

Lexico-Semantic Relations in Tiv

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Abstract

This work examines semantic relations in Tiv. Semantic relations are a set of words with an identifiable semantic affinity. This affinity creates a relationship between words in which they are connected in order to make more acceptable meaning out of them. It is obvious that semantic relations in Tiv consist of vocabularies that empower speakers of the language in attaining proficiency in the use of the language, but is this always the case? When you listen to most communications in the language, users do not show good mastery and use of sense relations. It follows that, misapplication of these sense relations by speakers render the listeners confused as to what the right option of word or expression should be in a given scenario. This misapplication in the use of the semantic relations would also result to wrong grammatical construction in the language. This work, therefore, calls for the need to identify these semantic relations in Tiv and understand their uses and applications to produce very intelligible and pragmatic sentences. The work examines the various possible semantic relations that exist in Tiv language with emphasis on synonymy, antonymy, homonymy and hyponymy. The tendency for wrong choice of words meant for one situation for another is almost inevitable due to lack of mastery in these areas of linguistic domain. The researchers are able to detect these semantic relations and their wrong applications in this work through the researchers' interaction with native speakers using our intuitive knowledge of the language. The work explains the need to educate students and learners of the language on the importance of semantic relations and their appropriate applications in daily discourse. It is also expected that the work will deepen the grammar of the speakers and learners and will further enhance effective communication in the language.

Keywords: Lexico-Semantic Relations, Tiv.

Introduction

Tiv as one of the Bantu group of languages has elements of semantic relations which affects meaning in the language when they are not appropriately used by the speakers. This work therefore, offers an interesting opportunity to describe and account for the lexico-semantic relations that are found in Tiv and their applications in different scenario.

Background to the Study

The study of sense relations in Tiv reveals a lot about the grammar of the people. It exposes a larger number of vocabulary in the language that empower speakers of the language to have proficiency in it. This is because all the sense relations that are found in Tiv will be exposed and the speakers will understand their use and application in order to produce intelligible and pragmatic sentences. This will eliminate the tendency for wrong choice of words meant for one situation for another which is caused by lack of mastery of sense relations in

Tiv.

The name "Tiv" refers to an ethnic and linguistic group found largely in Benue state and other parts of Nasarawa and Taraba states. It also refers to the language spoken by this ethnic group. According to Ngutswen (2013, 2) the word "Tiv" has a Bantu origin which means "a beloved child". Akase (2017, 16) claims that the word Tiv is derived from "Tive" meaning "their name". This means that, it is a name for the Tiv race. It is also the name of the ancestral father of the Tiv nation who had two (2) sons, *Ichôngo* and *Ipusu* who are the main sources of Tiv descents. The Tiv in Benue number about 6.5million people based on the 2006 demographic census data projection in Nigeria. However, this figure is expected to be higher than this by now. The migration history of the Tiv to the Benue valley has different accounts. Makar (1975, 10) maintains that the origin of the Tiv could be traced to the Bantu stock of the southern Africa. They journeyed through the Congo to the south



west region in Manfa division across the mountains of Cameroon to the Benue valley in about the 16th century. Bohannan (1954) argues that Tiv originated from *Swem*, a hilly area in the republic of Cameroon. Many modern scholars on Tiv historiography like Dzurgba (1985), Tseror (1992) have supported the Bantu connection and origin of Tiv. Gbor (1981, 10-11) concludes that linguistics and ethnological similarities have proved that Tiv are part of the Bantu ethnic stock.

Tiv language is a southern Bantu language which has severally been classified as a member of the Benue-Congo family of Niger-Congo phylum (Abraham, 1940, 16). The language is predominantly spoken in Benue state where the Tiv are also a dominant ethnic group. It is one of the minority languages in Nigeria with a rich linguistic history.

Research Problem

There is no preliminary work on semantic relations in Tiv. The absence of any work on this area in the language has created a vacuum in the area that needs attention. The objective of this work is to identify and describe the available lexical sense relations in Tiv. This will avail the speakers and users of the language an opportunity to understand these semantic relations, their use and application to produce meaningful sentences in the language. This will eliminate wrong grammatical constructions or sentences in the language, which are caused by lack of mastery of sense relations in the language.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in a number of ways. It examines the semantic relations in Tiv, an area that is not yet touched by researchers on Tiv language. There is a dearth of information on Tiv especially in the area of semantic relations which contributes greatly to the grammar of the language. This study therefore, is an attempt to fill an existing gap in this regards. At the academic level, it will help other language developers and writers of study materials for learning and teaching of the language at different levels. Finally, the study will add to the existing knowledge in the linguistic literature and create awareness on lexical sense relations in Tiv.

Methodology

The method used in collecting the data for this work was through two (2) principal means: primary and secondary. The primary method involves the gathering of some of the lexical sense relations in Tiv used in this work through the researchers' interaction with the native speakers using their intuitive knowledge of the language. The secondary method of data collection was through copious reading of textbooks and journal articles written by different authors that are related to the topic.

Conceptual and Empirical Review

A number of concepts used in this work require an explication. Such concepts include semantics, semantic relations and Tiv.

Lexico-Semantic Relations

It is very difficult to study the meaning of words comprehensively relying only on their referential or denotative properties without taking into consideration lexico-semantic relations. This is because a large number of words cannot be easily analyzed into meaning components. The meaning of such words can only be analyzed based on the relationship such words maintain with other words. Words may be semantically related with each other because they share certain semantic properties and are grouped together for they are closely related. Some words are however related because they share contrastive semantic features. This kind of relationship is a distant one. The sense of a word therefore, reveals itself through the relations of meaning which the word contracts with other words in the language. It is a semantic procedure of describing a language and characterizing the meaning of a word in terms of its relationship to other words but not in terms of its componential features. Kristin (2010) refers to semantic relations as the "Nyms" which is part of knowing the meaning of a word which includes knowing the semantic relations among words. The "Nyms" here refer to the antonyms, synonyms, homonyms, hyponyms, etc. which help to explain the relationship among words. A number of lexico-semantic relations are found in Tiv language. In this work, we shall discuss a number of lexico-semantic relations that exists in Tiv. They include the following:



Antonymy

These are words that are think of as opposites. They are words or phrases that are opposite with respect to some components of their meaning. For example:

	Tiv	English
1.		
i.	Tér/ngó	father/mother
ii.	Shá/shìn	up/down
iii.	Vá/yém	come/go
iv.	Kú/úmá	death/life
v.	Túgh/sév	night/day

In each of the above pairs, the two (2) words contrast with respect to at least one aspect of their meaning. For instance, the meaning of *tér* “father” and *ngó* “mother” are opposites with respect to gender, although they are alike in other respect (both human). Similarly, *vá* “come” and *yém* “go” are opposite in direction but both of them involve (movement). One of the characteristics of words which are opposite is that, they share all but one of their semantic properties. The semantic property which the words do not share is found in one but absent in another. The implication here is that, words can only be opposite of each other if they are semantically closely related. Other types of antonyms are gradeable, relational and complementary antonyms.

Gradeable Antonyms

Gradeable opposition or antonyms according to Lyons (1977) “involves comparison”. Gradeable antonyms are adjectives while others are not. Gradeable antonyms therefore express degree in various ways, comparative and superlative forms. Examples of gradeable antonyms in Tiv are:

	Tiv	English
2.		
i.	Táv/tìôn	tall/short
ii.	Cùkúú/kèhé	small/big
iii.	Shágbà/ícàn	rich/poor
iv.	Ìkyôr/cín	fat/thin
v.	Kpìshí/kpèghèr	much/small

Relational Antonyms

Relational antonyms are pair of words in which each member describes a relationship to the other. The relationship could be reciprocal, social or bilateral. There is usually an

interdependence of meaning such that membership of one of the pairs presupposes the other. Relational antonyms that are found in Tiv include the following:

	Tiv	English
3.		
i.	Òrmàrén/wán	parent/child
ii.	Ípín/ímlúmùn	question/answer
iii.	Húròr/órhíòm	friend/enemy
iv.	Mtéè/mýám	sale/purchase
v.	Òrtésén/òrhénén	teacher/student

Complementary Antonyms

This is another sub-group of antonyms in Tiv language. Complementary antonyms are the ones that show that if you are one, you cannot be the other. This means that the assertion of one entity implies the denial of the other. Examples of complementary antonyms in Tiv include the following:

	Tiv	English
4.		
i.	Mhíí/mkúr	beginning/ending
ii.	Kú/úmá	death/life
iii.	Sáá/zùámí	lost/found
iv.	Búgh/wùhé	open/close
v.	Nòm/kwásé	husband/wife

Reversives

Most antonyms pairs in Tiv are not one word, meaning the negative of another. It presupposes that when a party engages in one, he loses the other. Some examples of reversives in Tiv include the following:

	Tiv	English
5.		
i.	Kôndú/sèn	ascend/descend
ii.	Lùmùn/vèndá/lùmùngá	agree/disagree
iii.	Nyôr/dùé	enter/exit
iv.	Yúè/áhán	sad/happy
v.	Hégh/tségh	new/old

Synonyms

Synonyms are two (2) or more forms of lexical items with very closely related meanings, which are often but not always intersubstitutable in sentences (Kristin, 2010). They are words that are different in form but similar in meaning. When two (2) or more words have the same meaning, they are said to be synonym. Some examples of synonyms in Tiv include the following:



Moreover, a large number of word relationships enumerated in this study will certainly equip

language students or teachers to effectively learn or teach the language.

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