials. The qualitative approach is employed in the survey.

## Keywords

Bekwarra Language, Question Formation, Orthography, Phonology, Lexical-Expo-narrative

## 1. Introduction

The knowledge of question formation in Bekwarra language has been laid bare over the years, for which most speakers of the language remain ignorant of it. This study thus sets out to bridge the laid-bare knowledge gap and bring it to limelight. It found and describes, with examples, the existent questions in the language. As observed by Omachonu [1], a lot has been done on question formation in English and African languages, including some Nigerian languages, especially the three major ones: Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo, but one hardly finds such descriptions on the Igala language at present. This is also the case with Bekwarra Language, a language of the Northern (Upper) Cross River, as one rarely finds any descriptions of such aspects of the language currently.

Question formation is a transformational process. It is quite obvious that in question formation, there exists a transformational relationship between a statement and the corresponding question, be it yes/no or wh-question [2-4].

Yusuf [3] asserts that the simple sentence could perform various functions like declaration, *imperativisation* or interrogation as one makes plain statements, gives orders or asks questions. He further observes that sentences are similar in many ways, in that, in spite of the seeming structural differences; they are related underlying. The declarative, according to him, is primary, whereas the others are derived, and the process by which one sentence generates another type is simply tagged transformation.

Bekwarra is the language spoken by the Bekwarra people of Bekwara Local Government in Upper/Northern Cross River, and its dialectal speakers in Ogoja, Obudu and Obanliku LGAs. Mbube, Utugwang, Alege and several dialects of Bette are its dialects that have attained or are on the process of attaining full-fledged status. Bette, its proto-form, in particular had long ago attained such status and linguistic prominence. Bekwarra language is one of the three official languages of Cross River State of Nigeria. It is to Cross River what Hausa is to Nigeria. That is, Bekwarra is the language adopted for the Northern part, just as Ejagham was adopted for Central Cross River and Efik, for the

Southern part [5-11].

The break in further formal study and development, couple with political factors that have silenced Bekwarra, is what makes the formal status of Bekwarra language seems a mere paper thing. That is what manifests also in the laid-bare knowledge of its question formation, such that there is no formal literature on this aspect of the language. The linguistic deficiency of the language is the fault of its modern and contemporary linguists, who rather shy away from it for the alien language(s) – English (and French) and the popular Nigerian languages– Igbo, Yoruba, Efik, Hausa and/or thereabout. Such attitude towards the language contributes to its sudden backwardness in contemporary times. For if latter days Bekwarra linguists had sustained (have been sustaining) the worthwhile gestures of their predecessors that gained for Bekwarra the formal status and linguistic prominence in the 1970's and 1980's, the language would have been well developed and formalised by now.

As observed by Nwala [12], the numerous problems bedevilling our societies could have been addressed if the linguists were up and doing. Bekwarra linguists are not up and doing yet, just like most of their other Nigerian and African contemporaries. Thus, most of our problems, both those arising from language and general ones, are left unaddressed or have been half haphazardly addressed. Bekwarra linguists have not been up and doing. If they were, the formal knowledge of its questions formation would have been in place or formalised long ago. What would be done now are modified studies on this and other aspects of the language.

Therefore, this study breaks the uneven and is seemingly the first of its kind. Thus, its significance cannot be over-emphasised. It is hoped that possible rising issues in the language would be addressed by this study, as it would acquaint Bekwarra speakers and other users with the knowledge that would enable them tackle the linguistic problems, which its lack would generate. According to Dibie and Robert [13], all human problems stem from language (linguistic) problems, owing to language misuse, under-use or over-use; and linguistic ignorance, negligence, issues and trends. Their assertion reflects the thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein that the problems of philosophy, particularly those of the medieval era of philosophy, sprawled [still sprawls] from linguistic problems arising from philosophers' flamboyant and ambiguous use of language basically for impression. He informed that the philosophers of the era used language wrongly; adding that philosophy ceases to exist whenever language goes on holidays.

Similarly, Dibie and Robert [13] posit that the extent that science will and can go depends on how far language is ready to carry it. This means that when language goes on holidays, science and technology cease to exist. Drawing insight or inference from Wittgenstein's view, Dibie and Robert [13] submit that all human problems can best be solved or avoided linguistically. Therefore, the foregoing sheds light on why the existent problems of Bekwarra people and language remain unresolved. Its (their) linguistic problems are the bane of the

other numerous problems that bedevil the people and the language.

The Bekwarra linguists are challenged to wake up from their slumbering and proffer lasting and valid linguistic solutions to problems and address a lot of the existent issues for betterment and even development. This scholar's work, like several others, sets the pace. Stating categorically, this study rises to scholarly present to Bekwarra learners, speakers (and teachers, if at all any still exist or practice it), the processes and linguistic characteristics of questions formation in Bekwarra language. That is, it is to educate those concerned on how Bekwarra questions are formed along with their inherent characteristics.

The writer is worried by the attrition bids by contemporary Bekwarra people, which is gradually silencing the language and putting behind its formal status, unlike Efik and Ejagham. A better understanding of how questions are formed in Bekwarra would enhance some level of proficiency in the language as well as proper formation and differentiation of questions in the language. He is also worried by the attitude of the contemporary Bekwarra linguists, who often shy away from Bekwarra studies. A work of this kind would rouse the interest of and challenge some of them to action. In effecting some desired change, as hoped, the study is unique and significant. Although there are various other aspects of this language that deserve to be covered and brought to limelight, this single aspect studied—questions formation— is the central focus here for the want of space, time and precision.

The following questions are designed to guide the study:

1. How are questions formed in Bekwarra language?
2. Does the language share some processes and features in common with the English language in its questions formation and processes?
3. What question types commonly obtain in the language?

## **2. Bekwarra Orthography and Phonology: An Introductory Approach**

Bekwarra language, like every other language of the over 3,000 world's languages, has its distinct orthography and phonology. Orthography refers to the writing system of a given language. Iloene [14] defines it as the conventionalised indigenous writing system of a group of speech community, which is used for writing down their language. Inferring from and shedding light on Iloene's conception, Robert [5] defines orthography as the designed writing sound system of a given language, which comprises the vowels and the consonants of the language, used for the production of utterances or linguistic constructions in the language. This implies that orthography is graphical and phonemic; i.e. it involves graphically designed symbols used for representing emitted sounds of a given language.

## 2.1. Betwixt Orthography and Phonology: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives

We bring in one, out of the many earlier definitions in the literature, to lend credence to the above definitions offered by Iloene [14] and Robert [5]. Sampson (1985:19) cited Agbedo [15] has noted that writing system may be defined 'as a given set of written marks together with a particular set of conventions for their use.' Worthy of note from this definition is the fact that (almost) all the scholars' definitions capture the keywords 'conventional/conventionalised' and 'graphic or written marks'. In a similar contribution, which sheds light on the relationship between sounds of a language (phonology) and its orthography, Agbedo [15] informs that it may not be a logically necessary prerequisite for writing; it is posited that any culture which has writing has speech and that the latter had [usually] preceded the former, i.e. writing. It is little wonder therefore that a writing system is often construed as a means of representing the spoken form, although this is a means of representing the spoken form. This hardly suggests that writing system must be representative of the sounds of a language.

It means that orthography and phonology are interrelated and share a single or common thrust –sounds and graphic marks (symbols). Phonology continues from where orthography stops in the process of reducing a language to writing or in creating the written form of a language. Phonology is simply that branch of linguistics that studies the sounds (sound system) of a particular language, while phonetics is language-general in the study of the sounds of world's languages.

The description of phonology is not quite different from phonetics but for their variation in scope. Phonetics is the science (scientific study) of speech sounds production, transmission and reception– articulatory, acoustic and auditory phonetics. Phonetics [or the phonetician] does this at general level on the sounds of the languages of the world as whole, which phonology [via the phonologist or philologist] does at single or specific level– the speech sounds of a specific language. The sounds of a language constitute its sound system, made possible through graphic representation by its orthography. Vowels and consonants make the sounds of (a) language. As Agbedo [16] notes, '...those such as alphabetic systems, which are designed with sound representation in view, are known as phonographic systems, and they are three types: syllabic, segmental and *featural*.

The above clearly shows that Bekwarra has and makes use of the alphabetic writing system. Just as many other languages of the world had derived from the Roman alphabet system, which had derived from Greek alphabet, Bekwarra language had derived its writing system – orthography – from the Roman alphabet writing system. As noted by Agbedo [16], Modern Hebrew Arabic, Roman and Russian 'Grillic' alphabets are mutational derivatives of the Semitic alphabet, which exemplify the two main typological categories of script, i.e. phonographic and logographic. Bekwarra orthography, like the Roman's, is phonographic.

Recall that we have noted above that orthography and phonology combine to form the written form of a language.

The term alphabet derives from the names of the two graphs of Greek adaptation of the Semitic alphabet, alpha and beta. The first two Semitic graphs are called *palep* and bet. And, there are clear similarities between the ordering of the Semitic, Greek and Roman alphabets. The popular assumption is that the inventors of the Semitic alphabet, from which all segmental writing systems probably descended, took the idea of writing and the phonographic principle from the Egyptians [15]. This assumption tends to trace the first writing system as well as the Semitic Alphabet to Egypt, the location of Sumer, the world's city of civilization and 'every first' this or that [12, 13, 16, 17].

However, Sampson cited in Agbedo [15] debunks the assumption, as he maintains that Semitic alphabet, created some time in the 2nd millennium BC, somewhere in the Palestine/Syria region, probably by the Phoenicians, was clearly an independent creation. And, the original Semitic alphabet had no graphs for vowel sounds and there is what is called consonantal, as are those of its descendant systems– Hebrew and Arabic systems– that do not have letters for vowels.

According to Sampson cited in [15], the Semitic system has no vowels because vocalic letters rarely play any role as distinctive elements in its lexis. The western version of the Semitic alphabet system gave rise to the Greek that had six of Semitic letters: [h, w, h, j, s] to present vowels. The inclusion of vocalic letters in Greek writing was pertinent, being that it is a European language. It used vowels to indicate lexical contrast, and some Greek words also begin with vowels, while some others contain a sequence of two or more vowels. The Greeks, with time, switched from the system of writing every line from right to left to the boustrophedon style, i.e. the second line beginning from left to right and the third line from right to left and so on [16].

It is pertinent to note that the Etruscans, who lived in Etrucia, north of Rome, borrowed the Greek alphabet; whereas, the Romans acquired it from the Etruscans in about 650BC. Therefore, various modern European writing systems rose from the adapted Greek writing system. And, with the fall of the Roman Empire, the development of 'nation hands' began in various parts of the Europe, and by the 15th century, two main rival styles— the humanist script, used in northern Italy, reconstructed classical Roman handwriting, and the 'Gothic' or 'back-letter' script of France and Germany— rose. Since Europe had exercised political control, educational and socio-cultural and economic influences on Africa and several other parts of the world, Bekwarra, in Nigeria, had been influenced in all regards, including the language of the people with its orthography, phonology and other levels of linguistic analysis.

## 2.2. Bekwarra Orthography and Phonology

It is on that basis thus that Bekwarra orthography is phonographic, has vocalic letters, and uses vowels to indicate lexical contrast. Some Bekwarra words, like those of Greek,

also begin with vowels and others have a sequence of two or more vowels. This is so that there are the ‘O-words questions,’ just like there are ‘Wh- words questions in English language.

It is in view of the place of the distinctiveness of vowels in Bekwarra, such as the indication of lexical contrast and morphological variations, distinctiveness and restructuring, that it is imperative to have (a) good knowledge of both the orthography and phonology of Bekwarra language. In view of the orientation and clarification, what follows hereafter is an introductory discourse on the vowels and consonants of Bekwarra language.

Bekwarra phonology is the science of the sound system of Bekwarra language, which studies, describes and analyses the structural and physical patterns of speech sounds in the language, with a universal relation to phonetics. In other words, it is the systematic study of the structures and patterns of speech sounds and how they are generated, influenced and used by the native speakers of Bekwarra and others [non-native speakers] [5]. This, in its entirety, involves Bekwarra orthography, the consonant and vowel systems, the sound features, both primary and secondary, and the phonological features.

The above explanation (conception) is apt, as it captures the widely established fact that phonology is language-specific, as could be inferred from the above. Bekwarra shares some orthographical, phonological, phonemic, syntactic and grammatical features in common as well as resemblance in several ways and phases, including question formation, though they vary to a large extent in the area of question. As we proceed, their variances and similarities as well as possible commonly obtained features of linguistic interplay would be shown directly and/or indirectly, and the judgement becomes open to our personal discretion, perspectives, description and analysis, based on inductive/deductive reasoning.

Bekwarra Language is alphabetic in nature, having drawn from the English Language cum Roman alphabet system. Bekwarra, as empirically shown by the study carried out by Robert [5], has twenty-four (24) consonants and sixteen (16), vowels. As an agglutinating African language that is not phonologically cumbersome and underrepresented phonographically, it is unlike English and the like. Basically, it has twenty-four consonants and ten vowels. The vowels are earlier said to be sixteen (16) because there are four nasal vowels and two (2) liquids—semi-vowels—in the language [6]. Robert [6] emphatically notes that there are other sounds in the respective dialects that are not found in the Bekwarra Standard Orthography owing to dialectal variances. According to Robert [5], the following phonemes (graphic marks) constitute Bekwarra orthography:

b bw ch d f g gb gw h j k kp kw l m n ng nw ny m p r sh tw y and a aa e ee I ii O oo u uu.

Using the universal parameters for phonemes classification across languages, Bekwarra consonants are classified into: (a) Plosives [p, b, t, d, k, g], (b) Implosives [gb, kp, gw, kw]; [ɓ], [ɗ], [k], [g], (c) Fricatives [f, h, ʃ], (d) Affricatives [tʃ,

dʒ], (e) Liquids [l, r], (f) Nasals [m, n, ɲ, ŋ, ŋ] and Approximants/Semi-vowels [j, w]. Accordingly, plosives are phonemes produced when the airflow is entirely obstructed during speech production. They have implosives as their direct opposites. That is, implosives are those phonemes produced without or partial obstruction during speech production. Since the description of these consonants categories is the same with their universal description, say, fricative, affricative, liquid, nasal and approximant, we leave out the one-by-one description of Bekwarra consonants.

Bekwarra vowels, like those of other world’s languages, are classified using the three universal criteria (parameters) for vowels classification viz: (i) the shape of the lips (roundness or un-roundness of the lips), (ii) the length of the tongue (open or close tongue— the distance of the mouth to the tongue roof), and (iii) the part of the tongue raised (the point of the tongue: front, back and central). They are rounded vowels [æ, a:, e, ɛ, i, I:], and rounded vowels [o, ɔ:, u, u:]. [æ] is an unrounded open front vowel, while [a:] is an unrounded open back vowel. /e/ is an unrounded close-mid front vowel, while /ɛ/ is an unrounded open-mid (central) vowel. /i/ is an unrounded close-front vowel, while /i:/ is an unrounded open front vowel. /o/ is a rounded close-mid back vowel, while /ɔ:/ is a rounded open-mid back vowel. /u/ is a rounded close back vowel, while /u:/ is an unrounded close back vowel.

### 3. Questions in Bekwarra

There are different question types, with their varied inherent formation processes and features in Bekwarra Language. These are described with examples in what follows hereunder accordingly.

#### 3.1. The O— Questions

The ‘O- words questions in Bekwarra are the commonest and dominant ones. ‘O’ in Bekwarra is the second person pronoun, the referent/listener in a discourse. In question formation, it takes the place of words such as the ‘wh- words’ in English. Consider the following examples:

1. O ji denang? — What is your name?
2. E kwuo wo denang? They call you who? Or, what/how are you called?
3. O ye kung? – Where went you or where did you go to?
4. O ba ye kung – Where are you from?
5. O mu kaa? – How are you? Or, are you fine/okay?
6. O be maa? – Have you come? Are you back?
7. O nyie ja denang – How (much) do you sell?
8. O kem re ah? – Didn’t you give me?
9. O shi denang? – How did you do?
10. Ibang ng O shi? Or O shi bang? [Ibang (ng) O kang?] – What did you do? [What did you say?]
11. O bang ah? (Did) You agree(d)?
12. O kang de nang-You said what? Or, what did you say?
13. O bi mi ah? – Did you ask me?
14. O faa irichi ah? – Are you blind / can’t you see?
15. A yung ng’ a? – Who (what) is it?

16. O ba yaa? — Would you go? Are you going?

The 'O' question marker aptly represents the 'wh- words' that characterise the English language, an intonation language. It is also used considerably to form the 'Do-questions, such as the above examples. In this case, the English modal auxiliary verb, 'do' is also represented by the 'O— question marker'. It means that it also possesses nominal status. It is a *co-junct*. It collocates with verbs as pre-modifiers to perform the role of questioning or asking questions. When it produces the 'do- verbs' questions, they are mostly of two phases: (i) the polar (yes or no questions), (ii) the lexical questions. Examples:

O ja icha ah? Do you eat dry okra soup?

O ye kaa? Did you go there?

O gbe ah? Did you pass?

O be maa? Have you come?

O ba ka M ah? Would/will you give me?

### 3.2. Yes/No (Polar) Questions

There are questions in Bekwarra that require yes/no answers. They are mostly formed by combining the subject pronouns: *O* [you— singular], *amun* [you— plural], *abe* [they], *abere* [we], *awo* [you— singular] and *ami* [I], with modal auxiliary and lexical verbs of the lexicon (daily used vocabulary). The speaker expects the listener(s) to directly answer (respond) with yes/no rather than explanation, as in lexical and expo-narrative questions in which the listener(s) explain(s) or illustrate(s) the answer(s) to the poser(s). Examples include those shown in the table that follows.

Table 1. Examples of Polar Questions in Bekwarra.

Question	Response
1. O be maa? Have you come?	Eh! [M] Ma (Eh, M/Ma) be maa. Yes. (Yes, I have come.) Eheh (No). Ma (M) nyie wo (re).
2. O nyie mia [maa]? Do you know me?	I know you or I do not know you. NB: 're' is the equivalent of the English 'not' negative marker.
3. O ba jaa [jia]? Would you eat?	Eh (Yes). Eheh (No). Eh, M ba ja. (Yes, I would eat). Eheh, M ba ja re (No, I won't eat).
4. O yua? (Do [did] you hear?)	Eh (Yes). Eheh (No). M (Ma) yuo (re). (Yes, I heard. No, I did not hear).
5. Amun emu kaa? Are you [plural you] fine, okay or alright?	Eh (Yes). Eheh (No). Abere e/mu kung (We are fine). Abere e/mu kung re (We are not fine, ok or alright).
6. Unang ipem i nyin wo a'? Do you like pounded food (fufu)?	Eh (Yes). Eheh (No). A nyin mi (I like it). A nyin mi re (I do not like it).
7. O kang na ami a'? (Did you talk to me?)	Eh (yes) M kang naawo (Yes, I talked to you). Eheh, M kang na awo re (No, I didn't talk to you).
8. Abere eba gung fo a' [foa/faa]? Are we [still] meeting (converging) again?	Eh, abere eba gung (fo) (Yes, we will still meet, gather, convene or converge). Abere eba gung (fe) re (We will [still] convene again).
9. A ko wo maa? (Has he/she given you?)	Eh (Yes). Eheh (No). A ke M ma (He/she has given me). A ke M ma re (She has not given me).
10. E nam uchi fo a' [foa/faa]? Did they still judge the case?	E nam [uchi fe re] (They did not judge the case again). E nam (They did) uchi fo (They still judged the case [again]).
11. Was the case still heard or judged?	Eh, A gbe (Yes, s/he passed [the test exam/won the election]).
12. A [Ehea] gbe a? S/he passed?	Eh, tung mi (Yes, see me off). Eheh, tung mi re; O shi (No, don't see me off; thank you [thanks]).
13. M tung wo a? Should I accompany/see you off?	Eh, tung mi (Yes, see me off). Eheh, tung mi re; O shi (No, don't see me off; thank you [thanks]).
13. Unwu yon ng' a? Is s/he your sibling?	Eh, unwu ya ng'a (Yes, s/he is my sibling). Eheh, unwu ya ng'a re (s/he or [it] is not my sibling).

### 3.3. Alternate Questions

These are questions asked with super imposition of tone or stress (intonation), dropping some core question markers. They take the forms of passive and imperative sentences, and the word sequence seems to be deliberately, though unconsciously, juxtaposed. They are the likes of the following alternative questions in English, marked with intonation (stress) in English:

- You like me?
- You eat rice?
- I am fine?
- You love me?
- He/she asked after me?
- You know me?
- The food is sweet?
- You still owe me, right?
- You heard me, right?
- You fight me [over] for what? We quarrel over what?

It is clear that the above questions could be reframed (or would have been framed) in a better or more formal way with the 'do', 'have' and wh-words question markers, and the normal (usual) words ordering or placement rather than the juxtaposition of words for stress and passivisation effects. It is imperative to note that alternative questions are less formal, used more by speakers with low proficiency and linguistic competence of the given language/dialect, and are basically used for passivisation and/or stress (intonation) or tonal effects. Alternative questions in Bekwarra Language exhibit similar features to English alternate questions. Examples of alternate questions in Bekwarra include:

- N kung kwa kung ko wo; nang ra? Let me keep it for you; is that not so? Eh, kung kwa M ka (Yes, hold/keep it for me. Eheh, kung ke M, ku M kwa ru ufoyi (No, give me; let me hold/keep by myself).
- Ne O [No] ji iriji ma? I hope [think] you have eaten (some food)? [Eh] M ji ma ([Yes] I have eaten). [Eheh] M [Ma] ji ma re ([No] I have not [eaten]).

- iii. Ukwulo yen iba mia ye ng'a? The work will [would] finish now?
- iv. Irikang iyen, unwu agri re ng'o nang? The matter [issue], it seems no consensus, right?
- v. O yi rebeshe uni re a [ra]? You have no pity for someone?
- vi. Ma nyin woa? You like me?
- vii. O bia ra ami a? You are married to me or are you married to me? NB: The speaker is a male, while the addressee is a female.
- viii. Ashima abere E nara? We see later, right?
- ix. Ebetuo, na ang'a unyie ng'a? Drink [wine], it is for sale, right?
- x. Ashima E kang ra? Later, we talk, right.
- xi. O ba ba iteyung? You are coming when?

### 3.4. Rhetorical Questions

Rhetorical questions exist/obtain in Bekwarra Language. These are questions that demand or require answers from no specific but every audience [listener/reader]. They are questions of emotion, imagination and exclamation. They are not meant for any specific immediate answer(s). Examples include:

- i. Ayung ng'a ba pang unwaaben tiang? Who would save the orphan?
- ii. Ufarichi i ne [na] ine a? Do the blind see?
- iii. E gba ine na iribia a? Do they [does anyone] use lite up [lamp] light to foresee marriage [fate]?
- iv. E kung achi-adeni ha ke ekpe ihung a? Do they [does anyone] put sense [wisdom] in a white bottle? Or is sense [wisdom] put in a white bottle?
- v. Iteyung iye-ashini iyi kaba kwom ikwu [bu] ham ki inyanfo ngn? When would my suffering end?
- vi. Ayung ng'a a kaba kang kati [ngn]? Who would speak for us?
- vii. Uni ukpere iyi ha yi ayung? Who is my helper?
- viii. K' uchi akpe re r'uni, I kung jom tuu a? If a case favours someone, does s/he knit and wear it as necklace?
- ix. Ke efarichi ekpere re ene ka akachi, ayung ng'a (ka) kpo une mun tang inyie? If the blind meet at a bridge, who leads the other across?
- x. N kung kung? Where do I start?
- xi. E ka ne shee [sha] iye denang? How else would we [one] go about the world [life]?
- xii. Unyiche [enyiche] (e/kaman) bun unwu a'? Do men [does a man] [also] gossip?

**NB:** Rhetorical questions in Bekwarra are full of proverbs, parables, axioms/maxims and figurative expressions. Some are didactic. And, they also express the speaker's rhetoric(s).

### 3.5. Tag Questions

Tag questions are also found in Bekwarra, like in English and some other languages. The difference between tag questions in Bekwarra and English Languages lies basically in their forms and characteristics. In Bekwarra Language, tag

questions are basically marked out by these tag markers: *abi, re, ra, a, nang, ara, i-yi-nang-ra, o-nee-denang*, etc. Examples of tag questions include:

1. Awo tii ogbala yi [iyi] ng; abi awo ng'a re? You are the one who broke my (glass) cup, aren't you?
2. Awo [ho] de he ng; [abi] awo [ng'a] ara? You [are the one who] told him/her, aren't you?
3. Ma de o nokpo; [abi] M de O [wo] nang re a? I said you should [I told you to] leave, didn't I [tell you]?
4. Abere na awo ng'a; abi udim amia? It is you and I [we are friends] isn't it or aren't we?
5. O bu mi atee, abi? You insulted me, didn't you?
6. O ye ichicha re; O ye a? You did not go to school, did you?
7. O kem une yen ma re; [abi] O ke M ma? You have not given me the money, [or] have you?
8. Ang' irihung ng'a chie ang irishi; I yi nang ra? It is that [the one] in the stomach that carries that on the head, isn't it?
9. Ehe a kung unwu he ne O bun de he ma; [abi] I yi nang ra a [real]? S/he has narrated it the way you told him/her; is it not [so]?
10. O cha une ikani ma, abere eya aji; O nee nang ra? Since you need so much [whooping amount of] money, we have to go and rob, shouldn't we?
11. Ma ne wo ka ate; I yi [abi] awo ng'a re a? I saw you at [the] market, aren't you? Or was it not you [weren't] you?

### 3.6. Emphatic (Sarcastic) Questions

These are questions for emphasis or sarcasm. They stress certain facts or themes, or satirise the addressed or subject matter(s). These questions exhibit mixed features of lexical, alternate, polar and tag questions, with emphatic and/or sarcastic manners or tone. Examples include the following:

1. Ne o be ma? I think you have come [You have come again]?
2. Awo O yuo irikang ka atiang iwon ana bi a? Do you hear something with that your ear at all?
3. O yuo mi a? Did you hear me?
4. E ka yiaa a? Should we scatter— run — [because of you]?
5. O nyie mi [ma] a? Do you know me?
6. Ta ana ng aka shiri wo ng a? Is that how it does you [Is that how it has become of you]?
7. E kum ugrugbo ko O ka yuo a? Should they play wooden gong before you hear?
8. O nyie-una muo una a? Does s/he, who knows law [a lawyer], breach the law?
9. O kwa ibreki ma, ibaakaman gwu ubu? You applied [held] the brake, so what still killed the goat?
10. Abo yi iha uni irijem a? Does my hand impregnate someone?
11. O yie unyiche re, a ka shi denang ng O kwa irijem? You don't know a man, so how come you are pregnant?
12. E bii unwan Onitsha de I yuo Igbo a denang? Would they ask a native Onitsha child whether s/he

understands Igbo?

13. *Uni iba ufo kun nyua ke ufo kun a?* Does one come to the world and remain forever without reincarnating?

### 3.7. Lexical Expo-narrative Questions

These are questions formed with and characterised by lexical verbs in the language. However, it does not mean that lexical questions do not have other grammatical elements that characterise [most] other question types. Lexical verbs are usually all the other verbs other than the auxiliary verbs. They are main verbs that can function independently, even in the absence of the auxiliary verbs. In Bekwarra, they include:

- a. *ítùng* [fight], *bù* [run, open, insult– bú ate], *kpóm* [beat, flog, hit, jingle], *kpé* [take], *kpi* [sow, become], *ye* [go], *mùné* [sleep], *kùm* [pound, give way, panel-beat/brutalise, flog], *kwá* [hold, plait], *tém* [peel, swear], *gèrè* [slice], *chùón* [refuse], *chùn* [find/look for, seek], *chì* [sit], *chá* [find/look for, seek], *né* [see, look, to lie down], *hén* (to lie [to tell lie]), *hé* (put), *hàrà* (respond, reply), *chìn* (struggle), *káng* (speak, talk), *chìm* (try, strive), *gbùdújií* (etc.).
- b. *chibrimùn* (strive, to try harder), *tèn/tén* (walk, trek, carve, circumcise), *ábùò* (welcome), *gáchó* (well-done), *mù* (fall, sleep, yield), *faa* (roast), *páá* (scatter), *mè* (build, mould), *gbri* (cut, slice, piece, clear, beat/flog), *jùng* (cut, demarcate, fell/chop), *gán* (shout, scream), *kwú* (close, shot, band), *nibì* (wind, turn, lease/suck, stir, turn, wind), *nyám* (suck), *nyá* (dance), *yém* (sing), *búó* (count), *bùà* (tie), *fùò* (write, park), *gbùdújií* (etc.).
- c. *Wàrá* (tear), *bám* (guard, guide, safeguard, watch over), *négbèrè* (care, take care, watch over, guard), *nwám* (weep, lash), *shèré* (fear, clean), *kám* (drain, dry), *yán* (spread, to sun something), *bùn* (narrate, gossip, cut to piece/s), *nám* (stand, bear), *gwán* (fix, join, mend), *gwíá* (laugh), *bwiá* (repair, amend, renew), *dé* (say), *bèn* (spoil, damage, destroy), *tú* (hang), *kám* (dry, press), *nyí* (press, bury), *nyèrè* (hide/save), *diè* (donate, contribute), *gbùdújií* (etc.).
- d. *nùm* (weed, hum), *gbè* (pass), *gbé* (shout, bark), *tùó* (fetch, wash), *tiá* (sweep, 'to dress bed', touch), *fèn* (born, intensify), *kàá* (fry), *chiè* (cry), *jí* (eat, stead), *wèrè* (remind, pluck), *nyíè* (buy, know), *tiùng* (show, guide), *tùng* (accompany, see-off, sting), *gbùdújií* (etc.).

These verbs are sometimes used with the auxiliary verbs, especially when serialisation occurs (i.e. when the verbs occur in series, lineally or juxtaposed). In a few cases, the auxiliary verbs are also used to form the *lexical expo-narrative* questions. These questions usually demand explanations or details from the addressees. A few of them rouse brief responses. Examples include:

1. *I baa?* What is it?
2. *Inyang ng'e he akwa a [wo] bia [ki] itang ng, O kung a?* When he/she pulled you down and fell on you, did you scream?
3. *Ibaa ashika?* What happened there?

4. *Ayung ng a kpom wo?* Who beat you?
5. *Ukwo ang'n a ye denang?* This road leads to where?
6. *Abeni amun eka ba anaa [nga na a]?* Is it now you [plural you] are just coming? Are you just coming?
7. *O de M ma shi denang?* You [singular you] said I did what?
8. *E nyie ogbongbong anang ja okobo ihung?* A cup of beniseed is sold (for) how much? How much are they selling a cup of beniseed?
9. *O fuo gbaru ufowon ma?* Can you write about [on] yourself?
10. *E bi wo denang?* How/what did they ask you?
11. *Abere eba ya iteyung?* Which day [when] are we going?
12. *O nuo kung?* Where are you going [to]?
13. *Ayung a yen amun yengn?* Who heads [leads] you [pl.] now?
14. *O ba ba iteyung?* When are you coming? [You are coming when?]
15. *O shi denang?* How did you do [go]?
16. *A gbe ikwu denang?* How did it begin / start?
17. *Iba anyin wo ishang?* What makes you laugh [what is funny]?
18. *Unwu-abini iyi achi-adeni ng a?* Is speech proficiency wisdom? [Is speaking well being sensible]?
19. *Afenini iyi akwani ng a?* Is bearing [to born] more children parenting/child upbringing?

## 4. Conclusion

There are seven basic question types in Bekwarra language, as described so far. These are: (i) the *o-* words questions, (ii) polar (yes/no) questions, (iii) alternate questions, (iv) tag questions, (v) rhetorical questions, (vi) emphatic/sarcastic questions and (vii) lexical expo-narrative questions. Pronouns and auxiliary verbs are predominantly used in questions formation in Bekwarra Language. There are distinct question markers in the language, as exemplified so far. In the formation of questions, some phonemes and, at times, morphemes are inserted into and/or deleted from at least a word in the interrogative sentence (question statement). In a few cases across the question types, some morphemes (words) are reduplicated (see no 5 of lexical questions above for example, among others).

The existent different question types exhibit both similar and different (distinct) features and as well share some items in common, while others are only peculiar to each of them (the question types). They vary extensively in their structural compositions. For instance, rhetorical and emphatic/sarcastic questions convey additional message (information) besides the enquiry made. The examples of each of the question types are legion but only a few are given herein for want of space and precision as well as for a learner to easily assimilate the few examples.

On the whole, all the questions across the seven question types constitute the interrogative sentences found in the language, both of the sentence types according to structure

and function. There is every need for the formalisation and popularisation of Bekwarra question formation, through studies of this kind. This calls for more work (scholarly studies or researches) on this aspect and other aspects of the language. The thankless task lies basically with the Bekwarra indigenous linguists, writers, scholars, academia, elites and government.

It is high time Bekwarra Language became a full-fledge school language in Cross River North, being Cross River's statutory formal language in the North, like Ejagham to the Central and Efik to the South. Regular teaching of Bekwarra, especially in primary and secondary schools, would familiarise many (learners) with the good knowledge of the language, including the knowledge and mastery of questions formation in the language. Both local and state governments should employ, sponsor and (re)train Bekwarra linguists, old and young, in colleges and higher institutions like Federal College of Education, Obudu, College of Education, Akamkpa, University of Calabar and Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, among others, towards Bekwarra Language planning and engineering.

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