SPATIAL DEIXIS IN IBEME DIALECT OF IGBO

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Abstract

The study examines spatial deixis in Ibeme dialect of Igbo and, specifically, the forms of spatial deixis marking and their markers. Introspection featured in data collection as the researcher is a native speaker of the dialect. It is discovered that unlike in standard Igbo, Ibeme Igbo has a unique spatial deixis forms. In Ibeme Igbo, spatial deixis marks [+&- nearness to the speaker] and 'particularity', specialty/emphatic' and 'schematic orientation of an entity. The study also finds that in Ibeme Igbo, *a/e* marks close or nearness to speaker and operates in harmony with the vowel of the nominal while *ri, risi* and *nu/nyo* mark away from speaker in three aspects namely particularity, specialty and schematic orientations respectively. The study concludes that deixis shows interesting and complex variations in dialects of a language.

Keywords: Deixis, Spatial deixis, Dialect, Variation

1. Introduction

Language exhibits variation in some functional areas like phonology, morphology, syntax as well as semantics. In semantics, the notion of deixis is topical. It is held that languages and even varieties of a language exhibit some differences in terms of deixis marking (Emenanjo, 2016) and this is the focus of this study.

The variability of deixis marking and markers across languages and dialects has attracted the attention of scholars and indeed has formed part of the ways of formalizing languages and their varieties. Deixis marking has been studied from different perspectives in the Igbo language (Mbagwu, 2007, Nkamigbo, 2009, Egenti, 2013, Emenanjo, 2015) however; it seems that much research attention has not been on the variations of deixis in the dialects of the Igbo language. This has necessitated this study on deixis marking in Ibeme dialect of the Igbo language.

Ibeme Igbo is a variety of Igbo spoken in Ibeme clan of Obi-Ngwa LGA in Abia State. Nwaozuzu (2008) makes no clear mention of Ibeme in her classification of Igbo dialects (having glossed it over with Ngwa- a major dialect of the SEGD) but the assumption is that by classifying all the dialects spoken in "Obi-Ngwa, Isiala-Ngwa, Ukwa East and West LGAs" (p. 100) as among the South Eastern Group of Dialects (SEGD); Ibeme which is spoken in four vast communities in Obi-Ngwa is part of the SEGD. However, it has been established that Ibeme is a separate dialect. (Onwukwe, Ndimele & Onukawa, 2015).

In presenting data for this study, the tone convention adopted is that of Green & Igwe (1963) where low and step tones are marked leaving high tones unmarked.

2. Deixis in Language

According to Emenanjo (2015:603) "Deixis is the marking of the position or orientation of real-world entities and events with respect to certain points of reference, backward or forward, in terms of person, space, and time, in discourse. Levinson (1995:12) observes as follows:

"Deixis is an important field studied in pragmatics, semantics and linguistics. Deixis refers to the phenomenon wherein understanding the meaning of certain words and phrases in an utterance requires contextual information. Words or phrases that require contextual information to convey any meaning

are deictic"; and furthermore, Deixis concerns the ways in which languages encode ... features of the context of utterance ... and thus also concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterance depends on the analysis of that context of utterance."

Dylgjeri and Kazazi (2013:88) observe that

"Deixis does not only have the function of a grammatical constituent, but it has the duty to point out the different meaning the words have even in cases they are used in the same way in different situations. Traditional grammar does not have the ability or the resources to show the difference in such cases. The timing place, message bearers have their importance in the communicating process. On the other hand, modern linguistics has a different approach. Pragmatics, analyzing the words and the language terms in the situational terms, related to the context cultural, temporal, spatial, social and so on of the participants in the communicating process (dictionary reference), makes it easier to have a better view of the thought that is being transmitted."

The scholars further hold that deixis has a place in semantics, pragmatics and linguistics. Deixis is reference by means of an expression whose interpretation is relative to the (usually) extra linguistic context of the utterance, such as: who is speaking, the time or place of speaking, the gestures of the speaker, or the current location in the discourse.

Deixis is "the single most obvious way in which the relationship between language and context is reflected" (Levinson, 1983:53), constituting "key points of juncture between grammar and context" (Hanks, 1992: 47). Deixis concerns the ways in which languages express features of the context of utterance or speech event in a different way. It concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterance depends on the analysis of that context of utterance. Deictic information is important for the interpretation of utterance. If semantics is taken to include all conventional aspects of meaning, then perhaps most deictic phenomena are probably considered semantic in Levinson's point of view (1995:34), but deixis belongs to the domain of pragmatics, because it directly concerns the relationship between the structure of languages and the contexts in which they are used.

According to Huddleston & Pullum (2006) "The term deixis applies to the use of expressions in which the meaning can be traced directly to features of the act of utterance--when and where it takes place, and who is involved as speaker and as addressee." They present the example that, *now* and *here* are used deictically to refer respectively to the time and place of the utterance. Similarly, *this country* is likely to be interpreted deictically as the country in which the utterance takes place. Several of pronouns are predominantly used deictically, with *I* and '*we*' referring to the speaker and a group including the speaker, *you* to the addressee(s) or a set including the addressee(s)." From these observation, we understand that deixis is the marking of the orientation or position of entities and events with respect to certain points of reference.

As we said above, deixis belongs to the domain of pragmatics. In this domain, according to Levinson (1995:34), deixis is collectively the orientation features of human languages to have reference to specific points in time, space, and the speaking event between interlocutors. A word that depends on deictic clues is called a deictic or a deictic word. Deictic words are bound to a context, either a linguistic or extra linguistic context for their interpretation.

3. Theoretical Background

The theoretical orientations that underlie this study are the Deixis theory and Principles and Parameters Theory. While the Deixis theory provides explanations for the concept of deixis, the Principle and Parameters theory of Universal Grammar (UG) explains the variation aspect of deixis in a language. The choice is informed by

the fact that in some languages deixis can be grammaticalized as it equally can be lexicalized in others (Levinson, 1983).

Deixis theory was propounded by Levinson in (1995). Below are four instances of the proposal made by Levinson (1995).

A. Person Deixis

In many languages, person deixis can also contain other meaning elements like the gender of the third person. In addition, to pronoun and agreeing predicates, person, or participant-role is marked in various other ways. Person deixis concerns with the encoding of the role of participants in the speech even in which the utterance in question is delivered. Yule (1996, p.9-10) describe that person deixis involves the speaker and the addressee and operates in a basic three-part division they are: a) First person (I): The first person deixis is a reference that refers to the speaker or both speaker and referent grouped with the speaker which is expressed in singular pronouns (I, me, myself, mine) and plural pronouns (we, us, ourselves, our, ours). The first person deixis can be divided into exclusive first person deixix, which refers to a group including addressee.
b) The second person (you): The second person deixis is a deitic reference to a person or persons identified as addressee, such as you, yourself, yourselves, your, yours.
c) And the third person (He, She, It): Third person deixis is a deictic reference to a referent(s) not identified as the speaker or addressee and usually imply to the gender that the utterance refers to, for example: he, she, and they, him, himself, her, herself. In other words, person deixis is described as expression in which to refer to person who the speakers intend to refer.

B. Place Deixis

This is also described as spatial deixis, where the relative location of people and things is being indicated. Place deixis or Spatial deixis usually expressed in this, these, there, here, that, and those. Place deixis can be described along many of the same parameters that apply to the time deixis. Therefore, those references to place can be absolute or relational in nature. Absolute references to place locate an object or person in a specific longitude and latitude, while relational references locate people and place in terms of each other and the speaker (Cummings 2005).

Levinson (1983) cited in (http://awinlanguage.blogspot.com/2012/04/time-deixis.html)states that place or Space deixis concerns for the specification of locations to anchorage points in the speech event and typically the speaker, and there are two basic ways of referring objects by describing or naming them on the one hand and by locating them on the other. Alternatively, they can be deictically specified to the location of participants at the time of speaking. There are a proximal (close to the speaker) such as this, and these, and a distal (sometime close to the addressee) such as that, and those. Each may be used either as a pronoun or in a combination with noun. Grundy (2000) adds that there are three degrees of proximity is by no means uncommon, with some languages distinguishing proximity to the speaker and to the addressee. They are: here (proximal), there (distal), where (and the archaic hither, hence, thither, thence, wither, whence), left, right, up, down, above, below, in front, behind, come go, bring, and take.

C. Time Deixis

This is also called temporal deixis. Renkema (1993) cited in (http://awinlanguage.blogspot.com/2012/04/time-deixis.html) states that time deixis is a reference to time relative to a temporal reference point, and it is typically the moment of utterance. These language resources are the adjectives of time in the line….yesterday….now….tomorrow, and the verb tenses. The verb sometimes also has another function besides referring to a specific time.

Furthermore, Levinson (1993) says that the basis for systems of reckoning and measuring time in most languages seem to be the natural and prominent cycles of day and night, lunar months, season and years. While, Grundy (2000) states another

important time deixis is tense system. In fact, almost every sentence makes reference to an event time. Often this event time can only be determined in relation to the time of the utterance.

The deitic items use reference that can only be determined in relation to the time of the utterance in which they occur. Such as:
• This / last / next Monday/week/month/year.
•Now, then, ago, later, soon, before.
•Yesterday, today, tomorrow.
In other words, time deixis is an expression in relation to point to certain period when the utterances produced by the speaker.

The Principles and Parameters theory evolved in the late 1970s and early 1980s when Chomsky and others developed a better solution using a theoretical framework known as "principles and parameters" (P&P), which Chomksy introduced in *Lectures on Government and Binding* (1981) and elaborated in *Knowledge of Language* (1986). Principles are linguistic universals, or structural features that are common to all natural languages; hence, they are part of the child's native endowment. Parameters, also native (though not necessarily specific to language, perhaps figuring elsewhere too), are options that allow for variation in linguistic structure. The P&P approach assumed that these options are readily set upon the child's exposure to a minimal amount of linguistic data, a hypothesis that has been supported by empirical evidence (https://www.britannica.com/biography/Noam-Chomsky#ref1049045). In relation to this study, we observe that deixis marking in Igbo language constitute the principles of deixis while the parameters or variation aspects refer to its operation in Ibeme dialect of the Igbo language. This underscores the discussion of Standard Igbo, the principles of which the dialect discussed forms the parameter.

4. Briefs on Deixis Marking in the Igbo Language

Studies have identified personal, spatial and temporal deixis in the Igbo language (Emenanjo, 1978, Nkamigbo, 2009, Egenti, 2013, Emenanjo, 2015). For the personal deixis, the Igbo language uses the category pronouns such as first, second and third to point at persons. The Igbo pronouns identified by Emenanjo (1978) are
1.
(i)   e/a…m (m..mmu)
(ii)   i/ị….(gi)
(iii)   o/ọ (ya)
The above examples are the first, second and third person singular subject forms respectively while the plural forms are *anyi, unu,* and *e/a—ha*. He further classified the subject forms as: dependent or independent, definite or indefinite. The ones in parenthesis in addition to all the plural subject forms are the independent ones. The independent ones are said to be definite while the *e/a* are said to be impersonal and indefinite category of person and it is usually singular. Emenanjo (1978:64) holds that Igbo pronouns could be used in inclusive and exclusive sense. In order to realize the inclusive and exclusive sense, the enclitic *nwa* is added after the independent pronoun form *anyi.* He provides the following examples:
2. (a) *Anyi nii ne* **'we all" (Speaker + Listener) =Inclusive**
   (b) *Anyi nwa* **'we ourselves' (Excludes the Listener) = Exclusive**
He further submits that when the phrase '*onwe x*' (where x is the number) is used after independent forms such as *mmu, ngi, ya, anyi, unu* and *ha*, it is exclusive as in the following examples:
3. (a) *mmuo nwe m* **"I myself"**
   (b) *Ngịo nwegi* **"You (sg) yourself"**
   (c) *Anyio nweanyi* **"We ourselves"**
In terms of personal deixis, it is held (Egenti, 2013) that unlike the English which uses the second person singular pronoun 'you' deictically and non-deictically, the Igbo rather uses the impersonal pronoun non-deictically to point to things and persons in the generic sense i.e. without pointing at anything specifically. Also, the third person

singular pronoun o/ọ can be used to refer to the second person while the first person plural pronoun *anyi,* is used in inclusive and exclusive sense in greeting exchanges as a way of identifying the addressee.

For spatial deixis, Emenanjo (2015) holds that it is marked in Igbo using demonstratives such as *a* (this-close to speaker), *ahu* (that-away from the speaker), adverbial phrases such as *ebe a* (here), *Ebe ahu* (there), directional verbs such as *–pụ/-la* 'go' and *bia* 'come' as well as extensional suffixes like *–ta/-te* (towards speaker) and rV (towards a beneficiary who could include the speaker). Emenanjo (2015) observes that the Igbo mark temporal deixis using such expressions that refer to time such as yesterday (*Unyaahu*), today (*taa),* etc.

5. Spatial Deixis in Ibeme Dialect of Igbo

Spatial Deixis marking exhibits complex variations in Ibeme dialect of Igbo language as well as some similarities with the standard Igbo language. We identified that like Igbo, Ibeme Igbo exhibits spatial, personal and temporal deixis. We focused on the variations in spatial deixis marking in Ibeme Igbo.

5.1 Spatial Deixis Marking in Ibeme Igbo

Ibeme Igbo exhibits a unique and interesting spatial deixis marking. The unique feature of spatial deixis marking shows both in the marking process and markers. We have identified the demonstratives feature in spatial deixis marking and with three aspects of reference. These three aspects are particular, emphatic and schematic reference of an entity.

Demonstratives:

These can mark an entity close or away from the speaker. We start with close to the speaker.

1 (a) Close to the speaker:

Ibeme Igbo uses such demonstratives such as *e/a* 'this' to mark spatial deixis when referring to an entity that is 'close to the speaker' unlike the Igbo where *e* deixis marker is used for the same purpose. The alternation is as a result of the fact that Ibeme is highly harmonic. The *e/a* is harmonic with the vowel of the noun/nominal as can be seen in the example below:

4.   **(a) *Emeka tì ngweyi èˋ***
Emeka verb cloth/dress this
"Emeka is wearing this cloth/dress"

(b*) Eze yàà lì ute èˋ*
Eze verb Prep.Mat this
"Eze is lying on this mat"

(c) Ada nweˋncha aˋ
Ada verb Soap this
"Ada owns this soap"

(d)Ọ zàrì ụlọ aˋ
He/she verb-Assertive house this
"He/She swept this house"

In the examples in 4 (a-b), the demonstrative *'e'* referring to 'close to the speaker' harmonizes with the vowel of the nouns (*Ngweyi and Ute*) while the changes to *'a'* in harmony with the vowel of the nouns (*ncha, ulọ*) in (c-d).

1 (b) Away from the speaker

However, when referring to an entity away from the speaker, unlike in Igbo where the demonstrative is *ahu* (away from the speaker), Ibeme Igbo refers to three aspects of personal deixis of an entity away from the speaker and these markers and markings are:

1b (i) Particular reference away from the speaker
  This is marked in Ibeme Igbo using the marker *(ri)* "that particular". Consider the following examples:
   5 **(a)** ***Eze bì lì ụlọ̀ a ri***
   Eze verb Prep house Demonstrative that *particular*
   "Eze is leaving in that particular house"
   (b) ***Ada gàrì lì ụlọ̀ a ri***
   Ada verb+Assertive Prep house Demonstrative that *particular*
   "Ada went into that particular house"
   (c) ***Ada gwèrì ego e ri***
   Ada verb+Assertive money demonstrative that particular
   "Ada took that particular money"
   (d) ***O tì ̀ngweyi e ri***
   He/she verb cloth demonstrative that *particular*
   "He/she is wearing that particular cloth"

From the examples in 5 (a-d), it is evident that the particular reference marking of an entity is achieved by a combination of the harmonic demonstrative (a/e) and the particular reference marker (*ri*). It suggests that 'Particularity' in the sense it is used in Ibeme Igbo is such that the interlocutors have physical knowledge of an entity under reference.

1b (ii) Special/ Emphatic reference away from the speaker
 This is marked in Ibeme Igbo using the marker (*risi*) "that very one". We show this with the following examples:
   6 (a) ***Eze bì lì ụlọ à risi***
   Eze verb Prep house Demonstrative that *very*
   "Eze is leaving in that very house"
   (b) ***Ada gwèrì ego è risi***
   Ada verb+Assertive money demonstrative that *very*
   "Ada took that very money"

From the examples above, the harmonic demonstrative and the emphatic deixis referencing operates together. 'Emphasis' in referencing in Ibeme Igbo depicts a situation whereby among two or more entities, one is under reference for not having similar feature(s) with other entities for which it is emphasized and that very one is known by interlocutors.

1b (iii) Shared or schematic reference away from the speaker
  This is marked using the marker *nu* or *nyọ* depending on the speaker. Consider the following examples:

   7 (a) ***Eze bì lì ụlọ̀ nụ̀/nyọ̀***
   Eze verb Prep house Demonstrative that *schematic*
   "Eze is leaving in that (schematically-referenced) house"
   (b) ***O tì ̀ngweyi nụ/nyọ̀***
   He/she verb cloth demonstrative that *schematic*
   "He/she is wearing that (schematically-referenced) cloth"
The examples in 7 (a-b) show that marking an entity under 'Shared' or 'Schemata' reference in Ibeme Igbo involves the marker –*nụ* which has *nyọ* as a variant; often in the speech of the aged in Ibeme Igbo. It could be analyzed as linguistic correlate of age differentiation. The –*nụ/nyọ* marking is schematic or associated with schemata knowledge where the entity under reference may not be physically seen by the interlocutors but is made reference to based on understanding or sharing of knowledge

on the entity. In that case, the third party in such conversation would not be able to understand the entity both the speaker and receiver reference.

These forms of spatial deixis marking lend credence to the fact that deixis is basically domiciled within pragmatics than semantics or any other areas. The three aspects of referencing away from the speaker are all contextually and indeed pragmatically indentified.

6.0 Summary and Conclusion

We have provided insights into the variation of deixis marking in dialects of a language using Ibeme dialect of the Igbo language while focusing on spatial deixis. We profiled the spatial dexis marking in standard Igbo as principles from where we drew some variations as parameters of deixis marking in language. This underscored the choice of the theory of Principles and Parameters to account for this study. While focusing on points of variations, In standard Igbo, we alluded to Emenanjo,(2015) that spatial deixis is achieved using some processes such as "demonstratives, adverbial phrases, and extensional suffixes". However, in Ibeme dialect of Igbo which is in the South Eastern Group of Igbo dialects, spatial dexis is seen to vary in marking place using demonstratives that refer to entities both close and away from a speaker. In terms of close to the speaker, the marking is achieved by harmonic demonstratives *a/e* unlike '*a*' which is obtainable in standard Igbo. The demonstrative harmonizes with the vowel of the nominal it deictically refers. The variation is more pronounced in that Ibeme has three aspects of referencing an entity away from speaker thus: particularity, emphatic and schematic referencing of an entity with different markers. For particularity, we observed the marker (*ri*), for emphatic, we have the marker (*risi*) while (*nụ/nyọ*) is used for schematic referencing of an entity away from the speaker. The study concludes that deixis generally is better seen to be within pragmatics than semantics as often debated in some circles. The three aspects of spatial deixis marking away from a speaker in Ibeme Igbo are all pragmatically referenced than semantically identified.

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