

IGBO LANGUAGE AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Sentences are uttered in a context of discourse where features of language reveal speakers' attempt to process their message in view of their hearer's knowledge and interpretive efforts. Such contexts constitute a broader perspective, which examines the link between discourse activities and socio-cultural factors. The task of this paper is to explore some texts in Igbo with a view to establishing what gives its discourse coherence. It is from this premise that this paper is highly significant. The paper adopts an analytic approach as it x-rays the concept of critical discourse analysis, which has its base on the ten questions against which texts are assessed.

Keywords: IGBO, NA, modaling.

INTRODUCTION

Lancaster School of Linguistics was the first to developed Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA). Norman Fairclough made the most remarkable contribution to this field of study. The approach draws from several disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, and its main focus is to address social inequalities. Fairclough distinguished three stages of CDA as follows "description of text, interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction and explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context". He further developed ten questions against which texts are to be assessed to determine their experimental relational and expressive values. In this paper, we shall examine these questions with a view to finding their applications to Igbo textual structures.

The paper begins with a general introduction. The perspective of various scholars follows this on the topic. The application of Igbo Language to CDA forms the next section, before the final section of the paper, which is conclusion.

Literature Review

Some scholars in their approach to discourse have adopted broader perspective. A sociolinguistic perspective examines "the purpose or function of the discourse" Crystal (2003:142). To him, "is a branch of critical Linguistics which studies the relationship between discourse events and sociopolitical and cultural factors".

Agbedo (2010:39) believes that "CDA looks at language as a means of illuminating social problems". He asserts that CDA shares a common interest with interactional sociolinguistics.

In the views of Schmitt, CDA "is concerned with the relationship between language, ideology and power; also, the relationship between discourse and sociocultural change".

Swann, Deumert, Lillis, and Mesthrie concedes that "researchers working within CDA are interested in the ways in which discourse practices reproduce and/or transform power relations within society".

Wikipedia describes it as "an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse that views language as a form of social practice and focuses on the ways social and political domination are reproduced by text and talk".

Based on the foregoing, we agree with Miller (1984) when she contends that the likelihood between form and function are viewed as emanating from the likelihood in the social action undertaken. Texts are therefore viewed not only on the basis of their textual regularities, but also on the basis of the class, gender and ethnic bias, which they include. That is, the social practice reflected by them.

CDA and Its Application to the Igbo Language

Fairclough (1989:109) identified "three stages of CDA; description of text, interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction, and explanation of the relationship between interaction and soil context".

Fairclough used ten questions, which he exemplified to describe CDA. These ten questions are therefore presented as such in this paper, but with its applications and examples in Igbo language.

Question 1: What experimental values do words have?

This question has to do with how ideological variations between texts in their representations of the world are coded in their vocabulary, "(Fairclough, 1989:113). In Igbo, some vocabulary items that convey the same meaning may belong to difference ideological frameworks.

For instance, expressions like "ikwa iko" and "isoli nsoli" both of which means "to make love," however, fall into different ideological poles of moral consciousness and moral depravity respectively. The use of one in preference to the other represents a conscious effort to express a peculiar ideological framework.

Question 2: What relational values do words have?

This question deals with "how a text's choice of wordings depends on, and helps to create social relationships between participants", (Fairclough, 1989:116). Text producers usually avoid using words with expressive values for relational reasons. One of the strategies often employed is the use of euphemism to substitute for conventional or familiar expressions as a way of avoiding offensive bluntness that would attract negative values. In Igbo, euphemistic expressions are prolific in its literature and such expressions are "part of the process of negotiating a relationship of trust and solidarity with the assumed readership", (Fairclough, 1989:117).

Okoye (2004:205) contains some of these examples:

- O bulaala akwụkwọ (Ọ nwụọla) He is dead.
- Ikenna gara ileta nwaanyi akpi gbara (Ikenna gara inyu nsi) Ikenna went to excrete.
- O jighi anya ahụ nwaanyi (Ọ na-achukari nwaanyi) He goes after women a lot.
- Ike bu nwa mkpi na-agbara oha egwu: Ike ji ikwa iko mere aka oru (Ike is sexually promiscuous).

Question 3: What expressive values do words have?

This question underscores how the writer's impression of the world or a situation is implied in the vocabulary. Such impression represents the writer's evaluation of a situation or condition, which may likely have positive or negative expressive values for different groups of readers. In Igbo discourse, such expressions are replete, especially during political campaigns.

For instance: Zik nwa-nna a, oge agaala mgbe a na-asu oyibo na-ada ka ibewere nkụ.

The above expression would likely have positive expressive value for NPN party loyalists, but may be infuriating and puzzling to the NPP followers whose assessment or impression of Zik's oratory is rather awesome.

Question 4: What metaphors are used

Metaphor is a literary device, which represents one experience in terms of another, and in this regard, the relationship contracted by alternative metaphors is paramount for metaphors vary in their ideological connotations. Igbo literary works abound in such metaphors. An excerpt is taken from Anayochukwu Leonard Okoli's Igbo novel entitled "Uzo Di Njo".

"Nlota Ejike lotara n'ubochi ahụ adighi ka o na-adị maka na o nweghi onye maara na o lotara ma e wezuga nne ya. A si na onye emeghi ka o si eme a mara na o dighi ya a si adi. O bukwa n'abali ka o jiri lota ka anya ghara ihu ya ncha ncha. A si na dibia gbata mma, o jiri ehie laa mana o gbata njo, o jiri abali laa. Ya bu na o bu ubiam mere ka Ejike tiwe ya bu mmnwu anyasi". (Okoli, 2005:96).

Here, Okoli likened Ejike's return to the lack-lustre performance of a night masquerade that is usually poorly-customed and has little or no spectators. Note also that Ejike's return is likened to a diviner who returned empty-handed from a divination tour, for it lacks the usual pomp and pageantry.

Question 5: What experiential value do grammatical features have?

This has to do with how the grammatical forms of a language code, events or relationships in the world. A text comprises some real or imaginary events, state of affairs or relationships, and different grammatical processes and participants are often selected on the basis of ideological significant considerations. Consider the following Igbo simple sentences:

- 1.SVO:Okeke gburu ewu
- 2.SV:Okeke anwọla
- 3.SVC:Okeke di ocha

The above illustrations express respectively the three main types of processes, namely; actions (SVO), events (SV), and attributions (SVC). Actions usually involve two participants – an agent (eg Okeke) and a patient (e.g. ewu). An event involves one participant as illustrated in sentence 2 above; while an attribution also involves just one participant.

Question 6: What relational values do grammatical features have?

Texts usually have a number of grammatical features with relational values and such features include the modes of sentence, modality and pronouns.

There are three major sentence modes in Igbo and these include the following:

Declarative: Uju dara n'ule.

Interrogative: Olee ebe i bi?

Imperative: Bia.

In these three sentence modes, the position of the participants varies. In the declarative, the participant occupies the subject position, while in the interrogative mode; the participant occupies the addressee's position and receives information. But in the imperative, the speaker/writer is in the position of asking something of the addressee who is indeed a compliant actor.

Also important is the concept of modality, which has relational and expressive values in grammar. Modality underscores the speaker's or writer's authority with respect to truth or probability of representing reality (expressive modality) or in relation to other participants (relational modality).

Modality is expressed by modal auxiliary and in Igbo, the following expressions are illustrative by modality.

- Mmiri puru izo – it might rain
- Mmiri ahapughị izo – It must rain
- Mmiri kwesiri izo – It should rain
- Mmiri choro izo – It will/shall rain

Note that the identified Igbo modal auxiliaries sharply deviate from the conventional auxiliaries, which many Igbo scholars have erroneously assigned the role of modal auxiliaries. "Modals take a 'bare' infinitival verb phrase complement (ie. a VP not introduced by the infinitive marker 'to')", Radford (1990:151). The underlined Igbo examples of modal auxiliaries seem to agree with Radford's definition above.

Another important grammatical feature with relational value is the use of pronouns especially "we" and "you" which in Igbo we have as "anyi" and "gi/i" respectively or exclusively. "Anyi" can refer to the writer as well as the reader and others, in which case, it is said to be inclusive. But when it does not include the addressees, it is exclusive. For example; Onwu na-eche anyi n'elu uwa (inclusive).

Anyi guru akwukwo mara ihe (exclusive and limited to the educated).

Similarly, the Igbo pronoun "gi/i" may be used in mass communication to work out relationships where there are actually many potential audience or addressees whose identity is unknown.

Example: (1) Obiri-n'aja ocha enweghi ogwu

(2) I ga- echekwa ndu gi.

(3) Kpuru okpu nnabuenyi gi mgbe i na-enwe mmeko nwoke na nwaanyi.

Such personal address, despite its anonymity, has a wide currency of coverage.

Question 7: What expressive values do grammatical features have?

This has to do with expressive modality where there is an overlap between modal auxiliaries with relational modality and those that represent expressive modality. In Igbo language, the modal auxiliary "kwesiri" may signal possibility as well as permission, while "ahapughị" is associated with certainty.

Example

- (1) Iti boribo ga-adariri (certainty).
- (2) Ulo akirika kwesiri igba oku (possibility)
- (3) Okoro kwesiri isonye n'out PDP (permission)

It follows from the above illustrations that modality forms determine the authority of claims.

Question 8: How are simple sentences linked together?

This question explores the connective values of formal features of texts generally. Texts have a unifying characteristic commonly referred to as cohesion. Cohesion has to do with the vocabulary links

between sentences such as repetition of words and the use of related words. It moreover involves some connectors, which indicate series of temporal spatial and logical links between sentences. In Igbo, there are some logical connectors, which mark concessive relationships.

- Example: Erighi m nri n'agbanyeghi na aguu na-agu m.
- Obi kara ida n'ule ewezuga mbọ ọ gbara

We also have a relation of result conveyed by the Igbo connector like "n'ih.

Example:

- O riri ngari, n'ih ya, a chuo ya n'oru
- (2)Aadaeze kpọrọ ahia n'ih na ọ na-ahọ di.

Sometimes, it is the element of the juxtaposed sentences that imply such relationships and not necessarily the connectors.

Question 9: What interactional conventions are used?

This question focuses on formal organizational features of texts such as dialogue, (conversations, interviews) and monologue (speeches, newspaper articles and so on. However, question 9 primarily relates to dialogue where interactional routines and boundaries are implicitly linked to power relations and these are intuitively assimilated as naturalized conventions.

A key factor in interactional routine is turn-taking which largely depends on power relationships between participants. If informal conversation in between equals, participants negotiate on a turn-by-turn basis for "it is assumed that all participants have equal rights at each point in formula - to select others, "select themselves, or continue", Fairclough (1989:134).

Conversely, turn-taking rights are unequal if the participants in a dialogue have power relationships that are unequal. This is typically true in Igbo sociolinguistic environment, which is a class-divided and power-riven society.

Let us consider the dialogue between a father, his youngest son and his first daughter adapted from (Ezeibe: 2007:7-8).

Onyekachi: Daadi, ahuru m ebe Nneka

dowere rizoitu ya. O di uzọ abuo otu gosiri na

o dara ada, ebe nke ozọ...

Maazi Onyema: Onyekachi, si ebe a puo.

Kedu onye kpọrọ gi ebe a ma ya fodu ikọ ihe

o dighi onye juru gi?

Nneka, gosi m rizoitu gi.

Nneka: Onyekachi, i ma na mu na gi abughi ogbo.

M daa gi aka,

i buru onye nwuru anwu.

In the above dialogue, class distinction and domination is significant as exemplified in interruptions, turn-limitations, cutting off, commands, rewording and so on. This clearly paints the picture of power relations between unequal participants.

Question 10: What large-scale structures does the text have?

This has to do with the ordering of elements or events within a whole text in a predictable way. An incident within a text may be ordered such that it has the predictable features: what happened, what was its cause, how to deal with it, what was its immediate effect and its long-term outcomes or consequences. An excerpt from Okediadi (2003:8-9) illustrates this:

Ezigbo nne m!

i mara mma n' agboghobia

Ara di gi n'obi kwuru chim

Ukwu gi bu e lelebe e jeghi oru

onye egwu ukwu ginmatara nna m

O tufu ghi mgbe lubata gi

I batara mujuo ulo

Akunauba Sochiri gi azu

Nne m!

O dizi ka e jighi ego luo gi

N'ih na ihu di gi ka mma na-adighi nko ugbua

Anye adakpuo n'ime ka olulu

Ezigbo nne m ebeaka!

Isi awo na amamihe na-eso abia

Nka bu uru ezigbo nne m.

Interpretation and Explanation.

Interpretation

Interpretation refers to both a procedural stage and the interpretation of texts by discourse participants. He further listed six major domains of interpretation, two of which are for context interpretation, and four for 'text' interpretation. Under context interpretation, we have 'situational' and 'intertextual' context, while for text interpretation, he identified the following:

- Surface of utterance
- Meaning of utterance
- Local coherence
- Text structure and 'point'

Explanation:

Fairclough explained that this stage portrays a discourse "as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures and what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them"

In other words, power relations can help shape discourse. Its effects can either covertly or overtly bring about the sustainance or the transformation of power relations.

CONCLUSION

Text analysis is not just a matter of sorting out the component elements of sentences. There are some explicit non-linguistic features, which determine the interactional modes, and power relationship that should obtain among the participants in a discourse.

In this paper, we have explored such broader perspective of textual analysis with a view to establishing their applications to Igbo, and the application no doubt, was highly effective.

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