

Synonyms in Igbo Language

Thecla Obiora

Abstract

Synonym is a semantic concept of sense relation that depicts sameness of meaning. Different phonologically realised items or different lexical nomenclatures that refer to one and the same thing are tagged synonyms. They are synonymous because they are similar in meaning. Most linguists and grammarians are of the opinion that there are no true or complete synonym in all the natural language. The issue of synonyms poses a major problem to second language learners. This research work investigates how true this general assumption is in the Standard Igbo language dialect and how to help the language learners. The work is divided into four sections. The first section examines what different authors say about the concept 'synonym', section two unveils different tests for synonyms, the third section is the list of most of the synonyms in Igbo language and the test for the validity or authenticity of the lexical items considered to be synonyms, then the conclusion. This academic exercise would be beneficial to all language scholars, linguists, language learners and lexicographers.

Introduction

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 called synonymy. The word comes from Ancient Greek *syn* ('with') and *onoma* ('name'). The word *car* and *automobile* are synonyms. Similarly, in *long time* and *extended time*, *long* and *extended* become synonyms. In the figurative sense, two words are often said to be synonymous if they have the same connotation.

Synonyms can be any part of speech (example, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions) as long as both members of the pair are the same part of speech. It is important to note that synonyms are defined with respect to certain senses of words, for instance, a *pupil* as the 'aperture in the iris of the eye' is not synonymous with 'student'. Similarly, *he expired* means the same as *he died*, yet *my passport has expired* cannot be replaced by *my passport has died*. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>).

This work is segmented into looking at what synonym is all about, different types of synonym, general assumption about synonyms, criteria for testing real synonyms, a compiled list of Igbo synonyms, the finding and the conclusion among others.

The methodology for collection of data was mainly through observation. This was done through day to day observation of the native speakers dictions during interpersonal and intrapersonal communications.

The Concept of Synonym

Synonym is one of the most basic tools of lexical semantics. Others are hyponym, gradable and non gradable antonymy, converseness, polysemy, homonymy and metaphorical extension. Lexical semantics is primarily concerned with discovering relationships in the lexicon of languages. They are basic because one type cannot be characterized in terms of another type. Finegan (2004:193)

Bussmann (1996) describes synonymy as semantic relation of sameness or (strong) similarity in meaning of two or more linguistic expressions. In lexicology, grammar, or stylistics it is a term whose interpretations are as varied as the semantic theories in which it is found.

Synonym is therefore, a very important ingredient of grammar. Let us now look at its definition by different grammarians and authors.

If two expressions have the same denotation, then they have the same meaning (synonymy). Synonym refers to words with the same or nearly the same meaning eg pail, bucket. Synonyms are different phonological words which have the same or very similar meanings; some examples might be the pairs below- large/ big, and couch/ sofa, boy/ lad, lawyer/ attorney, toilet/ lavatory (Fromkin, et al 2003; Akmajian, 2006; Saeed, 2007).

In his own view, 'synonym' is seen by Yule (1996:118) as two or more forms with very closely related meanings, which are often, but not always, intersubstitutable in sentences. Examples of synonyms are the pairs broad-wide, hide-conceal, almost- nearly, cab-taxi, liberty- freedom, answer- reply.

Synonymy for example is defined by logicians as mutual entailment, so by definition a characterisation of meaning in terms of truth condition will guarantee that when two sentences have identical truth conditions, they will mean the same.

Synonym- in the strictest sense is a word or expression that has the same meaning as another word or expression. In the case of referential words, synonyms have the same referent. For example, 'morning star' and 'level star' are synonyms because they both refer to the planet Venus. In the broadest sense, any words that have overlapping meanings are said to be synonyms example, acquire, get, obtain, receive etc. (Kempson, 1977; Bussmann 1996:470).

Synonymy according to Crystal (1987:105) is the relationship of meaning example king/royal/regal, pavement/sidewalk, youth/youngster. The search for synonyms is a longstanding pedagogical exercise, but it is as well to remember that lexemes rarely (if ever) have exactly the same meaning. There are usually stylistic, regional, emotional, or other differences to consider. And context must be taken into account. Two lexemes might be synonymous in one sentence but different in another: 'range' and 'selection' are synonyms in 'what a nice---- of furnishings but not in 'There's the mountain-----'.

All the above definitions are pointing at one thing. Thus, synonym can be said to mean sameness of meaning, when different phonologically realised words, words with different etymology are referring to or interpreted as one thing, they are said to be synonymous.

Synonyms: An Overview

The degree of semantic similarity between words depends largely on the number of semantic properties they share. 'Sofa' and 'couch' refer to the same type of object and share most of their semantic properties. There are words that are neither synonyms nor near synonyms- yet have many semantic properties in common. 'Man and boy' both refer to male humans; the meaning of 'boy' includes the traditional semantic property of 'youth whereby it differs from the meaning of 'man' (Fromkin et al 2003:181)

When synonyms occur in otherwise identical sentence, the sentences are paraphrases; that is they have the same meaning (except possibly for minor differences in emphasis) for example 'She forgot her handbag', she forgot her purse. (Fromkin et al 2003:182)

Two words are said to be synonymous if they mean the same thing. The terms movie, film, flick and motion picture 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 a referent of 'B' and vice versa. For example, if every movie is a film and every film is a movie, the terms movie is a film and every film is a movie, the terms movie and film are synonymous. The vice versa is important: without it, we could be defining hyponymy. (Finegan 2004:192)

You are too young to drink
You are not old enough to drink.

The sentences basically 'say the same thing' in that the first describes exactly what the second describes. We say they are synonymous sentences, or that they paraphrase each other (Finegan 2004). When we assert that two terms are synonymous, we usually base the judgement on linguistic meaning only. Thus, even though movie, film, flick and motion picture have the same linguistic meaning, they differ in social and effective meaning. Thus, we can consider the terms to be synonymous if we specify that we are taking only linguistic meaning into account. At the social and affective levels, however, they are not synonymous. (Finegan 2004:191-192)

As Palmer (1981) notes, the synonyms often have different distributions along a number of parameters. They may have belonged to different dialects and then become synonyms for speakers familiar with both dialects like Irish English 'press' and British English 'cupboard'. Or the words may belong to different 'registers' those styles of language, colloquial, formal, literary etc.; that belong to different situations. Thus, 'wife' or 'spouse' is more formal than 'old lady' or 'missus'.

Saeed (2007) says, we might compare the synonymous pairs,
A big house: a large house
A big sister: my large sister

Saeed illustrates 'A' is synonymous with 'B'. 'A' has the same meaning as 'B'

Composite truth table for synonymy

P	q
T -	T
F -	F
T -	T
F -	F

This table simply says, of course, that 'P and q' always have the same truth value, that is if 'P' describes a situation so will 'q', vice versa, while if either incorrectly describes a situation so will the other. We can see this is true for examples, like:

Alice owns this book

This book belongs to Alice

We could give a logical definition of synonyms as in : p and q are synonymous when the expression

$P = q$ is always true (Saeed 2007: 87- 115)

Akmajan et al (2006:238) point out that 'Not only do words have meaning properties (such as ambiguity, or having a meaning), they also bear various meaning relations to one another. Just as words can be related morphological (eg. by word formation rules such as the -able rule), so they can also be related semantically, and words related by virtue of meaning from subgroups within the lexicon of a language. For example, one central meaning relation is synonymy, 'sameness of meaning or "paraphrase".'

Among the meaning properties and relations of words and phrases that carry over to sentences are ambiguity and synonymy (paraphrase) eg. of synonymy,

His pants were too small

His pants were not big enough

Lyons (1981:118) asserts that meaning can be descriptive, expressive and social and many lexemes combine two of these or all three. If synonymy is defined as identity of meaning, then lexemes can be said to be completely synonymous (in a certain range of contexts) if and only if they have the same descriptive, expressive and social meaning (in the range of context in question). They may be described as 'absolute synonymous if and only if they have the same distribution and are completely synonymous in all their meanings and in all their contexts of occurrence.'

Palmer (1981:88) states that synonymy is used to mean 'sameness of meaning'. It is obvious that for the dictionary- marker many sets of words have the same meaning: they are synonymous, or are synonyms of one another of course, dictionaries seldom rely solely on synonymy, but add descriptive details to enlighten the reader. We can, in fact, define synonymy as symmetric hyponymy.

Sometimes, words that are ordinarily opposites can mean the same thing in certain contexts; thus, a 'good' scare is the same as a 'bad' scare, and a 'fat' chance is about as likely as a 'slim' chance.

Quine (1953) in Kempson (1977:30) says ... “the terms analytic truth, meaning, definition and synonymy, are interdefinable and that in consequence any proposed explanation of one term by means of the others is circular, and an essentially empty exercise. So if we propose to explain synonymy in terms of meaning and meaning in terms of analytic truth, then it is essential that analytic truth be explained in terms of some independent construct if the explanation of meaning is to have any context at all.”

Types of Synonyms

Lyons (1981:118) outlined some types of synonymy when he says-

If synonymy is defined as identity of meaning, then lexemes can be said to be completely synonymous (in certain range of contexts) if and only if they have the same descriptive, expressive and social meaning (in the range of context in question). They may be described as ‘absolute synonymous if and only if they have the same distribution and are completely synonymous in all their meanings and in all their contexts of occurrence. Incomplete synonymy is by no means rare. In particular- and this is perhaps the only such case of identity of one kind of meaning, but not of others, that is clearly and usefully recognizable as such- lexemes may be descriptively synonymous without having the same expression or social meaning. Descriptive synonymy (commonly called cognitive or referential synonymy) is what many semanticists would regard as synonymy properly so called. Examples of descriptive synonyms in English are: father, dad, daddy, pop etc. ; lavatory, toilet, loo, WC etc. He says that instead of saying that two lexemes are (descriptively) synonymous because each has such and such a sense and the two senses happen to be identical, they would say that the synonymy of lexemes is part of their sense.

Assumption about Synonyms

There is this general assumption by grammarians that synonymy is rare in natural language; that it is very difficult if not impossible to have complete synonymy.

Fromkin et al (2003:181) state that it has been said that there are no perfect synonyms- that is, no two words ever have exactly the same meaning.

Giving examples of synonyms as large/ big, couch/ sofa, boy/ lad etc. Saeed (2007:65) adds that “Even these few examples show that true or exact synonyms are very rare”

Lyons (1981:118) re-echoes that it is generally recognised that complete synonymy of lexemes is relatively rare in natural languages and that absolute synonymy, as it is here defined is almost non-existent.

Even Yule (1996:118) adds, It should be noted that the idea of ‘sameness of meaning’ used in discussing synonymy is not necessarily ‘total sameness’. There are many occasions when one word is appropriate in a sentence, but its synonymy could be odd.

For Finegan (2004:192), in fact, there are very few true synonyms in the lexicon. More often than not, terms that appear to be synonymous have different social and effective connotations. Even if we restrict meaning to linguistic meaning, and words that appear synonymous at first glance often refer to slightly different sets of concepts or are used in different situation.

Palmer (1981:89) avers that it can, however, be maintained that there are no real synonyms, that no two words have exactly the same meaning. Indeed it would seem unlikely that two words with exactly the same meaning would both survive in a language.

Reasons for no Real Synonyms

Some languages due to historical factors have different synonyms. Palmer (1981:88) observes that it has often been suggested that English is particularly rich in synonyms for historical reasons that its vocabulary has come from different sources, from Anglo-Saxon, on the one hand, and from French, Latin and Greek on the other.

He further outlined reasons for no real synonyms in natural languages... and says, if we look at possible synonyms there are at least five ways in which they can be seen to differ.

First, some sets of synonyms belong to different dialects of the language. It is simply a matter of people speaking different forms of the language having different vocabulary terms.

Secondly, there is a similar situation, but a more problematic one, with the words that are used in different styles, eg. 'A nasty smell' might be, in the appropriate setting, 'an obnoxious effluvium' or 'an 'orrible stink'. The former is of course, jocularly very 'posh', and the latter colloquial.

Thirdly, some words may be said to differ only in their emotive or evaluative meanings. The remainder of their meaning, their 'cognitive' meaning remains the same. Words may have different emotive meanings in different societies. On the whole 'liberal' is a 'good' word in Great Britain but it is a 'bad' word in South Africa, and in some political circles in the United States.

Fourthly, some words are collocationally restricted, that is they occur only in conjunction with other words. Thus, 'rancid' occur with 'bacon or butter' addled with 'eggs' or 'brain'. This does not seem to be a matter of their meaning but of the company they keep.

Fifthly, it is obviously the case that many words are close in meaning or that their meanings overlap. There is, that is, to say, a loose of synonymy. This is the kind of synonymy that is exploited by the dictionary- marker. For the word 'mature' (adjective) for instance, possible synonyms are adult, ripe, perfect, due. For 'govern' we may suggest direct, control, determine, require, etc. If we look for the synonyms for each of these words themselves, we shall have a further set for each and shall, of course, get further and further away from the meaning of the original word.

Criteria for Testing Synonyms

It would be useful if we had some ways of testing synonymy.

One way, perhaps, is substitution- Substituting one word for another. It has been suggested that true or total 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 that '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; it will merely indicate collocational possibilities, and these do not seem necessarily to be always closely related to nearness of meaning.

Another possibility is to investigate the 'opposite' (the antonyms). 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 treating them as synonyms.

The adjectives 'fast, quick and rapid' may be used interchangeably in reference to someone's running speed, but a fast talker (a slippery or deceptive person) is different from a 'quick talker', some people live lives in the 'fast lane' not the 'rapid lane' and quick is the most appropriate term to describe a mind or a glance, while 'rapid' is the usual term when reference is made to a person's 'stride' especially metaphorical strides, as in learning to type or do mathematics. Under the circumstances, is it accurate to say that these adjectives are synonymous? (Finegan 2004:192)

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

Paradigmatically related units are not necessarily different in meaning, however, the selection of one lexeme rather than another may have no effect upon the message that is transmitted. In this case, we can say that the intersubstitutable lexemes are complete synonymous. The selection of one rather than another may change the social or expressive meaning of the utterance but hold constant its descriptive meaning (if it has descriptive meaning) : in which case, we can say that the inter- substitutable lexemes are descriptively synonymous (that is they have the same sense)

Palmer (1981:67) adds, "Paradigmatic relations are those into which a linguistic unit enters through being contrasted or substitutable, in a particular environment, with other similar units."

Importance/ effect of Synonym

Synonyms are very important in all languages because they help to increase the vocabularies of the language. They are of paramount importance of lexicographer. Synonyms add flavour to utterances as they spice the speech events because variety they said is spice of life. They make language to be dynamic instead of static because the linguistic situation can be presented in different ways. On the other hand synonyms create problems for a second language learner as he has not mastered the language.

The use of synonyms create lexical paraphrase, just as the use of homonyms creates lexical ambiguity- (Fromkim et al 2003:182)

Finegan (2004:193) notes that “although true synonym is rare, the notion is useful because it helps describe similarities between the meanings of different terms in the lexicon-”

Saeed (2007:65) states that “the synonyms may portray positive or negative attitudes of the speaker: for example naive or gullible seem more critical than ingenious”

Synonym is a tasty ingredient of language. It helps both the native speakers and language learning to have competence of the language.

Synonyms in Igbo Language

The general assumption that there are no true synonyms in a natural language seems to be an overstatement or rather does not always apply to all languages because investigations have shown that there are some true, complete and absolute synonyms in Igbo language. Some of the under listed linguistic items assumed to be synonyms in Igbo language are tested using the yardstick formulated by Palmer (1981), that is substitution and oppositeness. Some of them are as follows:

Synonymous lexemes in Igbo language	English equivalents
Mkpo□ro□ / nga (noun)	Prison
Uwe / akwa (noun)	Clothes
Ekpem / kalama / ololo (noun)	Bottle
U□gha / asi□ (noun)	Lie
U□sa / azi□za (noun)	Answer
Mmehie / njo□ (noun)	Sin
Omume / agwa (noun)	Character
Ugegbe / enyo (noun)	Mirror
O□gbako□ / nzuko□ (noun)	Meeting
Uhuruchi / mgbede (noun)	Evening
Isimkpe / ajadu□ (noun)	Widow
Oyibo / bekee (noun)	English
O□chi□ / amu□ (noun)	Laughter
Abu□ / mbem / ukwe (noun)	Poem
Agbu□ru□ / ebo (noun)	Tribe
Enyi / o□yi□ (noun)	Friend
Atu□matu□ / amu□ma (noun)	Programme
Alaka / ngalaba (noun)	Branch
Ubi / ugbo (noun)	Farm
Onyendu / onyeisi (noun)	Leader
Ebumnuche / ebumnobi (noun)	Objective
Agha / o□gu□ (noun)	War
Itoolu / iteghete / itenani□(noun)	Nine
Be / u□lo□ (noun)	House

U□jo□ / egwu (noun)	Fear
Abali□ / uchichi (noun)	Night
Izizi / mbu□ (noun)	First
Aku□pe / nkucha (noun)	Fan
O□miko / ebere (noun)	Mercy
Nso□pu□ru□ / ugwu (noun)	Respect
Ikpe / nko□cha (noun)	Criticize
O□dachi / mberede (noun)	Accident
Iberibe / nzuzu (noun)	Fool
Mkpo□tu□ / u□zu□ (noun)	Noise
O□gbo□ / ebiri (noun)	Peer
Mmee / o□bara (noun)	Blood
Mpako / ngala (noun)	Pride
Igbe / akpati□ (noun)	Box
Mgbi□ri□gba, atañu□ (noun)	Bell
U□kwu□ / o□kpa (noun)	Leg
Dum / niile (quantifier)	All
Gbasara / banyere (preposition)	About
Oge / mgbe (adverb)	When
O□si□i□so□ / o□so□o□so□ / ngwangwa (adverb)	Quickly
Si□ri□ / kwuru (verb)	Said
Je / ga (verb)	Go
Njedewe/ nkwo□si□□□□ / mmechi (verbal noun)	End
Mbido / mmalite (verbal noun)	Start
Nkenke / mkpu□mkpu□ (nominal modifier)	Short
Ike / ume	Strength
Inyom/ nwaanyi	Woman

Test for Igbo Synonyms

Obi gara u□lo□ *mkpo□ro□*

Obi gara u□lo□ *nga*

Mmanya di□ *n'ekpem*

Mmanya di□ *na kalama*

Mmanya di□ *n'ololo*

Ada bu□ onye u□*gha*

Ada bu□ onye *asi□*

U□*sa* o nyere di□ *mma*

Azi□*za* o nyere di□ *mma*

Anyi□ bu□ ndi□ *mmehie*
Anyi□ bu□ ndi□ *njo*□

Omume ya amaka
Agwa ya amaka

O nwere *ugegbe*
O nwere *enyo*

O□ *gbako*□ ahu□ malitere n'□ u□ tu□ tu□
Nzuko□ ahu□ malitere n'□ u□ tu□ tu□

Ha bi□ ara n'□ *uhuruchi*
Ha bi□ ara na *mgbede*

Onye *isimkpe* di□□ mma imere ebere
Onye *ajadu*□ di□ mma imere ebere

Onyenkuzi anyi□ na-asu□ *oyibo*
Onyenkuzi anyi□ na-asu□ *bekee*

O□ *chi*□ na-ato□ u□ mu□ akwu□ kwo□
Amu□ na-ato□□ u□ mu□ akwu□ kwo□

*Ha kwere *ukwe*

*Ha bu□□ ru□ *abu*□

*Ha mara *mbem*

(It is true that *ukwe*, *abu*, *mbem* are synonymous but they cannot be used interchangeably in the about context to get something like 'Ha kwere abu', 'Ha bxxr ukwe' or 'Ha mara abx' things like that. So, they are not true synonyms.

Onye nzo□ pu□ ta si n'□ *ebo* Ju□ da
Onye nzo□ pu□ ta si n'□ *agbu*□ ru□ Ju□ da

Eze na Emeka bu□ ezi *enyi*
Eze na Emeka bu□ ezi *oyi*

Atu□ *matu*□ o wepu□ tara di□ mma
Amu□ *ma* o wepu□ tara di□ mma

Asu□ su□ nwere *alaka* di□ icheiche
Asu□ su□ nwere *ngalaba* di□ icheiche

Anyi□ ma ako□ *ugbo*
Anyi□ ma ako□ *ubi*

Onyendu □ anyi □ abi □ aghi □ □ □
Onyeisi anyi □ abi □ aghi □

Ebumnuche ya emezuola
Ebumnobi ya emezuola

O □ *gu* □ kpu □ o □ ku □ n' □ o □ nu □ na-ada na mba Izreel
Agha kpu □ o □ ku □ n' □ o □ nu □ na-ada na mba Izreel

In another context like 'Obi na Eze na-alu qgx' cannot very correct to say *'Obi na Eze na-alu agha'. Therefore, 'agha' and 'qgx' are not true synonyms. The different has to do with degree and intensity of the action. 'Agha' has more violent than 'qgx'.

Ngozi mu □ ru □ u □ mu □ *itoolu*
 Ngozi mu □ ru □ u □ mu □ *iteghete*
 Ngozi mu □ ru □ u □ mu □ *itenani* □

O □ no □ ghi □ n' □ u □ lo □ ya
 O □ no □ ghi □ na *be* ya
 O □ no □ ghi □ n' □ u □ lo □
 *O □ no □ ghi □ na *be*
xlq and *be* cannot be used interchangeably in the above context

U □ *jo* □ *ji* ya
Egwu *ji* ya

Abali □ taa di □ *egwu*
Uchichi taa di □ *egwu*

O □ *ji* *aku* □ *pe*
 O □ *ji* *nkucha*

Chineke bu □ onye *ebere*
 Chineke bu □ onye o □ *mi* □ *ko*

(In a linguistic event like 'Meere ya ebere' and 'Meere ya' cannot go down very well with 'qmiko' to get * 'Meere ya omiko'. This shows that 'ebere' and 'qmiko' are not true synonyms.)

Mberede yiri dike
 *O □ *dachi* yiri dike

In this context 'mberede' and 'qdachi' cannot be used interchangeably. Therefore, they are not true synonyms.

Onye *iberibe* amaghi □ onye kari □ ri □ ya
 Onye *nzuzu* amaghi □ onye kari □ ri □ ya

Ngala buru uzo o di da eso ya
Mpako buru uzo o di da eso ya

Ike ya adi ghi m

**Ume* ya adi ghi m

‘Ike’ and ‘Ume’ are synonymous but in this language situation one cannot go in for the other.

Akwa ya di n’*akpati*

Akwa ya di n’*igbe*

Mgbi ri mgba kpo tere ya

Atañu kpo tere ya

Mmadu *dum* bi ara mmemme ahu

Mmadu *niile* bi ara mmemme ahu

Nne ya *gara* ahi a

Nne ya *jere* ahi a

In a context like ‘Q gara ah[a]’ one cannot replace ‘gara’ with ‘jere’ to get *‘Q jere ah[a]’. This has to do with vowel harmony in Igbo language. Therefore, ‘gara’ and ‘jere’ are not true synonyms.

Ebere *kwuru* na o di mma

Ebere *si* ri na o di mma

O si ri ya bi a

*O kwuru ya bi a

The two words ‘kwuru’ and ‘s[r]’ cannot replace each other in the above speech event.

Ha na-ekwu *banyere* ya

Ha na-ekwu *gbasara* ya

O bi ara *oge* a kpo ro ya

O bi ara *mgbe* a kpo ro ya

In a situation like ‘Oge ad[gh] maka oke okwu’ ‘Mgbe cannot appropriately fit in despite the fact that they are synonyms. One cannot say, *‘ Mgbe ad[gh] maka oke okwu’.

O riri nri ahu o si i so

O riri nri ahu o so o so

O riri nri ahu ngwangwa

Using the substitution criteria most of the above mentioned lexemes in Igbo language are true, complete and absolute synonyms except for the few that are not as indicated with asterisks (*)

Findings

From this academic exercise it was found out that the general assumption that there are no real synonyms in any natural language is an overstatement. This is so because there are so many Igbo lexemes that have exactly the same meaning. Those words can be used comfortably and interchangeably in the same context. Apart from those utterances marked with asterisks (*) in the above collected data other utterances are of the meaning. They can be used interchangeably in the same speech event.

Conclusion

The semantic concept of synonym cuts across all the natural languages. The assumption that there is no true synonym is not strictly applicable to Igbo language. Some true synonyms were X-rayed and tested, and the result showed that there are so many complete synonyms in the Standard Dialect (SD) of Igbo language. This is due to the fact that many of the vocabularies in the Standard Dialect (SD) were lifted from different dialects of the language and in most cases different names for the same linguistics item were accepted in the SD. Therefore, to conclude that there are no true synonyms in a natural language is a hyperbole/overstatement judging from Igbo language examples.

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