PREPOSITIONS IN IGBO DICTIONARIES

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Abstract

Despite the insights of current linguistic research into the meaning, functional environment, and the number of prepositional markers in the Igbo language, Igbo lexicographers continue to present "na" as the only preposition in Igbo dictionaries. This paper contends that such an approach does not align with the growing body of research in Igbo and highlights the different classes of prepositions in the language. Through a comparative analysis of five major Igbo dictionaries—Echeruo (1998), Igwe (1999), Eke (2001), Emenako (2005), and Akponye (2011)—we examine how prepositional categories are presented and classified across these works. The analysis reveals the persistence of this traditional view, which leads to the neglect of lexical, bound, and category-incorporated prepositions. Our findings advocate for a paradigm shift in lexicographical practices to accommodate a more dynamic representation of prepositions. Such an approach will align with recent linguistic insights and foster a more accurate understanding of Igbo grammar. This study urges Igbo dictionary makers to integrate current linguistic findings to serve learners and scholars better.

1. Introduction

"One of the most fundamental experiences is viewing spatial scenes, i.e. objects in relation to each other" (Tyler & Mueller 2011: 183), and language users perform this linguistic function using prepositions. Prepositions are particles that must necessarily take a noun or a pronoun as their complement and indicate the noun's grammatical relation or semantic role… (Luraghi and Parodi 2008:149). In other words, prepositions primarily describe spatial relations between two entities. For instance:

1. The picture is <u>over</u> the mantelpiece.
2. The book is <u>in</u> my school bag.
3. The cat perched at the edge of the window.

The underlined words in the above sentences are prepositions indicating different relationships between the entities involved in each sentence. In the first sentence, the preposition *over* shows the vertical relationship between the picture and the mantelpiece. It specifies that the image is higher than the mantelpiece and directly above it. The preposition *in* in the second sentence shows the containment relationship between the book and the school bag. It indicates that the book is enclosed and located inside the bag. The preposition *at* functions as a preposition of place. It shows the specific location of the cat in relation to the window.

For decades, the landscape of preposition in Igbo language studies has been dominated by the solitary figure of "na," Green and Igwe (1963: 43), Carell (1970: 17), Welmers (1973: 453), Emenanjọ (1978: 83), and Ọnụkawa (1999). These proponents of sole preposition for the language seem to solely base their characterization of preposition on structural influence. Thus, they see inherent “participation in the prepositional phrase” (Langacker 1991: 153) as a sine qua non to characterizing a linguistic element preposition. It is this view that gave rise to Green and Igwe’s (1963: 45-46) identification of three groups of prepositional phrases namely: nominals, interrogatives and nomino-verbal infinitives, all following the preposition *nà.* In the same vein, Emenanjọ (1978:83-85) points out that the preposition *nà* is followed by nominals and verbals. This entrenched view, however, stands in stark contrast to the burgeoning body of research revealing a far richer and more diverse terrain of prepositional usage in the language: Ọjị (1987), Nwachukwu (1987: 5), Mmadike (1992; 2010), Ụwalaka (1995; 1996: 113), Ụba-mgbemena (2006: 58), Mbah (2006: 40; 2010), Uchechukwu (2007; 2010). These authors posit that Igbo has many lexical, bound, and category-incorporated prepositions.

This paper embarks on a critical examination of prepositions in five prominent Igbo dictionaries, Echeruo (1998), Igwe (1999), Eke (2001), Emenako (2005) and Akponye (2011), analyzing their presentation of prepositions and its alignment with contemporary linguistic scholarship. We dissect the persistent privileging of "na" and expose the underrepresentation of lexical, bound, and category-incorporated prepositions. Through this analysis, we aim to illuminate the potential discrepancies between lexicographical practices and linguistic realities, paving the way for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of prepositions in Igbo grammar.

The paper addresses the issues as follows: Section 2 looks into the description of prepositions in Igbo language studies, while Section 3 examines the presentation of prepositions in Igbo dictionaries. Section 4 discusses the finding(s) while Section 5 forms the summary and conclusion.

2. Preposition in Igbo

Although there are dissenting views regarding what constitutes a preposition, the number of prepositions and the classes of this linguistic element in Igbo language studies, more recent scholarly works have presented, from different linguistic perspectives, a clearer proposition for understanding preposition and prepositional meanings as well as additional insights into the functional environment of the markers of this grammatical category, which in turn have provided the basis for the classification of preposition in the Igbo language. This section explores the findings of these recent studies on prepositions in Igbo.

Mbah (1999), classifies Igbo prepositions into three groups: lexical, bound and category-incorporated prepositions.

2.1 Lexical Prepositions

Lexical prepositions are single words that express prepositional meanings on their own. In performing such functions, the prepositions directly precede their complements following the syntactic rule of the language. Some of the lexical prepositions are *nà* "on, at, in" etc. *màkà* 'about,' *bànyéré*'about/concerning,'*gbàsárá* 'about/concerning,' *bèlụ́sò* 'except' etc.

4. Òbí nọ̀ *n'*ụ́lọ̀
   Obi be PREP house
   'Obi is at home'

5. Àzụ́ dị̀ *nà* ǹkàtà
   Fish be PREP basket
   'Fish is in the basket'

6. Hà bìà- rà *màkà* òrírí
   They come-rV(PAST) PREP feast
   'They came for the feast.'

The subjects, entities whose locations are being described, in the above sentences are *Obi, azu* and *ha* respectively while the objects, reference points, are *ụ́lọ̀, ǹkàtà* and *òrírí*. The use of the prepositions *nà* (*n'*) and *maka* respectively adds the functional meanings of *containment* in (4 and 5) and *purpose* in (6) for the spatial relations the subjects contract with the objects.

It is worthy of note that there is no difference between the preposition *n*à used in sentence 4 and that used in 5. The elision and replacement of the vowel '*a'* with an apostrophe in sentence 4 is a matter of convention and does not make any difference whatsoever. As a rule of thumb in Igbo grammar, whenever the preposition precedes a word that begins with a vowel, the vowel in the preposition is elided and replaced with an apostrophe and vice versa when the preposition comes before a word beginning with a consonant.

Taking a grammaticalization perspective Uchechukwu (2010), investigates how *gbàsárá, bànyéré, bèlụ́lsọ̀* and *n'ágbànyèghì,* first referred to as verbids by Emenanjo (1985), underwent a categorical change from their different verbal sources to preposition. As a way of telling what the verbids mean, Emenanjo (1985: 71) posits that "the verbids in the Igbo language are a small class of fossilized elements which translate as 'prepositions' in English. Syntactically, they combine with nominals instead of verbals and no longer take inflectional suffixes." Furthermore, Emenanjo (1985: 70) gives the following characteristics of the verbids:

i. They are fossilized verbal elements
ii. They translate as prepositions in English
iii. They syntactically combine with nominals instead of verbals
iv. They no longer take inflectional suffixes.

Uchechukwu (2010) agrees with Emenanjo's characterization of the verbids but goes further to posit that the structure of the verbids can no longer be subjected to any form of meaningful morphological analysis and that they acquired fixed constructional meanings as prepositions. Again, he sees the categorical change of the verbids to prepositions to involve a metaphorical exploitation of the different verbal source domains for expressing prepositional meanings. Thus, the verbids will subsequently be called prepositions and their description is based on Uchechukwu (2010: 50-51).

The preposition *gbàsárá* 'concerning/about' is a metaphorical extension of the compound verb *gbàsà*' splash/spray on.' The connection between the source and target domains is made clear with the following sentence pair from Uchechukwu (2010: 50)

7) a. Ḿmírí gbàsà- rà m
Water splash-rV(PST) me
'Water splashed on me.'

b. Ó kwù- rù ókwú gbàsárá m
he speak-rV(PST) word about me
'He spoke about me.'

Example (7a), i.e. the verb *gbàsàrà,* is the source/concrete domain where the water that is splashed spread out and touched another person. On the other hand, "it is this sense of something touching a person that is retained in the prepositional meaning" Uchechukwu (2010: 50). Part of what differentiates between when *gbasara* functions as a verb and when it functions as a preposition is tone. As a verb it has low tone all through (LLL) but low high high (LHH) tone as a preposition.

With regard to *banyere* the compound verb *ba*'enter' and *nye* 'give' seems a plausible origin. Uchechukwu (2007: 51) observes that *nye* inherently functions as the preposition(s) 'in/into' whenever it occurs as the second verb of a compound verb. This is demonstrated below

8) a. Ọ̀ wụ̀- rụ̀ ḿmírí bànyè- rè n' ụ́lọ̀ m
he pour-rV(PST) water go.enter-rV(PST) PREP house my
'He poured water that entered into my house.'

b. Ó kwù- rù ókwú bànyéré m
he speak-rV(PST) word concerning/about me
'He said something about me.'

Looking at the above pair of sentences one observes that *banyere* in (8a) is a compound linguistic element comprising the verb *bà* 'enter' + the incorporated preposition *nyè*' into' + the rV past tense marker while the same structure in (8b) is an indivisible lexeme that represents a prepositional meaning. Again, notice the change in tone of both words: *banyere* as a verb in (8a) has a low tone all through while it has a low high high tone as a preposition. Tracing the origin of this prepositional meaning Uchechukwu (2010: 51) avers: "it is as if the issue mentioned/discussed in the sentence moves or enters into the direction of the entity being spoken about, and as such concerns or is about that entity."

Referring to *bèlúsọ̀* Uchechukwu (2010: 51) concludes that it is a transparent morpho-semantic structure that is made up of the verb *bè* 'cut' + the suffix *lú*' to your favour' + *sọ̀* 'only.' Put together it means 'cut to your favour only.' The following sentence pair demonstrates both the literal and metaphorical (prepositional) meaning of the word.

9) a. Àdá, bíkò bèlúsọ̀ ánụ́ ehi
Ada, please cut.only meat cow
'Ada, please cut (out) only cow meat.'

b. È- nwè- ghí m ákwà ọ̀zọ̀ bèlúsọ̀ èfè á
AGR-have-NEG I cloth another except shirt DEM
'I don't have another cloth except this shirt.'

In the metaphorical extension, it is as if the entity which would have been cut out in the literal rendition of the sentence is metaphorically cut out, that is, as an exempted.

N'agbanyeghi is the last in the group of words examined by Uchechukwu (2010). It also has a complex structure that is decomposable in the view of tracing its origin as a preposition. It consists of the preposition n' + verb *gbà*+ verb *nyè* + NEG suffix *ghì. "*As a verbal, structure the form most likely has its origin in the compound verb *gbànyè '*pour' (in/for) something liquid." With the negative suffix, the action is annulled. The connection is the use of the whole expression to annul/negate a statement." See Uchechukwu (2010) for how the categorical change of the above linguistic elements from verb to preposition is evidenced using grammaticalization parameters.

2.2 Bound Preposition

This class of prepositions is said to be bound because they must be attached to root verbs to realise the prepositional meaning they express. Thus, they are not free forms but suffixes that inherently express prepositional notions in Igbo language. It is these suffixes that Emenanjọ (1978: 84) spoke about when saying thus: "prepositional ideas may be expressed in Igbo through the use of extensional suffixes." Morphologically the suffixes are the suffix component of a Verb + Suffix structures and semantically they express relational meanings as prepositions. One of such suffixes is the rV prepositional or applicative suffix. In describing this suffix Mmadike (2010: 14) says thus:

> The Igbo –rV applicative suffix is made up of a CV constituent of the form /r-/, plus a vowel (V) which harmonizes with the last vowel of its host. This usually occurs after the verb root, both of which create a complex predicate.

Speaking on the reason for calling this suffix a prepositional suffix Nwachukwu (1983:73) asserts that it performs the same function which several prepositions perform for the English language for Igbo language. Furthermore, Green and Igwe (1963:56) use what they refer to as homophonous –ra (time) and –ra (non-time) to not only assert that the –rv suffix is a prepositional marker but to also make a concrete distinction between when the –rv functions as a prepositional marker and when it functions as a tense marker. Thus, "the –ra (time) suffix gives a past time meaning," which is parallel to the –ra (non-time) suffix that has the meaning for, on account of…."

10)a. Àdà kpà- rà ákwà
Ada weave-rV(PST) cloth
'Ada weaved cloth.'

b. Àdà kpà- á- rà m ákwà
Ada weave-rV(APPL)-rV(PST) me cloth
'Ada weaved cloth for me.'

Mmadike (2010: 15) points out that a verbal compound like *kpaara* in (10b) above has its full specification as *kparara* with the –rv applicative and –rv factative/assertive/past tense markers as verbal suffixes. This implies that concerning the order of occurrence of the verbal suffixes in a compound verb, the –rv applicative suffix occurs immediately after the verb root while other verbal suffixes come after it. A look at the above sentence pair reveals that the only –rV (–ra) in (10a) indicates past tense, the same function it does as second –rV in (10b), while the first –rv (-ra) in (710b) is a prepositional marker with the meaning *for*. It is observed, as also seen with (10b) above, that the –rv prepositional suffix has the tendency of increasing the number of the object of a verb of a construction it occurs in by one object. Thus, its presence in (10b) added the object *m* to the sentence, thereby making it a double object construction. This added object is referred to as applied or indirect object. With regard to the order of occurrence of the objects in the construction, the indirect object precedes the direct object.

A prepositional meaning, 'motion towards/to/on,' has also been confirmed for the suffix pair –te/ta (Uchechukwu 2007: 399). In other words, the suffix pair is another prepositional element in Igbo language. The following sentences illustrate this stance.

11)a. Óbì kụ̀- tà- rà m áká
Obi hit-on-rV(PST) me hand
'Obi hit me with his hand.'

b. Úchè bù- tè- rè ìtè áhụ̀
Uche carry-to-rV(PST) pot DET
Lit. Uche carried the pot (to the direction of the speaker).
'Uche delivered that pot.'

In the above sentences the subjects, Obi and Uche, contract different spatial relationships of surface contact and direction respectively with the speaker. These respective spatial relations are coded by the suffix pair –te/ta. Note that the choice of which of the suffix pair to use is dependent on the vowel harmony rule of the language and such suffix varies in tone as it always assumes the tone of the verb root to which it is attached.

2.3 Category Incorporated Preposition

This last class of Igbo preposition involves a situation whereby the second verb in a $Verb_1$ + $Verb_2$ (V_1 + V_2) verbal compound of motion verb changes its categorical status as well as meaning to a preposition through re-analysis. This class of Igbo preposition appears "to form a greater percentage of prepositional notions than the other classes put together" (Mbah 2010: 37).

12)a. Ńnụ̀nụ̀ áhụ̀ fédà- rà àlà
bird DEM fly.fall-rV(PST) ground
'The bird flew downwards.'

b. Újú gbásò- rò Èmèkà
Uju run.follow-rV Emeka
'Uju ran after Emeka.'

Despite that the V_2 of the verbal compounds re-analyses to prepositional meanings in their English translation, there is no much divergence from their meanings as full verbs. Again, such verbs do not change their inherent tones in the union. For instance, the verbs –da 'fall' and –so 'follow' retain their inherent low tone as V_2 components in (12) above. It is because of the above

reasons that the second verbs of the compound verbs are described as main verbs, which gives rise to the analysis of the whole structure as $V_1 + V_2$ construction (Uchechukwu 2007: 391).

The following table illustrates prepositional meanings expressed by different verbs in V_2 environments of compound verbs.

Verb$_2$	**Verb$_1$ (-gba 'run') + verb$_2$**	**Meanings as verb$_2$**	**Spatial orientation of located object**	**Spatial orientation of the reference object**
-ba 'enter'	-gbaba 'run into'	Into	within the reference object	Contains the located object
-da 'fall'	-gbada 'run down(wards)'	downwards down	on a higher plane than the reference object	on a lower plane than the located object
-fe 'go by or over/across'	-gbafe 'run over/across'	over, across	over the surface of the reference object	under the surface of the located object
-ga 'go'	-gbaga 'run to (a location)'	to(wards)	forward- in the direction of reference object	end-point direction of located object
-so 'follow'	-gbaso 'run after'	after	located before the reference object	comes after the located object
-fu/-pu 'exit'	-gbafu 'run out'	out	outside the reference object	does not contain the located object
-ru 'reach'	-gbaru 'run up to'	up to	forward- in the direction of reference object	end-point direction of located object

Table 1: Prepositional meanings expressed by different verbs in V_2 environments

Culled from Uchechukwu (2007: 400)

The way different Igbo dictionary makers present the prepositional elements in Igbo dictionaries forms the concern of the next section.

3. Presentation of Prepositions in Igbo Dictionaries

The table below presents a graphic representation of Igbo prepositions in the five bilingual dictionaries by the different lexicographers.

Preposition Elements	Presentation in Dictionaries				
	Echeruo (1998)	Igwe (1999)	Eke (2001)	Emenako (2005)	Akponye (2011)
na	at, in, on, on top of, on the outside of, within	by, in, on, at, to, from, as	on, by	-----	
gbasara	Adverb: about, regarding, concerning,	-------	-----	-------	-----
maka	about, regarding, concerning, because of, in the name of, for the sake of	on account of, on behalf of, with reference to, about, because of, for, for the sake of, concerning	------	-----	For
banyere	about, concerning, regarding	-------	-----	------	------
-rV	------	for, to, on behalf of, for the benefit of or purpose of	------	------	-------
-te/ta	-----	expresses movement towards either actually or figuratively	------	to, in, into, for, unto	------
-ba (enter)	----	------	-----	in, into, inside, inward	-----
-da (fall)	-----	-----	------	downward	------
-ga (go)	-----	------	-----	into, unto	------

Table 2: Graphic presentation of prepositions in the five dictionaries

The above table comprises eleven preposition elements selected to represent the three classes of prepositions—lexical, bound, and category incorporated—described in section two. While the first four are lexical prepositions, the following two are bound ones and the last three are of the

category incorporated class. Short dashes in the table indicate the non-existence of a particular preposition under consideration in a particular dictionary.

Out of the eleven preposition elements, Echeruo (1998) has designated preposition entries for only *na.* Although he has entries for *gbàsárá, bànyéré* and *màkà,* he designates them asadverb. He has 'about,' 'concerning' and 'regarding' as the English equivalents of *gbàsárá* and *bànyéré* and 'about,' 'regarding,' 'concerning,' 'because of,' 'in the name of,' and 'for the sake of' as the equivalents of *màkà.* All of the English realisations are also prepositions. The only thing is that some—regarding, about, and concerning—are simple prepositions while others—because of, in the name of and for the sake of—are compound prepositions. Such realisations in the target language are further evidence of the fact that *gbàsárá, bànyéré* and *màkà* are prepositions in the Igbo language as already pointed out. On the part of bound prepositions, Echeruo (1998) does not have any designation closer to them let alone giving it another category name. Concerning the category incorporated, the dictionary contains several entries for V_1 + V_2 construction in which the V_2 is re-analyzable to preposition such as *gbàgá*' run to' etc. where *gbà* (V_1) is given the meaning 'run' and *gá*(V_2) is given the meaning 'to.' Such structures are designated verbs without recourse to the prepositional meanings they also express vis-à-vis the verbal meanings. These characterizations seem greatly influenced by the traditional view that Igbo has one preposition. Thus, Echeruo's (1998) characterizations are not only a shred of clear evidence that the Igbo dictionary maker is not in tandem with the research findings on prepositions in the language, but they are also an indication of unfair and poor treatment of prepositions in the dictionary.

Igwe (1999) in his presentation has four out of the eleven preposition elements. The dictionary has no entry for *gbàsárá* and *bànyéré.* It provides appropriate entry for the bound prepositions in the language. On the other hand, like Echeruo (1998), Igwe (1999) has the representation of preposition incorporated meanings like *gbàbà* 'run,' 'flow,' 'explode' or 'dance into;' 'rush into,' escape or 'flee into' etc. where V_2 (*-ba*) 'into' is not given due attention as a marker of preposition.

Eke (2001) has only *nà* as a preposition out of the eleven elements representative. The treatment of the only preposition is shallowly done as he records just two senses for the preposition. This

characterization of prepositions in the dictionary depicts giving less attention to the category preposition in the dictionary.

Emenako (2005) takes a different approach. He seems not influenced by the traditional view as well as not aware of the findings of the recent studies on Igbo prepositions. He does not have any preposition entry for *nà*, he only recognizes it as a conjunction in the language. Furthermore, he finds prepositional meanings in the language to be expressed by bound elements. Hence, he designates both the bound preposition element pair –te/ta and verbs in the V_2 environments (category incorporated prepositions) affixes.

Akponye (2011) on his part does not see *nà* as a preposition capable of characterizing a distinct meaning, thus he designates prepositional phrases such as *n' aka* 'on hand,' *n' ime onu '*inside the mouth' etc. as a preposition concerning making a prepositional entry for the preposition *nà*. Furthermore, out of the prepositional elements assessed, he recognises *maka* as the only full-fledged preposition in the language. Despite, having entries and characterizations such as *bànyé* 'to enter, go into, go in, move in,' *gbàfé*é 'to overtake, cross over, run across' etc, where it is obvious that the second elements, -*nyé* and *–fé*é*,* designates prepositional meanings, he does not associate any prepositional meaning to such elements.

The discussion of the findings arising from examination of the presentation of prepositions in the dictionaries forms the concern of the following section.

4. Discussion of Findings

Presentation of prepositions in the dictionaries gives credence to the assertion: "people never seem to have taken preposition seriously" (Jackendoff 1973:345). The Igbo lexicographers jump to giving English equivalents of the prepositions in most characterizations of the prepositions in the dictionaries without recourse to proper explanation of the meanings and illustrations of these meanings in the Igbo source language. One of the bad sides of this gesture is that it leads to describing one language from the perspective of another language. For instance, because the English word *about* can function both as a preposition and as an adverb Echeruo (1998) designates *gbàsárá, bànyéré*and *màkà* adverbs, probably for realizing *about* as one of the English equivalents of these Igbo words. Again, giving propositional definitions of prepositions,

as seen with few prepositional entries in the dictionaries, is not enough to explicate the meanings inherent in prepositions since prepositions describe ideas arising from human interactions with the physical environment, spatial relations, instead it is better to represent these meanings as being more gestalt-like and image-schematic in nature (Langacker 1987). As a way of providing back up for this view, Evans and Tyler (2005:13-14) says:

> This requires assuming that, through a process of reanalysis of perceptual information (Mandler, 1992, 2004), humans create mental representations of their recurring experiences with the spatio-physical world which involve spatial scenes. While spatial scenes are relatively rich in content, generalizations across spatial scenes give rise to highly abstract, schematic generalizations established in memory in response to observing or experiencing physical entities in a number of similar spatial relationships.

Prepositions in Igbo language, most especially *nà*, are polysemous. The different sense realizations of the prepositions are treated the same way by the five dictionaries. They took the traditional approach of presenting the multiple senses associated with a particular preposition as an arbitrary list of entries, i.e. it does not show the conventional senses realized by a particular preposition to be related in any way instead the senses are taken to happen by chance and should be learnt individually. This approach makes it difficult for a learner to learn the prepositions as it left the learner with no option than to learn them by rote. However, Cognitive Linguistics views these senses from a different perspective in that it sees them to be interrelated, i.e. forming a semantic network, where the more peripheral senses are derived from the more basic ones. For instance, of all the sense realizations of the Igbo preposition *nà* the sense of *in contact with another object*, i.e. the indication that the located object (LO) is in contact with the surface of the reference point, depicted by such expressions like *ákwụ́kwọ́ dị́ n' élú óché* 'book on the chair,' seems more salient than other senses. It would be more profitable to a target user if this primary sense of the preposition is put first and other senses shown as extensions resulting from it.

Tyler and Evans (2001b, 2004) are of the view that Cognitive Linguistics proffers many important benefits for teaching and learning of prepositions than the more traditional approach. First, since cognitive linguistics views the different senses of a particular preposition, semantic network, to be motivated in systematic principled ways, it minimizes the amount of arbitrariness and also saves the second language learner the stress of rote learning. Second, because the foundation of cognitive linguistics is based on experiential meaning which enables it to see the extended senses of the prepositions to emanate from observations of the external, physical-

spatial world, it indicates the personal experiences of the learners with the world. Thus, viewing the motivation behind the extended senses from experientially motivated angle and as being in tandem with the learners' personal observation of the world would facilitate easier learning of the meanings associated with the prepositions. Third, the various senses are represented as systematically related events instead of a list of unrelated dictionary-type definitions put together. This provides a clear representation which serves as visual rubrics that are useful presentational tools for the language teacher and useful aids for the second language learner.

5. Summary and Conclusion

The paper investigates the presentation of prepositions in five Igbo-English dictionaries. It starts by looking into the expression of prepositional meanings in the language. It disagrees with the proponents of the sole, ubiquitous preposition *na* and aligns with the proponents of multi-prepositions for the language. In line with these proponents, for instance, Mbah (2006), the paper observes that Igbo preposition markers are grouped into lexical, bound and category incorporated. While the lexical prepositions are free lexemes that express prepositional meanings on their own, bound prepositions are suffixes that exhibit prepositional senses when attached to lexical words (verbs) and the category incorporated prepositions are verbs that are contextually conditioned to express prepositional meaning due to their position in complex verb environment, i.e. as a V_2 of $V_1 + V_2$ verbal compound.

With regards to the presentation and description of the prepositions in the five examined dictionaries, the paper observes that the Igbo lexicographers do not align themselves with the description of prepositions in the Igbo language studies. This could be as a result of not being aware of the recent scholarly observations regarding prepositions in the language, or the strict adherence to the old belief that Igbo has only one preposition. Therefore, the paper concludes that Igbo lexicographers should endeavour to acquaint themselves with the knowledge of linguistic findings in the language to present well-known facts of the language in the description of the language in their dictionaries.

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