Grounding in Igbo Grammar: A Cognitive Linguistics Approach

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Grounding is a term used by Radden & Dirven (2007) to refer to the concept of reference. In a bid for speakers of a language to communicate effectively, we try to create the same instance we have in mind in the mind of our co-interlocutors also. This we achieve through 'grounding' the information we intend to pass by the means of referring expressions. This work examines the applicability of this concept to Igbo language data. The data is a radio programme recorderd on the 9th of November from Bliss FM 91.5 titled "Gọọmentị etinyego anya n'ihe gbasara ịpịa ụmụ aka ụtarị n'ụlọ akwụkwọ." The approach adopted is the cognitive linguistics perspective as used by Radden & Dirven (2007). The researcher's decision to use a natural language data among speech interlocutors is in a bid to ascertain if these types of references could be seen in real conversation. The programme consists of 6 speakers designated A-F. While speaker A is the anchor of the programme, speakers B-F are the different callers that participated in the conversation.

The data was analyzed with the aim of discovering if the sixteen (16) types of reference identified by Radden & Dirven's (2007) hypothetical English examples can be applicable to Igbo natural language data. This was however achieved despite the difficulty the researcher faced in analyzing the types of reference in Igbo since there is no one to one correspondence between English and the language under study (Igbo). From the analysis, we have been able to identify the sixteen (16) different types of reference in the Igbo language. It was discovered that even though Radden & Dirven (2007) uses hypothetical data in their description of these types of reference, the types are also obtainable in natural language as can be seen in the analysis.

This work therefore concludes that reference can be grounded in the Igbo language, not just by using referring expressions such as the determiners, demonstratives adjectives and numerals as the other researchers have pointed out, but also through different expressions as classified in the analysis of this work. However, we recommend that there is need for language scholars, precisely linguists to show more interest in the concept of grounding since it is an important aspect of speech communication.

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