
SYNONYMS IN AMAIYI DIALECT OF IGBO

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Introduction

Sense relation refers to how the meanings of individual words are either similar or different. Many scholars have studied how the meanings of words are interrelated. Some words have similar meanings, some others are quite different. These similarities and differences range from close to distant relationship. Upon these varying degrees of relationships, words are sorted out using different criteria. Sense relation is one area of language to which we can continually add throughout our lives because we are always learning new words and their meanings. Speakers of a language as part of the knowledge of their language have also mastered the words and the kinds of relationship they have with one another. Again, the vocabulary of a language is not an unrelated aggregate of words rather there are systematic relations between the words of a language and it becomes part of the burden of a linguistic account of lexical meaning to provide a characterisation of the relations. (Anagbogu et al 2010).

Synonymy is a term used in semantics to refer to the major types of sense relation between lexical items. Lexical items which have the same meaning are synonyms. For two items to be synonyms, does not mean that they should be identical in meaning that is interchangeable in all contexts and with identical connotations. This unlikely possibility is sometimes referred to as absolute synonymy. Synonyms can be said to occur if items are close enough in their meaning to allow a choice to be made between them in some contexts, without there being any difference for the meaning of the sentence as a whole. Linguistic studies of synonymy have emphasised the importance of context in deciding whether a set of lexical items is synonymous. Synonymy is distinguished from such other sense relations as antonym, hyponymy and incompatibility etc. (Anagbogu et al 2010).

The aim of this research is to examine synonyms, how to test synonyms, reasons for synonym and some list of synonyms in Amaiyi dialect. This will enable one to ascertain whether there are real synonyms in Amaiyi dialect or not. Amaiyi dialect is a member of Nwaozuzu's (2006) East Niger group of dialects. The research work is divided into five sections, the first is introduction, the second section is definitions of the topic of the research, third section is the reasons for synonyms, and synonyms in Amaiyi dialect and the fourth section is the findings and conclusion.

Concept of synonymy

According to Anagbogu, Mbah and Erne (2010:224), "Synonym refers to the study of how different lexical items share similar meanings". So, when two or more words have the same meaning, they are said to be synonyms. Some words that are believed to be synonyms are:

- (1.) a. church-synagogue
- b. buy-purchase
- c. conceal - hide
- d. chase – pursue

In other words, synonyms are different words with identical or very similar meanings. Words that are synonyms are said to be synonymous and the state of being a synonym is synonymy. The word '*buy*' and '*purchase*' are synonyms. The word synonyms comes from Ancient Greek *syn* (with) and *onoma* ('name'). Synonyms can be any part of speech such as verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs or prepositions, as long as the members of the pair are the same part of speech. Here are more examples of English synonyms

- (2) a. Adjective:
sad and unhappy
 - b. Verb:
buy and purchase
 - c. Adverb:
quickly and fast
 - d. Preposition:
below and beneath
- (Obiora, 2010:139-152)

Yule(1996:119) states that synonyms are two or more forms with very closely related meanings which are often, but not always, intersubstitutable in sentences. Some examples of synonyms are the pairs:

- (3) a. broad -wide
- b. hide - conceal
- c. almost - nearly
- d. cab - taxi
- e. answer- reply

According to Saeed, (2007:65) "synonym is seen as different phonological words which have the same or very similar meanings". Some examples might be the pairs below:

- (4) a. couch - sofa
- b. boy - lad
- c. lawyer - attorney
- d. toilet - lavatory
- e. large – big

Cruse (1986) as quoted in Anyanwu (2008:193), states that synonymy is the lexical relation which parallels identity in the membership of classes. It is a sense relation between items that have the same meaning. The emphasis is on identity of meaning rather than on similarity of meaning. Lexical items that are involved in this kind of relation are referred to as synonyms. Synonyms do not only need to have a high degree of semantic overlap, they must also manifest a low degree of implicit contrastiveness. They are lexical items whose senses are identical in respect of 'central' semantic traits, but differ, if at all, only in respect of what may be provisionally described as 'minor' or peripheral traits.

Synonymy, according to Palmer (1976:59) as quoted in Agbedo (2000:152), "... is used to mean "sameness of meaning". Superficially, the notion of synonymy is a straight forward one: two words are synonyms if they have the same meaning. Finch, (2000:184), stresses that synonymy is a sense relation which exists between words which have a similar meaning or sense. For example:

- (5) a. drunk - intoxicated
b. mad - insane

Furthermore, Hurford and Heasley (1983:102), say that synonymy is the relationship between two predicates that have the same sense. Examples:

- (6) a. stubborn - obstinate
b. brigand - bandit
c. mercury - quicksilver.

The above examples are synonyms in different languages.

Finegan (2008:184) opines that two words are said to be synonymous if they mean the same thing. The terms movie, film, flick and motion pictures all have the same set of referents in the real world and are usually taken to be synonymous terms. To address the notion of synonymy more formally, we can say that term 'A' is synonymous with term 'B' if every referent of 'A' is a referent of 'B' and vice versa. For example, if every movie is a film and every film is a movie, the terms movie and film are synonymous.

According to Fromkin and Rodman (1993:131), "There are also words that sound different but have the same or nearly the same meaning." Such words are called synonyms. There are dictionaries of synonyms that contain many hundreds of entries, such as:

- (7) a. Apathetic/phalgmatic/passive/sluggish/indifferent.
b. Predigree/ancestry/genealogy/descent/lineage

Crystal, (2008:47), states that synonymy is a term used in semantics to refer to a major type of sense relation between lexical items. Lexical items which have the same meanings are synonyms. Some scholars have written on synonyms in the Igbo language. Synonym can be said to mean sameness of meaning when different phonologically realised words with different etymology are referring to or interpreted as one thing. Examples are:

- (8) a. omume/agwa - character
b. oyibo/Bekee - English
c. abụ/mbem/ukwe - poem
d. alaka/ngalaba - branch
e. iberibe/nzuzu - fool
(Obiora, 2010:139- 152)

In the examples, it shows that there are real synonyms in the Igbo language because the words can be used interchangeably without any problem.

Ogbalu (1974:70) in his proposals states that words of identical meanings in all dialects should not be condemned simply because they are not central dialect or union Igbo but rather be employed as synonyms, examples:

- (9) a. Abali, uchichi, anyasi - night
b. Ogbọ, ebiri, uke, uro - age mate
c. Abọ, akpa, mkpukuru - oblong container
d. Ejula, okpatu - snail
e Mbubo oba, ebele, ugba, egbee – calabash

All the above definitions are pointing at one thing. Thus, synonym can be said to mean sameness of meaning, when two words that are pronounced differently will have the same meaning. It will merely indicate collocational possibilities and these do not seem necessary to be always closely related to nearness of meaning.

Tests for synonyms

Some ways of testing synonym include:

Substitution

Oppositeness

Substitution: Substitution can be said to mean using one word for another.

Synonyms are mutually interchangeable in all their environments. What we shall find, of course, is that some words are interchangeable in certain environments only, example 'deep' or 'profound' may be used with 'sympathy' but only deep

with 'water' but this will give us little measure of synonymy or of similarity of meaning.

Another way is to investigate the opposite (the antonyms) of the lexical items. Thus, 'superficial' is to be contrasted with both 'deep' and 'profound' but shallow is for the most part, in contrast only with 'deep'. Perhaps, the fact that two words appear to have the same antonyms is a reason for testing them as synonyms.

Two or more expressions will be defined to have the same sense (that is to be synonymous) over a certain range of utterances without affecting their descriptive meaning.

Examples of synonyms in Amayi dialect using substitution criteria

- (10) a. Emeka na Obi ga-abụ ọgbọ
Emeka and Obi will be age mates
Emeka and Obi are age mates
b. Emeka na Obi ga-abụ ebiri
Emeka and Obi will be age mates
Emeka and Obi are age mates

The two lexemes 'ọgbọ' and 'ebiri' can be used interchangeably as true synonyms because one can replace the other without affecting their descriptive meaning as in example 10 and 11.

- (11) a. Otu ọgbọ ha masịrị m.
Age mate they be good to me.
Their age grade pleases me.
b. Otu ebiri ha masịrị m.
Age mate they be good to me.
Their age grade pleases me.

In this case 'ọgbọ' and 'ebiri' can replace each other in any context.

- (12) a. Nri ahụ na-atọ ose ose.
Food that is testing pepper pepper.
The food is pepperish.
b. Nri ahụ na-atọ ịgbaka ịgbaka.
Food that is testing pepper pepper
The food is pepperish.

The two lexemes 'ose' and 'ịgbaka' are synonyms because they can be used interchangeably in any context.

- (13) a. Ose ekweghị ya eri nri ahụ.
Pepper allow not him eat food that.
Pepper did not allow him to eat that food,
b. Ịgbaka ekweghị ya eri nri ahụ.
Pepper allow not him eat food that.
Pepper did not allow him to eat that food.
(14) a. Ọ bịara mụnyere ha ọkụ.
He come past put give past them fire.
He came and put fire for them,
b. Ọ bịara mụnyere ha ngwa.
He come past put give past them fire.
He came and put fire for them.

The two lexemes 'ngwa' and 'ọkụ' can be used interchangeably as true synonyms because one can replace the other.

- (15) a. Ị gara ebe ọkụ dị?
You go past where fire be?
Did you go where there is fire?
b. Ị gara ebe ngwa dị?
You go past where fire be?
Did you go where there is fire?

In this example 'ọkụ' and 'ngwa' can substitute each other.

- (16) a. Anyị hụrụ gị ebe ị pịara ya ụtari
We see past you place you flog him cane.
We saw you where you flogged him.
b. Anyị hụrụ gị ebe ị pịara ya apịansu.
We see past you place you flog him cane.
We saw you where you flogged him.
- (17) a. Ụtari dị n'uko.
Cane be in ceiling.
The cane is in the ceiling.
b. Apịansu dị n'uko.
Cane be in ceiling.
The cane is in the ceiling.

The two lexemes 'ụtari' and 'apịansu' can be used interchangeably as synonyms because they can replace each other in both 16 and 17 examples above.

- (18) a. Emeka nọ n'ụlọ'mkpọrọ'.
Emeka is in house prison.
Emeka is in the prison.
b. Emeka no n'ụlọ 'nga'
Emeka is in house prison.
Emeka is in the prison.
- (19) a. Mkpọrọ ha tụtụ ya abaghị uru.
Prison they put past him is not gain.
His imprisonment is not necessary,
b. Nga ha tụtụ ya abaghị uru.
Prison they put past him is not gain.
His imprisonment is not necessary.

The two lexemes 'mkpọrọ', and 'nga' can be used interchangeably as synonyms because they can substitute each other in 18 and 19 examples above. 'Nga' can be used in place of 'mkpọrọ' in any speech event. Using the substitution criteria it was observed that some lexemes in Amayi dialect are true, complete and absolute synonyms in any context.

Reasons for synonyms

Synonymy is very important in all languages because it helps to increase the vocabularies of the language. The use of 'ùtarì' in place of 'apìánsù' helps the language to have variety. Synonyms add flavour to the utterances as they spice the speech events because variety they say is the spice of life. In the use of 'ùsa' and 'azìza' the speaker of a language like the Igbo language cannot be using 'ùsa' in all sentences. Therefore, 'azìza' can substitute 'ùsa' and it, will make the sentence interesting and shows that the speaker is competent in the language. Synonymy makes language dynamic instead of static because a linguistic situation can be presented in different ways. Learning the synonyms will help the second language learners to master the language very well.

It also helps to describe the similarities between the meanings of different terms in the lexicon. Synonymy may portray positive or negative attitudes of the speaker, for example naive or gullible seem more critical than ingenious. Synonymy is a tasty ingredient of language. It helps both the native speakers and language learners to have competence of the language.

Synonyms in Amaiyi dialect

Some of the underlisted linguistic items assumed to be synonyms in Amaiyi dialect are tested using the yardstick formulated by Palmer (1981), that is, substitution and oppositeness.

Remember that the convention used for tone marking is to tone mark only the high tones and downsteps. The low tones are left unmarked.

high tone (/)

low tone

downsteps (-)

Some of them are as follows:

S/NO	Synonymous lexemes in Amaiyi dialect	English equivalent
1	éhihie/owu	afternoon
2	úkwú / ókpa	leg
3	ùtarì / apìánsú .	cane
4	ngá / ébé	place
5	ódō / ókirī	mortar
6	ntú / así .	lie
7	ìgbàkà / ósè	pepper

8	ńgwā/ ọkú	fire
9	ípata /ákpúkọ ńkwü .	shoe
10	ọhü / ikè	buttocks
11	àhúrú / éréghéré	sweat
12	odógwu ọzará/ ákpị	scorpion
13	ńmémé ńmémé / ọbara ọbara	blood
14	ajadu / ísímkpē	widow
15	oyibó / bekéē	English
16	úbi / úgbō	farm
17	ákwà / ọgọdọ	cloth
18	úrì / égwú	dance
19	ụchụ / azị	bad luck
20	otíkpa / óka	corn
21	úkpáala/ ahụékéré	groundnut
22	ugórò / ákí ilū	bitter kola
23	ńgbede / uhúhurú chi	evening
24	omumé / agwa	character
25	ngà / ńkpórọ .	prison
26	ọgbáko/ńzukó .	meeting
27	ụsa /ázìzá	answer
28	ńkpa / azú ńlọ .	backyard
29	ńjije / ularị	head tie
30	ọkwa ńzọ / igodo	key
31	ngajì / ákụkọ	spoon
32	ílóm / ólóló	bottle

33	agadiḡbọ / nwáanyí nọduru ókwù	kitchen stool
34	kpókojọ / éfere	plate
35	ímémhie / njó	sin
36	ogbó / ébiri	age mate/peer
37	íké / ulighilí	strength
38	mbúbó / úbì	farmland
39	aparapa / útara	cassava fufu
40	ókwuru órū / mgbímgbí	paw-paw
41	ímé ndúrú / ímé oghó m	unwanted pregnancy
42	akom / íba	malaria
43	áhụ / úkwa	bread fruit
44	okpukpo ókū / ékwú ókụ	tripod stand
45	ókéaha / ókenye	old person
46	mgbírímgbá / átánú	bell
47	banyéré / gbasarà	about
48	akpatì/igbé	box
49	inyóm / nwáanyi	women
50	dum / nílé	all

The examples above can be used in sentences below:

- (20) a. Akpì gbara nwoke ocha ahụ.
Scorpion sting past man fair that.
Scorpion stung that fair man.
- b. Odogwu ozara gbara nwoke ocha ahụ.
Scorpion sting past man fair that.
Scorpion stung that fair complexioned man.

In these two examples the lexemes 'akpì' and odogwu ozara can be used in place of the other in the two contexts.

- (21) a. Anyị tara ọka
We eat past corn.
We ate corn,
b. Anyị tara otikpa
We eat past corn.
We ate corn.

In the examples above 'ọka' and 'otikpa' mean the same thing therefore, they are synonyms because one can replace the other in all the context.

- (22) a. Ha biara n'uhuru chi.
They come past in evening.
They came in the evening,
b. Ha bịara na mgbede.
They come past in evening.
They came in the evening.

In the examples above 'uhuru chi' and 'mgbede' can be used interchangeably in the same speech event.

- (23) a. Akpatị ahụ mara mma.
Box that fine.
That box is fine
b. Igbe ahụ mara mma.
Box that fine.
That box is fine

The examples above 'akpatị' and 'igbe' are synonymous because they can replace each other and the meaning will still be very clear.

- (24) a. Ha dum bịara nzụkọ ahụ.
They all come past meeting that.
All of them came to the meeting.
b. Ha niile bịara nzụkọ ahụ.
They all come past meeting that.
All of them came to the meeting.

The above examples show that the two words 'dum' and 'niile' can stand in for each other and still have the same meaning not minding how the words are pronounced or spelt. They are conveying the same meaning.

- (25) a. Ngozi zụtaara m odo.
Ngozi buy past me mortar.
Ngozi bought mortar for me.
b. Ngozi zụtaara m okiri.

Ngozi buy past me mortar.
Ngozi bought mortar for me.

The examples above show that 'odo' and 'okiri' can stand in for each other in any speech event.

Findings

- a. It was found out that synonymy can be said to mean sameness of meaning, when two words that are pronounced differently are referred to or interpreted as one thing.
- b. It was observed that there are many synonymous words in Amaiyi dialect.
- c. That synonyms help to increase Igbo vocabulary and for stylistic effect.
- d. That synonyms help native speakers and language learners to have 'competence of the language.

Conclusion

Synonymy as a sense relation cuts across all natural languages. Synonyms were x-rayed and tested and the result showed that there are many synonyms in Amaiyi dialect. This is due to the fact that these words help to enrich the vocabulary and help language learners to master the language well. This research work concludes that there are true and real synonyms in Amaiyi dialect. Some synonyms in the dialect were listed out. Students should be encouraged to do the same research in other Igbo dialects to improve the study of the Igbo language.

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