

DIGITISATION OF BODIJA MARKET LANGUAGE USE AND CULTURE

Oluwakayode Dare Komolafe

Department of Linguistics and African Languages
University of Ibadan, Ibadan Nigeria
kayodespL78@gmail.com

Oluwabusayo Ajayi

Department of Linguistics and African Languages
University of Ibadan, Ibadan Nigeria

Abstract

This study documents and analyzes the unique linguistic and cultural vocabulary used in Bodija Market, one of the largest food and commodity markets in West Africa, located in Ibadan, Nigeria. Using a qualitative research design, the study employs purposive sampling and face-to-face interviews with traders, buyers, and market leaders to collect lexical data. The research focuses on specialised terms related to commodities, bargaining expressions, measurements, slang, leadership titles, and greetings, reflecting the market's socio-cultural dynamics and economic interactions. The collected data were processed and organised using Field Works Language Explorer (FLEX), a digital lexicography tool, to create a searchable, multimedia Yoruba-English dictionary. The study adopts a tripartite theoretical framework combining Descriptive Linguistics, Specialised Lexicography, and Digital Lexicography to ensure accurate representation, contextual relevance, and accessibility of the documented terms. Findings reveal that Bodija Market's lexicon is not only functional for trade but also serves as a vehicle for cultural expression, social cohesion, and identity preservation. Terms such as *Ìyálójà* (market woman leader), *òsàrò* (rebuke for unserious bargaining), and *alábò* (head porter) illustrate the deep interconnection between language, culture, and commerce. The study also highlights the role of digital tools in preserving endangered lexical resources in rapidly urbanising contexts. This research contributes to the fields of lexicography, sociolinguistics, and Yoruba studies by providing a structured, culturally annotated

digital lexicon. It recommends further documentation of market vocabularies across Yoruba-speaking regions and advocates for the integration of such resources into educational and cultural preservation initiatives.

Keywords: *Digitisation, Language use, Market, Bodija*

Introduction

Language is an important facet of the society. It is a means for individuals within any society to communicate with one another (Caldwell, 2023). Crystal (2008) DeSaussure (1916) defines language the concrete act of speaking, writing or signing in a given situation. Language not only serves as a means of communication but also a vessel for expression and identity. The Yoruba language is one of the major official languages in Nigeria. The estimated number of Yoruba speakers is 47 million, according to the Ethnologue (2024). It has varying dialects spoken predominantly in southwestern states of Nigeria: Lagos, Oyo, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun and Ogun. It is rich in expressions, idioms, and terminologies that reflect the people's socio-cultural life, including their market system.

The term market does not have a consensus definition. It can mean different things to many people as it attracts wide interest. As emphasised by Kotler and Armstrong (2018), a market represents an arrangement where buyers and sellers come in contact to exchange goods and services. Similarly, the English Oxford Dictionary describes a market as a place where people buy and sell goods, in a specified location. A market is a structured setting where buyers and sellers meet to exchange goods and services, often guided by economic regulations, social and cultural norms. Within the market place, especially in bustling trade centers like the Bodija Market in Ibadan, traders and buyers interact using specialised words and phrases that may not be easily understood by outsiders even when they speak the Yoruba language. These market terms include names of products, measurements, negotiation expressions and coded phrases.

Among the Yoruba, markets are more than economic centers; they are places where relationships and interactions are

actively maintained. In Yoruba society, markets historically serve as hubs of economic activities and cultural exchange. A day in the market is typically full of bargaining, exchange, laughter, gists and sometimes playful banTERS between buyers and sellers. Markets are sometimes named after their location or features, and these names are connected to history, culture, founders or even geographical location. For example, Oja Oba meaning King's market; the location of this market was near the king's palace. Similarly, the current location of Bodija Market was originally a fighting arena before the government relocated some traders from Orita Merin to the area which is now known as the new Bodija Market.

Market terms like greetings and styles used by sellers also reflect Yoruba oral traditions. For instance, a seller may address a customer as 'iyá okomi' (my mother-in-law); the person is not actually her mother-in-law, but it is a polite way to get the customer's attention. Expressions like these are common in Yoruba markets, especially among the women traders, and they help create rapport and familiarity. The Yoruba proverb "*ayé lojà, òrun niilé*" (the world is market, heaven is home) captures the importance of market in Yoruba worldview. It portrays market as a temporary but vital place like life itself, where people gather, interact, and eventually depart. This shows that market is not only an economic or transaction center but also an arena that reflects the existence of humans, essence of social interaction and cultural importance of trade in Yoruba society. In addition, there is a structural arrangement of roles in Yoruba markets. Positions are assigned to people who are not just leaders but keepers of market rules, cultural practices and moral values. Disputes in the market are settled via dialogue and traditions in Yoruba. These figures include 'iyálojà' (market mother), 'bàbálojà' (market father), 'akòwé' (market secretary), etc.

Bodija Market, established in 1987 in Ibadan, Oyo State, is one of the largest food and commodity markets in West Africa. It attracts traders and buyers across Nigeria and even neighboring countries. Its establishment came as a result of growth and

overpopulation at the OritaMerin foodstuff market in Ibadan. The government relocated many foodstuff traders in OritaMerin alongside traders at Sango to Bodija Market. While Yoruba is the dominant language of communication, the market is also home to Hausa traders dealing in grain, pepper, and onion section and a small number of Igbo traders dealing in electronics and Igbo foods. This multilingual mix creates an environment where Yoruba speakers interact with Hausa, Igbo, making it a bilingual environment.

Trading is a manifestation of human socialization. According to Sapir (1921), language is “a guide to social reality”. The way buyers and sellers speak will determine how transactions will unfold. The persuasive phrases, the playful banter and witty bargaining are what make the market and without proper understanding of these terms, one may not fully enjoy the dynamics of the market. Documenting and analyzing these terms are important, not only for an academic purpose but also for preserving a living aspect of Yoruba culture that is constantly evolving in response to contact with other languages. This study has its focus on Yoruba as its dominant language used by natives and non-Yoruba buyers and sellers within the market for transactions and communication. Moreover, with the lacuna on machine translation of indigenous Nigerian Languages and the cultural and linguistic imperialism of English language in Nigeria eroding domains of language use, most significantly, the primary domains, efforts on preservation through documentation and digitisation are encouraged. It is on such background that this study is based.

Statement of the Problem

A number of linguistic related studies have been carried out on Bodija market. Odebo (2012) examined sociolinguistic strategies in marketing discourse with focus on multilingualism, code-switching, and euphemism among others. The study examines methods of communication which intrinsically demonstrate that Yoruba is in competition with other languages and could lose some of its usage. Similarly, Alo and Soneye’s (2014) study on haggling

as a socio-pragmatic strategy in selected urban markets is a discourse on bargaining strategies which reveals the competition of Yoruba with English and other languages even in the heart of a major Yoruba city. While these studies are sociolinguistic discourse on marketing strategies on Bodija, we see a deeper concern on the need for language revitalisation and preservation. If English continues to dominate all domains of language use (Fadoro, 2008), and Yoruba have to compete, there is a tendency that a number of Yoruba expressions and cultural representation in the marketing domain will be lost. Beyond the immediate gap, there is also the problem of innovations in machine translation and natural language processing. Despite its economic and cultural significance, the unique vocabulary in terms of Yoruba names for traditional and common goods, stores, market chieftaincy and roles among many others of Bodija Market remains largely undocumented in academic literature. Market-related terms are predominantly transmitted orally, rendering them vulnerable to erosion, semantic shift, or outright extinction amid urbanisation, globalisation, and language contact. Beyond the documentation, there is also the need to provide a sociolinguistic description to lexical entries as used in the market domain. For example, *alabo* in the market discourse bear different meanings such that it could be labourers helping to carry load or seller of plates, with the first currently predominant in usage by Yoruba and non-Yoruba Bodija market users. This gap in documentation and sociolinguistic description not only impedes linguistic and anthropological inquiry into the nexus of trade, language, and culture but also obscures an important dimension of Yoruba heritage. Without systematic preservation, the nuanced meanings and contextual usage of these terms risk being lost to future generations.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This research aims to develop a digital lexical entry of Bodija Market Yoruba expressions and to provide a sociolinguistic

description of specialised terminologies used in Bodija Market. The objectives are to:

- i. compile and digitalised sizeable comprehensive lexicon of market-specific terms used in Bodija Market in a Yoruba-English bilingual format.
- ii. provide a sociolinguistic description of some of the specialised Yoruba expressions in Bodija market.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following questions:

- a. What are the commonly used Yoruba terminologies in Bodija Market, and how can they be classified?
- b. What are the sociolinguistic interpretations of Yoruba lexical entries used in Bodija market that are not commonly used in other domains?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to linguistic preservation. It creates a durable digital archive of endangered market lexicon, safeguarding it against sociolinguistic relegation and at worst death. It is also important for corporal resource development; the resulting digital dictionary serves as a resource for sociolinguistics, computational linguistics, anthropologists, educators, language learners, and cultural preservationists.

Scope and Limitations

The study is geographically confined to Bodija Market in Ibadan, Oyo State. It focuses on the linguistic and cultural dimensions of market communication, documenting Yoruba terms related to commodities, trade, measurement, social interaction, and leadership. The research does not aim to produce an exhaustive dictionary of all Yoruba market terms, nor does it conduct an economic survey or a full ethnography of all trader groups. Its primary focus is the documentation and analysis of the language that defines this specific

market space at the time of the study (2025). This underlying factor formed part of the limitation with only 300 entries digitalised from the compilation.

Literature Review

Language Documentation

One of the most important fields in contemporary linguistics is language documentation. Its primary focus is the process of gathering, conserving, and researching the real-world language usage of people. The primary goal is to preserve languages, particularly those that are endangered or have not yet been adequately documented, in order to prevent the voices, information, and customs they convey from vanishing over time. As stated by Woodbury (2003), language documentation is more than just listing words or describing grammar rules, its goal is to capture authentic dialogues, meanings, and cultural practices that shape human communication; it goes beyond simply describing how a language functions to include demonstrating how it relates to people's everyday lives and the culture in which it is spoken. Himmelmann (2006) defined language documentation as a methodical process which involves naturalistic data collection, annotation and archiving. Language documentation has advanced quickly in recent years as a result of new study techniques and digital technologies that facilitate archiving and promote more community involvement. These changes have made it possible for linguists to gather, store, and share valuable language data more effectively. Most importantly, they help to keep the voices, stories, and traditions of different communities alive and available for future generations (Himmelmann, 2006; Akinlabi and Connell, 2008; Seyfeddinipur, 2016).

Projects like the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme (ELDP) and the DoBeS initiative have widened the reach of linguistic preservation by storing texts, audio, and videos in open-access archives (Woodbury, 2011). Even with this, progress has not been evenly distributed as many minority languages remain

undocumented even with their rich and social value. There is often a gap between documentation and description. Some projects gather plenty of linguistic data but fail to analyze them deeply or link them to the social and contextual use of the language (Akpan et al., 2016). The scholars suggested a better and balanced approach; one that combines real data collection with cultural interpretation, so that linguistic records are accurate and meaningful to the communities they belong to. In African contexts, one major challenge facing language documentation, as observed by Ngué'um (2020), is the multilingual nature of communication. In many communities, whether in markets, homes, or public gatherings, people naturally switch between languages depending on whom they are talking to or the situation at hand. This kind of everyday multilingualism makes it difficult to apply traditional documentation methods that view languages as fixed, separate systems; language documentation needs to be adaptable enough to capture people's actual speech patterns, including code-switching, borrowing, and linguistic mixing.

Another important shift in recent years is the move toward community-based documentation. Akumbu (2024) stressed that language documentation should not treat speakers as research subjects, but as contributors who take part in deciding what and how their language is documented. This method guarantees that the outcome of the research, like dictionaries, recordings, or linguistic records, truly captures the voices, values, and culture of the language speakers, not just the perspective of the researcher thereby leading to more sustainable, and culturally significant language documentation. This point of view informs the interest of digitising culture and trade-oriented lexical items from the point of view of the writer.

From the foregoing, it can be inferred that language documentation is not only a theoretical project but also practically important in a multilingual setting such as Bodija Market, where Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, and the English language coexist throughout everyday encounters; it helps preserve the unique trading expressions, greetings, and leadership terms that shape market life,

while also revealing how people use language to connect, negotiate, and maintain cultural identity in a shared social space. It can help preserve market-related vocabulary, traditional greetings, and leadership titles such as 'Ìyàlòjà' (market women leader) and 'Bàbàlòjà' (market men leader), while also shedding light on how people communicate and express authority in such a dynamic environment. A good documentation project in this setting would involve recording real-life conversations, like bargaining, greetings, leadership meetings or conflict resolutions along with detailed information about the speakers and their backgrounds. This kind of documentation would not only enrich linguistic research but also serve as a living archive of Yoruba market life, culture, and social organisation. Lexicography, the discipline of dictionary-making, is a fundamental division between theory and practical execution. Theoretical lexicography (meta-lexicography) grapples with the principles of defining meaning, structuring entries, and classifying lexical data (Hartmann & James, 1998). Practical lexicography involves the applied craft of data collection, entry composition, and editorial process (Landau, 2001). Although this distinction is foundational, contemporary scholarship has evolved beyond such a basic understanding.

A pivotal shift is the predominance of the function theory (Bergenholtz & Tarp, 2003), which states that dictionaries are tools designed for specific user needs in contextual cases. This moves lexicography from a prescriptive, language-internal focus to a user-oriented design philosophy. For the present study, this theory is not merely contextual but methodologically central. A Bodija Market lexicon must not be perceived as an exhaustive academic catalog but as a functional resource. Its design—the selection of entries, the manner of definitions, the inclusion and types of examples—must be determined by the anticipated needs of individual user groups: traders verifying terms, language learners navigating cultural nuance, or researchers analyzing sociolinguistic patterns.

Lexicography and Yoruba Studies

The relationship between lexicography and Yoruba studies is quite close, because any attempt to study Yoruba must at some point deal with words, their forms, meanings and cultural uses. In fact, one could say that Yoruba scholarship would be incomplete without some lexical documentation. Yoruba, being one of the most spoken African languages, is not just a medium of communication but also a carrier of history, philosophy and identity. In Yoruba studies, lexicography goes beyond simply listing words; it extends to reflecting the worldview of the people. For instance, dictionaries and glossaries of Yoruba proverbs, chants and market terms do not just give meaning; they also open windows into how the Yoruba think, persuade and negotiate (Ehineni, 2016). This is important because words in Yoruba are usually tied to context; a greeting at dawn is not the same as a greeting at dusk (Adeoye, 2014), and bargaining terms in markets carry social force that a literal translation may not capture. Another way Yoruba studies link with lexicography is in the area of language development. Scholars have pointed out that Yoruba faces pressure from English, and one way to strengthen its use is to expand and modernise its lexical resources (Obikudo, 2024). Dictionaries, whether general or specialised, help languages remain relevant in schools, digital spaces and even in academic research.

Lexicographic work on the Yoruba language has a long and layered history, stretching from the missionary period of the 19th century to the digital innovations of today. These works not only documented vocabulary but also reflected the cultural, religious and scholarly concerns of their time. One of the earliest attempts was Samuel Ajayi Crowther's *Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language* (1843) and later *Dictionary of the Yoruba Language* (1852). Crowther's study signified the first attempt at written documentation of words used in the Yoruba language. It has since then become a point of reference for the study of the Yoruba language. Afterwards, R.C Abraham compiled the *Dictionary of Modern Yoruba* (1958). This dictionary provided a modern, detailed and comprehensive

record of Yoruba vocabulary, capable of serving the educational interests of scholars and students of the Yoruba language throughout the 20th century (Awoyale, 2008).

As the 20th century neared its end, specialised dictionaries became quite common. One noteworthy example is the compilation by Bamgbose, Oloruntoba-Oju and Thomas titled ‘Yoruba Meta-language series’, which was published in two volumes (1990 and 2005). Although the compilation cannot be classified as a general dictionary, it can function as a terminology dictionary for purposes of education and scholarship. These works showed that beyond being a word list, lexicography can capture special vocabulary, a model which is necessary for market-context lexicon.

Similarly, Oyekan Owomoyela's *Yoruba Proverbs* (2005), though structured differently from conventional dictionaries, is a repository of over 5,000 Yoruba proverbs arranged systematically with translations and cultural notes so that the context of usage can be better understood by readers. The compilation shows how possible it is for oral history and traditions to be treated in a similar manner as a conventional dictionary, thereby preserving cultural practices associated with everyday speech and conversations.

When scholars talk about Yoruba lexicography today, it is way beyond printed books and includes online and digital dictionaries. For instance, the Yoruba Name project by Kola Tubosun comprises a multimedia crowd-sourced dictionary of over 6000 Yoruba names with meanings, pronunciations and audio recordings. Fakinlede's (2003) *Yoruba–English: Modern Practical Dictionary* was written in a way that is easily accessible to people without struggling with heavy academic explanations. Another good example is Philip Akoda's *Yoruba Dictionary App* (2024), developed under the AFLANG Project. This app did more than just provide meanings; it provided phonemic transcriptions, synonyms, antonyms, hypernyms, hyponyms, as well as pronunciations and dialectal variants from over twelve Yoruba dialects. This is very significant because it shows how technology can make a dictionary more interactive and at the same time help preserve the richness of

Yoruba as it is spoken in different parts of the world. Also, DejiOlaiya, who has produced works like the Digital Yoruba Dictionary (2019) and Learn to Speak Yoruba (2023), has projects on a large scale; the dictionary contains more than 100,000 entries. It also includes Yoruba proverbs, personal names, and cultural notes, and is combined with learning materials for students of Yoruba. Likewise, Osunade, Dawodu, and Philips (2015) developed an electronic, data-driven Yoruba dictionary. All these are aimed at promoting, digitalising and preserving the Yoruba language.

All these digital projects show that Yoruba lexicography is not stagnant; it is changing and adapting to new ideas and growth. Dictionaries today are no longer just lists of words; they now include sound, context, variation, and even cultural information.

Language and Market Interaction

Markets serve as more than just locations for the exchange of goods and services; they are dynamic spaces where language itself is used as a medium of exchange. For instance, in Bodija, every expression matters, not just for transactions but also to establish rapport, uphold cultural norms, and foster confidence between buyers and sellers. The market space shows how language and livelihood are inseparable. Bamgbose (1991) points out that African languages like Yoruba are much more than a way to share information; they carry culture, shape relationships, and reflect who people are.

A key aspect of Yoruba market communication is the use of greetings. Greetings are important in Yoruba culture and they play a meaningful role in trade. Greetings are expressions of respect and acknowledgment of social bonds (Akindele, 1990). In Yoruba markets, greetings like 'ẹkúòrò ajé o' (“well done on your hustle for sales”) or 'sé ẹ tà?' (“hope you had good sales?”) often begin negotiations; these greetings help to build a friendly atmosphere and often make negotiations easier. However, ignoring the greeting or refusing to say hello can result in coldness or even harsh treatment. Bargaining in Yoruba markets, as well, is more like a ritualised verbal negotiation. Typical exchanges include: Buyer:

'èlóniṣúyín? Sè ó gbààpòkan?' (“How much is your yam? Will it go for two hundred naira?”) Seller: 'kògbà, èmuniàpòmèta' (“No, one bag costs six hundred naira”).

Fakuade, et al (2021) noted that proverbs and figurative expressions are frequently used in Yoruba bargaining to soften disagreement, to persuade, or to humor the other party. For instance, a seller may jokingly say 'ẹ fẹ kí n jẹunlóni?' (“you don’t want me to eat today?”) when a buyer insists on a low price. A buyer may, in turn, comfort a seller by saying 'ènitómọọjọ òwòlómọọjọ ikú' (“only the one who knows the day of sales knows the day of death”), meaning that better sales days will come.

In most markets, Bodija inclusively, the way a person uses language often shapes how they are responded to. A buyer who speaks Yoruba fluently, especially with familiar market phrases, usually gains smoother negotiations. On the other hand, someone who struggles with the language may find it harder to connect with sellers. This can sometimes affect the prices they are offered. As a result, in the marketplace, language proficiency helps in making bargaining easier.

Market Leadership and Chieftaincy in Bodija Market

The title 'Oloyè' in Yoruba which translates to ‘chief’ in English is given to town heads, leaders of cults, market leader and heads of lineages. The importance of chiefs in the community cannot be overemphasised, and they perform several vital functions that vary with their positions. They have the basic responsibility of administering justice, seeing to the smooth running of the community and monitoring the welfare of the people. They are all part of the council headed by the Oba, the King. The selection of chiefs relies heavily on the type of chieftaincy conferment practised in such a community, whether it is by hereditary titles, non-hereditary titles and honorary titles. The chief in charge of running the market is called the “iyaloja”, all affairs regarding the market are heard by the king through her.

The Bodija market was originally a fighting arena, which is reflected in its name. The market was established in October 1987; its establishment came as a result of growth and overcrowding at the 'Orita Merin' foodstuff market in Ibadan. The Oyo State government under the military administration of Tunji Olurin then relocated many food stuff traders from 'Orita Merin' to the new Bodija market in 1987 which is in close proximity to a timber market. Along with the produce traders, cattle sellers from Sango, Ibadan, were also relocated to the market. The location of the market is close to the Oyo-Ogbomoso-Ilorin inter-state road network, allowing produce farmers within and outside the state easier access to transport their produce to the market.

Across various Yorubastates and markets, an Iyaloja is usually democratically chosen by her constituents (and is thereafter confirmed by the “*Oba*”) or chosen by the oba. In rare situations, like the case of the Iyaloja of Lagos in 2013, the deceased Iyaloja can choose her successor before her death. Their functions are also very identical across Yoruba land. As the leader of market women and traders, the *Ìyálójà* (literally, “Mother of the Market”) supervises trade operations, arbitrates conflicts, upholds market regulations, and speaks on behalf of traders to government officials and traditional rulers. Current accounts highlight the Iyaloja's function in coordinating market taxes, resolving disputes, and inspiring women for social causes (Gadebo, 2010).

Leadership titles like *Ìyálójà* and *Bàbálójà* have also gained formal recognition at governmental and institutional levels. For instance, legislation and policy in Oyo State now formally acknowledge '*Ìyálójàs*’/*Bàbálójàs*’ roles as part of the official market governance architecture responsible for coordinating market affairs and advising local government bodies. This incorporation of indigenous leadership into state structures illustrates how traditional authority adapts within modern governance frameworks.

Within Bodija market, the administrative system is layered and segmented. The market is divided into sections for instance, yam section, yam flour section, Sawmill section, beans section, etc.

Each section maintains its own association with leadership positions such as chairman, vice chairman, treasurer, financial secretary, and editor /records officer. Some sections contain sub-groups linked to ethnic communities, example, beans section is divided into 'Egbé Ìrò Igi' (for Hausa traders) and 'Egbé InúOjà' (for Yoruba traders), each with its own chairman. Across Bodija, there are approximately twenty-four sections, each overseen by its sectional chairman. Above the sectional authorities stand 'Ìyálójà and Bábálójà', who serve as general heads of the market. They receive reports from sectional leaders and represent the market in dealings with government, acting as intermediaries. They are often the ones who carry the market's collective voice to local authorities. Beneath them is the 'AlagaOjà', who supervises detailed administrative matters that may exceed the capacity or scope of the sectional chairmen.

Theoretical Framework

This study is a compilation of the lexicon of Bodija Market discourse; therefore, the framework is drawn from three major perspectives: Descriptive Linguistics, Specialised Lexicography, and Digital Lexicography. Together, these approaches provide a balanced foundation for understanding both the linguistic realities of the market and the methodological tools needed to document them effectively.

Descriptive Linguistics

The first pillar of this research is descriptive linguistics, which is primarily concerned with recording and analyzing how a language is usually used by its speakers, without imposing external judgements about correctness or prestige. Descriptive linguistics provides the tools for observing language in its natural context (Grimes, 1968). This viewpoint is crucial because communication at Bodija Market extends beyond economic exchange, greetings, bargaining strategies, playful banter, and culturally embedded expressions all form part of the linguistic environment. Rather than comparing if expressions are standard Yoruba or non-standard, descriptive

linguistics values them as real reflections of living speech. This framework ensures that lexicon captures real usage of word in the market, thereby preserving the cultural richness embedded in everyday communication.

Specialised Lexicography

The second theoretical foundation is specialised lexicography, which deals with the designing of dictionaries or lexicons for a specific subject field or domain. Bergenholtz and Tarp (1995) argue that such dictionaries are fundamentally different from general-purpose ones, since they must address the needs of a clearly defined user group and a domain. In this study, the domain is Bodija Market and the user group comprises the traders, buyers, students of Yoruba, and researchers. The market context naturally limits the scope of the lexicon to terms and expressions relevant to commerce, bargaining, greetings, and interactional routines. Specialised lexicography therefore guides the selection of entries, the type of information to include (meaning, usage, cultural context), and the arrangement of data in a way that makes sense for the intended users. Fuertes-Olivera and Tarp (2014) emphasise that specialised dictionaries must be user-oriented: they should not only list words but also show how those words function in practice. For instance, the same expression can have different meanings depending on whether it is uttered by a seller trying to attract customers or by a buyer trying to negotiate price. Specialised lexicography provides guidance on how to define the vocabulary, design the entries, and address the specific needs of users.

Digital Lexicography

Digital lexicography is the modern way of presenting lexicon in accessible formats. Unlike traditional works, digital lexicons allow for interactive features such as search functions, hyperlinks, audio files, and regular updates. Makarov (2024) stresses that digital lexicography changes the nature of dictionary-making by

introducing the need to organise information in searchable and user-friendly formats.

For this study, digital lexicography helps in transforming the Bodija Market lexicon into a searchable electronic resource where users can easily access terms, hear their pronunciation, and view them in real-life examples.

Methodology

This study is grounded in a qualitative research design, guided by the goal of language digitalisation. A qualitative approach is suitable because the study focuses on understanding how traders and buyers in Bodija Market naturally use market-related expressions, bargaining terms, and other culture-specific vocabulary. Instead of relying on numbers or statistics, the design allowed the researcher to pay attention to meaning, context, speaker intention, and real-life usage of each term. In alignment with language digitalisation, all the collected terms were processed using digital lexicography tool called FLEx; each term was entered with its grammatical class, English gloss, definition, category, and usage in Yoruba along with its English translation. This ensured that data were not only analysed but also preserved in an organised digital format for future reference and further research.

The area selected for this study was Bodija Market, located in the Ibadan North Local Government, Oyo State, Nigeria. It is one of the busiest, most important trading centers in Ibadan, and indeed Nigeria, known for its wide range of goods and its lively mix of people from different backgrounds. It was chosen for this study because it provided a rich environment where the Yoruba language is used for trading activities on a daily basis. The most important aspect of business in Bodija Market is communication. While different languages can be heard across the market, Yoruba remains the main language of interaction, especially among traders and local buyers. English, Nigerian Pidgin, Hausa, Igbo, and other local languages are sometimes used, depending on who is speaking. This

mix of languages makes the market a perfect setting for studying how people use words and expressions in trade.

This study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability technique that allows the researcher to intentionally select participants who possessed relevant knowledge or experience (Etikan, *et al.*, 2016). By using this technique, the researchers were able to choose participants who use Yoruba in their everyday interactions and are actively involved in the trading activities of Bodija Market. Hence, participants were drawn from various sections of the market such as the yam section, yam flour section, beans section, pepper section, grain section, palm oil area, and sawmill. In total, fifteen (15) participants were interviewed- eight female and seven male, within ages 18-60. They included traders, buyers, and one market leader ('Ìgbàkẹ̀jì Aláḡàlṣòlṣù', *Vice Chairman of the Yam Section*). The participants were selected because of their communicative experience and their ability to provide authentic examples of market-related vocabulary, expressions, and interactions. This technique ensured that the data collected reflected the linguistic richness and variation present within Bodija Market, as each section has its own unique language patterns, terms, and the expressions used in daily trading situations. Data were gathered using direct elicitation method: face-to-face interviews and direct observation in Bodija Market. The interviews were conducted in Yoruba and occasionally mixed with Pidgin and English depending on the speaker. The researcher used a phone recorder to capture conversations and responses, while brief notes were taken in a jotter during each session.

The fifteen (15) participants interviewed were selected from different sections of the market to ensure that the data represented a variety of trading experiences and language use. The table below shows the distribution of participants according to their trade section, role, gender, and age. Informed consent was sought from the participants and was documented.

Table 1 Socio-demographic details of participants

Name	Section	Age	Gender	Occupation
Jelili Gbamgbose	Yam	46	Male	Vice chairman for yam section (trader)
Bisi Oladipo	Yam	40	Female	Trader
Bosedede Awe	Yam flour	49	Female	Trader
Iya Samad	Yam flour	50	Female	Trader
Iya Atoke	Pepper	60	Female	Trader
John	Grain	35	Male	Trader
Islamiyah	Grain	45	Female	Trader
Fatai	Meat	25	Male	Trader
Saliu Azeez	Beans	60	Male	Trader
Sodiq	Beans	28	Male	Trader
Alimot	Pepper	18	Female	Trader
Muhammed	Onions		Male	Trader
Mummy Titi		45	Female	Buyer
Pelumi		30	Female	Buyer
Isekolowo Akeem			Male	Buyer

Dictionary Making Model

The dictionary for this research is built using FLEx (FieldWorks Language Explorer), which is a software developed by SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) specifically designed for organising and analysing language data and this made it highly recommendable for the documentation of terminologies used in Bodija Market. FLEx allows the researcher to input lexical words, their meanings, examples of use, semantic domains and grammatical information in a structured way. This feature made it easier to manage and analyze the data collected from traders and other market participants.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section is mainly divided into two parts: the first part is the presentation of the digitisation of collected market expressions, while the second part is a sociolinguistic description of entries intended to provide the cultural and communicative use of the entries.

Bodija Market Lexical Entries

Each dictionary entry consists of several components. First is the headword, which represents the Yoruba lexical item, as used in the Bodija market. This is followed by the grammatical class, which identifies the word category, such as noun, verb, or adjective. The English gloss of each entry provides the equivalent of the Yoruba word, while the English definition offers an explanation of its usage within a market context. In addition, each entry includes example sentences in Yoruba alongside its English translation to aid comprehension. The entries are also placed into categories, while certain entries have notes which provide extra information like cultural notes, health benefits or other names. For instance, the entry ‘àádùn’ shown in Figure 1 highlights all the components of the entry as described above.

Àádùn *Note:* It is usually sold by hawkers or petty traders
Noun. A traditional snack made from roasted maize flour mixed with palm oil, salt, and sometimes sugar. **Mo ra àádùn lẹwọ onfiri** I bought local maize cake from the hawker.
Category: **Food.**



Figure 1: a snipped view of a dictionary entry

To aid pronunciation, audio entries of each lexical item were recorded using FLEx's built-in media tool (the sound field), which allows audio files to be directly attached to each headword. In figure 2, the arrow indicates the audio recording of the entry.

The screenshot shows a software interface for a lexical entry. At the top, there's a title bar 'Entry' and a checkbox 'Show Hidden Fields'. Below the title bar, the entry is displayed in Yoruba and English. The main area is divided into several sections:

- Lexeme Form:** Yor: **Ilá iròkò** (with an audio icon), Yor: [input field]
- Morph Type:** **phrase** (with a blue arrow pointing to the audio icon)
- Citation Form:** Yor: [input field]
- Complex Forms:** [input field]
- Components:** [input field]
- Note:** Eng: [input field], Yor: [input field]
- Messages:** [input field]
- Sense 1:** Eng: **The big okro variety**
- Gloss:** Yor: **The big okro variety**
- Definition:** Eng: **A type of okro known for its big sturdy nature, bigger and thicker pods**
- Grammatical Info:** Yor: **Noun** (dropdown menu)
- Example:** Yor: **Ilá iròkò má fí wón**
- Translation:** Eng: **The big okro variety is usually expensive**
- Type:** **Free translation** (dropdown menu)

At the bottom right, there is a page number '141/300'.

Figure 2: a snipped view of a complete entry, including the audio entry

For space and the purpose of archival and accessibility to users, exports of the lexical entries are stored in a document (.docx) and HTML format on Drive, which can be accessed via this open source link: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gX9kAahV4kvPv3Oiy9xzJQwvuwfQynLh?usp=sharing>. The lexical entry comprises 300 words (some of which are discussed below) that can be accessed digitally or printed for archival and interdisciplinary purposes.

Sociolinguistic Description of Bodija Market Lexical Items

The lexical items, words or expressions that relate to the vocabulary and meaning of a language collected from study and survey of Bodija market showed that beyond a word list, there exists a system of language shaped by daily interaction, trade, and shared experience amongst people who visit the market. Therefore, to draw valuable

resources from this rich linguistic collection, the words and expressions have been grouped into six major categories on the basis of how they function or are used in real-life market communication. The aim of this grouping is to provide a clearer picture of the language practices that define Bodija’s trading environment and the social relationships built around it. The entries presented are not exclusively single-word items; they include multi-word expressions, interrogative forms, bargaining idioms, honorific titles, and culturally bound phrases. This is because the Bodija Market lexicon reflects real-life communicative practices rather than dictionary-style isolated words.

Table 2 Names of commodities

Lexical items	Gloss	Description/Usage
Àádùn	Local maize snack	Traditional snack from maize flour, palm oil and salt
Àgbàdo	Maize	A type of grain that can be eaten fresh, roasted or ground into flour
Àgbọ̀n	Coconut	A hard--shelled tropical fruit containing edible white inner part and liquid
Álómù	Alum	A white solid substance used to purify water and sometimes for skin care
Alùbòsà	Onion	A round vegetable with many layers, used for cooking and adding flavor to food
Bọ̀kọ̀tọ̀	Cow leg	The leg of a cow usually sold in pieces to cook soup or stew
Èfọ̀	Vegetables	Leafy plants sold in the market for cooking
Eja	Fish	An aquatic vertebrate with gills that is used for food
Èso	Fruit	The edible seed or fleshy product of a plant
Erèé	Beans	A traditional or dialectal Yoruba word for beans commonly used by

		elders or speakers from Oyo and surrounding areas
Èlùbọ ịṣu	Yam flour	Flour made from dried and ground yam used in preparing amala in Yoruba cuisine
Ịṣu	Yam	A tuber crop cultivated for food
Orógbó	Bitter kola	A type of kola nut with a strong bitter taste
Láfún	Cassava flour	A type of flour made from cassava used to prepare amalalafun in Yoruba cuisine

Table 3 Bargaining expressions

Lexical items	Gloss	Meaning
Ajéyín	Sales blessing	A phrase used to stylishly request blessings or good sales for the day
Ajé á wá	Sales will come	A prayerful or hopeful expression used in the market to affirm that sales will come
Ẹ bá mi ràá	Patronise me	A market expression used by traders to call customers to buy their goods
Ẹ mágbá mi	Do not cheat me	A phrase customers say to traders to warn them not to overcharge them during purchase
Ẹ mu wá	Bring it	A phrase customers use to tell the trader to hand over good after payment has been settled
Ẹ wá mu	Come and take it	A phrase traders use to show final acceptance of buyer's bargaining price
Irúèwo?	What type?	A question used to ask about the kind, type or category of an item a customer wants to buy
Jára	Bonus	An additional amount of goods given to customer for free after a purchase
Kògbà	Not acceptable	A phrase used during negotiation to indicate that buyer's suggested price cannot be agreed on

Kòdín	No reduction	A phrase used to indicate that the price of a commodity will not be reduced further or is fixed during bargaining
Mélódó?	How many?	A question used to ask number or quantity of goods a customer wants
Şé ó gbà?	Will you take this price?	A bargaining question customers ask traders to know if the seller will agree to the price they are offering
Ọmọge	Maiden	A friendly term traders use to call or attract young female buyers to their stall
Ìdìlèkẹ	Beaded waist	A friendly term traders use to call or attract young female buyers to their stall

Table 4 Measurement terms

Lexical items	Gloss	Usage
Dọsin	Dozen	Usually used to sell countable items
Kóngò	Congo	Used to measure grains or flours.
Ìlékan	Three pieces	Used to categorise a set of yam tubers
Ìlájọ	Half of quarter	Usually used to measure items in a sack e.g Rice, beans, flours etc
Ìlàrin	Quarter	Usually used to measure items in a sack e.g Rice, beans, flours etc
Ìlé	Portion	Used to describe a small heap
Agolo	Measuring cup	
Ìlémárùùn	Thirty pieces of yams	Used to categorise 5 sets of yam tubers
Ìléméjì	Six pieces of yams	Used to categorise 2 sets of yam tubers
Ogúnilé	Sixty pieces of yams	Used to categorise 20 sets of yam tubers
Ọwọ	Handful	Used to quantify goods measurable by hands eg Onions
Ìdì	Heap	
Ìdajì	Half	Usually used to measure items in a sack e.g Rice, beans, flours etc

Table 5 Slang and figurative expressions

Lexical items	Gloss	Figurative meaning
Aláfomúro	Packed with breast	Plentiful
Ojádùn	Market is sweet	There are no sales
Owò ò dógba	Fingers are not equal	Inequality
pa ojà	Close the market	Close the market
Pàrùpàrù	Weevil-damaged beans	Infested beans
Sámbà	Mixed beans	Mixed beans
Ósàrò	Too early	Caution
Òpò ojà	Plenty goods	Abundant
Yàwàlù	Plenty	Plenty

Table 6 Market leaders

Title	Gloss	Role in the market
Akápò	Treasurer	Keeps association money or fund
Akòwéegbé	Secretary	Keeps minutes of meetings
Alága	Chairman	Coordinates the affairs of a market section
Bàbálójà	Market men leader	Oversees overall market affairs
Ìyálójà	Market women leader	Oversees overall market affairs
Agbowòde	Tax collector	Collects taxes and levies from traders
Igbákejì alága	Vice chairman	Assists the chairman in performing his duties

Table 7 Greetings

Greetings	Gloss	Purpose
Şéajéwá?	Are sales going well?	To inquire if sales are going well
Şeçtà?	Did you sell?	To inquire if sales are going well
Ọlọrun á fúnwatà	God will give us good sales	To wish a trader good sale
Èkúorò ajé	Greetings on trading effort	To encourage a trader
Èkúojúmọ	Good morning	To acknowledge the presence

		of a person in the morning
Èkúojà	Well done on market sales	To commend a person's effort in the market
Ajé á wá	Sales will come	To encourage a trader
Ajéyín	Sales blessing	Used by traders to invoke blessings from customers

Semantic and Cultural Analysis

Some expressions documented carry meaning that is beyond what is being sold or means of communication; they capture tradition, history, culture, and social relationships within the market. An illustration is 'àádùn', a traditional snack made from roasted corn flour, pepper, salt and palm oil. This hand-molded treat is more than just a commodity sold in the market; it has been enjoyed for generations at local gatherings, even before the introduction of modern snacks like minced pies and doughnuts. It is also used in ceremonies like weddings and naming to symbolise sweetness, joy and good things in life (just like the name implies). Its presence in markets today is a reflection that culinary tradition is still alive and culture can be found in what people eat and sell.

Also, the term 'Óṣàárò' also provides meaningful insight into how cultural beliefs govern economic behaviour within the market. It is often used by traders in the morning when a customer makes an unreasonably low offer or engages in bargaining without the true intention to purchase. Literally, the word can be broken down as "ó-ṣe-àrò", which means "it is morning"; pragmatically, it is a form of rebuke: "It is too early for this kind of (unacceptable) behaviour." The usage of this word is grounded in the heart of Yoruba culture that links morning (ààrò) to seriousness, productivity and getting the day off to a good start. The common proverb "Ààrò niójà" ("The market sells in the morning") reinforces this belief, supporting that the first or early transactions of the day are important for attracting prosperity. Therefore, making jokes or unserious offers in the morning is seen as indirectly jeopardising the trader's luck or good sales for the day. Thus, 'ósàrò' is not just a complaint about

price but a form of verbal indirectness where the trader avoids direct confrontation, like 'Your offer is insulting!' and instead uses a less confronting word to maintain peace.

Apart from the cultural symbolism, some expressions also function as evidence of social structure and how context can shape meaning. This can be illustrated by the term 'alabo', which in standard Yoruba is a compound word 'oni' + 'abo', meaning 'owner of plastic' or 'seller of place'. In the Yoruba morphological pattern, it is a common naming pattern, for instance, 'onibata' (shoe seller), 'onisu' (yam seller), etc. However, in the Bodija Market context, 'alabo' is not used to refer to a plastic seller but a head porter. The word has undergone a semantic shift which is metonymic in nature, as the meaning has been transferred from the seller of the tool to the user of the tool; they are identified by the instrument they work with (the large basin they use to carry people's goods on their head).

Notably, this term is specific to Bodija; in the nearby markets like Aleshinloye, the same role is referred to as 'Alabagbe' (carrier of loads). In Bodija market, 'alabo' does not cause confusion because it is context-bound and the participants already understand its meaning, but if someone calls a head porter "alabo" in Aleshinloye specifically, it would lead to confusion because it is a plastic market; one would think they are referring to a plastic seller. This shows how specialised communities generate their own semantic rules. This role is essential in market logistics; it often carries a certain social perception. Head porters are usually viewed as a lower social-economic class; this is because of the physically demanding and messy nature of the work. It is seen as employment of last resort for people who are economically disadvantaged.

Likewise, the phrase "pa ojà" which literally means to close market provides insight into market role in the community's social life. It does not refer to daily closing of market at sunset; it means to officially suspend all market activities for specific reasons: which are usually festivals, traditional ceremonies or significant communal events. For instance, the market can be closed for a king's funeral or coronation. A prominent example occurred on Friday, 26

September, 2025, when markets across Ibadan, including Bodija were closed to honor the coronation of Oba Rasheed AdewoluLadoja as the 44th Olubadan of Ibadan land. This shows how the market is more than just a place of business but a core part of the community's social and cultural life.

Furthermore, the data revealed that market discussion also includes expressions or phrases which portray how individuals think and behave within their social environment. A prime example is the phrase “*ọjà dùn*” (literally "the market is sweet"), an expression that carries more meaning than what the word phrase suggests, depending on who says it, when, and in what situation. Its surface-level function is a positive report: to communicate that business is good and sales are thriving. In contrast, a deeper analysis shows that the phrase can be employed ironically. A trader may say “*ọjà dùn*” but mean the exact opposite, that sales have been poor. This irony is not a lie; it is rooted in the Yoruba cultural logic that avoids directly naming undesirable realities because there is a belief that speaking negativity into the open can attract further bad luck. Therefore, using a positive expression like “*ọjà dùn*” can be a way to wish for a better outcome than facing a difficult situation directly. This does not happen in the market context alone; it is recognisable in broader Yoruba communication. For instance, a practice of referring to a scorching hot ground (*ilẹ̀ gbóná*) as cold ground (*ilẹ̀ tutù*) to avoid "jinxing" or invoking hardship through direct speech. Thus, the meaning of the word “*ọjà dùn*” cannot be found merely in a dictionary definition but by understanding the speaker's intention, the context of the conversation and shared cultural beliefs.

Conclusion

This research has documented and digitised a significant portion of the specialised vocabulary used in Bodija Market. The resulting lexicon, beyond being a word list, is a record of how language, trade, and culture come together in everyday life. Using FLEx software, it was possible to preserve these terms in a structured, searchable, and expandable format, contributing to the preservation

of Yoruba market heritage for the future. The study confirms that Bodija Market is a rich site for linguistic and cultural research, where language is actively used to negotiate, relate, and sustain community identity. The analysis revealed that market language in Bodija is deeply cultural. For instance, terms like *ó sàrò* (“it is morning”) are used not just to tell time, but to check inappropriate behaviour in the early hours, reflecting Yoruba beliefs about prosperity and respect for the time of day. Similarly, expressions like *ọjà dùn* (“the market is sweet”) can be used ironically to mean sales are poor, showing how indirect speech is valued in Yoruba communication. The study also documented the structure of market leadership, including titles like *Ìyálọjà* (market women leader), *Bàbálọjà* (market men leader), and *Alága* (sectional chairman), showing how authority is organised and exercised within the trading community. Creating a lexical entry in a digital bilingual dictionary form significantly contributes to Yoruba language preservation and the Yoruba digital corpus, which is one of the action plans or requirements in computational linguistics. Therefore, the findings underscore the importance of documenting such living vocabularies before they are altered or lost due to urban changes, language shift, or generational disconnect.

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