

Hyponymous Relations among Verbs of Planting, Maturation, and Harvesting in Mbaitoli Igbo

Victory Chiemerie Osondu

Department of Linguistic and Nigerian Languages
University of Uyo, Uyo.
victoryosondu94@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the semantic relations that exist among verbs of planting, maturation, and harvesting in Mbaitoli Igbo. Drawing from the lexical field theory of semantics, the research identifies and analyzes verbs that denote agricultural processes and their associated crops in the Mbaitoli dialect, specifically focusing on the Orodo speech complex. Data were gathered through oral interviews with native speakers aged forty-five years and above. Findings reveal that these verbs exhibit hyponymous relations, with superordinate verbs serving as hypernyms under which more specific verbs fall. The study contributes to the understanding of how language encodes agricultural concepts and highlights the lexical richness of Mbaitoli Igbo. It concludes that these verbs are semantically structured through a hierarchical network that mirrors the linguistic and cultural patterns of the community.

Keywords: Hyponymy, Igbo, Lexical Field, Semantics, Verbs

Introduction

In order to progress in this research, we must understand what makes man which is language. Generally, it is accepted that language is the means by which people in a community interact and express feelings, thought and intentions. As a result, hardly every moment of our lives is free from words, because the words we speak are our make ups. Ndimele (2006:2) defines language as a system of structural vocal symbols by means of which human beings make meaning, communicating and interpreting with each other in a given community. Effective communication is based on a person's linguistic ability to produce, pronounce and comprehend words, ability to construct sentences and know the meaning of individual words and sentences. This different level makes up linguistic which are: morphology which is the study of word formation and structure, phonology which studies speech sounds and how they are organised into system of a given language, syntax which studies the systematic arrangement of words to form sentence, Semantic which studies the meaning of individual words and sentences.

Semantics is defined from a Greek word 'semanitein' which means to signify. Lyon (1997) defines semantics as the study of meaning. According to Witms Hurt (1986) meaning of an expression is said to be what the expression refers to or the idea associated with it in person's mind. This is to say that semantics do not give correct answer to the question "what is meaning" or probably will not help you find out the meaning of words you do not understand but as we learn about semantics, we find out a lot about how words form to meaning and when the meaning of two expressions are different and identical. This is to say

that semantics tells us the cultural and actual meaning (denotative) and also the figurative meaning (connotative). Several scholars including Jacobson (1960); Haliday (1970); Lyons (1968, 1981); Brown and Yule (1981); Yule (1996); Agbedo (2000); Anagbogu, Mbah and Eme (2001) concede the fact that the concept of meaning is a problematic one. The general agreement of what meaning really is has led to the postulation of several theories of meaning among them are: the componential theory of meaning; the logical theory of meaning; the structural theory of meaning; the referential theory of meaning; the speech act theory of meaning; the use theory of meaning; the thing theory of meaning; the idea theory of meaning; the correspondence theory of meaning; the realistic theory of meaning; the lexical theory of meaning among others. (see Bradley & Swartz, 1979; Stainton, 1996; Saeed, 2003; Yoshitake, 2004). Under the lexical theory of meaning, there is a field theory semantics which forms the fulcrum of this study. This study is to determine the interrelationships that exist among verbs that denote planting, maturation and harvesting in the Mbaitoli Igbo.

Statement of Research Problem

Studies have been done on planting and harvesting in some dialects of Igbo, but no such study have been done in Mbaitoli Igbo. The lack of study of Mbaitoli planting, maturation and harvesting verbs has prompted this work, to know.

Objectives: Specifically, the following objectives were set to:

- i. identify the various verbs of planting maturation and harvesting in Mbaitoli Igbo.
- ii. examine the different verbs that are used for a groups of crops.
- iii. ascertain the lexical relation used amongst the verbs of plant, maturation and harvesting in Mbaitoli Igbo.

History of Mbaitoli

Mbaitoli Local Government is one of the 27 local administrative districts in Imo State of Nigeria Mbaitoli dates back to 1955 when it started as a rural District Council with Nwaoriubi as headquarters and became fully a District Council precisely, in October, 1958. Following the military putsch of 1966, Mbaitoli became one of the two districts amalgamated to form newly created Mbaitoli Ikeduru Local Government Area. Mbaitoli became a distinct local administrative authority when Mbaitoli – Ikeduru Local Government Area was dissolved on the 11th of May, 1989. The headquarters of Mbaitoli remained Nwaorieubi till date. The Local Government Area has a landmass of 238 square kilometer. It shares bound.

It is the most populated Local Government Area in Imo State with a population of 221, 514 people, by 2005 estimates (IMSG, 2006). Mbaitoli Local Government Area has a total of 31 autonomous communities and 17 electoral wards which is about the highest in Imo State. The LGA is neither urbanized nor highly industrial. Infact, Mbaitoli fits, in several ways, into Odewale's (1986) classification of a rural area as that with among other features; limited educational and economic opportunities, strong cultured, tribal and religions adherence and absence of large business and commercial institution. Yet, it consistently receives the largest revenue allocation from Revenue mobilization allocation and fiscal

commission among the LGAs in Imo State. This is a testimony to its large population and expansive geographical size. However, following the passage of Imo state law on Local Government creation of 2003, the present Mbaitoli LGA was split into three distinct L.G. Development Areas (Emenajor and Akanwa, 2007:315). These LGDAs are Mbaitoli North, which includes; Afara, Eziamma-Obiato, Orodu and Ogwa; Mbaitoli South which includes: Umunoha, Fekala, Ogbaku, Ubomiti, and Mbieri comprising all communities in Mbieri clan (Emanalor). Farming is an important economic activity in Mbaitoli L.G.A with the area known for the cultivation of a number of crops such as yam, cassava, cocoyam and oil pam.

Methodology

In this study, the researcher adopted descriptive research design. The data used for this study were generated by some native speakers of Mbaitoli dialect of Igbo, consisting of elderly men and women from 45 years and above who were born and bred; and have continued to stay in Mbaitoli. The data were achieved through oral interview. Mbatoli is made up of some dialect complexes, such as, Afara, ogbaku, Orodo, Ubomiri, Mbieri, Orodo, Umunoha. The data used for this study were extracted specifically from Orodo complex.

Review of Related Literature

Preamble

Under the literature review of this study, the researcher will review the concept of semantics, lexical relations with the major focus on hyponymy. The theoretical framework of this study will also be reviewed.

Conceptual Framework

Semantics

The term Semantics was coined from a Greek word 'semasia' meaning 'signification'. According to Lyons (1977), semantics is the study of meaning. He adds that asking the meaning of meaning makes two pre-supposition, which are difficult to grasp: the first presupposition is that the word meaning has an independent existence apart from its attachment to other entities or word, secondly, that when everything called meaning is taken together, it is similar if not the same in nature. These two presuppositions are called the presuppositions of existence and homogeneity.

According to Palmer (2000:1). Semantics is the technical term used to refer to the study of meaning and since meaning is a part of language, semantics is a part of linguistic. Semantics is that branch of linguistics which studies the meaning of words, phrases and sentences. According to Yule (1997:114) "Linguistic semantics deal with the conventional meaning conveyed by the use of words and sentences of a language". Semantics is seen as a science of meaning or an investigation into meaning. Therefore, a semantic is seen as a science of meaning or an investigation into meaning. Therefore, a semantic analysis focuses on what a word means conventionally rather than the subjective meaning which is speaker

might want the words to have on a particular occasion. Crystal (1997:102) notes that a semantic account of a language recognizes that several kinds of sense relations may be syntagmatic, that is that which is concerned with the way they can substitute for each other, some of these relations holding between paradigmatic choice are described in terms of synonyms, polysemy, homonyms, antonyms and hyponymy. Two lexemes are said to be synonymous with each other if they are different words having similar meanings which are substitutable for each other in some circumstance. Polysemy refers to a lexical item that has variant meanings which belong to a common semantic field. Homonymy describes a lexeme whose meaning is embodied in the meaning of another general word, and Antonyms refers to lexical items whose meaning conflict. Akwanga (1996:36) note that “A semantic theory aims to account for these relationships economically and make an explicit statement of them”. According to Rodman (1973:296), there are different ways in which a lexical item may change semantically. The meaning of a word could be broadened, it could be narrowed, it could be weakened, it could be shifted and it could equally be improved. That gives rise to broadening, narrowing, weakening, shifting and amelioration as different ways to which meanings can change.

Lexical Relation

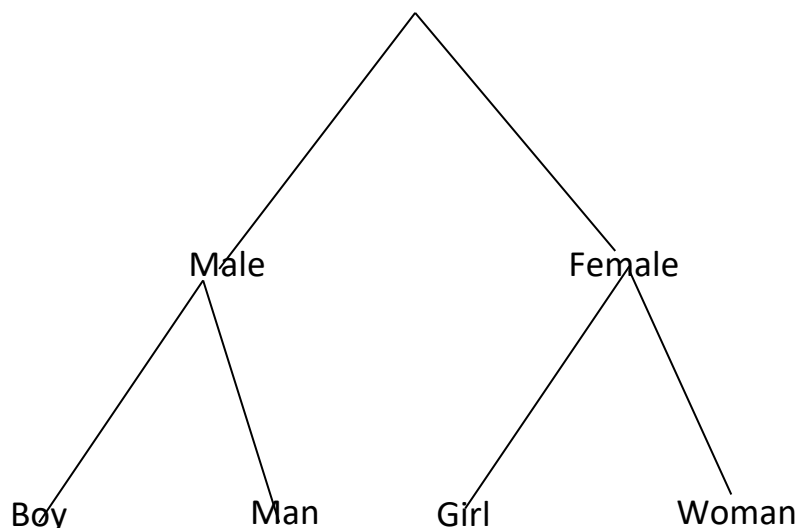
The relationship that is established among lexicons in terms of their meaning is referred to as lexical relations. The words that describe relationship often end in the bound morpheme – nym. Various terms have been used by different scholars to describe this relationship. They include; semantic relations, essential meaning relations, sense relations, collocation and company keep words, among others (Asha 1994, Firth 1987, Onwukwe 2015). Rustejovsky (1995) describes lexical semantics as a subfield of semantics which deals with the study of how and what the words of a language denote, and the network relationships word have within a language. In explaining what lexical relations is; Yule (1996:118) observes that not only can words be treated as ‘containers’ on a fulfilling ‘roles’, they also have relationship.

The various forms of lexical relations stated by Saeed (2016) include homonymy, polysemy, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, part-whole and member – collection. In this paper, we are not going into all but will select the form that focus on this work which is hyponymy.

Hyponymy

This is the relation of sense inclusion where the sense of a word is included in the meaning of another word. According to Anagbogu, Mba and Eme (2010), when two or more words are related in the sense that they can be classified under another umbrella, term, they are called hyponyms. The relationship between two or more hyponyms is called co-hyponyms. The more general word whose meaning accommodates the sense of another word is referred to as the hypernym or superordinate term. Cruse (1990) describes hyponymy as the sense of inclusion according and exclusion according to him relates to entailment. It entails that they

have a common superordinate and belong to a semantic field. For further explanation, look at the diagram below.



Human – Superordinate /hypernym

However, this paper also examines planting, maturation and harvesting in Mbaitoli Igbo, showing a hyponymous relationship.

Theoretical Framework

Lexical Field Theory

Lexical field theory, or word-field theory was introduced on March, 12, 1931 by the German Linguist Jost Trier. Although according to John Lyons, it has historical roots in the ideas of Wilhelm Von Humboldt and Joham Gottfried Herder, Stephen (1960) saw semantic fields as crystallising and perpetuating the values of society. According to John Lyons (1972), words related in any sense belonged to the semantic field, and the semantic field was simply a lexical category, which he described as a lexical fields. Eva Kittery (1984) developed a semantic field theory of metaphor. This approach is based on the idea that the items in a semantic field have specific relations to other items in same field, and that a metaphor works by re-ordering the relations of a field by mapping them on the existing relations of another field. Fillmore (1982) proposed frame semantics as an alternative to semantic field theory.

Wu (1988:94-95) summarized Trier's semantic field theory as follows:

1. The vocabulary in a language system is semantically related and builds up a complete lexical system. This system is unsteady and changing constantly.
2. Since the vocabulary of a language is semantically related, we are not supposed to study the semantic change of individual words in isolation, but to study vocabulary as an integrated system.

3. Since lexians are interrelated in sense, we can only determine the connotation of a word by analyzing and comparing its semantic relations with other words. A word is meaningful only in its own semantic field

Rystal (1992:34) defines semantic field theory as “the view that the vocabulary of a language is a system of interrelated lexical networks, and not an inventory of independent items, stating that semantic field theory is also called lexical field theory. Pa and Xu (2011:1587) explain semantic field theory as the basic assumption underlying the theory of semantic fields, such as a vegetable field which contains all kinds of words that denote vegetables: spinach, cauliflower, cabbage, pepper, eggplant, onion, tomato, cucumber. As Changhong (2010) states, the semantic field theory matured thanks to the efforts of German scholar, Trier in the 1930s. Crystal (1992:347) points out the significance of context and points out that “it is always necessary to consider context before assigning a lexical item to a field. For example hospital relates to both semantic field of health (as in I was in hospital last week) and that of buildings (as in the hospital needs a new roof).

It has been observed that a major factor for classifying lexical items under semantic field is the factor of selectional restriction. This simply means that the co-occurrence of this lexical item under a semantic field is restricted to certain word which serves as complement. This selectional restriction can equally be seen among Igbo verbs that are under a semantic field. According to Anoka (1983) selectional restriction has been observed in Igbo verb phrase and they are essentially semantic, claiming that the matching of verbs with their corresponding items are determined by the inherent meaning of the verbs. This selectional restriction has been described by many scholars as collocation. This paper bears the assumption of this theory in mind in the analysis of the lexical relations that exist among verbs of planting, maturation and harvesting.

Data Presentation and Analysis

As stated earlier, the data for this study were generated through oral interview by some native speakers of Mbaitoli dialect of Igbo consisting of elderly men and women from about 45 years and above, who were born and bred in Mbaitoli and have continued to stay in Mbaitoli. Mbaitoli dialect, the superordinate verbs for planting is ‘íkū’, for maturation is ‘íkā’ and for harvesting is ‘íghọ’. Also, the crops used here are the ones familiar to Mbaitoli community member. That is, the crops that are commonly planted, and they are: eleven (11) crops for planting, thirteen (13) crops for maturation and thirteen (13) crops for harvesting. Examples of the verbs and their complements (crops) in Mbaitoli Igbo are seen on Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of verbs and their complements (crops) in Mbaitoli Igbo

Verbs of planting	Planting gloss	Crops	Gloss	Sentential form
Íkū (superordinate which is the general name)	To plant	ókà	Maize	Agam aku oka
		èkwúsí	Melon	nafoa ozo
		ókwùrù	Okro	I will plant maize next year
		úgū	Pumpkin	Iga aku ekusi.
		òróamá	Orange	Will you plant melon
		ùbé	Pear	
Thi	To put in	Ipaoji	Yam	Ehirim ahu nala
		Ikpocha	Plantain	I have put the yam in the ground. That is, I have planted the yam
		Ede	Banana	
			Cocoyam	
Igba	-	Akpu	Cassava	Agbaala akpu ahu norum
				They have planted the cassava in my farm land.

Verbs of Maturation

In this group of verbs we have three verbs of maturation in Mbaitoli Igbo, íkā which means ‘to mature’ and ‘íchā’ which means ‘to ripe’ and íjì will not use ‘imi’ which means to germinate because all crops germinate and the only verb for germination in Mbaitoli is ‘imi’

Note that there are crops which get mature, but are not ripe for eating, so they have to get mature and then ripe, while others just need to be mature and then they are ready to be harvested. Example ‘g’ (yam). Also, some crops need to just get ripe.

Table 2: Summary of different verbs used for a group of crops

Verbs of planting	Planting gloss	Crops	Gloss	Sentential form
ika (superordinate)	To mature	Ji	Yam	
		Ugu	Vegetable (pumpkin)	
		Ede	Cocoyam	
		Oroma	Orange	
		Ekwusi	Melon	
		Oka	Maize	
		Ipa ojii	Plantain	
		Ipa ocha	Banana	
		Akpu	Cassava	
icha	To ripe	Oroma	Orange	
		Ipa ojii	Plantain	
		Ipa ocha	Banana	
		Ose	Pepper	
		Nkwu	Oil palm	
iji	To ripe	Udara	Star apple	
		Ube	Pear	Ube a ejuela
				This pear is ripe

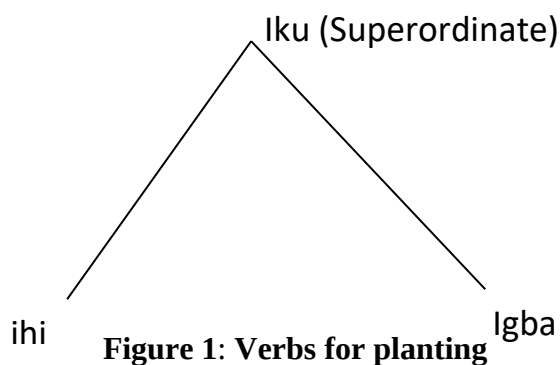
Verbs for Harvesting

Mbaitoli dialect has three forms of verb for harvesting. They are: ‘igho’ – to pluck, ‘ibu’ – to dig out, ‘igbu’ – to cut and ‘itutu’ – to pick.

Table 3: Lexical relation used amongst the verbs of planting, maturation and harvesting in Mbaitoli Igbo.

Verbs of planting	Planting gloss	Crops	Gloss	Sentential form
igbo (superordinate)	To pluck	Oroma	Orange	Iga agho
		Udara	Star apple	Oroma gi
		Ose	Pepper	You will
		Ube	Pear	pluck your orange
ibu	To dig out	Akpu	Cassava	Aburum
		Ji	Yam	Akpu
		Ede	Cocoyam	I dug out cassava
igbu	To cut	nkwu	Oil palm	Gaa bguo
		ipa ojii	Plantain	nkiru ahu
		ipa	Banana	Go and cut
		ocha	Vegetable	the palm fruit
		ugu	Pumpkin	fruit
Itutu	To pick	nkwu	Palm fruit	I tutara
		udara	Star apple	udara Did you pick star apple

You will notice that the ‘ukwu’ and udara appeared in two places. Udara is picked also because it falls on its own when its ripe. Palm fruits scatter when the bunch is being cut down, thereby causing the owners to also pick. It is observed that ‘ihi’ ikpa have the same semantic meaning as iku which means ‘to plant’. ‘ika’ and icha has the same semantic meaning and ‘igbo’ ‘igbu’ ‘ibu’ and itutu has the same semantic meaning. Hence, they belong to the semantic relation known as hyponymy. The figure 1-3 show this



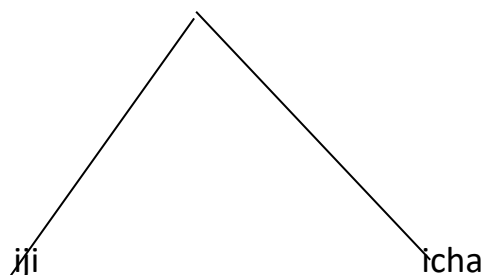


Figure 2: Verbs for Maturation

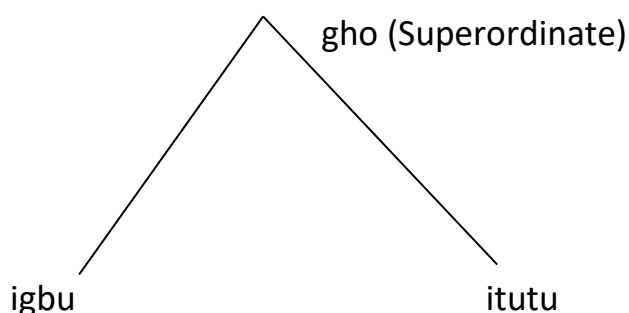


Figure 3: Verbs for Harvesting

Findings

This study which examines the verbs of planting, maturation and harvesting found out the various verbs for thirteen crops commonly planted in Mbaitoli Igbo. The researcher also identified two crops which do not have the verb for planting in Mbaitoli dialect because the interview, the community members claimed that the two crops are not usually planted but grow on their own, hence, there is no specific verb suitable for the two crops, they are: 'ukwu' – palm fruit and 'udara' star apple. The researcher also discovered that those crops that were not planted in Mbaitoli Igbo do not have dialectal names as most community members do not understand how they are planted get matured and harvested.

Furthermore, it is ascertained that the various verbs for planting, as well as maturation and harvesting has semantic relation and so can be grouped as hyponymous verbs. It has been discovered that referent (signified) is very essential as it helps the sense (signifier) to create an image in the mind of the language users. This is because in Mbaitoli Igbo, there are some crops that are not planted, hence no verb for attach to this crops. The reason can be that there was referent and so, so sence.

Conclusion

This study semantics of verbs of planting, maturation and harvesting in Mbaitoli Igbo is very important as we have seen and analyzed the differnet verbs for planting. Further work can be done in the study, as this work just covered an aspect of verbs in Mbaitoli Igbo. This material may also be useful to future researchers.

References

- Agbedo, C. U. (2000). General linguistic: An Introductory Reader. Nsukka: ACE Resource Consult.
- Anoka G. M. K. (1983). Selectional Restriction: Verbs meaning 'to by' In P.A. Nwachukwu (Ed.). Reading on the Igbo Verb. Nsukka: Afria – FEP Publishers P. 30-35.
- Anyanwu, O. N. & Ikone N. (2004). Verbs of planting and harvesting: The Ngwa and Obimo Dialects examples: In O-M Ndimela (Ed.) Language and culture in Nigeria: A festschrift for Okon Essien. Aba: Ama Publishers and NWA N.P. 815-821.
- Bach, E. (2009). On Morpho-semantic: the Internal Meanings of words.
- Filmer C. (1982). Frame semantics. Linguistics on the morning calm. Selected papers from SICOL – 1981. Ed. The linguistics society of Korea Seoul Hanshin Publishing Co. pp 110-136.
- Lyons J. (1981). Language and Linguistics. Cambridge: University Press.
<http://www.google.com>. 5/12/2021.
- Lyons J. (1981). Language meaning and context. London: Fontana.
- Lyons J. Semantics: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ndiribe, M. O. (2004). Lexical semantics of planting term in ihiala dialect of the Igbo language unpublished B.A. project, Department of Linguistics, Igbo and other Nigerian language. University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Nwachukwu P.A. (1985). Inherent complement Verbs of Igbo. Journal of Linguistics Association of Nigeria (JOLAW) 3:61-74.
- Ogden, C.K. & Richards, I.A. (1923). The meaning of meaning: Kegan Paul.
- Onukwe D. C (2015). Hyponymous relations of verbs of cooking in Igbo. International research journal of arts and social science vol. 4(3) pp. 61-69.
- Udo, A. & Osuagwu, S. (2019). Fundamental of linguistics. Fruities publication Ltd.
- Udofo (1988). English semantics, Nigeria: Scholars Press Ltd.
- Uwalaka, M. A. (1988). The Igbo verb: A semantic syntactic analysis, Beltrage Zur Africans.
www.wikipedia.org 7/12/2021.