

THE VERB *RÍ* (EAT) AS A SOURCE OF METAPHOR IN IGBO

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Abstract

A number of cross-linguistic studies have shown the relationship between the meanings of linguistic forms and the categorisation of the world which a knowledge of these meanings entail. In many languages, verbs of ingestion are rich sources of metaphorical extensions into a number of semantic domains. Studies demonstrating how the verbs of ingestion are linked to human conceptualisation seem to be rare in Igbo. This study therefore accounts for metaphorical mappings of syntactic constructions with the verb *rí* 'eat' in Igbo. It adopts the theoretical orientation of Cognitive linguistics which approaches the study of language with the view that language is grounded in human cognition. Therefore, the study of language is a systematic study of cognition. The data was purposively selected from published Igbo prose fiction and poetry collections. The collected data were categorised and analysed within the theoretical framework adopted. The findings show that the basic activities of eating can be mapped onto various target domains which serve as metaphor in the language. These domains can be broadly categorised as, actor-oriented and undergoer-oriented. The actor-oriented category shows that the metaphoric elaborations depend on the encoding of the action of the verb on the subject NP, while the undergoer-oriented extensions derive their meaning from the adversative features of the object NP. The study concludes that the Igbo world view can be revealed through the grammar of the language.

Key Words: Igbo Verb, Eating, Metaphor, Cognitive Linguistics

Introduction to the Igbo Verb

Igbo verbs have been classified into simple, complex and compound verbs (Emenanjo, 1978; Nwachukwu, 1984; Uwalaka, 1988, 1996, 1997). Simple verbs are verbs without affixes. Indeed, these are lexemes that co-occur with nouns and take up the verb category in the syntax. The examples in (1a-c) below represent these lexemes. Complex verbs comprise a lexeme with at least one affix. However, this could be reinterpreted as stems. The examples in (2a-e) represent these stems.

1. a. *rí* 'eat'
b. *ló* 'swallow'
c. *tá* 'chew'
2. a. *rì-bé* 'begin to eat'
b. *lò-chá* 'swallow all of it'
c. *tá-rìé* 'chew to pieces'

The lexemes in (2a-c) have their meanings extended by the suffixes attached to them. The lexeme in (2a) is *rí* 'eat' but with the attachment of the suffix *be*, the resulting stem has the meaning of 'begin to eat'. In (2b) the lexeme, *ló* 'swallow' is extended in meaning when the suffix *cha* is attached to it. The new meaning of the resulting stem is 'swallow all of it'. The lexeme *tá*, has its meaning extended as observed in (2c).

Compound verbs in Igbo have been described as comprising of two simple verbs which are independent. As previously stated, these are instances of stem formation in the morphology. These stems co-occur with nouns in the syntax and function as compound verbs. This point is illustrated by combining some lexemes to derive these stems in (3) below.

3. a. *rí-gbú* eat-kill 'unjustly expend'
b. *ló-dà* swallow-down 'swallow up'
c. *tà-púó* chew-open 'chew into'

All the lexemes in (3a-c) are derived stems because they are meaningful and independent lexical items that function as compound verbs in the syntax. In (3a) the compound verb *rígbú* is made up of two lexemes with independent meanings in the syntax. *rí* means 'eat' while *gbú* means 'kill' but a combination of both of them results in the meaning of the verb in (3a) which is 'unjustly expend'. The compound verb in (3b) is made up of the lexemes *ló* 'swallow' and *dà* 'fall down'. A combination of both of them gives the meaning 'swallow up' as illustrated in (3b). *tá* 'chew' and *púó* 'open' when combined give a new verb *tàpúó* 'chew into' in (3c). The expositions in examples (1) to (3) above are morphological features of the Igbo verb.

The Argument Structure of the Igbo Verb

A study of the argument structure of the verb in general is the prerequisite to an account of any syntactic, semantic or pragmatic analysis of Igbo.. The affirmation by Emenanjo (1978; 1975b and 2005) is that the morphosyntactic structure of the Igbo

verb ‘is made up of three mutually obligatory and complementary elements.’ These obligatory elements comprise the verb itself, the complement and the bound cognate noun (BCN). The construction in (4) below, with the verb *rí*³ ‘eat’ illustrates the argument structure of the Igbo verb.

4. Òbí rì-rì ñrí
 Obi eat-IND food⁴
 ‘Obi has eaten some food’

In (4) above, the verb *rí* ‘eat’ obligatorily co-occurs with the nominal element *ñrí* ‘food’. The claim here is that every Igbo verb must co-occur with a nominal element which serves as its complement. The idea of the bound cognate noun is illustrated in (5) below.

5. Òbí rì-rì ñrí èrí
 Obi eat-IND food EMPH
 ‘Obi has indeed eaten some food’

Èrí is a morphological derivation of the verb *rí* ‘food’ and it serves as an emphasiser morpheme. In the literature this is known as the Bound Cognate Noun or BCN. All Igbo verbs have the BCN, which always occur bound to the verb and follows it in the construction as shown in (5) above and illustrated again in (6).

6. Ó rì-rì ya eri
 3S eat 3S (obj) EMPH
 ‘S/he ate it indeed’

³ The transcription follows standard Igbo orthography: à (low tone); á (high tone); and ā downstep. All tones are marked to avoid ambiguity due to lexical variance among the dialects. Igbo has phonological features of vowel harmony where the eight vowels in the language are neatly divided into two sets. One set comprises vowels produced with the Advanced Tongue Root (+ATR) while the other set comprises vowels with –ATR. In standard Igbo, –ATR vowels are represented with the sub-dot, e.g, [ɔ̣] while the +ATR vowels do not have the sub-dot.

⁴ The abbreviations used here are: IND-indicative, DET-determiner, PRON-pronoun, EMPH-emphasiser, PL-plural, S-singular, 3s (subj)-third person singular for subjects, 3s (obj)-third person singular for objects, 3pl-third person plural, PROG-progressive, AGR-agreement marker,

In examples (5) and (6) above the nominal element *nrí* and the BCN *èrí* are regarded as arguments and/or direct objects of the verb, respectively (Emenanjo 1978:129). However, Agbo (2013), relying on cross-linguistic evidence, claims that the subject (external argument) of the verb is the participant in the clause that initiates the action represented by the verb, while the object (internal argument) is the participant that is completely affected by the action of the subject as it is represented by the verb. Therefore, while the nominal element *nrí* is an argument because it is a participant that is completely affected by the action of the verb, the BCN *èrí* is simply a morphological derivation of the verb *rí* and not its argument or direct object. Although the study adopts the term ‘complement’ to label the nominal element, the sense differs from Emenanjo’s perspective. It is used in the sense of Langacker (1987; 1991) and Croft (2001; 2003) where the verb and its complement is referred to as a construction that is fixed in the mind of the language user as a symbolic unit. In other words, the verb and its complement is a piece of the lexicon of the language and must be used in context matter-of-factly. This perspective will become clearer presently, during the discussion of the Igbo verb *rí* ‘eat’. Section 1.2 discusses the transitivity features of the Igbo verb which is essential to understanding the concept of the actor and the undergoer in the basic Igbo clause.

Transitivity in Igbo Verbs

Agbo (2013) following insights from Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) assumes two types of semantic roles in Igbo verb structure. They are the thematic relations and semantic macroroles. Thematic relations include positions taken by arguments in the structure of the verb. The semantic macrorole on the other hand are defined in terms of the number of participants in a clause. The two basic participants are the **actor** and **undergoer**. The actor is the doer or instigator of the action which, in a concrete and intense way, affects the undergoer. Single-participant clauses could either be actor or undergoer and this depends on the morphosemantic features of the verb. The morphosemantic feature is related to the semantic macrorole of the verb. This relationship is demonstrated in RRG through what is expressed as the Actor-Undergoer hierarchy. This relationship states that a given argument structure of the verb, the leftmost argument is the actor while the rightmost argument is the undergoer.

For Igbo, the actor-undergoer hierarchy is relevant in discussing transitivity, since this involves the effective transfer an action from the agent (actor) to the patient (undergoer). Therefore, a transitive clause in Igbo is one that holds two arguments, where one of the arguments is the actor and the other is the undergoer.

Theoretical Orientation

The study adopts the theoretical orientation of Cognitive linguistics as postulated in Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Johnson 1987, Lakoff 1980; Langacker 1997 and Turner 1987. These studies approach the study of language with the view that language is grounded in human cognition. Therefore, the study of language is a systematic study of cognition. Cognitive linguistics also has cultural bearing and concerns manifested in the extensive study of metaphor. Cognitive linguistics proposes that human cognition operates metaphorically and that metaphor can be used to identify the link between cognition and culture. Langacker (1997:241) claims that cognitive domains are 'metaphorically structured' and that 'metaphor is a major factor in cultural construction.'

Metaphor operates between domains. This consists in the mapping of the logic of source domain, which is usually more concrete, to a target domain, which is usually more abstract. The understanding of one domain of experience in relation to another is motivated by the co-occurrence of the domains within a particular area of experience (Taylor 1989).

Data Collection

The syntactic constructions in this paper were supplied mainly from three sources. These are two books on Igbo prose fiction, *Omalinze* a book of Igbo folktales published in 1977 and *Nza na Obu* whose revised edition was published in 1997. The other source of data was from *Aka Weta*, a book of poems published in 1982 and *Ukàbùilo ndí Ìgbò*, a book of Igbo anecdotes first published in 1998. The stories in the book of folktales were transcribed in naturalistic settings (Emenanjo 1977; Ogbalu 1997; Achebe and Udechukwu 1982). The researcher translated the texts in the folktales, poems and anecdotes into English and derived the constructions with the verb *rí* essential to this study. These constructions were authenticated by five adult speakers of the Nsukka and three of the Nnewi varieties. There followed and analysis of these constructions in the language. One other important source of data is the Igbo-English dictionary by M.J.C. Echeruo. The data are grouped systematically into constructions with actor-oriented metaphorical extensions and undergoer-oriented extensions and constructions.

The Metaphorical Extensions of syntactic constructions with the verb *rí*

The data for the study are categorised into constructions with actor-oriented metaphorical extensions and undergoer-oriented extensions and constructions.

Actor-Oriented Extensions

Actor-oriented elaborations have the image of internalisation, which Newman (1997:216) describes as 'incorporating something into one's personal or private life.'

Here the property of the subject NP in the clause motivates the metaphorical extension. In other words, the effect of the action on the patient in the clause contributes little or nothing to the meaning of the metaphor. The following verbs occur in clauses with actor-oriented metaphorical extensions.

7.

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|----|--------------|----------------------------|
| a. | rí àhù úfù | ‘eat body pain’ |
| b. | rí nhá | ‘eat fine’ |
| c. | rí ìtàrì | ‘eat the whip’ |
| d. | rí úru | ‘eat profit’ |
| e. | Ríté | ‘eat up’ |
| f. | rí ùgwó ónwá | ‘eat monthly debt’ |
| g. | rí ògárí | ‘eat bribe’ |
| h. | Rídà | ‘eat down/fritter away’ |
| i. | Rígbú | ‘eat and kill/con someone’ |
| h. | rí mbómbó | ‘eat race/escape’ |

The verbs in (7a-h) occur in examples (8-18) below as simplex clauses representing metaphorical extensions that are actor-oriented. The metaphorical mappings of these constructions extend to the domain of instilling discipline as demonstrated in examples (8-10), enjoying the gains of enterprise (11-15), enjoying wealth/legacy (16 and 17) and escaping from danger (18). These domains are laid out in Section 2.2 below.

In examples (8-18) the human actors have the semantic role of causer/experience, while the stimulus for the internal experience of discipline is the inanimate object NP of the clauses which have the semantic role of stimuli. The transitivity features of the constructions further elaborate their metaphorical extensions. The constructions involve events including only two participants encoded by the subject and the direct object of the verb *rí*. Both NPs are distinct from each other and are referential. The events depicted by the constructions are consciously initiated by the subject NP which stands in an adversative relationship to the object NP. The events are punctual and this is denoted by the reduplicated vowel (-rV) suffix of the verb, which functions as an indicative morpheme for punctual events on the verb.

However, note that after the occurrence of the event, there is no change of state in the object NP, which only serves as a stimulus for the real world experience of the human actors.

Instilling Discipline

8. Há rì-rì àhù úfù íhé ójóó há mè-rè
 3S eat-IND body pain thing bad 3S do-IND

‘They suffered for their bad deeds (Lit. They ate body pain for doing something bad)

9. Ézè rì-rì nhá màkà àgwà ójóó.ó kpà-rà

Eze eat-IND fine because behaviour bad 3S V-IND

‘Eze paid a fine for behaving badly (Lit. Eze ate a fine for his bad behaviour)

10. Úmùákā āhù rì-rì ìtārì n’ìhì íhē ójōō há mè-rè

Children DET eat-IND whip because thing bad 3S do-IND

‘The children were flogged for behaving badly (The children ate some whips for behaving badly)

Instilling discipline requires the human agent to first of all to acknowledge the offence committed. This target domain is sourced from the sub-domain of the intake of food. The sub-domain of the mastication, swallowing and digestion of food metaphorically represents the acceptance with full consciousness the enormity of the offence, the willingness to face the consequences of the action and finally facing up to the stipulated punishment. The sub-domain of nourishment represents the fact that bracing up to the stipulated offence makes the human agent a better member of the society in question. The sub-domain of hunger/thirst for food and enjoyable gustation are not applicable to the domain of instilling discipline because the idea of discipline is alien to human character flaws and it is not a pleasurable experience.

Enjoying the gains of enterprise

Clauses with the verb *rí* may be extended metaphorically to the domain of someone enjoying the gains from his/her enterprise. The clauses in (11-15) below illustrate examples of metaphorical mappings within this domain. As described in Section 2.1. above, these clauses are transitive. The semantic roles of the subject and object NPs are the same as the clauses in (8-10) above.

11. Há rì-rì úrù áhīā hā zù-rù

3PL eat-IND profit market 3PL buy-IND

‘They profited from their trading (Lit. They ate the profit from their trading activities)

12 (a). Há rìtè-rè íhē nà áhīā hā zù-rù

3PL eat up-IND thing in market 3PL buy-IND

‘They gained from their trading’.

b. ìtè á rìtè-rè mìrì áhù

pot DET eat up-IND water Det

‘This pot contains that quantity of water’ (Lit. This pot is able to eat that amount of water)

13. Há rì-rì ùgwō ònwā ùnyáhù
 3PL eat-IND debt month yesterday
 ‘They received their salary yesterday’ (Lit. They ate monthly debt yesterday).
14. Ùm̀ òkóròbià áhù nà-é-rī ùwà/ńdù
 Young men DET PROG-AGR-eat world/life
 ‘Those young men are enjoying life (Those young men are eating the world/life [because they have worked for it]).
15. ńdī úwē ójī rì-rì ñgárí
 DEM police men eat-IND bribe
 ‘The police men took some bribe/’The police men ate bribe’

For one to embark on an enterprise there is the initial hunger for success. This hunger is stimulated by the material gains of enterprise. This requires the one involved to learn the art of the enterprise, master it and apply it until it becomes second nature to the person. This is sourced from the eating sub-domains of food intake, mastication, swallowing and digestion. The gains of enterprise improve the material well being of the subject NPs (11-15) above and this is akin to the nourishment that eating gives to the body. Embarking on a gainful enterprise is an appealing experience that has the source sub-domain of enjoyable gustation. Igbo speakers vary in their usage of the metaphor *rí ùwà/ńdù* as shown in (14) above. In any case, this inter-speaker variation does not change the meaning of the metaphor illustrated by the example. Note that in the metaphorical mapping of example (12b), the subject NP is non human and also non agential. It has the semantic role of recipient but not causer while the object NP has the semantic role of theme. There is no hunger/thirst for the object NP by the recipient nor is there a need for mastication or digestion or even nourishment. The only sub-domain of eating applicable to the target domain here is swallowing. The pot in (12b) has the capacity to swallow the amount of water that is available. Again, the sub-domain of enjoyable gustation is irrelevant for the metaphorical extension. The mental representation here is the personification of the capacity of the pot to accommodate the available water. Note also that in example (14) the clause is in the progressive form. This is because the act of enjoying the world can only be done by someone who is still living in the world. If the clause has the -rV suffix indicative marker, the translation would be that the subject NP is dead.

Enjoying Wealth/Legacy

The metaphorical mapping of *rí* onto the domain of enjoying the wealth/legacy of someone is illustrated with examples (16) and (17). The clause in (16) is in the progressive form but it does not detract from its transitivity features as the event is telic. Moreover, the clause has all the features of transitivity spelt out for (8-15) above.

16. Nwányi áhù nà-è-rí àkù dí yā sósò yá

Woman DET PROG-AGR-eat wealth husband 3S only 3S

‘That woman is enjoying the wealth of her husband alone’

17. Há rì-rì ínnà hà ékpé
 3PL eat-IND father 3PL inheritance
 ‘They inherited their father’s wealth’

All the sub-domains of eating can be extended to the metaphorical meaning of example (16). The sub-domain of hunger for food corresponds to the desire for wealth by the human actor in the event. The target domain of the circumstances leading to the human actor in (16) cornering the wealth to herself correspond to the eating sub-domains of the intake of food, mastication, swallowing and digestion. The nourishment and enjoyable gustation brought by eating is mapped onto the sense of well being and pleasure the actor in (16) experiences while she enjoys because of the husband’s wealth.

For the example in (17) the only eating sub-domain that corresponds to the target domain is that of nourishment. The actors in (17) may not have desired their father’s wealth or come to terms with the reality of his demise. However, as the tradition demands they come into his inheritance for their continued well being. This target domain corresponds to the eating sub-domain of nourishment.

Escaping danger

Escaping danger is another domain in which syntactic constructions with the verb *rí* can be mapped onto. The example in (18) illustrates this construction.

18. Nwátà áhù rì-rì mbómbó mgbè.ó hù-rù ègwùgwù
 Child DET eat-IND race when 3S see-IND ègwùgwù
 ‘That child took to his heels when S/he saw ègwùgwù’ (Lit. That child ate a race when S/he saw ègwùgwù)

Ègwùgwù is a scary, masked ancestral spirit. This explains why the child takes to his/her heels on sighting it as the construction shows. The act of running away from danger is an instinct of self-preservation. This instinct is activated when the senses perceive and comprehend the magnitude of the danger at hand. The body reacts by energising itself and fleeing from the scene. These processes correspond to the intake of food, mastication, swallowing and digestion. The flight from the scene of danger corresponds to the nourishment the body gets from eating because nourishment preserves the body.

Undergoer-oriented extension

In syntactic constructions with undergoer-oriented constructions, the meaning of the metaphor is encoded in the prominence of the adversative feature of the undergoer. As noted earlier, these constructions are transitive. The verbs in example (19) are found in the kind of constructions being described in this study.

19.

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|----|----------------|---|
| a. | rí ọ́nú | ‘eat mouth/surprise someone |
| b. | rí ọ̀bì | ‘eat heart’ |
| c. | rí ísì | ‘eat the head of someone’ |
| d. | rí arìrì | ‘eat grief/ be filled with grief’ |
| e. | rí ọ́nú ńmáḍù | ‘eat someone’s flesh/punish someone severely’ |
| f. | Mírì írì ńmáḍù | ‘water to eat someone (Lit. someone to be drowned)’ |

The metaphorical extensions where these verbs occur are categorised into the domains of mental pain, falling in love, loss of life and punishment. The description of these domains follows presently.

In examples (20-22) below, the human actors have the semantic roles of experience while the undergoers have the semantic roles of stimulus. In example (20) there are two human participants in the clause. The grammatical subject of the clause has the verb-specific semantic role emoter. For (23) and (24) the non-human subjects have the semantic role of agents while their human objects have the semantic role of experiencers. In example (25) the subject of the clause has the semantic role of agent and the object has the semantic role of stimulus. Let us now study the domains these constructions fall into.

Mental Pain

20. Ọ́nwù ényì Ádà rì-rì yá ọ́nú
 Death friend Ada eat-IND 3S mouth
 ‘The death of Ada’s friend left her speechless’
21. Àdà rì-rì àrìrì nà ọ́nwù ńnà yá
 Ada eat-IND grief in death father 3S
 ‘Ada was filled with grief because of her father’s death (Lit. Ada ate grief because of her father’s death).’
22. Àdà rì-rì ọ́nú ọ́nwé yá màkà ọ̀didà ùlé áhù
 Ada eat-IND meat self 3S because failing exam DET
 ‘Ada was disturbed because she failed the exam (Lit. Ada ate her flesh because she failed the exam)’

The metaphorical mapping of eating in (20-22) presents the image of unsavoury experiences. Here the eating sub-domains of swallowing and digestion may be the only ones that correspond to the domain of mental pain. The subjects of the sentences are forced to accept some unpleasant situations beyond their control and this is akin to forcefully swallowing and digesting unwanted food. This is why the meaning of the metaphors is derived from the adversative features of the undergoers in the sentences.

Falling in Love

The target domain of falling in love is also sourced from the eating sub-domain of swallowing and digestion. In example (23) the heart of the undergoer is ‘eaten’ by the actor

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in the event. The metaphor corresponds to the sub-domain of eating where the meal is swallowed and digested becoming part of the eater. Here the heart of undergoer is swallowed and digested by the actor and there results a perceptible change of behaviour in the actor. The adversative relationship between the heart of the undergoer and the actor determines the meaning of this metaphor.

23. Nwá àgboghó áhù rì-rì óbì Òbí
 Child teenage girl DET eat-IND heart Obi
 'That girl won over Obi's heart'

Loss of life/Intoxication

Ísì 'head' is metonymical for life in Igbo. For the example in (24a) the domain of the loss of life corresponds to all the eating sub-domains. The purpose of war is complete destruction of the enemy and this involves the thirst for blood. The art of war is akin to the eating acts of food intake, mastication, swallowing and digestion. The objective of war, which is victory over the enemy, corresponds to the nourishment that eating gives to the body. The sub-domain of enjoyable gustation is related to the sadistic pleasure that goes with the infliction of pain and death on the enemy.

In (24b) the domain of intoxication is also derived from all the eating sub-domains. The purpose of music is for the listening pleasure and one can get intoxicated, literally speaking, by listening to enjoyable music. Note that (24a) *ísí yá* 'his head' is a possessive construction which functions as the complement of the verb in the sentence. This function determines the meaning of the sentence. On the other hand (24b) is a double object construction where *yá* is the direct object and *ísí* is the indirect object. The difference in construction between (24a) and (24b) gives the difference in their metaphorical extensions.

- 24a. Ághá áhù rì-rì ísì yá
 War DET eat-IND head 3s
 'That war caused his death (The war ate his head)'

- 24b. Égwú áhù rì-rì yá ísì
 Music DET eat-IND 3S head
 'The music ate his head (Lit. The music intoxicated him).'

For the domain of loss of life in example (25), the sub-domains of swallowing and digestion clearly establish the meaning of the metaphor. The subject NP is personified and assumes the human capacity to swallow and digest food. The mental representation is that the object NP is swallowed and digested by the non-human agent.

25. Mírì rì-rì Àdá
 Water eat-IND Ada
 'Ada was drowned'

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Punishment

The sentence in (26) is in the progressive form. This is because the event it depicts is a potential but real one. Punishment as a target domain of eating is related to the sub-domains of hunger and food intake. In the example below, the human agent has the desire and capacity to punish the human object NP. This desire and capacity corresponds to the hunger for food and the act of food intake.

26. Òbí chì-rì Chíké íchí nà ́ó gà-è-rí áńú yá
Obi warn-IND Chike warning that 3S AUX-AGR-eat meat 3S
'Obi warned Chike that he would severely punish him (Lit. Obi warned Chike that he would eat Chike's flesh).

Actor and Undergoer Oriented Elaborations

The constructions in examples (27 and 28) illustrate expressions where the action of the subject NP and its effect on the object NP in the event, both contribute aspects of the meaning of the metaphor. The subject NPs with the semantic role of agent, carry over actions that adversely affect the object NPs with the semantic role of patient. In both sentences, the eating done by the human subject NPs has all the trappings of the sub-domains of eating but its effect on the object NP is destructive. This destructive effect on the object NP is necessary for the full interpretation of the metaphor.

Profligacy

Examples (26 and 27) illustrate the metaphorical mappings onto the domain of profligacy. Eating here is conceptualised as something that is used to waste resources. The verb *rí* in these examples has another verb suffixed to it forming a compound verb. In (26 and 27) the verbs *dà* 'fall' and *gbú* 'kill' are attached to *rí* and this modifies the meaning of the verb.

26. Ùmùáká áhù rídà-rà ́nà há
Children DET eat down-IND father 3PL
'Those children wasted their father's resources (Lit. Those children ate down their father)'
27. Há rìgbù-rù ́nà há
3PL eat and kill-IND father 3PL
'They wasted their father's resources (Lit. Those children ate down their father)'

The sub-domains of eating are mapped onto the mental images of (26 and 27). The hunger for food is mapped onto the domain of the inordinate desire for the human subject NP to be prodigal with their father's resources. All other sub-domains of eating can also be mapped onto this domain of profligacy. However, for the Igbo speaker, this kind of eating is disapproved. The suffixed verbs show that eating of this nature leads to the destruction of the object NP, who is also a human being. In other words this kind of eating is an exhibition of greed.

Conclusion

The main concern of this study has been to record the metaphorical extensions of syntactic constructions with the verb *rí* 'eat'. In doing this the study maps the basic activities of eating onto various target domains which serve as metaphor in the language. These target domains fall into two categories, actor-oriented and undergoer-oriented category distinctions. The actor-oriented category shows that the metaphoric elaborations depend on the encoding of the action of the verb on the subject NP, while the undergoer-oriented extensions derive their meaning from the adversative features of the object NP. The target domains within the actor-oriented category include; instilling discipline, enjoying the gains of enterprise, enjoying wealth/legacy and escaping danger. The undergoer-oriented extensions include mental pain, falling in love, loss of life and profligacy.

The metaphoric extensions studied here are also the investigation of an aspect of the Igbo world view as revealed through the grammar of the language. The findings of the study would contribute to the growing cross-linguistic literature on the metaphorical potential of eating as source domain.

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